Social Histories of Iran

Histories of Iran, as of the wider Middle East, have been dominated by the twin narratives of top-down modernization and methodological nationalism. In this book, Stephanie Cronin problematizes both of these narratives. Its attention is firmly fixed on subaltern social groups: the 'dangerous classes' and their constructed contrast with the new and avowedly modern bourgeois elite created by the infant Pahlavi state; the hungry poor pitted against the deregulation and globalization of the late nineteenth-century Iranian economy; rural criminals of every variety, bandits, smugglers and pirates, and the profoundly ambiguous attitudes towards them of the communities from which they came. In foregrounding these groups, the book also seeks to move beyond a narrow national context, demonstrating, through a series of case studies, the explanatory power of global, transnational and comparative approaches to the study of the social history of the Middle East.

STEPHANIE CRONIN is Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Research Fellow at St Antony's College and is a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford. She is the author and editor of multiple books and journal articles on Middle Eastern and Iranian history including *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' Since 1800* (2020), *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East: Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform* (2013), *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (2010) and *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (2004).

Social Histories of Iran

Modernism and Marginality in the Middle East

Stephanie Cronin

University of Oxford

Social Histories of Iran

Histories of Iran, as of the wider Middle East, have been dominated by the twin narratives of top-down modernization and methodological nationalism. In this book, Stephanie Cronin problematizes both of these narratives. Its attention is firmly fixed on subaltern social groups: the 'dangerous classes' and their constructed contrast with the new and avowedly modern bourgeois elite created by the infant Pahlavi state; the hungry poor pitted against the deregulation and globalization of the late nineteenth-century Iranian economy; rural criminals of every variety, bandits, smugglers and pirates, and the profoundly ambiguous attitudes towards them of the communities from which they came. In foregrounding these groups, the book also seeks to move beyond a narrow national context, demonstrating, through a series of case studies, the explanatory power of global, transnational and comparative approaches to the study of the social history of the Middle East.

STEPHANIE CRONIN is Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Research Fellow at St Antony's College and is a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford. She is the author and editor of multiple books and journal articles on Middle Eastern and Iranian history including *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' Since 1800* (2020), *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East: Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform* (2013), *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (2010) and *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (2004).

Social Histories of Iran

Modernism and Marginality in the Middle East

Stephanie Cronin

University of Oxford

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Social Histories of Iran

Histories of Iran, as of the wider Middle East, have been dominated by the twin narratives of top-down modernization and methodological nationalism. In this book, Stephanie Cronin problematizes both of these narratives. Its attention is firmly fixed on subaltern social groups: the 'dangerous classes' and their constructed contrast with the new and avowedly modern bourgeois elite created by the infant Pahlavi state; the hungry poor pitted against the deregulation and globalization of the late nineteenth-century Iranian economy; rural criminals of every variety, bandits, smugglers and pirates, and the profoundly ambiguous attitudes towards them of the communities from which they came. In foregrounding these groups, the book also seeks to move beyond a narrow national context, demonstrating, through a series of case studies, the explanatory power of global, transnational and comparative approaches to the study of the social history of the Middle East.

STEPHANIE CRONIN is Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Research Fellow at St Antony's College and is a member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford. She is the author and editor of multiple books and journal articles on Middle Eastern and Iranian history including *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' Since 1800* (2020), *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East: Politics, Nationalism and Military Reform* (2013), *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (2010) and *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (2004).

Social Histories of Iran

Modernism and Marginality in the Middle East

Stephanie Cronin

University of Oxford

Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The history and historiography of Iran, as of the countries of the wider Middle East, have been dominated by the twin narratives of top-down, elite-driven and state-centred modernization, and methodological nationalism, the assumption that the geographical territory defined by the state and the population within its borders is the primary, and sometimes only, organizing principle for research and analysis. This book seeks to problematize both these state-centred narratives. Its attention is firmly on subaltern social groups outside the dominant elites, whether these elites be old or new, traditional or modern. These subaltern groups include the 'dangerous classes', and their constructed contrast with the new and avowedly modern bourgeois elite created by the infant Pahlavi state; the hungry poor pitted against the deregulation and globalization of the late nineteenth-century Iranian economy; rural criminals of every variety, bandits, smugglers and pirates, and the profoundly ambiguous attitudes towards them of the communities from which they came; slaves and the puzzle of their agency. Although the focus is firmly fixed on these subaltern elements, their historical experience is deployed in a much larger attempt to understand the wider societies of which they were a part and the nature of the political, economic and cultural authority to which they were subject. In particular they are counterpointed to the praxis of modernism, hegemonic not only in Iran and the wider Middle East but across the world from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century and depicted here in all its astonishing ambition, reaching from the state itself into the deepest and most intimate layers of everyday life.

In addition, and complementary, to this spotlight on subaltern lives, this book seeks to move beyond a narrow national context, rejecting any singularity or uniqueness to the experience of individual countries

but seeing it as fundamentally shaped by inescapable transnational and global developments, and its character and significance illuminated by comparative perspectives.[1] Put simply, these narratives take as their starting point the notion that what happens in Iran, or in any other national environment, is always part of something much bigger and can be better understood as such.

The book seeks to demonstrate, through a series of case studies, the explanatory power of global, transnational and comparative approaches to the study of the social history of the Middle East. The first part of the book focuses on Iran in a comparative perspective, the second adopts a wider lens to consider the Middle East in general, including Iran but also incorporating discussions of the Ottoman Empire/Turkish republic, the Arab world and North Africa, and the former Ottoman territories in the Balkans. Each chapter consists of narrative elements, but pays equal or perhaps greater attention to issues of theoretical framing, of methodology and of historiography. The chapters in both parts of the book are linked by their concern with social and sociological history 'from below' but also and particularly by their approach. All are comparative, all trace the impact of specific transnational relationships and all integrate global historical processes into their analysis.

The first chapter of the book examines the revolutionary movements of the 1970s in Iran. An obvious example of a global historical event, the Iranian revolution is, in fact, a prime example of the profound fracture that routinely separates analysis of the national history of Iran from its global context. This generalized fracture, furthermore, has operated in both directions. Not only is the global context usually absent from analyses of the Iranian experience, but that experience has also itself been neglected by wider scholarship, thus aggravating a persistent Eurocentrism in global, transnational and comparative

---

[1] The *Journal of Global History* defines its mission as examining 'structures, processes and theories of global change, inequality and stability', www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-global-history. *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* states that 'modern world history must be understood, not simply as a sum of national histories or a chronicle of interstate affairs, but also as a story of connections and circulation, by people, goods, ideas and skills', Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Comparative history applies comparisons between different national societies. See Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) for a good introduction to methodological issues.

history. Iran is almost always omitted, or dealt with in a perfunctory way, in global and transnational histories in general, as well as in specific monographic studies, for example, of the 1960s and 1970s and its student movements or of histories of socialist and communist movements.[2]

Chapter 1 argues that although the multiple domestic crises besieging the Pahlavi monarchy in the late 1970s were real and serious enough, the emergence of the revolutionary movements and their character can be properly explained only by wider perspectives. These include global processes: the post-Second World War 'education revolution', the youth radicalization of the late 1960s, the ubiquity of the resort to urban guerrilla warfare by this young generation, increasing ease of movement, whether migration or simple travel, technological innovations in the dissemination of ideas, through the press, radio and cassette recordings, the creation of an activist and highly influential diaspora, political influences not only from traditional Western sources but from the wider world, especially Latin America. Transnational connections include particularly those with neighbouring revolutionary movements, especially in Dhofar and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and with new dissident movements in the United States and Europe. The chapter also argues that the profile of the opposition may be clarified particularly by a comparative approach illustrating the extraordinary similarities between the Iranian and other radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s across the world, in sociology, politics, ideology and objectives, and even tactics and strategies. Iran's history thus ceases to be either the crude product of foreign influence

---

[2] The prevailing methodological nationalism has been challenged recently. See, for example, the conference held to mark the 40th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution at the Amsterdam Centre for Middle Eastern Studies, 13–14 December 2018, 'The Iranian Revolution as a World Event'. See also H. E. Chehabi, Peyman Jafari and Maral Jefroudi (eds.), *Iran in the Middle East: Transnational Encounters and Social History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015); Eskandar Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, 'The Origins of Communist Unity: Anti-Colonialism and Revolution in Iran's Tri-Continental Moment', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2017, pp. 796–822; Manijeh Nasrabadi and Afshin Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement and the Making of Global 1968', Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova, Mary Nolan, Marilyn Young and Joanna Waley-Cohen, (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 443–56; Toby Matthiesen, 'Red Arabia: Anti-Colonialism. The Cold War, and the Long Sixties in the Gulf States', Chen Jian et al. (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties*, pp. 94–105.

or the result of local mimicking but one arising from indigenous socio-economic and political processes similar to, but not derived from or dependent upon, those operative across the world. Using notions of global contexts, historical periods and, especially important, paradigm shifts, the chapter also sheds light on an enduring paradox: how a revolutionary movement of the 1970s apparently steeped in the ideology of the Left actually produced in the 1980s an outcome so much at variance with the objectives of so many of its original advocates.

Revolutions in general are pre-eminently global events. This is illustrated comparatively by the two other examples of profound revolutionary change in the modern world, the French and Russian revolutions. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was certainly a result of a process of globalization but, as the French and Russian examples show, such globalization was by no means new and can be detected in the causes, long and short term, of an earlier episode, the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1905/6. Indeed, the constitutional revolution in Iran was as much a product of globalization as that of 1979 and offers an equally powerful example of the ways in which moments of radical change provide an opportunity for integrating Iran into broader waves of historical development. Such integration both deepens our understanding of global historical processes through the addition of a neglected concrete case study and also illuminates the Iranian experience. Thus, the Iranian constitutional revolution ceases to be a unique event, explicable only by Iranian history, and becomes instead one example of a much bigger story, the sudden and dramatic, and almost simultaneous outbreak of political and labour conflict across the world in the early 1900s, including across the Middle East.

The lower classes of the pre-modern Middle East are often seen as largely untouched by new ideas, passive recipients of change, the impact of modernity affecting first, and sometimes only, elites and intellectuals. Yet the nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the urban and rural poor of Iran experiencing massive transformations in their circumstances and the options available to them, as they were drawn into a rapidly globalizing world. Migration was one strategy, long-distance travel increasingly viable. The movement of people and ideas, both the labouring poor in search of work and a layer of subaltern political activists and organic intellectuals, between Iran and the Russian Empire, especially the oil fields of the Caucasus, in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century has long been recognized as instrumental in the

diffusion of early ideas and practices of constitutionalism inside Iran.[3] Yet a closer examination of this single transnational connection shows how deeply it was embedded in more general global change, Iran already integrated into and shaped by international economic, political and technological trends. For Baku to become a magnet for impoverished Iranians seeking work and a centre of dissident and oppositional politics a kaleidoscope of necessary change was required: the extension of Russian imperial rule to the southern Caucasus in the early nineteenth century; an oil boom made possible by the new technology of drilling, which replaced the old practice of collecting oil seepage from man-made pits, investment made secure and immensely profitable by the developing capitalism of imperial Russia, the tsarist government selling outright parcels of land to Russian and Armenian speculators and later the Nobel Company.[4]

At the same time, movement within Iran had been accelerating from the mid-nineteenth century, largely driven by the consequences of Iran's integration into the global economy. Migration from the rural areas to local towns and from there to the large cities had steadily increased, driven by the growing economic, financial and political crises, and their accompanying food shortages and famines. Although urbanization was increasing exponentially, no industrial development absorbed the pool of surplus labour resulting from migration from the countryside and the collapse of local handicraft production. The demands of Russian industrial capitalism, encouraged by the Russian

[3] The political and economic significance of Iranian migration in both the creation of an Iranian working class and in its acquisition of organizational and ideological tools was firmly established before 1917 in works by Mikhail Pavlovich and later became a central trope of Soviet academic writing on this period of Iranian history. It was transmitted to academic scholarship beyond the USSR principally by extracts from a work by Z. Z. Abdullaev translated and published in English in 1971 which then became the basis for several studies of the impact of this migration on the politics of Iran during the constitutional period. See Stephanie Cronin, 'Introduction: Edward Said, Russian Orientalism and Soviet Iranology', Stephanie Cronin and Edmund Herzig (eds.), *Russian Orientalism to Soviet Iranology: the Persian-Speaking World and its History through Russian Eyes*, Special Issue: *Iranian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2015, pp. 647–62; Charles Phillip Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971); Hassan Hakimian, 'Wage Labor and Migration: Persian Workers in Southern Russia, 1880–1914', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1985, pp. 443–62.

[4] Audrey Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku: Transformation of a Muslim Town,' Michael F. Hamm, *The City in Late Imperial Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 238–318, p. 286.

state, were, however, insatiable. Towards the end of the nineteenth century rapidly improving communications, especially steam shipping on the Caspian Sea, brought cheap and desperate Iranian labour to satisfy this demand. The development of new, quick and cheap forms of transport was crucial. Only thus was seasonal or semi-permanent migration possible and a viable strategy for the Iranian poor. The expansion of shipping on the Caspian Sea linked Enzeli directly with Baku, ships leaving twice weekly, and also with Central Asia.[5] The construction of railways was also vital in linking Baku to Tiflis, the capital of the Russian Caucasus, and to European Russia, eventually bringing the labouring Muslim poor of northern Iran and members of the constitutionalist intelligentsia face to face with Russian products of European social democracy.[6]

By the late nineteenth century, the scale and character of this migration was massive and unprecedented. Yet this Iranian movement, permanent, semi-permanent and seasonal, was far from a unique or even unusual case, indeed was part of a much wider phenomenon. It seemed the entire world was on the move. In these years migrating Iranians joined the waves of massive population movements that were taking place around the world between the 1870s and the First World War, prompted by the search for land and work and escape from political crisis and war.[7] This movement was instrumental in the diffusion of new ideas and practices in the political arena and the workplace. Not only Iran but the rest of the Middle East shared fully in this experience. As well as Iranians moving between Tabriz and Baku, the cities of Alexandria, Cairo and Beirut attracted both skilled workers with political and trade union traditions, and subaltern intellectuals, while Iran itself became a destination for migrant workers.[8] The countries of the Middle East became both recipients and providers of migrant labour. Projects such as the Suez Canal and the development of cotton cultivation in Egypt depended on large quantities of local migration, while Syria and Lebanon saw some

---

[5] Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran*.

[6] For a full discussion of the situation in Baku, see Altstadt-Mirhadi, 'Baku: Transformation of a Muslim Town'.

[7] See Donna R. Gabaccia, 'Worker Internationalism and Italian Labour Migration, 1870–1914,' *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 45, 1994, pp. 63–79.

[8] For a recent discussion, see Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010). See also Anthony Gorman, 'Foreign Workers in Egypt 1882–1914: Subaltern or Labour Elite?', Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 237–59; Touraj Atabaki, 'Far from Home, But at Home: Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry,' *Studies in History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2015, pp. 85–114.

of the highest overseas migration rates in the world.[9] The transmission of ideas and example through these routes was intense. Everywhere, the result was similar. Between 1900 and 1914, a wave of strikes broke out around the world, in the advanced industrial countries, across the Russian Empire, and in China, Africa, Latin America and across the Middle East, migrants or those with experience of movement among the most militant of the workforce and often providing the leadership. The introduction of constitutional rule in Iran, with the revolution of 1905/6, and in the Ottoman Empire with the revolution of 1908, unleashed a period of intense unionization and labour agitation while these few years of the early 1900s saw the extraordinary synchronicity of revolutions overthrowing autocratic rule and introducing representative government around the world, not only in Iran and the Ottoman Empire, but also in Russia in 1905, Portugal and Mexico in 1910 and China in 1911.[10]

Most Iranian migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was driven by economic hardship and especially difficulties in the supply of food. Chapter 2 discusses the deteriorating living conditions of the Iranian poor and their reaction in the form of the bread riot or protest. The chapter argues that one central, and so far overlooked factor contributing to the constitutional revolution was the refusal of the hungry poor to accept their worsening immiseration as the Iranian economy was drawn into international trade and financial networks, coupled with the increasing political unresponsiveness of a paternalistic Qajar order crumbling under the impact of imperial penetration. It places the Iranian case firmly in Mike Davis' famous template for understanding the global subsistence crises of the late nineteenth century.[11] Like similar episodes elsewhere, especially the better documented cases of China and India, food crises in Iran may be explained not by the ecological disaster of drought alone, but by the economic and political context, the deregulation of the older paternalistic Iranian economy concomitant on the arrival of a local variety of capitalism and exposure to global trade and financial systems.

Chapter 2 takes as its framework a foundational text in the field of social history, E. P. Thompson's 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd

---

[9] Adam McKeown, 'Global Migration, 1856–1940', *Journal of World History*, vol. 15, 2004, pp. 155–89, p. 162.

[10] See Charles Kurzman, *Democracy Denied, 1905–1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[11] Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

in the Eighteenth Century'.[12] Although E. P. Thompson was cautious about the extension of his paradigm to cover the wider, especially the non-European, world, its approach has been widely adopted, including for the Middle East. However, the subtleties of Thompson's text, and its location of the phenomena of protest within a specific and evolving ideological, cultural, political and economic universe, have sometimes been lost en route. The account here returns to Thompson's original text and uses a close reading of his narrative of eighteenth-century bread riots in England to shed light on key features of the Iranian case: the elite sources of legitimacy, secular and religious, on which the protesters drew and which they fashioned into a powerful weapon; the rational and even ritualized character of their protests, their target market manipulation rather than simple and absolute dearth; the proliferation of protests as an older paternalism, embodied in the figure of the *muhtasib* with his *hisba* manuals, disintegrated, to be replaced by the free market; and the contribution of their actions to the outbreak of the constitutional revolution.

Two important conclusions may be singled out. First, Iranian bread protesters were, like their confrères elsewhere, motivated by anger at hoarding and speculation, not a simple lack of food. Famine in fact produced very little protest. Second, urban crowds justified their action by specific and complex beliefs and older existing practices. They were not at all simply hungry mobs, but were engaging with the authorities in political and ideological contests that possessed a degree of legitimacy recognized by both sides.

Nonetheless, these protests took place against a menacing backdrop of hunger and famine, a sharp fear of both dominating the lives of most Iranians, as they dominated the lives of populations around the world, until at least the Second World War. Famine was episodic but urban populations in particular were perennially haunted by any signs of its impending arrival. This stark reality provides another illustration of the invisible quarantine separating Iranian history from that of the rest of the world. Iran is rarely, if ever, included in broader histories of famine, and comparative studies are rarely used to shed light on the Iranian experience.[13]

The absence of Iran from histories of famine partly flows from the example of Iranian historiography itself. The marginality of the

---

historical experience of famine to Iranian scholarly and nationalist discourses is striking and in stark contrast to other countries. The failure of the potato crop and the 'great hunger' of the 1840s quickly came to possess an iconic status within Irish nationalism, an iconic status that persists until today. A similar role was played by the repeated famines in India, perhaps especially that of Bengal during the Second World War. Famine was also crucial in shaping indigenous narratives of reform in the nineteenth century. In Qing Dynasty China, for example, the famine of 1876–79 created both a sense of crisis and a corresponding opportunity for a critical discussion of Chinese state and society.[14] Yet in Iran the history and historiography of famine has been largely confined to footnotes and scholarly journals.[15] The suffering engendered in Iran by famine and dearth was shocking in itself but the long-term impact was also highly deleterious to the country's demographic, economic and social development. Yet these episodes are almost completely neglected in conventional narratives of Iranian history. The template of reform and state-building, which has dominated scholarship on Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran, has found literally no place for any discussion of their significance. It is striking, for example, that all the discussion of the notorious Reuter concession is silent regarding the fact that its granting, in 1872, coincided with Iran's emergence from perhaps the most devastating famine of the entire century, a demographic disaster with all its consequences for economic development. The literature on the causes of the constitutional revolution also omits any possible role for the localized famines, more generalized food shortages and bread riots that proliferated in the years before 1905, nor do analyses of the political crisis that eventually led to Reza Khan's coup in 1921 take any account of the apocalyptic losses to famine and Spanish flu between 1916 and 1919.

Nor, furthermore, have food shortages and famine been integrated into the discourses of Iranian nationalism. Both Irish and Indian nationalism located primary responsibility for the famines that struck their countries in British imperial control, this control underpinned by Malthusian notions of demography and laissez-faire economics and free trade. Yet, despite the overweening position of Britain in Iran during the formative decades of Iranian nationalism, British policies have been seen

---

[14] Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, 'The "Feminization of Famine", the Feminization of Nationalism: Famine and Social Activism in Treaty-Port Shanghai, 1876–9', *Social History*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2005, pp. 421–43.

[15] The exception is of course the work of Mohammad Goli Majd, *The Great Famine and Genocide in Iran, 1917–1919* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2013); *Iran under Allied Occupation in World War II* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2016). For a discussion of the literature see below, Chapter 2 footnote 3.

as only secondary contributory factors to food insecurity and famine.[16] This is perhaps connected to a general disinclination to valorize, or even to acknowledge, the political role of the peasantry. In countries such as Ireland, India and China, peasants played, in both ideological and actual physical terms, a central role in the struggle for independence. Their sufferings, especially in terms of famine, consequently came to be acknowledged by the victorious new elites, both nationalist and communist, and venerated in newly constructed historical narratives. In Iran, by contrast, under both Qajars and Pahlavis, the politics of state-building has been an exclusively urban phenomenon, and an elite urban phenomenon at that, the peasantry often marginalized and sometimes stigmatized.[17] Indeed, nationalist discourses in the Middle East, with the partial exception of colonial North Africa and mandatory Palestine, have not in general embraced peasants as heroic figures, the efforts of nationalist states and modernist elites such as those of Pahlavi Iran or Kemalist Turkey to police rural populations often given greater political and ideological import than the struggles of the rural poor themselves.

Gradually, over the final decades of the nineteenth and the early decades of the twentieth centuries, the urban poor of Iran and especially the 'lower depths' among them, ceased to be merely a permanent and occasionally troublesome presence in towns and cities, to be tolerated, managed or ignored. They became instead a collective menace, to be confronted by a new elite and, after 1921, a new state determined that they be reformed and moulded into obedient citizens and productive workers.

Chapter 3 moves on to examine marginality and the dialectical dynamic between the marginal and modernism, again locating its focus on Iran within wider comparative frameworks. Using especially the work of Michel Foucault, it takes as its key players, on the one hand the so-called 'dangerous classes' and, on the other, their eternal adversary, the modern state. The chapter has, at its centre, narratives of the lives of various representatives of the 'dangerous classes', prostitutes, the criminal in the form of the serial killer, prisoners, the undeserving poor, beggars and paupers and the quintessentially liminal *lutis*. But it also argues for the artificiality of this notion of the 'dangerous classes' and its deliberate construction by a modernizing elite for whom it functioned as a mirror image, the marginal, the immoral and the criminal a perfect foil for the emerging middle classes. The chapter also examines the

---

[16] Again, Majd's work is the exception to this general approach.

[17] See Stephanie Cronin, 'Resisting the New State: Peasants and Pastoralists in Iran, 1921–41', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–47.

role allocated to the marginal in the construction of modern regimes of surveillance and discipline, including avowedly modern police forces, prisons, judicial systems, red-light districts and clinics. In early Pahlavi Iran and Khedivial Egypt, for example, even the city itself was a candidate for modernization, to be 'reformed' through an aggressive programme of urban renewal and redesign, and made healthy, hygienic and beautiful. The chapter insists on the routinely underestimated ambitions of modernism, the implementation of its agenda requiring not only massively enhanced coercive instruments at the disposal of the state but also a series of cultural offensives, indeed culture wars, for example in the fields of entertainment and sport, which would lead to an internalization of modernity on the social and on the individual psychological levels.

  Much of the literature on the dangerous classes has focused on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it being generally assumed that the dangerous themselves and the environments that produced and succoured them would disappear with the triumph of modernity and its accompanying education, regular employment and prosperity. The twenty-first century has, however, so far proved this assumption to be mistaken. On the contrary, such 'dangerous' environments appear to be proliferating. The countries of the contemporary Middle East and North Africa have failed to resolve or sometimes even to address a number of interrelated problems that have produced an almost permanent sense of social crisis. A demographic bulge, the inadequacy and corruption of authoritarian governments in thrall to the International Monetary Fund, the dislocation arising from mass migration internally and overseas, the exacerbation of existing chronic inequalities, have led to the creation of an layer of unemployed or semi-employed young men, in Middle Eastern cities and, increasingly, of Middle Eastern origin in European cities, crippled by a pervasive sense of hopelessness, prone to petty crime and vulnerable to induction as foot soldiers into gangsterism and jihadism. Such marginal young men now appear in various guises, migrants, petty criminals, drug addicts/pushers, and, perhaps the most dangerous of all the dangerous classes, terrorists. A modern lumpenproletariat, they demonstrate precisely that layer's typical political liminality but eventual propensity to mobilization by reactionary leaderships. Similarly, the conditions tending to give rise to prostitution, poverty, war, social collapse, forced as well as voluntary migration, rural to urban and increasingly transnational, continue to worsen. They are, furthermore, exacerbated by the appearance of novel forms of an older exploitation, the trafficking of women and girls on a truly modern scale and the more localized activities, such as the temporary marriages to Syrian refugees

contracted by rich men from the Gulf. In these circumstances the old debates between regulationists, who argued that the legalization of prostitution offered the most realistic method for managing prostitution, and abolitionists, continue unresolved and unabated. Vagrancy has re-appeared as homelessness, and from San Francisco to London the authorities are still trying to clear the streets of beggars without addressing the problems of poverty and housing.

Chapter 3 locates its discussion of marginality and modernism in regional and global contexts, using examples drawn from Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, Algeria, France and the United Kingdom to illuminate the Iranian experience. The remaining chapters in the book move away from a central focus on Iran to look more broadly at the countries of the wider Middle East. Chapter 4, echoing Chapter 2, again employs a careful reading of a classical text, this time Eric Hobsbawm's *Bandits*, to examine the applicability of the 'social bandit' thesis to the Middle East and North Africa, and the theoretical frameworks, historiography and methodology shaping Middle Eastern bandit studies.[18] Like Thompson's bread riot paradigm, Hobsbawm's social bandit thesis, although widely criticized, found an instant response among wider scholarship and was taken up and applied to peasant societies around the world. Hobsbawm, however, to an even greater extent than Thompson and in a more negative way, has often found his thesis vulgarized, reduced to the simplistic and clearly inaccurate notion that bandits everywhere were Robin Hoods. The chapter here again returns to his foundational text in an attempt to recover its analytical subtleties in order to make sense of the extraordinarily diverse, but still largely understudied, Middle Eastern experience of banditry, piracy and smuggling.

At the time of its publication and since, Hobsbawm's text was widely criticized for its methodology, particularly an over-reliance on and uncritical reading of, first, folklore and popular traditions and, second, nationalist mythologies. This criticism Hobsbawm conceded had some merit, and the resulting debates have put methodology at the heart of bandit studies. The chapter here assesses the general problems affecting the study of rural crime, and indeed crime in general, in the Middle East arising from the availability of only fragmentary and sparse data, the elite origins of much of this data, and broader problems of textual interpretation. The chapter argues for the absolute centrality of methodology to research outcome, an argument demonstrated most strikingly by the case of the Egyptian Adham al-Sharqawi, an Egyptian

---

[18] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, 2000).

bandit of the early twentieth century. His story illustrates the capacity of an individual narrative to possess completely contradictory meanings for the state and its elites on the one hand, and the poor on the other. Whether al-Sharqawi emerges as a tyrant terrorizing the countryside or as a noble robber defending the oppressed from local landlords and colonial officials, depends entirely on whether the sources used are newspaper and police reports or the *mawawil* (ballads) of the peasantry.[19] The argument concludes that attempts to reconcile these contradictory narratives miss the point. Rather than searching for the truth in the opposing narratives, they might rather be decoded, and understood as symptomatic of fundamentally opposed worldviews, of those who prospered under the status quo and those who did not.

Using examples from diverse historical and geographical periods, colonial North Africa and Egypt, interwar Palestine, Kemalist Turkey and Pahlavi Iran, early modern Mediterranean corsairing and Morisco piracy, the chapter revisits the vexed question of the relationship between bandits and, on the one hand, the peasantry from whom they sprang and, on the other, the landlords and local rulers into whose service they were often recruited, and interrogates the notion of crime as a distorted form of social protest.

Thompson's bread riot and Hobsbawm's banditry were common subaltern strategies across the world, including in Europe itself, and Chapters 2 and 4 use the ubiquity, perhaps universality, of these phenomena to excavate their character and significance in the context of the Middle East. Chapter 5, on slavery, adopts a similar comparative approach and again bases its argument on a foundational text, deploying critiques of Orientalism deriving from Edward Said's classical work.[20] In this chapter, however, there is a particular concern with challenging and deconstructing an existing comparison, that often made between Atlantic slavery and slavery in the Middle East and North Africa. Here, some of the possible dangers of the comparative approach become evident, particularly when that approach tends towards ahistorical and ideologically driven assumptions.

Chapter 5 takes issue with the very notion of an Islamic slavery, seeing this as indicative of an Orientalist inclination which situates slavery in the Middle East and North Africa not within a geographical

[19] Mohammed Saaid Ezzeldin, *History and Memory of Bandits in Modern Egypt: The Controversy of Adham al-Sharqawi*, MA thesis, Georgetown University (2013). Available at: https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/709716/Ezzeldin_georgetown_0076M_12481.pdf;sequence=1.

[20] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

or chronological context, as is usual with other cases, but within a civilizational framework. The chapter questions the notion of a *sui generis* Middle Eastern and North African slavery defined by Islam but sees the institution itself and the lives led by slaves in medieval and early modern Middle Eastern societies as remaining close to the traditions and customs that they shared with other Mediterranean countries, especially Italy, Spain and Portugal, with no absolute and binary division between Christian Europe and the Islamic Middle East. Rather than accepting prescriptive legal and religious texts as providing a reliable picture of the reality of the day-to-day functioning of slavery, the chapter instead highlights actual social, political, economic and legal relationships in their historical context. In other words, looking at what actually happened, rather than what was supposed to happen.

Using this approach, the chapter engages with the two most thorny issues in slavery studies: that of slave agency and that of the reasons for the presence or absence of abolitionist discourses. It argues, first, that specific slave strategies were indissolubly linked to specific modes of slavery. Plantation slaves in medieval Iraq, for example, might possess the ability to mount mass violent rebellions, and did so, with the objective of overturning their own servile status and themselves becoming part of the slave-owning elite. On the other hand, however, the household nature of most Middle Eastern slavery made absconding, 'weapons of the weak', or even a resort to the courts more viable. Second, the chapter questions the frequent assertion that the supposed absence of a redemptive discourse of abolitionism implies some civilizational dysfunction peculiar to Muslim societies. To the contrary, the chapter highlights the actual withering of slavery in the nineteenth century as modernism took hold, a process directly aided by reforming elites, and provides tantalizing examples of subaltern sympathy and solidarity between the free poor and slaves and ex-slaves, and the emergence of a popular abolitionism in the early twentieth century.

Chapter 6 returns to a direct encounter with modernism now seen through the prism of its campaigns against female veiling and everything which veiling was made to represent. The chapter's central focus is on the period of high modernism in the Middle East, roughly the late nineteenth century to the 1960s, and especially the interwar decades, but it contextualizes this discussion historically within the renewed controversies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and geographically, including case studies from the Soviet Union and the Balkans, some consideration of debates and policies in Western Europe and even a discussion of practices relating to the female body in China and Africa.

Although the topic of anti-veiling campaigns seems, at first sight, of limited general relevance to wider issues of political and social history, yet narratives of these campaigns reveal much about the ambitions of modernism, the triumphs of nationalism and state-building, and the struggles of class and gender. From North Africa to Yugoslavia to Afghanistan, dress, and in particular female veiling, became a key battleground in the struggle to produce a new, modern citizen, the basic and essential building block of a new, modern society.

As a result of advances in the field of Middle Eastern gender studies, we possess excellent accounts of individual anti-veiling campaigns.[21] Chapter 6, however, seeks to place the anti-veiling wars waged by modernism in a comparative perspective, taking them beyond the national frontiers of individual states. It notes the striking similarities between the programmes and practices of very different polities, including the Turkish republic, the modernizing monarchies of Iran and Afghanistan, and the infant Soviet Union, and traces the rapid emergence of a pan-Islamic gender discourse and the immediate formation of a counter-discourse. In contrast to the accepted view, which sees female dress reform and other modernist gender policies as largely imposed by male-dominated authoritarian regimes and deeply unpopular among both men and women, the narrative below emphasizes the agency of women themselves as they intervened forcefully in contributions to debates and by adopting different forms of clothing on their own initiative. Again, in contrast to existing scholarship, the chapter observes that governments such as that of Reza Shah and of the Soviet authorities in Central Asia saw their repressive policies as primarily aimed at recalcitrant men and at defending women as they unveiled against a possibly violent male backlash. The chapter places this argument within a review of the historiography of unveiling especially regarding Iran, where the 1979 revolution led to a revalorization of veiling and a new emphasis on the repression accompanying interwar gender reforms, and Central Asia, where a similar revalorization and reassessment followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. In both cases and indeed across the region, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries veiling was reimagined, reinvented and widely readopted, becoming sometimes a hallmark of the modern Muslim woman, sometimes of the radical Islamist, once again demonstrating its profound liminality.

The narratives contained in this book are historical and historiographical. Yet their concerns are of a striking contemporary

---

[21] See, for example, Stephanie Cronin, *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

relevance. Both Thompson and Hobsbawm located both their subjects and their strategies in a specific and rapidly evolving context: the disintegration of pre-modern agrarian and urban societies and their replacement by the free market. Neither believed that the forms of resistance which they described, food riots and social banditry, could survive the disappearance of those societies.

Yet, although Thompson's reconfiguration of the 'mob' or the urban crowd as a rational, and usually peaceful, actor, conscious of its own legitimacy, has been victorious in social history, his assumption that bread riots were a product only of the pre-modern economy has been challenged by recent developments. Certainly, for much of the twentieth century, subaltern economic struggles were mostly conducted via formal organizations including political parties and trade unions. Over the last thirty years, however, and quite contrary to earlier analyses, across the Middle East and North Africa, and indeed around the world, the food riot has reappeared as a result of neo-liberalism-induced austerity measures. Everywhere the removal of subsidies on staple foods, especially bread, has generated wave after wave of popular protest.[22] The reappearance of the food riot was perhaps most spectacularly announced by the massive protests which shook Cairo in January 1977 following the removal of state subsidies on staple foods as demanded by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Modern *intifadat al-khubz* often bear a striking resemblance to earlier protests with their central demand, for political intervention to modify the operations of the free market. Nor did Hobsbawm, although he discussed the 'modernization of social banditry' and the emergence of varieties of 'neo-bandits' or 'neo-Robin Hoods' and their relocation from rural to urban environments in the 1970s, anticipate any phenomenon such as the creation of 'failed states' through war and foreign intervention across the Middle East and North Africa, and the filling of the resulting political, social and economic vacuum by a massive resurgence of banditry, smuggling and piracy.

Even slavery has re-emerged as darker shadows have spread over the Middle East since the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Certainly, formal abolition is complete, although not achieved in the Gulf and north-west Africa until surprisingly recently, while it seems, furthermore, frequently to have survived legal abolition, forms of domestic dependence and servitude continuing on the margins of the Middle East until the twenty-first century, hardly distinguishable from past slavery. The position of migrant workers in the Gulf and elsewhere has also been

---

[22] John Walton and David Seddon, *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 171.

situated within forms of economic servitude. There are, however, even more sinister developments. The recent and startling resurrection and rehabilitation of an imagined Islamic discourse on slavery has become of central importance to radical Islamist groups such as Islamic State in the Middle East, its enslavement of Yazidi women in Iraq, presented as a direct challenge to Islamic modernism, seizing worldwide attention.

In the early twenty-first century, the 'dangerous classes' remain, constantly reconfigured but eternal, prostitutes now sex workers, bandits now gangsters, smugglers and sometimes militia leaders, while food rioters again battle global economic forces, and women's dress once more becomes an arena in which modernism, religious as well as secular, confronts its opponents. Such a modernism, increasingly embattled and entangled in domestic, regional and global conflicts, now confronts a future, which it once triumphantly owned, increasingly called into question.

Part I

Iran

1 The Iranian Revolution, the Islamic Republic and the 'Red 1970s'
A Global History

A recent account of the global 1970s posed the following question: How could this 'Red Decade', characterized by the apparent hegemony of radical leftist and revolutionary movements around the world, result in the triumph by the early 1980s of its opposite: a global socially conservative neo-liberal agenda, heralded and symbolized in 1979 by the electoral victories of Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom? This has been called 'the mystery of the 1970s'.[1]

The discussion below asks a similar question of Iran in the period of the revolution and the consolidation of the regime that it eventually produced. How could a revolutionary movement of the 1970s apparently steeped in the ideology of the Left produce an outcome in the 1980s so much at variance with the objectives of so many of its original advocates? The answer it gives is predicated upon the notion that the global context and the character of the historical period is crucial to understanding the national history of Iran, not merely an aspect of that history but profoundly constitutive. It explains the paradox outlined above as follows. The long 1970s, which may be said to have begun around 1967–8 and which ended, at least symbolically, in 1979, was the environment that incubated the Iranian revolution, often seen as launched in 1971 by the beginning of a guerrilla campaign against the shah's regime by far left elements. The revolution, however, gestating throughout the 1970s and culminating in the successful overthrow of the shah in January–February 1979, was finally born on the cusp of a tectonic shift in the global balance of forces between Left and Right, a shift evidenced everywhere by the rapid ebbing of the revolutionary tide. Although the radicalization of the 1970s had never been uncontested, especially in Latin America where

---

[1] Duco Hellema, *The Global 1970s: Radicalism, Reform and Crisis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), p. 11.

the Left suffered a series of devastating defeats, it was in 1979 that the emergence of powerful neo-liberal conservative movements began to demonstrate decisively their capacity to challenge and then roll back, on a global level, the leftist and left-leaning nationalist hegemonies of the previous years.[2] This was the very different environment of the 1980s, a decade of consistent neo-liberal and conservative victories and retreats by the Left, in which the legacy of the revolution was transformed into the Islamic Republic.

An important element of the argument presented here concerns the danger of hindsight, of viewing the Iranian revolution through the prism of the subsequent history of forty years of repression, sanctions and war. Instead, it attempts to begin to unravel the enigma of the revolution by restoring the events of 1977–9 to their global context and thereby recovering a sense of how the revolution, at the time of its making, saw itself and was seen by the world. Thus, it hopes to respond to the concerns recently raised by historians of other revolutions regarding the challenge of comprehending, in absolutely transformed circumstances, 'the ideals and passions that galvanized revolutionaries' and achieving an 'intellectual and imaginative understanding' of their motives.[3]

The Iranian revolution, its gestation, emergence and eventual consolidation, is incomprehensible if removed from its global context. Every characteristic of the revolutionary movement, as well as the episodes through which the revolution itself unfolded, was formed in the crucible of twentieth-century world politics. This global shaping of the Iranian experience may be traced concretely in a number of ways, for example, through the history of opposition movements. The Tudeh Party may be better understood once it is located within and as a part of the pro-Soviet international communist movement, its history resembling closely that of its sister parties. Its discrediting by its subservience to Soviet imperatives and its consequent supersession by radical groups of the Iranian far left were typical features of the fate of communist parties around the world in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, the adoption by a younger generation of the strategy of world revolution and the tactic of armed struggle was truly a global phenomenon in the late 1960s and early 1970s, guerrilla groups in Iran and across Europe, Asia and Africa resembling each other closely in age, socio-economic origins, ideology and, ultimately, failure. Again, the mobilization of religion and

[2] The global analysis provided here draws on Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*.
[3] 'A long look at the Russian revolution'. Steve Smith talks to the British Academy Review about his new book, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890–1928*, in www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/long-look-russian-revolution.

the deployment of a religious vocabulary to buttress a revolutionary political agenda flourished first in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s and then, with very different outcomes, in Iran and across the Middle East. All these developments, furthermore, took place in a world everywhere shaped by the Second World War and the resulting political and socio-economic transformations, especially decolonization and the 'educational revolution'. Perhaps most prescient of all, the world offered a warning to the makers of the Iranian revolution in the shape of the fate of Salvador Allende, the Marxist Chilean president overthrown in 1973 by a coup organized by the CIA and executed by the Chilean armed forces. The memory of this recent imperial intervention, which had reverberated around the world, was sharp in revolutionary Iran among all sections of the revolutionary movement, religious as well as secular, and was a powerful echo of the overthrow of the nationalist icon, Muhammad Musaddiq, in 1953.[4] The Chilean experience and the destruction of the pro-Allende coalition was a key factor in the strategic considerations of the Tudeh Party and the Soviet Communist Party's International Department while the cleric Ali Khamenei, later to succeed Khomeini as Supreme Leader, declared in 1981: 'We are not liberals, like Allende, willing to be snuffed out by the CIA.'[5]

Global Contexts, Historical Periods and Paradigm Shifts

The Iranian revolutionary movement derived its momentum from the radicalism of the late 1960s–1970s, but the revolution itself came at the end of that historical period, not its beginning, and marked a watershed. The Iranian revolution, together with the simultaneous Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, may be seen as the last of the leftist mobilizations of the 1970s, perhaps even of the twentieth century. However, it may also be understood as the first and most spectacular intervention of a newly hegemonic political Islam, which was to characterize the following decades. The decline of the Left globally from the mid to late 1970s had coincided, in Iran and across the wider Middle East, with the rise of varieties of political Islam, the latter becoming the main rival of the Left in terms both of discourse and of constituency. Indeed, the global

---

[4] Jeremy Friedman, 'The Enemy of My Enemy: The Soviet Union, East Germany, and the Iranian Tudeh Party's Support for Ayatollah Khomeini', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 3–37, p. 7, pp. 15–16.

[5] Friedman, 'The Enemy of My Enemy', Khamenei quote from Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup* (New York: The New Press, 2013), p. 225.

rightwards shift that was to become apparent in the 1980s was represented most obviously across the region by the increasing salience of a populist, conservative or fundamentalist Islamic politics. Sometimes such forces merely stepped into the vacuum created by the decline of leftist and other secular elements, sometimes they engaged directly in political, cultural and even physical battles with them. During the revolutionary period in Iran, this historical shift, from the hegemony of more or less secular leftism to that of political Islam, which worked itself out over decades elsewhere, was compressed into a moment. The discourse of the revolutionary movement, including its religious elements, had been shaped by the leftism of the 1970s, and leadership of the revolution and of the new republic was successfully seized by Islamic populists who were ready to continue to utilize the vocabulary of the Left where expedient. Essentially complete by 1982 this transition, although masked and complicated by the necessities of total war with Iraq, eventually culminated in the post-war victory of the neo-liberal, free market and business-friendly era of reconstruction under President Rafsanjani. This neo-liberal agenda was then to remain a constant, featuring in the policies of all subsequent Iranian presidents, including the apparent opposites, the reformer Muhammad Khatami and the populist Mahmud Ahmadinejad.[6]

The revolutionary and immediate post-revolutionary years in Iran demonstrate perfectly a paradigm shift that was taking place across the Middle East, a paradigm shift from one era to another, from the hegemonies of the Left and secular nationalism to that of Islamic politics.[7] The victorious ideologies of the 1980s, all neo-liberal, were not new but had been incubating, sometimes below the radar of public commentary, for years. In other parts of the world, similar paradigm shifts, differently configured according to national circumstance, were also taking place. As in Iran, such sudden paradigm shifts, actually the result of much deeper and long-term conflicts, might also take place over the course of a few months. In the United Kingdom, for example, a decade of industrial conflict culminated in the 'Winter of Discontent' of 1978–9, which saw union action on a massive scale with half a million people out on strike demanding large wage increases. In May 1979 Margaret Thatcher was elected on an overtly anti-trade union, pro-business, neo-liberal agenda.

[6] Ervand Abrahamian, 'Khomeini: Fundamentalist or Populist?', *New Left Review*, vol. 186, 1991, pp. 102–19.
[7] For the theory of paradigm shifts, see Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

By the late 1970s even post-cultural revolution China had begun to experiment with market reforms.

The Iranian revolution and the Islamic republic, therefore, were each the product of quite distinct historical periods. They were also the product of three distinct, although related, global trends. These trends included a world youth radicalization most emphatically demonstrated by the May 1968 events in Paris, an ongoing process of decolonization across the 'Third World', and the rise of political Islam. Each of these trends, furthermore, was a consequence of much deeper processes of historical change.

Yet nonetheless the history of Iran, and particularly the history of the revolution of 1977–9, has been dominated by methodological nationalism, by an almost unconscious presupposition that the nation state and the population within its borders is the natural and self-contained unit of historical and historiographical enquiry.[8] As the Islamic republic recently entered middle age, turning forty in 2019, this was especially noticeable as a slew of articles marking the anniversary appeared in the mass media. Although providing detailed assessments of the multiple domestic crises besieging the Pahlavi monarchy in the late 1970s and the factors that led to the emergence and consolidation of clerical rule, all sought explanations for the revolution primarily, even exclusively, in internal factors and one key international relationship, that with the United States.[9] In addition to the ideological, political and organizational contribution of Khomeini and his clerical supporters and their networks of religious institutions, the revolution's ostensible domestic causes included the monarchy's disastrous economic policies and erratic political decisions, its reliance on repression, exercised especially through SAVAK, the secret police and the profound cultural alienation of much of the population, including among the elite itself.

Even less have studies of the formation of the Islamic republic taken into account the character of the historical period which was just beginning at the time of its birth. Explanations for an outcome that contrasted so starkly with the goals of many of the participants in the revolution have also tended to focus entirely on domestic causes: on the guile of Khomeini, who concealed his true objectives beneath a rhetoric stolen from the Left, and the ruthless violence of his lumpen supporters; or on the failure of the Left itself, which made certain key and ultimately fatal mistakes, lending some support to the Islamic authorities while

---

[8] For recent challenges to the prevailing approach, see Introduction, footnote 2.
[9] See, for example, the recent account by Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London: Penguin, 2014).

failing to make a more determined defence of issues relating to gender and democracy.[10]

As a result of the narrowness of this prevailing methodological approach, the Iranian revolution and the relationship of that revolution to the system it produced still, even after four decades, represent something of a mystery. As the Iranian revolution turned forty, it still represented, to the outside world and to many Iranians, a puzzle. The bafflement displayed at the time and since that a cleric of advanced years and obscure politics might not only furnish a figurehead for a revolution but also seize and maintain power in the post-revolutionary state has never diminished. This has led to analyses that tended towards an Iranian exceptionalism, first proposing some profound and unique symbiosis between Iran and Shi'ism and then focusing especially on the supposed Shi'i predilection for martyrdom or the alleged 'oppositional' role of the ulama.

While rejecting any explanatory Iranian exceptionalism, the account here recognizes that the Iranian revolution was an event of quite exceptional magnitude and rarity, overturning the political, social, economic and cultural status quo within the country, evicting an entire class from power, the resulting transformation permanent and affecting not only Iran but also the wider Middle East and indeed the global political order. Indeed, in its depth and scale it bears comparison with the two iconic revolutions of the modern period, the French and the Russian. Certainly uprisings, coups and other sorts of political turbulence have been common across the Middle East. But revolutions on this scale, with the necessary long-term impact and global significance, have been rare. Middle Eastern regimes, again as elsewhere, equipped with powerful security apparatuses, have proved adept at containing or suppressing dissent. Many countries in the Middle East and beyond have endured, and continue to endure, levels of political authoritarianism and repression, economic mismanagement and corruption, unpopular international alignments and so on, similar to those prevailing under the Pahlavis, without producing the volcanic eruption of 1977–9 in Iran. The Iranian revolution offers further puzzles.

---

[10] See Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999). Haideh Moghissi, 'Troubled Relationships: Women, Nationalism and the Left Movement in Iran', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 209–28; Ali Mirsepassi, 'The Tragedy of the Iranian Left', in Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries*, pp. 229–49; Saeed Rahnema, 'The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran', in Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries*, pp. 250–67.

It received no impetus from military entanglement and defeat abroad, as had the Russian revolution in 1917 or the Portuguese in 1975, nor did it flow organically from resistance to occupation, as had the Chinese and Vietnamese, nor to direct confrontation with neo-imperial domination, as had the Cuban and Nicaraguan. Other than President Jimmy Carter's ambiguous human rights rhetoric, and the activities of oppositional groups in exile, there was little external pressure on the monarchical regime, even the Soviet Union and eventually China on cordial terms with the shah. The simple listing of Iranian grievances, therefore, cannot explain this apparently inexplicable revolution.

Iran and the World Revolution

The revolutionary movement that overthrew Muhammad Reza Shah in 1979 was a de facto coalition consisting of a wide variety of political trends. It included the revolutionary or far left, both secular and religious, including the Tudeh Party, the Fadaiyan-i Khalq and the Mujahidin-i Khalq; the parties of the national minorities, especially the Kurds; left-leaning constitutionalist opinion, especially the various iterations of the National Front; Islamic modernists, most notably the Liberation Movement; and a version of Islamic populism, represented by Ayatullah Khomeini himself. Each of these trends was integrated into transnational and global networks and each adopted the lexicon of the global Left. This lexicon possessed two central concepts: a preference for the strategy of revolution over a reformism perceived as historically exhausted and even treacherous; and an anti-imperialism born of the notion of the unity of the struggles of the oppressed within the imperial metropolises and throughout their empires, formal and informal. These two concepts merged seamlessly to produce the goal of the world revolution.

In the late 1960s–1970s the concept of the world revolution had an extraordinary salience among large numbers of the younger generation around the world.[11] Although hindsight and a focus on the domestic context has tended to present the Iranian revolution as a unique and isolated episode, it was in reality, as well as in the worldview of that generation, only one in a succession of extraordinary upheavals across the globe, to the extent that the 1970s acquired the soubriquet of the

[11] The rise of radical youth movements in the 1960s has a produced a considerable literature. For a selection, see Jeremy Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che: Radicalism, the Transnational Imagination, and the Politics of Heroes', *Journal of Global History*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 506–26, footnote 5, p. 507.

'Red Decade'. The political and military conflicts of those years were perceived by both supporters and opponents as a single struggle. So powerful were the apparent interconnectedness, synchronization and even coordination of these upheavals, which erupted in every continent and in practically every country, that they often presented themselves to conservatives as a single global crisis, to radicals as manifestations of an inevitable world revolution. The progress of world revolution thus conceptualized was followed closely by Iranian opponents of the shah for whom Iran's escape from informal US hegemony seemed an inevitable, if delayed, step on the path already trodden by much of the world. The overthrow of the shah of Iran, a close ally of the United States and a covert friend of Israel, seemed for its advocates, both Iranian and non-Iranian, to represent a globally significant victory, for its opponents a global defeat.

This approach was not purely, or even mainly, a result of the development of a youthful, romantic Third Worldism, a 'transnational imagination'.[12] It was certainly a key concept for the Left on the theoretical level, most memorably articulated by Che Guevara's call for 'two, three many Vietnams',[13] but also seemed, for all shades of opinion, to prove its correctness by the actual course of events. Defeat in Vietnam in 1975 paralysed the United States for several years, including during the Iranian revolution itself, and even in Europe, the organic connection between imperial defeat and revolution at home was strikingly illustrated by the overthrow of the dictatorship in Lisbon in 1974 following the slow but inexorable collapse of Portuguese colonialism in south-west Africa. Of course, the reverse was also true. It was everywhere anticipated that any victory for an imperial power would inevitably entail a risk to domestic rights. The deployment of the British army in Northern Ireland, internment and the suspension of jury trials in favour of 'Diplock courts', for example, was feared as presaging the spread of these methods to the rest of the United Kingdom.

This tendency to conceptualize global politics in binary terms was, of course, particularly encouraged by a powerful discourse of the Cold War, tropes of the conflict between the West and the Soviet Union, between capitalism and communism, embedding themselves in every national conflict. Iran had historically escaped colonialism and direct imperial control and had therefore produced no hegemonic national liberation movement. Even during the crisis over oil nationalization

---

[12] Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che', p. 508.
[13] Ernesto Guevara, 'Message to the Tricontinental', quoted by Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che', p. 512.

in the early 1950s, a principal conflict underlying Iran's struggle with Britain and the United States was domestic, between Musaddiq and the shah. The conflict between US hegemony and Iranian anti-imperialism was rather reflected internally within Iran, the revolutionaries, both secular and religious, aligning themselves with the anti-imperialist camp, the monarchy casting itself as an imperial power in its own right as well as being essentially defined by its close albeit complex alignment with the West.

The Iranian revolutionary movement was the child of the 1970s. However, both the centrality of a discourse of decolonization/anti-imperialism, and the youth radicalization of the 1960s–1970s, in Iran and around the world, had their origins even earlier, in the transformations wrought by the Second World War and its aftermath.

The Second World War had dealt a death blow to old-style European imperialism, Britain and France ejected from the Middle East country by country, and the end of the war saw the emergence of a string of independent states across Asia. But the Second World War had also unleashed the rising power of the United States, the only country to have emerged from the war strengthened. Gradually, and at first imperceptibly, the exhausted European empires were replaced by the United States as the principal imperial power. From the 1950s, decolonization accelerated, often with support from the Soviet Union, acquiring its left-leaning and anti-American character along the way. Newly confident independent states across the Third World began to assert themselves more forcefully and collectively, first through the Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia in 1955, and subsequently through the Non-Aligned Movement, established in 1961, and the founding of the Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Tricontinental) at the meeting in Havana in 1966.

Between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s the advance of leftist and left-leaning nationalist movements seemed unstoppable, part of the unfolding of an inevitable march of historical progress. This march reached its high point in the 'revolutionary year' of 1968, the metropolitan-colonial symbiosis symbolized by the Vietnamese Tet offensive in January–February, and 'les événements' in Paris, the former colonial power in Vietnam, in May. In early 1968 the Vietnamese National Liberation Front had launched a series of attacks on South Vietnamese and US forces across the country, even penetrating the capital of South Vietnam, Saigon. Although a military failure, perhaps even because of it, Tet was an enormous propaganda victory and was celebrated around the world. A military failure, then, but a political

success, Tet was a turning point in the Vietnam war.[14] It forced the US president, Lyndon Johnson, to declare that there would be no further escalation of the war, that the US was ready to begin negotiations and that he himself would not seek re-election.

The Tet offensive came only a few months after the dramatic emergence onto the global stage of the other iconic international issue of the period, that of Palestine. After the crushing defeat of the armies of the Arab states in June 1967 in the Six-Day War with Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) emerged as a radicalized liberation movement, an umbrella organization for Yasser Arafat's Fatah and the smaller guerrilla groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Popular Front immediately embarked on a spectacular series of guerrilla attacks, especially aircraft hijackings, designed to capture the world's attention. The Palestinians launched simultaneously a propaganda offensive directed at the radical younger generation, the Palestinian students' organization calling on students from around the world to attend the Palestine Students' Congress, held in Amman, Jordan, between 2 and 6 September 1970, just as the confrontation between the Jordanian regime and the Palestinians was reaching the climax of Black September.[15]

The Palestine revolution, based in the refugee camps of Jordan and Lebanon, became a key site of radicalization for a younger generation pursuing world revolution against imperialism (i.e. the United States), the reactionary Arab regimes and Israel itself, the latter increasingly identified as an instrument of global counter-revolution. The Palestinian refugee camps became a crossroads and meeting point for Middle Eastern and Western radical youth. Large numbers of activists, keen to learn about the political dimensions of the Palestinian struggle and to offer solidarity, visited the Palestinian camps in the 1970s. More than this, however, for Iranian revolutionaries, as well as for other nascent militant groups around the world, notably the German Red Army Fraction and the Japanese Red Army, the Palestinian camps also offered military training and sometimes even logistical assistance and supplies. Iranian revolutionaries specifically chose the Palestinian camps in Beirut as a suitable location for acquiring military expertise and for establishing and maintaining contacts with militant groups across the

[14] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, pp. 7–8.
[15] www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVA5N92SIKLZ8P82843NF3PMP66U-JORDAN-PALESTINE-STUDENTS-CONGRESS-DELEGATES-VISIT-HOSPITAL-AND/query/wildcard.

Arab world.[16] As early as December 1970, before the launch of the guerrilla campaign inside Iran, a group of Iranians had been arrested trying to cross the border with Iraq on their way to the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. Eighteen were subsequently put on trial before a military court, becoming famous as the 'Palestine Group' and attracting international attention.[17]

The two iconic struggles of the late 1960s and 1970s, Vietnam and Palestine, took place within a wider context of anti-imperialist victories. The period saw the rise of socialist-oriented regimes in Africa – in Ghana, Tanzania and Guinea – while military coups brought leftist army officers to power in Somalia and Sudan in 1969, and in Ethiopia in 1974. In 1975 revolutionary Portugal accepted the independence of its African colonies, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, and the United States ignominiously fled Vietnam. The next year the killing by South African police of hundreds of unarmed black urban youth in the township of Soweto delivered a huge psychological blow to apartheid, enhancing the prestige of the South African liberation movement, the African National Congress and its ally the South African Communist Party.

The global crisis lapped at Iran's shores. In 1968 the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) was established following a long conflict with the British colonial power, becoming a 'Cuba of the Middle East'.[18] In Dhofar, in neighbouring Oman, a rebellion launched by local leftists, encouraged by Yemen, against the British- and American-backed sultan became a Middle Eastern cause célèbre, analogous to the Spanish Civil War of 1930s' Europe, attracting militants from across the region, including Iran.[19] Indeed in the first half of the 1970s Dhofar constituted a site where the shah's army, openly allied with British imperial military power, and Iranian militants confronted each other directly for the first time.[20] The late 1960s and 1970s in Turkey saw a protracted struggle between the student- and trade union-based Left and the state, which was only ended by the military coup

---

[16] H. E. Chehabi, 'The Anti-Shah Opposition and Lebanon', in H. E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the last 500 years* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, in association with I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 180–98.

[17] Naghmeh Sohrabi, 'Remembering the Palestine Group: Global Activism, Friendship, and the Iranian Revolution', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 281–300.

[18] Matthiesen, 'Red Arabia', p. 6.

[19] Matthiesen, 'Red Arabia', p. 5.

[20] For the transnational and global character of the Dhofar revolution, see Abdel Razzaq Takriti, *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): Matthiesen, 'Red Arabia', See also Fred Halliday, *Arabia Without Sultans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

of 1980 and in 1978 the *Saur* (April) revolution brought the Afghan Communist Party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, to power in Kabul. As the Iranian revolution unfolded in 1978–9, it was accompanied by the overthrow of the US ally in Nicaragua, the dictator Somoza, by the Sandinistas.

Nor was revolutionary change confined to the 'Third World'. Les événements of May 1968 in Paris were quickly followed by the Italian *Autunno Caldo* (Hot Autumn) in 1969, with widespread strikes and factory occupations. In 1974 fascism in Portugal was overthrown, ending a dictatorship that had endured since the 1920s, closely followed by the fall of the military junta that had been in power in Greece since 1967, and the end of Franco's Spanish dictatorship following his death in 1975. All three countries then began a period of radical political and social conflict. Even in the United Kingdom, a massive civil rights movement in the Catholic ghettos of Belfast and Derry led to the creation of 'no-go zones' such as that of Free Derry, under the control of local Republican groups and forbidden to the so-called 'Crown forces' (the British army).

The global revolutionary Left, including and especially its Iranian component, drew several lessons from these victories and the manner of their achievement. One lesson of central importance was the confirmation of a belief in armed struggle, part of a wider rejection of the increasingly reformist strategies of traditional pro-Soviet communist parties, and even occasionally of the classical Marxist notion of the historical mission of the working class. The belief in armed struggle was tied to a notion of the mobilizing power of a moral victory, even where the military action had failed. The Tet offensive, the almost miraculous resurgence of Palestinian resistance after the disaster of 1967 and particularly the aircraft hijackings, and even the black youth of Soweto, all seemed to demonstrate the political value of revolutionary sacrifice, while the examples of the most highly valorized victories, Cuba, Vietnam, Algeria, illustrated the capacity of militarily weak groups to triumph over massively stronger force by deploying a strategy of asymmetrical warfare, specifically the use of rural or urban guerrilla tactics. These conclusions provided both strategy and tactics for an impatient younger generation and freed it from reliance on a working class that showed little appetite for fulfilling the historical role allotted to it by classical Marxism, where levels of socio-economic development meant that a proletariat hardly existed in significant numbers, or, as in the case of Iran, where the level of political repression was such that organizing among workers was a political impossibility. The turn to armed struggle was confirmed in 1968 by the PLO's new charter which declared that

'armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine'.[21] These conclusions found internationally acclaimed artistic endorsement in films such as Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) and Costa-Gavras' *State of Siege* (1972).

Of course, neither the theory nor the practice of guerrilla warfare was an invention of the late 1960s, nor had the strategy always been confined to the Third World. For Europeans, partisan and resistance activity during the Second World War was still a powerful memory in the 1960s and 1970s and was constantly reiterated and romanticized in popular culture and especially film. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw an extraordinarily widespread resort to this strategy by groups in very different historical and political environments, but themselves very similar in class and educational background. In February 1971, Iranian guerrilla groups launched their war against the shah when the Fadaiyan-i Khalq attacked a gendarmerie post in the village of Siyahkal. This attack, like others elsewhere, was a military failure, all the guerrillas were caught and most killed, but it was a propaganda victory, signalling the beginning of a concerted armed revolutionary campaign against the monarchy.[22]

Youth and Revolution in Iran

Iranian oppositional movements shared not only the politics and ideology but also the sociology of the global Left of that decade. The Iranian resort to guerrilla warfare arose from exactly the same conditions that were producing the proliferation of such groups around the world. These conditions included particularly a highly educated, discontented but hugely optimistic and frustrated middle and lower middle-class youth, discredited orthodox communist parties and a rapidly accelerating global circulation of people and ideas.

In the years after the Second World War in Europe and the United States a younger generation had grown up that benefited from the social peace, free education, full employment and relative prosperity resulting from the need to stabilize Western countries in an environment dominated by the Cold War with the Soviet Union. These years also saw, in particular,

---

[21] *The Palestine Charter*, The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School. Available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/plocov.asp.

[22] See Peyman Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010); *A Rebel's Journey: Mostafa Sho'aiyan and Revolutionary Theory in Iran* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2019).

an 'educational revolution'. Across the world, in both post-war Europe and the United States and in the Third World, a massive expansion in tertiary education took place. In Italy and West Germany, for example, student numbers almost doubled during the 1960s, reaching one million in West Germany by 1979.[23] Not only were there more students, but their class origin was more diverse. Although the number from truly working-class backgrounds remained small, the proportion from the lower middle classes, from families without a tradition of university attendance, increased significantly. Bernadette Devlin (McAliskey), a prominent member of the student-led civil rights organization in Northern Ireland, People's Democracy, and then the youngest and most radical woman ever elected to the Westminster parliament, has described in her memoir the seismic shift in individual and collective consciousness caused by the arrival at university of a generation of young people from a community and class hitherto excluded.[24] Iran shared in many of these developments, including better employment opportunities, especially in the new state bureaucracies, and real if limited social mobility and rising living standards. Most significant, however, was the massive expansion of educational institutions and a corresponding increase in access to them for students outside the old and new elites.[25]

This was the generation that abandoned the traditional parties of the Left, especially the communist parties, and which produced the youth radicalization and student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and later the cadre for the armed struggle. Starting in the mid-1960s, student activism had rapidly grown into a global phenomenon of considerable significance. Beginning with complaints relating to the university system itself, which could hardly cope with the huge influx of numbers, it rapidly became politicized, critical more generally of the society which it inhabited and drawn into wider struggles. Students were at the forefront of many of the radical upheavals of the period, across Europe, in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and West Germany, in Japan, throughout Latin America and in Africa, students a leading element in the overthrow of the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie. A few examples: student discontent had sparked off *les événements* in Paris, in Italy the *autunno caldo* had been preceded and triggered by a wave of revolts at Italian universities. In 1973 the Greek military junta was

---

[23] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, p. 16.
[24] Bernadette Devlin, *The Price of My Soul* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).
[25] The explosion in Iranian student numbers can be seen clearly in tables provided by David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

challenged by a series of student demonstrations at the University of Athens and the Athens Polytechnic School, which drew in thousands of other opponents of the regime and which acted as a catalyst for the overthrow of the junta.[26] In Spain by 1975 the universities were hotbeds of opposition to Francoism. In Northern Ireland, even the strongly Loyalist Queen's university, newly accessible to young people from the Catholic community, nurtured the civil rights movement.

Iranian students both inside the country and abroad participated fully in this global wave. Iranian universities had for decades functioned as sites of oppositional politics, in the years of the oil nationalization crisis of the early 1950s sheltering supporters of the Tudeh Party and of the left wing of the National Front.[27] In 1967–8 Iranian universities joined universities around the world, experiencing months of strikes with two students killed and hundreds expelled, arrested or conscripted into the army.[28] But the crowning achievement of Iranian student activism in the 1960s was the formation of the Confederation of Iranian Students/National Union (CISNU). This created an organized student movement, 'the longest-lasting and most effective' of all such movements of the Third World in that period, and gave the younger generation a powerful voice in the opposition to the shah but also within a wide range of Western radical youth movements.[29] The impact of the contact between Iranian students abroad and local radical movements was particularly strong owing to the sheer numbers involved. It has been estimated that in the 1970s about half of all Iranian students studied abroad, by 1979 50,000 Iranian students located in the United States alone.[30]

The student and youth radicalization everywhere peopled a proliferation of political organizations to the Left of, and often in bitter conflict with, pro-Soviet communist parties. Meanwhile, many national communist parties themselves continued on their reformist trajectories, their links with the Soviet Union, itself ever more conservative, weakening. Although the 1970s saw many communist parties, especially in southern Europe, at the height of their post-war electoral strength, they had largely lost the younger generation of the

[26] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, p. 44.
[27] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', p. 444. For a fuller study of the Iranian student movement and the Confederation of Iranian Students, see Afshin Matin-asgari, *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002). See also Matthew K. Shannon, *Losing Hearts and Minds: America-Iranian Relations and International Education during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
[28] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', p. 446.
[29] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', p. 443.
[30] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', footnote 6, p. 455.

intelligentsia. Although the specific reasons for this disillusionment with orthodox pro-Soviet communist parties varied from country to country, it everywhere produced the same result, the rise of a New Left committed to a radicalism which the communist parties were believed to have abandoned either because of their subordination to the diplomatic interests of the Soviet Union or their conversion into reformist 'Eurocommunist' national parties.

The eclipse of traditional communist parties by the New Left in the 1970s had its origins in the recent past. By the end of the Second World War, the part played by the Soviet Union in defeating fascism, and especially its heroic defence of Stalingrad, and the role of communist parties in leading popular mobilizations and partisan resistance against occupation by the Germans, Italians and Japanese, had enormously enhanced the prestige of the Left. This was strikingly reflected in huge increases in membership.[31] In China, the Communist Party took power in 1949 and Vietnam began its struggle against first French, then American imperialism. Elsewhere, however, national communist parties found themselves obliged to subordinate their own strategies to the diplomatic interests of the Soviet Union, the latter's primary, and sometimes only, objective first to preserve its wartime alliance with the United States and, when this failed and the Cold War began in earnest, to protect itself from attack. In relentless pursuit of this objective, the Soviet Union put immense pressure on communist parties to curb the radical aspirations and enthusiasms of their members and sympathizers in the interests of a defensive strategy.[32]

In Iran, a fragile Communist Party had been born in 1920, joined the Comintern almost immediately and found itself in a similar position to communist parties around the world and following a similar trajectory. The foundation, life and demise of the Iranian Communist Party/ Tudeh, its birth in the context of the revolutionary upheavals of the years 1917–21, its integration into an interwar global communist movement organized in the Comintern and its adoption under Soviet tutelage of the strategy of the Popular Front in the 1940s and early 1950s exactly replicated the history of communist parties around the world.

By the 1930s the infant Iranian Communist Party had been extinguished by twin assaults, repression both in Iran and in exile, in the

---

[31] The Chinese Communist Party, for example, which had numbered 40,000 in 1937, had 2,700,000 members by 1947. The Italian Communist Party exploded from 5,000 in 1943 to two million in 1946. Fernando Claudin, *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), p. 308.

[32] Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, pp. 316–72.

Soviet Union of the purges.[33] After 1941 and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, however, the Iranian Left experienced a renaissance, and the Tudeh Party was established with Soviet assistance.[34] The party flourished, initially under the protection of the Soviet forces occupying the north of the country, later spreading to the British zone and especially the oil fields. Its membership grew rapidly, and the party established solid bases among the intelligentsia and among the embryonic proletariat working in the British-owned oil industry.[35] By 1946 it had branches in every major urban centre, occupied three posts in the cabinet and had six members of parliament. It was a major power in the oil fields where it led a series of strikes.[36]

The Tudeh Party, having in its early years benefited from the protection of the Soviet Union, now began to suffer from the burden of Soviet imperatives. In 1945–6 the Tudeh was first obliged to support the Soviet demand for an oil concession in the north of the country, at a time when opposition to the British oil concession in the south was burgeoning, and Soviet sponsorship of two autonomist movements in the provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan then profoundly alienated nationalist sentiment. The shah's government took the opportunity to crack down on the Tudeh, which was further weakened when in 1948 a splinter group which became known as the Third Force split owing to its dissatisfaction with the developing Stalinism of the party. Most disastrous, however, was the Tudeh's lukewarm support for the oil nationalization movement of 1951–3, its lack of enthusiasm deriving from Soviet suspicions about Prime Minister Muhammad Musaddiq's possible pro-American leanings. The Tudeh was, after the coup of 1953, particularly criticized for its failure to mobilize its network within the army. Support collapsed and many would later cite this as their specific reason for abandoning the party.[37] The coup destroyed the organization

---

[33] Touraj Atabaki, 'Incommodious Hosts, Invidious Guests: The Life and Times of Iranian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union, 1921–1939', Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries*, pp. 147–64.

[34] Sepehr Zabih, 'Communism ii. In Persia from 1941 to 1953', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. vi, fasc. 1, pp. 102–5. Cosroe Chaqueri, 'Did the Soviets Play a Role in Founding the Tudeh Party in Iran?', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1999, pp. 497–528.

[35] It was soon able to claim perhaps 50,000 members and 100,000 affiliated supporters while as many as 300,000 workers gave their allegiance to its trade union organization, the Central United Council of Workers and Toilers. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 108.

[36] Touraj Atabaki, 'Chronicle of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', Karl Heinz Roth (ed.), *On the Road to Global Labour History: A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 93–128.

[37] For an Iranian Leftist critique of the record of the Tudeh Party, see Yassamine Mather, 'Iran's Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals', *Critique*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2011, pp. 611–27.

of the Tudeh Party in Iran although it survived underground and in exile, beginning to make anti-government broadcasts from the later 1950s from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Bulgaria and publishing a newspaper. As relations between the shah and the Soviet Union improved from the mid-1960s, it became ever more docile.

The Tudeh had found itself, like communist parties elsewhere, obliged to curb the militancy of its own members and to subordinate its own strategy to the needs of its Soviet patron.[38] It was indeed even less able to assert itself than stronger, more self-confident parties elsewhere. Born in 1942, with Soviet assistance, and initially made up of survivors of the pre-war Left in Iran, it was part of the tradition of the Popular anti-fascist Front, the pre-war policy of communist parties in Europe, which was revived in 1941 after the German attack on the Soviet Union. Its purpose was to assist the prosecution of the war effort by allying itself with and bolstering those elements interested for whatever reason in an Allied victory. It did not develop out of a revolutionary upsurge, it lacked any perspective of actually taking power, either in 1944–6 or in the early 1950s, and certainly not in 1979, and it was always unable to escape its dependence on its Soviet mentors.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Tudeh Party's predicament was produced by a specific immediate political configuration, the oil nationalization crisis, but ultimately similar underlying causes that were experienced by communist parties around the world, eventually producing similarly a radicalized New Left. Its strategic choices between 1979 and 1982, when it was finally extinguished, were entirely in keeping, and can only be explained by, not specific Iranian circumstances, but by its own history as formed within the global movement of which it was a part.[39]

During the 1950s, the global pro-Soviet communist movement suffered serious damage. The first major split along national lines had occurred in 1948 when the Yugoslav Party under Tito refused to accept the subordination of its own interests to Soviet diplomacy and used the ideological, political and military strength of its wartime partisan

[38] Touraj Atabaki, 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and revolutions since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 298–323.

[39] The relationship between the Tudeh Party and the CPSU's international department has recently been the subject of a reconsideration. See Jeremy Friedman, 'The Enemy of My Enemy: The Soviet Union, East Germany, and the Iranian Tudeh Party's Support for Ayatollah Khomeini', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 20, no.2, 2018, pp.3–37. While rejecting the notion of blind obedience, this account makes clear the extent to which the Tudeh leadership shared the ideological positions common to the CPSU and communist parties around the world.

organization to seize power. This was followed by the much more serious Sino-Soviet split, which developed in the late 1950s, while Khrushev's revelations at the twentieth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 and the Hungarian uprising of the same year had led to further confusion and doubt.

The spreading disillusionment with pro-Soviet communist parties led everywhere to a search for new paths. The hope of new possibilities arising from the Sino-Soviet split, a fascination with the epic struggle in China led by Mao Tse Tung and the shifting of attention away from Europe to the Third World, led naturally to a vogue for Maoism.[40] In the 1960s certain elements on the Iranian Left followed a pattern by now well-established. A Maoist group, the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran (ROTPI), emerged out of a split from the Tudeh, just as similar pro-Chinese groups had split from communist parties elsewhere around the world.[41] Drawing inspiration from the successes in China, Vietnam and Cuba, and appealing especially to those disenchanted with the Tudeh itself and with the record of the Soviet Union in general, ROTPI drew up a blueprint for revolution in Iran based on the Chinese model, and came to the conclusion that to fight the shah's regime a communist vanguard must work among the peasants, create a people's army and surround the urban areas from rural bases. This strategy had been devised without any reference whatsoever to the actual conditions prevailing inside Iran which, unlike China, possessed neither a radicalized peasantry nor a weak state, and the ROTPI's arrival in the rural areas quickly ended in disaster. The ROTPI's dogmatism meant that it took not only its strategy but also its vocabulary directly from Chinese Maoism and its international adherents, calling the Tudeh a revisionist party and the Soviet Union a social imperialist state in which capitalism had been restored. Other small groups with Maoist tendencies also emerged during the 1960s. Notwithstanding the actual fate of the ROTPI, this ideological orientation became very strong, even hegemonic, in the Confederation of Iranian Students, by 1969 all five members of its secretariat were elected from Maoist factions.[42]

The popularity of Maoism indicated another trend, the development of a broad sympathy for the tactic of armed struggle and a tacit,

[40] See Julia Lovell, *Maoism: A Global History* (London: The Bodley Head, 2019).

[41] Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999); Stephanie Cronin, 'The Left in Iran: Illusion and Disillusion', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2000, pp. 231–43.

[42] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', p. 446.

unacknowledged, move away from the classical Marxist notion of the historical primacy of the urban working class. This development accelerated after the violent suppression of protests against the White Revolution in 1963. Perhaps a dozen tiny underground groups advocating armed struggle against the monarchy were formed during the later 1960s, most from former Tudeh members, but also including the Islamic leftists of the Mujahidin-i Khalq and also the Kurdish Komala.[43] All drew on the intelligentsia for their cadres and all experienced harsh repression. By the beginning of the 1970s, the two remaining groups of significance were the Fadiyan and the Mujahidin-i Khalq. In 1971 a guerrilla campaign inside Iran began in earnest with the attack at Siyahkal and, in line with the strategy proposed by the Brazilian theoretician, Carlos Marighella, and reinforced by the failure of the Maoist approach of the ROTPI, moved from a rural to an urban focus. There followed a number of assassinations, bombings and bank robberies.

Perspectives drawn from the Latin American experience of those years were of immense importance to Iranian revolutionaries. The cult of Che Guevara was as strong among Iranians as elsewhere, but the less well-known Carlos Marighella was of greater ideological impact as the inspiration for the global New Left's turn to urban guerrilla warfare in the early 1970s. Marighella's redirecting of guerrilla operations away from the rural areas, as advocated by Che Guevara, to the cities was a theoretical innovation of the greatest significance for the Iranian guerrilla groups and he became their principal authority.

The Iranians thus joined a truly global movement. By the late 1960s small groups devoted to armed struggle were most numerous in Latin America, and included the Chilean Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), the Bolivian National Revolutionary Army (ELN), the Tupamaros of Uruguay, Venezuela's Armed Forces of National Liberation, Peru's Revolutionary Left Movement, the Nicaraguan Sandinista National Liberation Front, The People's Revolutionary Army of Argentina and the Brazilian Revolutionary Movement of 8 October. The United States and Europe followed the same path. In the late 1960s Weathermen or the Weather Underground was formed in the United States, in 1970 Italian students founded the Red Brigades, and in the same year the Red Army Fraction emerged in Germany. In South Africa too the African National Congress (ANC)'s armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) had for several years been active in sabotage and other forms of guerrilla warfare. The Japanese Red Army was

---

[43] Torab Haqsenas, 'Communism iii. In Persia after 1953', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. vi, fasc. 1, pp. 105–12.

founded by Japanese radicals in 1971 in Lebanon and in 1972 carried out an attack on Lydda (Lod) airport in Israel under the guidance of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command. Even the pragmatic United Kingdom saw the Angry Brigade which, among other actions, in 1970 bombed the Miss World contest in London because it had accepted two entrants from apartheid South Africa, one representing the black population, the other the white. The strategy of armed struggle was also taken up by left-leaning nationalist groups including the Basques and Irish republicans.

Around the world, in Iran as elsewhere, the social composition of these guerrilla groups was very similar, as were the ideological sources on which they drew. Their personnel were drawn from a younger generation of the intelligentsia consciously rejecting the legacies of their parents. The foundational texts of these groups had been produced by the Latin American experience and given authority by success in Cuba. They included Che Guevara's *Guerrilla Warfare,* and especially its development into the theory of *foqismo* by Regis Debray as elaborated in *Revolution in the Revolution?*, and Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*. Indeed, as the popularity of these sources indicates, in terms of ideological impact on Iranian youth, Latin America, with its guerrilla groups and its Liberation theology, was at least as important as the United States and Europe.

These texts were immediately translated into Persian and widely circulated. Shorn of their complexity and sophistication, they were often reduced to a few simplified notions. These included the elevation of the role of a revolutionary vanguard, the *foco*, which might by its actions spark an uprising, and the corresponding relegation of the importance of the industrial working class.[44] *Foqismo* became what Edward Said has called a 'travelling theory' and was the inspiration for all the urban guerrilla groups of the 1970s, including those in Iran.[45] It was perfectly suited not only to the political but also to the emotional and psychological needs of the most radical elements of the youth and student Left. It rationalized an immediate and audacious activism, sidelined the difficult reality of educating and mobilizing a reluctant working class where Communist Party reformism was often securely established, and also gave the intelligentsia itself a role of primary importance, offering a solution to the theoretical problem presented by the middle-class composition of the radical Left groups. *Foqismo* was

[44] For a discussion of these theories, see Presthold, 'Resurrecting Che'.
[45] Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 226–47.

theorized and applied to the Iranian experience most fully by militants of the Fadaiyan-i Khalq, in publications such as Amir Parviz Puyan's 'The Necessity of the Armed Struggle and the Refutation of the Survival Theory' and Masud Ahmadzadah's 'Armed Struggle: Both Strategy and Tactic'.[46]

In wrestling with the theoretical problem presented by the class origin of the revolutionaries, the Fadaiyan echoed a much wider debate taking place among the radical Left, which had universally failed to make a significant impact, politically, organizationally or ideologically, on the big battalions of the industrial working class. The Iranian Left never went as far as some elements of the Western New Left that, under the influence of theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, argued that the working class itself, sedated by consumerism, had become a conservative force. But the most significant true proletariat in Iran, in the oil industry, was largely closed by state repression to Fadaiyan penetration. The Iranian Left looked in another direction. In certain contexts elsewhere the radical Left, including the guerrilla groups, had successfully found a social base in marginalized communities, the Palestinians in the refugee camps, the ANC in the South African townships, the Irish Republicans in the Catholic ghettos of Belfast and Derry. This success, and the sustained support that the radical groups received from these environments, further shifted attention away from the working class. In Iran, the Fadaiyan turned their attention to a milieu possibly more receptive than the relatively well-paid oil workers, the labouring poor of the shanty towns which had grown up on the peripheries of the major cities since the White revolution's land reforms and the oil boom. This milieu, however, turned out to be more readily hegemonized by religious forces. By the time of the revolutionary upsurge, it was not the Left but Khomeini who had won over the slums which eventually provided the shock troops of the post-revolutionary Islamic republic.

Iranian Revolutionaries and the World

The transnational and global character of the Iranian Left and its adherence to the concept of the world revolution led naturally to an emphasis on the importance of fostering solidarity in the 'First World'. The resulting hostility in Europe and the United States to the shah's government was so powerful that it became a key factor in demoralizing both the shah himself and his circle of supporters inside Iran as well as

---

[46] Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrrrilla Odyssey*.

in the West. The strategy of engaging with sympathetic opinion in the West was not new. On the contrary, earlier oppositional discourse and political activity of all kinds had been shaped by interactions with the wider world and had drawn sustenance from sympathetic opinion in the imperial metropolises. As the Iranian economy became integrated into international trade and financial systems, and transport, communications and print culture expanded, the circulation of ideas and the actual movement of people, emigration, exile and the birth of a diaspora, had grown ever more important in the spread of dissent. This was true across the secular-religious spectrum. The role of migration was instrumental in the diffusion of early ideas and practices of social democracy inside Iran while formal and informal religious networks, based in the shrine cities of southern Iraq and in Lebanon, had perennially provided a safe haven for clerics and religious students at risk of incurring Tehran's displeasure.

In the early twentieth century Iranian reformers had joined with progressive forces in Britain, liberals and socialist and Irish nationalist circles, in Western Europe and in Russia, in support of constitutionalism and to oppose British and Russian imperialism, even obtaining a letter of support from Maxim Gorky.[47] The international connections of Iranian constitutionalism and its ability to mobilize public opinion, especially through the press, were indeed astonishing.[48] In their construction of such an alliance, Iranian reformers and their friends in the West were pioneers of a strategy that was to become commonplace later in the twentieth century, evident in, for example, the Vietnam Solidarity Campaigns, and strongly characteristic of the Iranian campaign which emerged alongside the revolutionary movement from 1977.

In the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, the transnational activism of the Iranian opposition was drawing on an old tradition. Its scale, however, was greater than ever. As the shah's repression increased, and more and more opponents fled into exile, so their presence in global discourses and movements became more substantial. Waves of emigration took place

---

[47] Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism and Dissent* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), p. 316; 'Iranian Nationalism and Global Solidarity Networks 1906–1918: Internationalism, Transnationalism, Globalization, and Nationalist Cosmopolitanism', Chehabi, Jafari and Jefroudi (eds.), *Iran in the Middle East*, pp. 77–119.

[48] See Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution* and 'Iranian Nationalism and Global Solidarity Networks', for a very full discussion. For the constitutional revolution's transnational military support see, for example, Iago Gocheleishvili, 'Georgian Sources on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905–1911', Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters*, pp. 207–30.

after the coup of 1953, and again after the crushing of the protests against the White Revolution in 1963, exile groups publishing translations of key texts, of Guevara, Debray and Marighella, and newspapers of their own, and making radio broadcasts, sometimes with the help of the Soviet Union, China or Iraq. Voluntary and temporary migration, especially of students, also mushroomed, many eventually returning after a period of contact with radical activists, both Iranian and European/American, in the West. Everywhere Iranians abroad integrated themselves into local radical movements with which they were in natural sympathy, formed solidarity groups which aimed at delegitimizing the shah's regime in the eyes of Western public opinion, and also sometimes joined ongoing revolutionary conflicts, with the Palestinians in Lebanon and with the Dhofaris in the Gulf state of Oman.

The Iranian diaspora, especially as organized in the Confederation of Iranian Students, began to exert a significant impact on wider Western public opinion beyond the student and radical Left milieux. In 1965 the confederation ran a successful campaign to defend five former members accused of plotting to assassinate the shah, gaining support from Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, intellectuals such as Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre, from European parliamentary opinion and the major newspapers.[49] In 1970–1 the Confederation of Iranian Students again energetically alerted Western public opinion about the arrest, torture and trial of the Palestine Group.[50] In the second half of the 1970s, as the revolutionary movement emerged, the capacity of Iranian exiles to work with local political and opinion-forming circles in Europe and the United States quickly proved its worth. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI), composed of a handful of young Iranians and their British sympathizers, ran an influential and effective propaganda campaign. CARI was chaired by a Labour MP, William Wilson, and had the energetic support of other left-wing MPs, notably Stan Newens, and trade unionists.[51] Wilson himself was a member of the Campaign for the Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran. CARI produced a series of bulletins and press reports from late 1976 which, together with the Amnesty International report of November 1976, provided material to British sympathizers in parliament and the press. This agitation, together with the reporting from Tehran

[49] Nasrabadi and Matin-asgari, 'The Iranian Student Movement', p. 446.
[50] Sohrabi, 'Remembering the Palestine Group', p. 289.
[51] Savka Andic, 'Britain and Revolutionary Iran 1906–1909 and 1976–1979: A Comparative Study', DPhil, University of Oxford (2016), pp. 165–96, 226–53.

in the *Guardian* newspaper by Liz Thurgood, quickly began to shape wider views on the situation in Iran. In 1977–8 student unions and trades councils passed resolutions condemning the shah's repression and the Labour Party National Executive Committee and the wider membership was hotly at odds with the pro-shah policy of the Labour government and its Foreign Secretary David Owen.[52] Between 1977 and 1979 this coalition of Iranians and their Western sympathizers succeeded in making Iran one of the great causes of the international Left, in a genealogy that stretched back through Vietnam and South Africa to Spain in the 1930s.

Transitions: The Decline of the Left and the Rise of Religious Politics

By the latter years of the 1970s there was still much to reinforce the impression that politics around the world was continuing on the trajectory dominant during the decades since the Second World War, with the ascendancy of leftist and left-leaning nationalist discourses, movements and governments. Below the radar, however, signs of a fundamental shift were accumulating. Right-wing forces, always active although not dominant, began to gain confidence and greater traction.

In fact, this period saw the emergence and rise of a sustained and ultimately successful challenge to the post-war 'golden age' consensus of reconstruction, economic growth and the welfare state.[53] By the mid-1970s economic difficulties in both the West and the Third World were beginning to provide greater scope for advocates of a doctrinal neo-liberalism based on the uncontrolled free market. Such advocates were entirely unconstrained by the desire for social peace which had dominated Western elites since the expansion of Soviet power in Europe resulting from the Second World War. Indeed, they welcomed the opportunity to challenge this social peace which seemed to have only produced an ever more radical leftism. Their determination remained undimmed despite the fact that the initial neo-liberal experiments, so-called 'shock treatments', in Latin America, most notably Chile, had been an economic failure, a failure, moreover, that had had to be imposed by massive state repression. Neo-liberalism was aggressively promoted by lobbies and think tanks in the United States and by intellectuals and

---

[52] Andic, 'Britain and Revolutionary Iran'. See also Vittorio Felci, '"A Latter-Day Hitler": Anti-Shah Activism and British Policy towards Iran, 1974–6', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 515–35.

[53] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, p. 117.

business spokespeople in Europe, part of a 'web of transatlantic networks and organizations'.[54] This trend received elite endorsement when two of its most important theoreticians received the Nobel prize for Economics, Friedrich von Hayek, in 1974, and Milton Friedman in 1976. By 1979 this newly hegemonic neo-liberalism was powerful enough to secure electoral success for both Reagan in the United States and Thatcher in the United Kingdom.

The decisive significance of these victories, ushering in a new historical period, was not, however, apparent at the time, nor were the victories secured without considerable accompanying social and economic strife. Indeed, the late 1970s has been described as a time of confrontation, deadlock and ungovernability as the Left fought a rear-guard action against the rising forces.[55] Yet certainly the late 1970s saw the Left everywhere entering into a period of decline. Social democrats, socialists and communists all saw their electoral base, which had peaked only a few years earlier, begin to weaken. The radical Left in particular had, by the mid-1970s, reached a political, ideological and organizational crisis. Groups to the left of the communist parties such as the Italian *Lotta Continua* experienced a decline in their mass base and had begun to split, whether as a cause or consequence of the adoption by small *foqos* of urban guerrilla tactics is unclear. In any case, especially in West Germany and Italy urban warfare produced a wave of repressive legislation. This culminated in the 'German Autumn' of 1977, with arrests and killings by the police and the apparent suicides in prison of leading members of the Red Army Fraction. In Italy, a so-called strategy of tension, a 'dirty war' between the Red Brigades and elements within the Italian state allied to neo-fascists, dragged on. The European crisis echoed that already experienced by urban guerrilla groups in Latin America, so much the inspiration for the rest of the world. Across Latin America, *Foquista* guerrilla groups based in the cities found themselves isolated from their potential bases, among the rural poor and the urban working class and even students, and at the mercy of newly energized state security forces reliant on ever greater counter-insurgency assistance from the United States coordinated through the infamous Operation Condor.[56]

This crisis affected the Iranian guerrilla groups in similar ways. The Fadaiyan, the closest in political and ideological terms to other such groups around the world, had by 1976 been almost totally eradicated by

[54] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, p. 155.
[55] Hellema, *Radicalism, Reform and Crisis*, pp. 166–90.
[56] Prestholdt, 'Resurrecting Che', p. 525.

arrests, torture imprisonment and assassination.[57] The evident failure of the strategy of armed struggle then produced a period of ideological disorientation and political paralysis from which the organization only emerged during the revolutionary upsurge of 1977–9.[58]

As the Left entered this period of crisis, receding from the high-water mark of its influence, groups with a religious orientation began to occupy the space created, especially but by no means only in the Middle East. The United States saw the rise of socially and even fiscally conservative Evangelical movements, in 1979 Jerry Falwell founding what was to become a powerful pro-Reagan, pro-Republican organization, the Moral Majority. In May 1977 in Israel the Labour Party, which had formed the government since the creation of the state in 1948, suffered a crushing defeat by the religious and conservative, pro-settler and neo-liberal Likud party, secular Labour Zionism never to regain its former dominance.

Until the 1970s, the twentieth century, including in the Middle East, had been dominated by secular ideologies. Naturally, however, the engagement of theologians and lay intellectuals with social and political issues had continued. The resulting ideologies and theologies, reflecting the spirit of the times, were themselves often of a leftist orientation, blending theology with a concern for the poor and oppressed. The most famous of these was Catholic Liberation theology, developed in Latin America in the 1960s, becoming a major social and political force across the continent and most famously exemplified by the Catholic priest Camilo Torres who joined the guerrillas of the Columbian National Liberation Army (ELN) and was killed in combat against the Columbian army. For Torres, the theological perspectives of Liberation theology led directly to the taking up of arms in the fight for social justice. In Iran, a direct parallel to Catholic Liberation theology was developed by Ali Shariati whose elaboration of a theological framework for radical political activism, revolutionary and anti-imperialist, offered an immense attraction to Iranian youth.[59] As with Liberation theology, Shariati's formulations also led to the adoption of guerrilla tactics,

---

[57] Vahabzadeh, *A Guerrrilla Odyssey*, p. 37.

[58] Afshin Matin-asgari, 'Rāhi digar: Ravāyat-hā-i dar bud-o-bāsh-e Cherik-hā-ye fada'i-e khalq-e Irān', eds. Touraj Atabaki and Naser Mohajer, 2 vols (Berkeley, CA: Noghteh Publishers/Paris: International Institute of Social History, 2017), *Iranian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 5, 2018, pp. 805–9, p. 806.

[59] For Shariati see, *inter alia*, Ali Rahnema, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Sharia'ti* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998); Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008), pp. 102–46.

in this case by the 'Islamic Marxists' of the Mujahidin-i Khalq. For Shariati, the demonstration that his formulations were of purely and authentically Islamic origin was crucially important and there is no textual evidence indicating that he had studied the texts of Liberation theology or that he directly drew on it. Yet while in Paris it seems he was exposed to their ideas through the Catholic journal *L'Esprit*.[60] Indeed, so similar are Shariati's formulations to those of Liberation theology that they sometimes read like a direct transposition. In any case, given the controversial character of Liberation theology and its profound similarities with Shariati's own ideas, the interest of Iranian intellectuals in global ideological trends generally and the importance of Latin American politics in particular, it is hardly possible that during his years in Paris he remained outside its influence.

   The revolutionary, anti-imperialist Islam of Shariati was one strand of the religious politics that emerged so dramatically to occupy centre stage in Iran in the later 1970s, providing Khomeini himself with a vocabulary. At the same time, however, In Iran and across the Middle East, other varieties of political Islam, populist, conservative and fundamentalist, were also becoming more assertive. The struggle between Left and Right often merged into a battle between secular and religious. Secular governments such as that of Anwar Sadat in Egypt increasingly used Islamic groups to fight the Left, and conservative Muslim forces, notably the Shi'i ulama in Najaf, Khomeini's place of exile, found political Islam a useful tool in combating leftist influence.[61] Even the shah, having rid himself of Khomeni in the 1960s by exiling him to Iraq, tolerated and even encouraged the expansion of the institutions of the clerical establishment in his battle with secular forces.[62] At the very end of the 1970s very different iterations of a newly empowered radical Islam burst upon the world, with the Iranian revolution of 1977–9, the attack on the Grand Mosque in Mecca, 1979, and the assassination of Sadat in Egypt, 1981. While the Iranian revolution, incubated during the 1970s, still bore some imprint of its early leftist dimension, the latter two events, although their perpetrators were of plebeian origins, were completely devoid of any such traces.

---

[60] Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, p. 144.

[61] Hanna Batatu, 'Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah and al-Mujahidin', in Juan I. R. Cole and Nikki Keddie (eds.), *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 179–200.

[62] Mirsepassi, 'The Tragedy of the Iranian Left', p. 233. For the increasing appeal of Islamist discourses for the intelligentsia as the1970s wore on, see John Chalcraft, *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 421–32.

As these multifaceted conflicts illustrate, the late 1970s was a period of intense political conflict, temporary ungovernability and transition as Left and Right collided and the balance of forces shifted. It was into this context that the Iranian revolutionary movement was born. Each of the three principal characters, Khomeini, US President Carter and the shah, seemed to embody, in their separate ways, the contradictory character of the period. Khomeini himself, fully comprehending the appeal of the leftist discourse and the danger it represented to conservative Islamic forces, appropriated the lexicon of the Left and deployed it to extraordinarily powerful effect. Simultaneously making the novel slogan of a demand for an Islamic government central to the revolutionary movement, he was thus able to appeal to both the politically radical and the socially conservative, he himself remaining an enigmatic figure and his concrete political programme opaque. The United States under Carter, as it faced the revolution, was uncertain about the character of the emerging regime, an uncertainty that it shared with the rest of the world, and its foreign policy exhibited contradictory impulses. Symbolizing the deadlock of the late 1970s, Carter was unable to decide unambiguously between backing the shah or the opposition. His human rights rhetoric undermined the shah while failing to satisfy the opposition and his later offers of full support did nothing to assuage the shah's anxieties. The shah himself vacillated between repression and compromise, as fearful of US betrayal and of treachery from his own army officers and court officials as of the revolutionary movement.

By 1980 the United States had begun to recover from its post-Vietnam trauma, even Carter developing a more decisive hawkishness, and had launched a series of responses to its key enemies especially in the Third World. Together with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the latter's position transformed by the oil price rise of 1973 and now beginning to fund a global Salafi movement, the United States began to give military, financial, diplomatic and political support to the Afghan mujahidin fighting the Soviet-backed People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. It provided similar encouragement to the Contras aiming to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and to Angolans supported by South Africa and opposed to the leftist post-independence government backed by the Soviet Union and Cuban troops. 'Third Worldism' was in retreat for other reasons. Beyond this renewed American self-confidence, the international Left was shocked by the disaster that took place in Cambodia at the hands of the Khmer Rouge and demoralized by the outbreak of a number of armed conflicts between newly independent Third World countries and by their pervasive corruption and authoritarianism. In 1982 a symbolic and practical blow of great significance came with

the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the resulting expulsion of the PLO, the disarming of the Palestinians and the reestablishment of Lebanese government authority over the refugee camps.

In all three of the conflicts mentioned above, Afghanistan, Nicaragua and Angola, the United States, unwilling to commit its own troops after the disaster of Vietnam, decided upon a strategy of using proxy forces to fight its enemies. In 1980, after some half-hearted backing for coup attempts, the United States under President Reagan also adopted this strategy for Iran, now with Iraq as proxy, supporting the Gulf Arab sheikhdoms and Saudi Arabia which in their turn were bankrolling the Iraqi war effort. The Iran–Iraq War further contributed to the global Left's confusion and disillusionment, socialist Iraq, supported by the Soviet Union, now paid by the reactionary Arab Gulf states and the United States to wage war against revolutionary and anti-imperialist Iran. Inside Iran, this war provided Khomeini and his supporters with the opportunity to consolidate their position and finally rid themselves of any organized opposition, particularly from their rivals on the Left who had been the source of their discourse of the dispossessed.

Conclusion: The Revolution and the Islamic Republic

The radical intelligentsia of the 1970s, in Iran and internationally, was deeply imbued with the notion of historical progress, inevitable and irreversible. Indeed, the Left in particular was dominated by a belief in historical progress so profoundly embedded that it was scarcely ever explicitly articulated, let alone questioned. This belief was reinforced by the widespread dissemination of Marxist theories of historical development, according to which societies moved inexorably from lower to higher forms, primitive communism being superseded by the classical/slavery stage, followed by feudalism, capitalism and finally socialism. But it also flowed from a more general adherence to Enlightenment ideas.[63] This was a period when confidence in the future had not yet been displaced by post-modernism, before the hope represented by decolonization undermined by catastrophes such as in Cambodia, before the reversal in living standards in the West itself, with the high unemployment, austerity and economic insecurity consequent upon neo-liberalism.

---

[63] For the application of this theory to Iran, see Cronin, 'Introduction: Edward Said, Russian Orientalism and Soviet Iranology'; Abbas Vali, *Pre-capitalist Iran: A Theoretical History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).

It was in the 1970s still nowhere envisaged that an authentic popular uprising could produce an outcome that appeared to reverse the march of historical progress, to produce a reversion to atavistic forms of social and political organization. That millions of people would risk their lives in street protest in order to demand an authoritarian, sectarian or repressive regime was a notion that had it occurred to anyone would have been dismissed as nonsensical. Furthermore, neither Iran in particular, nor the world in general, had at that time any experience of radical political Islam in power. The Saudis represented an archaic and utterly reactionary form of government, while the Muslim Brothers were generally rather conservative in their political aspirations, preferring activities focused on the social and individual level. Certainly, Khomeini had elaborated the theory of *velayat-i faqih* (rule of the jurist) but in the late 1970s no one, including Khomeini himself, knew precisely what the slogan of an Islamic government might mean in practice.[64] The novelty of such notions cannot be overstated. Indeed, it was not only the Left who underestimated the political potential of Khomeini and his supporters but the monarchy itself and its supporters in Western academia. For decades, as part of the Pahlavi bid for hegemony, both inside Iran and abroad, the ulama had been largely erased from the history, marginalized and presented as an historical remnant of declining significance.[65]

In the 1970s the rhetoric, and also the realities, of revolution were everywhere. The generation of the 1970s possessed no experience of the manipulation of discontent by elite interests to produce regime change under the rubric of colour-coded uprising. Revolutions were simply authentic expressions of mass political opposition to the status quo and the desire for radical transformation on the political, economic and cultural levels. In Iran, as around the world, this generation was dazzled by the example of Russia in 1917. Archival footage of the Iranian revolution shows the population of Tehran conforming very closely to this script, almost as if they were being directed by Eisenstein. An urban uprising, unarmed demonstrators confronting tanks, mass desertions by solders to the crowds, the strikes, the establishment of workers' councils (*shuras*) and neighbourhood committees, the return of exiles, perhaps

[64] Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, p. 143.
[65] This was true of the 'modernization' theorists but also of the Left. Most notably, Fred Halliday's book, although published at the height of the revolution, barely mentioned the religious opposition. Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).

most noticeable of all the self-confidence of those controlling the streets contrasting with the uncertainty and weakness of the authorities.

The hegemony of the Russian model is important not just because of the Iranian performance of revolution but because it shaped theoretical understanding of the revolutionary process and determined the adoption of certain political strategies. It was taken for granted that the revolution might have to pass through stages, as had the Russian in 1917, the bourgeois-democratic stage under Kerensky giving way to the socialist stage. Indeed, Shahpour Bakhiyar, the shah's last prime minister, quickly became known as the Iranian Kerensky, but perhaps Khomeini himself was to play this part. The belief was widespread that the flight of the shah in early 1979 was the beginning, the first stage, in a revolutionary process which would culminate in the decisive victory of the Left, just as February 1917 had seen the tsar abdicate and October the Bolsheviks seize power. Khomeini was a figurehead, a caretaker, his aura of mystical other-worldliness seeming to remove him further from the milieu of day-to-day politics, his position transitional, the long-term survival and secure establishment of clerical rule unimaginable.[66]

For all these reasons, the risks and dangers of supporting the new clerical authorities remained opaque until it was too late. Revolutions have rarely produced democracies, at least in the short-run, and the Iranian revolution was no exception. Revolutions are made by coalitions temporarily united by common opposition to the state quo. They are usually followed, in quick succession, by civil wars and political terror, eventually producing strong states capable of establishing the hegemony of one strand within the revolutionary coalition. This was as true of Iran in the early 1980s as of Russia in 1917–21 and late eighteenth-century France. Between 1977 and the flight of the shah in early 1979 the revolutionary movement in Iran experienced relatively low casualties, but the years immediately following saw a struggle for power between the components of the former coalition and an explosion of violence. Eventually the best organized, coherent and ruthless element of the revolutionary coalition, that of Khomeini and his supporters, won and imposed itself on its opponents.

The resulting disillusionment was intense, partly as a result of the extravagance of the hopes raised, and has resulted for many participants in a rejection of the entire revolutionary movement, the emergence of

---

[66] For Khomeini's mystical leanings, see Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran*, pp. 141–2. A shared disbelief in the long-term viability of a clerical regime in the twentieth century was an important factor in the strategic discussions between the Tudeh Party and the CPSU. See Friedman, 'The Enemy of My Enemy', p. 8.

an apparently pathological regime condemning the revolution itself as pathological, its pathology hidden beneath a rhetoric of liberation. The revolution has thus been disowned. The depth and speed of disillusionment was extraordinary.[67] All revolutions have a utopian dimension and therefore all inevitably disappoint, some even betray. Iran after the revolution, however, lacked a honeymoon period of utopian promise while the new republic, under a leadership largely unknown to the wider world, never reached out to the global activists and engaged intellectuals who had played such an important part in undermining the monarchy. Revolutionary Iran's potential sympathizers around the world were rapidly disillusioned, dismayed by the socially conservative and politically repressive policies, notably against women and against the Kurds, of the new authorities. Its orientation to the Islamic, perhaps even only to the Shi'i world, where popular support was in any case silenced by local authoritarianisms, deprived it of international friends. The contrast with the new republic's contemporary, the revolutionary regime of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, is stark, the latter mobilizing its embassies to reach out energetically to sympathizers around the world, receiving visits by thousands of revolutionary tourists eager to defend the new government and to publicize its achievements.[68] The consequences of the Islamic republic's attitude became only too apparent in the early 1980s. While the American government's support for the Contras seeking to overthrow the Sandinista government was constrained by an effective anti-intervention campaign in the United States, Europe and indeed across the world, Iran faced the Iraqi invasion alone, sometimes making an ideological virtue of its isolation.

[67] For an exegesis see David Greason, 'Embracing Death: The Western Left and the Iranian Revolution, 1978–83', *Economy and Society*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2005, pp. 105–40; also Claudia Castiglioni, '"Anti-Imperialism of Fools"? The European Intellectual Left and the Iranian Revolution', in Roham Alvandi (ed.), *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and its Global Entanglements* (London: Gingko Library, 2018) pp. 220–59.

[68] Kim Christiaens and Idesbald Goddeeris, 'Beyond Western European Idealism: A Comparative Perspective on the Transnational Scope of Belgian Solidarity Movements with Nicaragua, Poland and South Africa in the 1980s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2015, pp. 632–55; Christine Hatzky and Jessica Stites Mor, 'Latin American Transnational Solidarities: Contexts and Critical Research Paradigms', *Journal of Latin American and Iberian Research*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, pp. 127–40; Christian Helm, '"The Sons of Marx Greet the Sons of Sandino": West German Solidarity Visitors to Nicaragua Sandinista', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, pp. 153–70; Hatzky and Stites Mor, 'Latin American Transnational Solidarities', pp. 153–70; Christian Helm, 'Booming Solidarity: Sandinista Nicaragua and the West German Solidarity movement in the 1980s', *European Revue of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 597–615.

The disillusionment of many Iranian revolutionaries was faster and deeper than that experienced in other situations elsewhere, reflecting the global retreat, even collapse, of the hopes of that generation around the world. Those who took part in the Russian revolution, including old Bolshevik victims of the purges and even Trotsky himself, expressed no nostalgia for the Tsar nor wished for his return. Similarly, the victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, whatever the vagaries of the following decades, produced no pining for the overthrown dictator, Somoza. Whatever the feelings of Jacobins and Republicans across Europe and beyond at Napoleon's crowning of himself as emperor, they did not reject the revolution itself but on the contrary longed for a reassertion of its principles.

The two revolutions to which the Iranian can be compared in scale, the French and the Russian, were pre-eminently global events, and had universalist aspirations.[69] This can be seen clearly in the two most iconic examples of revolutionary upheaval in the modern period. The French revolution, proceeding from that most universalist of ideologies, the Enlightenment, challenged and sometimes overthrew the status quo across Europe, from Ireland in the far west to Moscow in the east, and convulsed the Americas, contributing to the outbreak of the American War of Independence and producing most spectacularly the Black Jacobin republic of Haiti, the French Jacobins announcing their most ambitious, if short-lived, global emancipatory project with the National Convention decree of 4 February 1794 abolishing slavery in all French possessions. Nor was this a merely a reassertion, in revolutionary clothes, of an older imperialism. Across Europe and the Americas, French revolutionaries worked together with local radicals in the furtherance of a shared objective of local and global transformation. The global reach and universalist goals of the Russian revolution are even more obvious. Based on an ideology which also owed its sense of historical progress to the Enlightenment, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 offered itself as the harbinger and agent of world revolution, called for uprisings across the world, including the colonial world, renounced Russia's old tsarist-era privileges, and immediately devoted its attention and resources to the establishment of sister organizations in every country, and the coordination of their activities through the Comintern.

---

[69] See, for example, Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt and William Max Nelson (eds.), *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013); Stefan Rinke and Michael Wildt (eds.), *Revolutions and Counter-Revolutions: 1917 and its Aftermath from a Global Perspective* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2017). For a theoretical discussion, see Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999).

The possibility that post-revolutionary Iran might follow this path was, however, closed off by the character of the faction which seized power and, equally, by the changing nature of the global context. Radical Islamic elements, known as the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line, made some efforts at first to uphold the Leftist tradition of international solidarity, organizing a conference in Tehran in early 1980 described as the first gathering of the world's liberation movements.[70] But the Islamic republic made no appeals for global solidarity similar to those of the Sandinistas and the 1980s was, in any case, becoming an unwelcoming decade for such appeals. Its slogans, such as 'Every day is Ashura and every land is Karbala', although emotionally resonant and powerful to religious Shias, were meaningless beyond that milieu. Of course, the long-term construction of links to Shi'i groups across the Middle East, especially in Lebanon and Iraq, has been and still is of immense importance to Iran's regional influence, and were based on older transnational networks, but these links, at least after 1979, connoted a relationship of patronage rather than solidarity. Although the Iranian revolution destroyed an autocratic monarchy, as did the French and Russian, the post-revolutionary republic was never presented nor presented itself in the light of secular world historical progress. Significantly, the figure of Khomeini himself, in contrast to other revolutionaries, Lenin most notably, failed to seek or to find even the mildest apologia beyond his own small circle of supporters.[71]

The early 1980s saw the political and even physical annihilation of the Left in Iran, achieved only by internal repression justified by the necessities of total war with Iraq, while from the late 1980s the authorities made attempts to adopt the neo-liberal economic policies then all the rage around the world. Yet similar results, although secured by less traumatic means, became visible around the world. Everywhere the Left declined, a failing Eurocommunist experiment ending with the disappearance of communist parties following the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the far left intelligentsia vanished into its 'long march through the institutions'.[72] The Third World itself and the Non-Aligned Movement disintegrated, post-colonial elites across Asia and

---

[70] See www.lib.uchicago.edu/ead/pdf/meposters-0002-049.pdf.

[71] For a recent collection of academic perspectives on Khomeini, see Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[72] 'The long march through the institutions' summarized a Gramscian strategy formulated by Rudi Dutschke to accumulate power by incrementally infiltrating the state. The expression references the long march of the Chinese communists under Mao Tse Tung.

Africa enthusiastically embracing the financial opportunities offered by the strategies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank where the United States and its neo-liberal agenda were dominant. In Iran, Islamist revolutionaries became reformers, the authorities adopted policies of privatization and the language of business efficiency, producing especially among younger generations an individualism and consumerism far from the vaunted ideals of the revolution.

Yet the Islamic Republic of Iran still bears the traces of the contradictory context into which it was born. The global crisis of the 1970s produced the revolution and gave it its particular character, but this crisis has still not finally been resolved in Iran, as it has been resolved elsewhere, by the decisive victory of economic and financial globalization under US leadership. The ideological origins of the republic may still be perceived in the rhetoric which accompanies its defiance of the new United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia axis and in its support for opposition movements in the Middle East. In the Islamic republic, radical anti-imperialist rhetoric survives in more or less peaceful co-existence with neo-liberalism.

2 Bread and Justice in Qajar Iran

The Moral Economy, the Free Market and the Hungry Poor

In 1971, E. P. Thompson published a seminal article on eighteenth-century English bread riots which was to become a foundational text for the study of such protests and which was, furthermore, to exercise a profound influence on the understanding of crowd politics in general across wide geographical areas and chronological periods. Challenging older elite notions of the irrationality, illegitimacy and even criminality of the 'mob', in this article Thompson situated popular direct action in times of food crises within a very specific historical, economic and, most importantly, cultural, context.[1] This context, he argued, produced a deeply held adhesion among the poor to the concept of a 'moral economy' and an equally profound rejection of the free market as enshrined in the new political economy of the late eighteenth century, theorized most famously by Adam Smith.[2]

This chapter returns to Thompson's original text in order to assess whether and to what extent his paradigm may shed light on bread riots in Iran.[3] In particular, it examines the evidence that supports the notion

---

[1] Thompson, 'The Moral Economy', see also *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (London: Merlin Press, 1991); *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1968). For a later reassessment, see Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth (eds.), *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict, and Authority* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[2] Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was first published in 1776.

[3] The relevance of the work of the British Marxist historians, particularly E. P. Thompson and George Rudé, to the study of the Iranian crowd was first noted by Ervand Abrahamian, 'The Crowd in Iranian Politics, 1905–1953', *Past and Present*, vol. 41, 1968, pp. 184–210; 'The Crowd in the Persian Revolution', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1969, pp. 128–50. The early adoption of this approach had little sequel until it was again taken up by Stephanie Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran: The Tehran Crowd and the Rise of Riza Khan 1921–1925', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2005, pp. 167–201. The almost simultaneous publication by Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in 19th-Century Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), constituted a ground-breaking study of popular politics in Iran over the nineteenth century. Cronin again dealt with crowd politics with 'Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class: the 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no.5,

2010, pp. 699–732. Ervand Abrahamian returned to the study of the crowd with 'The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution', *Radical History Review*, no. 105, 2009, pp. 13–38.

Interpretations of bread riots based broadly on Thompson's paradigm have now appeared for various countries of the Middle East. These include James P. Grehan, *Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Damascus* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011) and 'Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, 2007, pp. 215–36; Boaz Shoshan, 'Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1350–1517', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1980, pp. 459–78; Amina Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: The America University in Cairo Press, 2017); Till Grallert, 'Urban Food Riots in late Ottoman *Bilad al-Sham* as a "Repertoire of Contention"', in Stephanie Cronin, *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The Dangerous Classes since 1800* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2020), pp. 157–76.

This work followed the rather earlier application of Thompson's paradigm to other areas of the non-European world, especially India and China, where subaltern social history was more developed. For some of this literature see Stephanie Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 284–5.

The first significant efforts to locate bread protests within a discussion of popular politics in Qajar Iran were by Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, pp. 100–1 and Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot', pp. 193–6. Bread riots in the early Pahlavi period and the Second World War are discussed by Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran', and Stephen L. McFarland, 'Anatomy of an Iranian Political Crowd: The Tehran Bread Riot of December 1942', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1985, pp. 51–65. Willem Floor, *History of Bread in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2015), also provides some very useful accounts of bread protests in a slightly different context. Ranin Kazemi's unpublished PhD dissertation, 'Neither Indians nor Egyptians:' Social Protest and Islamic Populism in the Making of the Tobacco Movement in Iran, 1850–1891, Yale University (2012), has a chapter which looks at food protests in Tabriz, 1856–7, and Tehran, 1860–1. Sections of this dissertation have been published as Kazemi's 'Of Diet and Profit: On the Question of Subsistence Crises in Nineteenth-Century Iran', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2016, pp. 335–58; 'The Black Winter of 1860–61: War, Famine, and the Political Ecology of Disasters in Qajar Iran', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24–48. Kazemi suggested, but did not develop, the relevance of Thompson's moral economy to Iranian bread riots. '*Neither Indians nor Egyptians*', p. 301.

Bread protests have also been mentioned and contextualized in several broader historical accounts. For the Tehran riot of 1861, see Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian monarchy, 1831–1896* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 378–82. For Isfahan in the 1890s, Heidi Walcher, *In the Shadow of the King: Zill al-Sultan and Isfahan under the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008); for Tabriz, Vanessa Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Various Persian-language memoirs of the nineteenth century contain fragmentary descriptions of bread riots. See, for example, the two extracts edited, translated and introduced by Negin Nabavi, *Modern Iran: A History in Documents* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2017), pp. 7–9. The first extract looks at the bread riot of 1861. The source cited is *Yaddashtha-ye Farhad Mirza Mo'tamed al-Dawlah*, quoted in Fereydun Adamiyat, *Andishe-ye tarraqi va hukumat-e qanun-e 'asr-e Sepahsalar* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Khvarazmi, 1351/1972, pp. 79–80. The second extract, describing the riot of June 1900, is from Qahreman Mirza Salur, *Ruznameh-ye khaterat-e 'Ayn al-Saltaneh* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Asatir, 1376/1997), pp. 1,467. See also Heribert Busse, *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* (translated from Hasan Fasa'i, *Farsnamah-yi Nasiri*, 1821 or 22) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 356–68. Persian sources, including archival sources, dealing with bread

that Iran experienced a 'golden age' of bread riots in the 1890s and early 1900s, just before and indeed contributing to the outbreak of the constitutional revolution.[4] It then suggests, in explanation of the intensity of the popular conflicts over bread raging in Iran's cities in the late nineteenth century, a parallel with eighteenth-century England. Although a century of chronological time separates the two cases, each country experienced, at their different moments, a similar collapse of an older paternalist socio-economic and political order, with market regulation at its core, and its supersession by modern capitalism, exemplified by the free market. In each country, this provoked a similar response from the urban poor. The Iranian and Middle Eastern bread riot had functioned reasonably effectively in pre-modern economic and

---

riots are listed and extensively quoted by Mahdi Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat: Ta'sir-i Buhranha-yi Nan bar Siyasat va Iqtisad-i 'Asr-i Nasiri* (Tehran: 1394).

Rather more attention has focused on the broader question of famine in Iran, its causes and consequences, without necessarily dealing in depth with subaltern responses other than the struggle for survival. The most systematic investigation of the relationship between ecology and politics in Iran is Kazemi, '*Neither Indians nor Egyptians*'. Recent studies of famine also include Majd, *The Great Famine and Genocide*; *Iran under Allied Occupation*; *A Victorian Holocaust: Iran in the Great Famine of 1869–1873* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2017). Majd's books also contain some information about popular responses.

Older work includes Shoko Okazaki, 'The Great Persian Famine of 1870–71', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, 1986, pp. 183–92; Charles Melville, 'The Persian Famine of 1870–1872: Prices and Politics', *Disasters*, vol. 1, 1988, pp. 309–25; Xavier de Planhol, 'Famines in Persia', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. ix, fasc. 2, 1999, pp. 203–6; Ahmed Seyf, 'Iran and the Great Famine, 1870–1872', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2010, pp. 289–306; Abbas Amanat, 'Of Famine and Cannibalism in Qom', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 47, no. 6, 2014, pp. 1,011–22; An Iranian eye witness account of the great famine in Qum may be found in John Gurney and Mansur Safatgul (eds.), *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg, 1288 qamari* (Qum: Kitabkhanah-i Buzurg-i Hazrat-i Ayatullah 'Azmi Marashi Najafi, 1387).

Published Persian secondary material includes the very useful Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*. For a general discussion of bread riots in this period see Dariush Rahmanian va Mahdi Mir Kiyayi, 'Ta'sir-i Balvaha-yi Nan bar Ravabit-i Hukumat va Mardom dar 'Asr-Nasiri', *Tahqiqat-i Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, 1392, no. 6, pp. 65–98. For various famine years, see Sarhang-i Muhandis-i Jahangiri Qa'im Maqam, 'Qahti-yi Sal 1273 qamari dar Tabriz', *Adabiyat va Zabanha*, 1343, no. 194, pp. 266–9; Mas'ud Kuhistani Nazhad, 'Sal-i Dampukht (Qahti-yi Sal 1296 shamsi),' *Ganjinah-i Asnad*, 1381, no. 45–6, pp. 40–85; Muhsin Khudadad and Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Manzuralajdad 'Payamadha-yi Ijtima'i-yi Qahtiha-yi 'Asr-i Nasiri', *Tarikh-i Islam va Iran*, 1389, no. 7, pp. 21–44; Riza Jahan Muhammadi, 'Mushkil-i Nan va Kambud-i An dar Qazvin pish az Mashrutah', *Tarikh-i Mu'asir-i Iran*, 1386, no. 41, pp. 41–54.

The broader analysis of famine and dearth contained in this article is influenced particularly by Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, and David Arnold, *Famine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988). Useful for the broader socio-economic context is Hooshang Ahmirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran under the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

[4] Peter W. Avery and J. B. Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver, 1880–1890', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1974, pp. 259–86, p. 281.

political contexts, where the 'politics of negotiation' were still salient. As the free market replaced paternalism, however, so did unmediated class conflict replace older methods of bargaining, albeit occasionally by riot, between unequal partners within a social pact.[5]

   The constitutive components of Thompson's paradigm may be summarized as follows.[6] First, it strongly rejected 'crass economic reductionism' in its explanation of food riots. They were not instinctive reactions to hunger, not 'rebellions of the belly'. On the contrary, Thompson argued that it was the political culture, the mentalité, of the bread rioters, in particular their perennial possession of a legitimizing notion, which was crucial in understanding their modes of action. This notion was, specifically, the beliefs that they were defending traditional rights or customs 'as to what were legitimate and what were illegitimate' practices in the production, milling, baking and marketing of bread, and that they were supported in this by a broader community consensus. This consensus among the poor drew additional strength from the fact that it occasionally found some endorsement from the authorities and it was, in any case, so powerful that it could overcome both habitual deference and any fear of retribution. Thompson's hungry poor accepted the right to a fair profit. It was rather price hiking, hoarding, profiteering and the manipulation of the market in the pursuit of private gain and to the detriment of communal interests that aroused popular outrage. It was anger, not hunger, that produced bread riots. Second, Thompson pointed out that this concept of a 'moral economy' derived directly from an older elite paternalism, embodied in custom and particularly in law, which regulated markets and offered some protection to consumers. The objective of the crowd was the enforcement of this older paternalism, not 'the sack of granaries and the pilfering of grain … but the action of "setting the price"'. They were determined, in effect, to enforce what they believed to be the law when the authorities could or would not do so. Third, it was this sense of legitimacy that produced among Thompson's bread rioters an extraordinary discipline and purposefulness such as to make the description 'riot' inappropriate. Fourth, Thompson highlighted the extraordinary persistence, over hundreds of years, of a pattern of crowd action, a pattern 'which repeats itself, seemingly spontaneously, in different parts of the country and after the passage of many quiet years'. Thus, the food riot, far from requiring a high degree of organization, needed only 'a consensus of support … and an inherited pattern of action'. Finally, Thompson noted that the peculiar

[5] For the 'politics of negotiation', see Martin, *The Qajar Pact*.
[6] Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd'.

tensions of the eighteenth-century bread riot arose from the fact that the older paternalism was being aggressively challenged by notions of the 'free market'. Nonetheless it still had both an 'ideal existence, and also a fragmentary real existence' and was always available for revival by the authorities to provide a moment of 'symbolic solidarity' in periods of crisis. For Thompson, in pre-industrial societies the market, and specifically the struggle over prices, was the primary arena of class struggle and it was in the actual marketplace that the poor became conscious of a sense of their collective power. Only as industrialization advanced did the workplace, factory and mine, and the struggle over wages, supersede this older conflict.

 Thompson's paradigm, although addressing an apparently quite different historical context, in fact allows us to penetrate into the meaning and significance of the Iranian bread riot. Iranian bread rioters were drawn from the lower classes of Iran's towns and cities and sometimes represented the very poorest among them. The viability of reconstructing the experience of such social layers, especially in the Middle East, has often been questioned because of their illiteracy and their archival silence. In the case of Iranian bread rioters, only fragments of indirect speech survive, recorded by observers, which hint at their mentality.[7] Yet the poor were neither mute nor passive. Although we know little of what they thought, we know more of what they did, and it is mainly through their actions that they speak to us. The choreography and ritual of the Iranian bread riot shows us Iranian subalterns engaging in political activity, demonstrating both consciousness and agency. The bread riot was neither impulsive, nor an instinctive reaction to hunger, nor was it prepolitical. On the contrary, it represented the direct involvement of the urban poor in local struggles for power in Iran, and also implicitly and sometimes explicitly allowed them to articulate critiques of their rulers. As elsewhere, bread rioters, rather than constituting a desperate mob impervious to its own illegitimacy, in fact invariably appear to have been motivated by a strong sense of justice and entitlement, to have targeted their actions appropriately, and to have displayed a sometimes astonishing self-discipline. Iranian bread rots must be uncoupled from the problem of absolute dearth. They were not 'rebellions of the belly' but interventions in urban politics primarily, like most subaltern political actions, defensive in their objectives.

---

[7] Petitions have recently been the focus of much attention as a way of gaining access to (mediated) subaltern voices. See, for example, Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). For examples of Iranian petitions, see the appendix to this chapter.

An inclination to view the urban lower classes as inert, politically passive and unthinking has resulted in them often being perceived and portrayed only as instruments of elite rivalries, their mobilizations explained as the result of manipulation by external actors. Sometimes too, a view of their interventions as blindly instinctive has produced an emphasis on their supposed predilection for communal antagonisms. The history of the bread riot, however, contradicts both these assumptions. Similarly, the prominent role of women in bread riots is often depicted as a result of their being prompted and organized by male actors, the women's riot a prelude to a more significant action. Again, the narrative below rather insists on female protesters' possession of motivation and objective in their own right.

In Iran, as elsewhere, food riots were an urban phenomenon, only arising where the majority of the population were dependent on the market for their everyday needs. It was in this context that the price of staple foods, especially bread, became an issue of the greatest sensitivity, even the smallest price rises representing a potentially mortal threat to the very poorest. At times of crisis, provoked by sudden price rises, by the apparently inexplicable failure of prices to fall after good harvests, or by the export of grain in times of dearth, crowds of the urban poor, sometimes men and women together but often women alone, their anger inflamed by well-founded rumours of hoarding, speculation and official collusion, would assemble and make their demands.[8] These demands were couched in the language of custom and justice, and were aimed squarely at those they considered the responsible authorities, often the shah himself. Principal among these demands was for the authorities to enforce a 'just price'. Such bread riots, or perhaps more accurately bread protests, tended to erupt during periods of more generalized political tension. They might be isolated episodes but might also extend over several days, often abating after dark only to resume next day with renewed vigour and larger numbers. They were typically preceded only by little or rudimentary planning and began peacefully. Looting and theft were rare and it was only after the initial petitioning of the authorities expressing complaint and requesting, or occasionally demanding redress, failed to produce results, that the protesters might turn from rowdiness to violence. It seems that in these actions, bread rioters were attempting not to challenge or disrupt the status quo themselves, but rather to force delinquent or recalcitrant elites to abide by commonly held notions of mutual rights and responsibilities and to observe custom and tradition.

---

[8] The assemblage and composition of such crowds has been described by Martin, *The Qajar Pact,* Kazemi, 'Neither Indians nor Egyptians', pp. 170–307.

   The traditional Iranian bread riot was of considerable antiquity. Although it retained its customary features into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, the political and economic environment in which it operated was being radically transformed. Far from demanding change, the bread rioters of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iran were rather acting in the name of an older and perhaps idealized paternalism. By the late nineteenth century, however, they were also reacting against the chaotic transformation of their lives and living standards wrought by a collapsing Qajar political order and the simultaneous arrival of newly aggressive economic imperatives. Iran's urban poor, like their English predecessors, accordingly mounted a last-ditch resistance to the rapid ascendancy of the free market and the disappearance of older forms of elite and royal paternalism, market regulation and consumer protection.[9]

The Moral Economy of the Iranian Crowd

Bread riots were not new in late nineteenth-century Iran. In both form and content the numerous and widespread Iranian bread riots of the 1890s recall powerfully earlier protests, appearing to have retained certain key features over a very long period of time and to draw on much older traditions of subaltern political interventions to be, truly, a perennial feature of urban life. Like Thompson's bread rioters, Iranian crowds seem to have been able to sustain traditions of urban protest over remarkably long periods, indeed over hundreds of years. The resilience of the Iranian pattern is extraordinary. One episode from Isfahan in 1715, for example, is startlingly familiar to the bread protests of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its key features include a marked contempt for the person of the monarch together with a general absence of deference to the authorities, and the prominent role of women. Most significant too is the choice of target, the shah himself, and, crucially, the apparent demand, for the authorities to carry out their recognized duty of enforcing the price they themselves had fixed.[10] On this occasion, a sudden rise in the price of bread resulted in widespread popular suspicions of grain hoarding. A crowd of women and 'the rabble' assembled, went to the shah's palace, shouted insults at the shah, threw rocks at the palace and even tried to set it on fire. They later

---

[9] The contribution of an embryonic capitalism to the creation of subsistence crises in Iran has been noted by Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'.

[10] Rudi Matthee, 'Blinded by Power: The Rise and Fall of Fath 'Ali Khan Daghestani, Grand Vizier under Shah Soltan Hoseyn Safavi (1127/1715-1133/1720)', *Studia Iranica*, vol. 33, 2004, pp. 179–220.

turned their attention to the house of a high-ranking cleric, a notorious hoarder, apparently intending to plunder it. The crisis was averted by a last-minute paternalist intervention, the shah ordering the cleric to make a large quantity of grain available on the royal square.[11]

The longevity and ubiquity of this pattern is striking and is reinforced by a comparative perspective. Iranian bread riots were remarkably similar to other such episodes across the wider Middle East. In medieval Cairo, early modern Damascus and across the Ottoman Empire, the urban poor, often led by women, frequently took collective action to assert their right to bread and to exert pressure of various kinds, sometimes peaceful, sometimes not, on the authorities to control excesses in the operation of the market. Indeed, the urban bread protesters of Safavid and Qajar Iran, Mamluk Cairo and Ottoman Damascus often seem interchangeable in their mode of organization, choice of target and especially their sense of legitimacy. All invoked the concept of the 'just price', displayed suspicions of plots to hoard grain and manipulate prices and anger against merchants, millers and bakers, and demanded official intervention to regulate the grain trade.[12]

E. P. Thompson argued that the eighteenth-century English crowd derived its sense of legitimacy and its understanding of proper economic behaviour not only from custom but directly from Tudor and Stuart statutory law and its enforcement by magistrates, and government action more generally, which sought to modify the operations of the market in times of dearth. This has exact parallels in the Iranian, Middle Eastern and Islamic contexts. The actions of Iranian bread protesters were also embedded in a wider culture of market regulation, comprising not only custom but also law. It was indeed this legal tradition of market regulation that explained the rioters' readiness to appeal to the shah or other authorities to protect them against speculators and hoarders, their occasional successes in thus mobilizing the authorities apparently justifying their own belief in the continuing relevance of past customary entitlements and practices. They had much custom and surviving practice on which to draw, nineteenth-century Iran still possessing approaches to market regulation dating back to the medieval period and even earlier.

One key source of legitimacy for bread protesters was the system of market supervision and regulation by state-appointed officials that had existed in Iran, as across the Muslim world, from the earliest Islamic

---

[11] Matthee, 'Blinded by Power'.
[12] Stephanie Cronin, *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from below in the Middle East and North Africa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 8.

period, perhaps even earlier. The key figure was the *muhtasib* who was, as his name indicates, entrusted with the Quranic injunction of the *hisba*, the duty to 'promote good and forbid evil'.[13] The *muhtasib* was a powerful official in the urban administrative/legal structure, possessing a general mandate much wider than that of individual members of the ulama. He was appointed by the state, usually the shah himself, and was guided by legal doctrine (*fiqh*) as formulated by the jurists and as summarized in *hisba* manuals, his authority therefore combining both secular and religious legitimacy.[14] He was normally, although not invariably, a member of the ulama himself and his office possessed considerable political, moral and religious prestige. The figure of the *muhtasib* was, until the late nineteenth century, to be found in every sizeable city throughout Iran, as it was across the Muslim world.

In theory, the *muhtasib* had a wide variety of duties, these falling into two basic categories: ensuring the smooth operation of the market, and supervising public morals and the correct performance of religious obligations.[15] He monitored weights, measures and scales and the minting of coins, prevented counterfeiting, regulated trades and professions, enforced correct behaviour between men and women and between Muslims and non-Muslims and concerned himself with the general orderliness of the marketplace. His responsibility for ensuring the propriety of commercial transactions and consumer protection in general was paramount, but his most crucial and sensitive single task was to regulate the supply and quality of bread.

Manuals containing summaries of *fiqh* were available for the use of the *muhtasib*. Regarding the provision of bread, legal scholars dealt with three main issues, hoarding, price controls and forced sales. There was broad agreement among jurists that hoarding was prohibited. As one medieval jurist commented, 'Hoarding is forbidden, and it is his [the *muhtasib's*] duty to prevent what is forbidden.'[16] In support of this view, the jurists quoted the *hadith*: 'The one who brings food to the market is blessed, and the one who hoards it is cursed.'[17] The famous late Safavid Shi'i scholar, Hurr al-Amili, was very specific in prohibiting hoarding and profiteering, quoting several *hadith* supporting his condemnation of them as sinful and worthy of hellfire. According to al-Amili, the

---

[13] C. Cahen, M. Talibi, R. Mantran, A. K. S. Lambton, A. S. Bazmee Ansari, 'Hisba', A. K. S. Lambton, 'iii Persia', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Brill Online.

[14] Kristen Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 1.

[15] R. P. Buckley, 'The Muhtasib', *Arabica*, vol. 39, 1992, pp. 59–117, pp. 81–2.

[16] Cited by Buckley, 'The Muhtasib', p. 96.

[17] Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action*, p. 153

Prophet said even the fragrance of Paradise was refused to anyone who hoards goods, and anyone hoarding for forty days in anticipation of price rises has distanced himself from God and God tires of him.[18] Price-setting and the allied issue of forced sales were the owners of bread to refuse to sell, were also permitted, although only under certain specific circumstances. For example, although price-setting was considered the prerogative of God, some jurists permitted it in the interests of public benefit (*maslaha*), and to prevent harm in times of high prices. One often adopted compromise in Iran was for the *muhtasib* to agree a price with the merchants. He would then enforce the agreed rate, punishing any merchant whose prices rose above it.[19]

The *muhtasib*, appointed by the ruler, was also guided by the requirements of *siyasa* (politics). Pre-modern Middle Eastern polities, the Mamluks, Ottomans, Safavids and others, all valued social stability and political order above the maximization of profit and urban populations would have been well aware of the authorities' sensitivity to the political consequences of sudden price rises. Although evidence from Iran is sparse, the experience of cities in other parts of the Muslim world suggests that interventions by *muhtasibs* in moments of crisis might be very energetic and often went far beyond anything sanctioned by religious doctrine.

The complexities of *fiqh*, the *hisba* manuals and the concerns of *siyasa* give little sense of the realities of the pre-modern marketplace. The *muhtasib's* everyday activities would have made him a familiar figure to the urban population who would have been acquainted with the doctrinal basis of his actions from preaching and sermons in mosques. As they demanded the *muhtasib* act against hoarding and set prices, so he came under pressure from contrary interests, from landowners, merchants, millers and bakers, all of whom benefited from high prices.[20] His inclination, as a representative of authority, might naturally have lain with other elements of the elite. He was also, unsurprisingly, often open to corruption and collusion.[21] His duty of consumer protection seems to have exercised only an occasional restraint, usually in times of crisis. Yet, although riots were relatively rare, the tensions between owners

[18] Hurr al-Amili and Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah ila Tahsil Masa'il al-Shari'ah* (ed. Abd al-Rahim Rabbani) (Bayrut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1971), 20 vols, vol. 12, p. 314. For a further discussion, see Husayn Taqi al-Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasa'il* (Qum, 1984).
[19] A. K. S. Lambton, 'iii Persia', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill)
[20] Stilt, *Islamic Law in Action*, p. 171.
[21] Willem Floor, 'The Office of Muhtasib in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1985, pp. 53–74, pp. 66.

and consumers were perennial, constantly threatening to undermine the political stability of the major cities. For pre-modern Iran, as for Thompson's eighteenth-century England, the marketplace was in fact the pre-eminent site of conflict between the classes. Their actual experience of consumer protection might have been erratic, limited and crisis-driven. Nonetheless the religiously sanctioned system of market regulation provided the poor, when they protested about hoarding and demanded price control, with a powerful sense of what ought to happen, in other words a moral economy.

It was this experience of centuries of legitimate market regulation and price monitoring, still extant in the later nineteenth century and surviving in the collective memory of the urban poor, which provided Iranian bread rioters with their central objective and their primary target. They aimed their protests at the authorities, and demanded that they carry out their popularly understood responsibility to prevent hoarding and to 'set the price', and then to enforce this price in the marketplace. Iranian bread riots were almost always, in fact, 'price riots'.

The legal responsibility of the state to supervise the market was embedded in religious doctrine, exemplified by the *hisba* and personified by the *muhtasib*. Yet the poor had wider elite and popular sources from which to derive their sense of entitlement to bread.

The question of bread aroused popular attitudes of peculiar intensity. In Iran, again as elsewhere in the Middle East, food riots were almost always centred on the price and quality of bread, although there were occasional rice riots in the Caspian provinces. Bread was an essential staple in the Iranian diet, especially for the poor who lacked access to other foods. But the cultural significance of bread went far beyond this practical aspect. Bread was surrounded by highly charged emotions imparting to it an almost 'sacred' character. It had a place in religious ritual, was often used linguistically and proverbially as synonymous with life and the sharing of bread symbolized a binding commitment.[22] Giving bread to the hungry was an obligatory charitable act and folk wisdom measured the qualities of monarchs by their generosity in providing food.[23]

The interconnectedness of bread and justice was an idea that stretched back to the Middle Ages and beyond and was to be found throughout wider Iranian and Middle Eastern elite and popular culture, cumulatively reinforcing the legitimacy of consumer protection. The medieval 'Mirror for Princes' literature describes the way the system was supposed to work.

---

[22] For a full discussion of the cultural significance of bread in Iran, see Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, pp. 89–100.
[23] Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 95.

For example, the *Siyasatnamah* of the eleventh-century *vazir* to the Seljuks, Nizam al-Mulk, contains a chapter dealing with judges, law-enforcement and royal justice. In it he relates a morality tale according to which, on one occasion when bread became scarce, the poor went to the ruler seeking justice, accusing the royal baker of hoarding. The king ordered the baker to be trampled to death by an elephant, hung from its tusk and paraded around the town, symbolizing a threat to other bakers of the same fate. By evening the desired result had been achieved and bread was available everywhere.[24]

The doctrinal framework of market regulation and the 'Mirror for Princes' literary genre was reinforced by the Qajar revival of concepts captured in the even older idea of the 'Circle of Justice'.[25] This notion, with its emphasis on the maintenance of a social balance or equilibrium between the classes, implied the interdependence of the ruler and the ruled. The ruled owed the ruler obedience and the payment of taxation, but only so long as the ruler carried out his own obligations to them, principal among which was to guarantee the supply of bread. A hegemonic concept intended to encourage the acquiescence of the ruled, the Circle of Justice sometimes proved to be a double-edged sword, legitimizing demands and even overt opposition when the circle was popularly believed to have been breached.[26]

Notions such as the Circle of Justice were particularly important for the early Qajars who lacked the religious legitimacy of their Safavid predecessors and consequently surrounded themselves with 'invented traditions' designed to demonstrate their fitness to rule. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the second Qajar shah, Fath Ali Shah, revived a political vocabulary derived from the Circle of Justice, his royal titles emphasizing his role as protector and guardian of his people.[27] The later decades of the century saw Nasir al-Din Shah experiment with a number of reforms to the petitioning system which likewise encouraged a belief in the availability of justice and the primacy of the ruler in guaranteeing it.[28] As the nineteenth century approached its end, a 'modernized' concept of justice, derived from

[24] Quoted by Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 95.
[25] Linda T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013) p. 159. See also Nader Sohrabi, 'Revolution and State Culture: The Circle of Justice and Constitutionalism in 1906 Iran', in G. Steinmetz (ed.), *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, CT: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 253–88.
[26] Darling, *A History of Social Justice*.
[27] Darling, *A History of Social Justice*, p. 159.
[28] Mansoureh Nezam-Mafi Ettehadieh, 'The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: A Case Study of Nineteenth-century Iranian Social History', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 22, 1989, pp. 51–61.

both indigenous and European political traditions and vocabulary, became central to the projects of modernist intellectuals. Indeed, the first demand of the constitutionalists in the mass demonstrations of the revolution of 1905/6 was for an *adalatkhanah*, a House of Justice.

The depth of the popular belief in the right to justice, the responsibility of the shah personally to provide and guarantee it, is particularly demonstrated by the popular devotion to the system of petitioning.[29] Indeed bread protests were often launched with a petition. The shah's centrality to the system of petitioning, and to these notions of justice in general, is familiar from other authoritarian monarchies, most notably the neighbouring tsarism. It certainly contributed to the hegemonic power of the monarchy, but only as long as the person of the monarch and the institution was seen to uphold its part of the bargain. This perception began to wane in late nineteenth-century Iran, as it was waning elsewhere, and the resulting disillusionment was correspondingly profound.

The Circle of Justice indicates the broad contours of the discourse of Qajar paternalism but this discourse was clearly an elite product. There were, however, various routes of transmission that ensured that versions of it reached the general population. The illiterate poor would of course have had no access to the court literature extolling the virtues of the Qajar shahs and their supposed Achaemenid and Sasanian predecessors as dispensers of justice but they would, for example, have heard echoes of such ideas in proclamations read out by town criers, in Friday sermons in mosques, from popular preachers, from reciters of the *Shahnamah* and professional story-tellers in coffee houses. It would seem that the poor absorbed such ideas from this originally elite discourse as were useful to them. Indeed, they introduced an ideological innovation of their own. Elite discourses linked the royal provision of bread and justice, but it was the creative subaltern reception of this discourse that introduced the idea of the legitimacy of direct action should the monarch default. During the process of transmission from top to bottom, ideas of royal paternalism ceased being solely devices for ensuring obedience but became legitimations of protest. Story-telling, for example, easily appropriated notions of justice and the legitimacy of resistance, inverting existing hierarchies along the way, encouraging opposition even to shahs and sultans were they oppressive.[30] Folk stories, myths and legends,

---

[29] See Irene Schneider, *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006).
[30] See p. 194.

song and poetry all show evidence of the existence of a powerful popular conception of justice.

In summary, until the mid to late nineteenth century, Iranian society shared a common belief that the shah was ultimately responsible for guaranteeing the welfare, symbolized by the supply of bread, of his subjects who, in their turn, owed him their loyalty. Such a notion, expressed in various idioms, was indeed common to patrimonial imperial monarchies throughout Asia. In times of crisis, the Mughals in India and the Chinese Qings, for example, as well as the Qajar shahs, depended for their legitimacy on the implementation of a quartet of fundamental and specific measures. This policy quartet consisted of anti-speculative price regulation, embargoes on food exports, tax relief and the strategic and sometimes theatrical distribution of free food.[31] Such measures were indeed still in evidence in Iran, if somewhat erratically, during the first half of the nineteenth century. This was as much a pragmatic political as an ideological commitment. For all such polities, including the Iranian, social and political stability, a fundamental aspect of which was the adequate provisioning of the cities, was significantly more important than the maximizing of profit.

From these broad conceptualizations of justice, and the actual policies that it had, if somewhat erratically, inspired, the poor of Qajar Iran derived the belief that they possessed both a right to bread and an expectation that the shah would guarantee it. This belief extended to the idea that the authorities ought to take action, even specific forms of action, to ensure that bread was available. Such actions included prohibiting the export of wheat in times of shortage, taking measures to ensure the provisioning of cities and, especially, controlling prices. The urban poor clung to this belief and no amount of experience to the contrary succeeded in disabusing them of it. Faced with the reality of the delinquency of the authorities, they furthermore considered themselves entitled to suspend their submissiveness and take action to oblige compliance.

It was, therefore, a sense of moral outrage, rather than an extremity of hunger, which is of greatest importance in explaining the eruption of discontent in Iran. Again, as elsewhere, Iranian bread and price riots cannot be synchronized with the harshest conditions and the greatest shortages. Indeed, famine produced rather few such episodes. Starvation was inimical to collective action. Where dearth and price rises deteriorated into real starvation, the ability of the urban poor to

---

[31] Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, p. 286.

mount collective political action largely disintegrated, to be replaced by a demoralized retreat into exhausted, pathetic and occasionally shocking attempts at personal survival. The hungry and the fearful might riot, the starving could not. The city of Qum, for example, which was very hard hit by the great famine of 1870–72, saw only one bread demonstration, and that at the beginning of the catastrophe.[32] Tehran saw several minor protests but here the general situation was better. Indeed, the many accounts of famine in Iran rarely mention any form of direct action to obtain bread. Throughout the country, the famine years of 1869–71 saw a total of only six recorded protests.[33] On the contrary, accounts in abundance emphasize the passivity and resignation of the poor as they starved in the midst of well-stocked bazaars, market traders and officials impervious to the dying paupers who surrounded them and their produce.[34]

The eruption of a bread riot in fact depended on the poor harbouring a particular view of the reasons for a shortage. Were the hungry to accept that there was simply no food available, then protest would have been futile and irrational, and lacking in targets. Iranian bread riots rather resulted not so much from hopeless hunger but from the conviction that 'others were unjustly depriving them of food to which they had a moral and political right'.[35]

The one single factor that was always present in Iranian bread riots was the belief that shortages were artificial and the result of hoarding and speculation by the rich, and that ample supplies existed but that the poor were being deliberately deprived of their entitlement. This belief is expressed strongly during every bread riot in Iran throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. Indeed, the belief that such hoarding, rather than any actual shortage, was responsible for the price hikes and the consequent distress was universally and immediately expressed by the urban poor whenever prices rose. When the severe bread shortages in Tehran in the spring of 1861 led to serious protests by women of the city, they had already been infuriated by the general belief that the high officials of the city were hoarding and speculating in the small amounts of grain intended for distribution to the needy.[36] In 1865,

[32] Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, pp. 50–1.

[33] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, pp. 204–5.

[34] See, for example, William Brittlebank, *Persia During the Famine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873), p. 96.

[35] Charles Tilly, 'Food Supply and Public Order in Modern Europe', in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 380–455, p. 389.

[36] Alison to Russell, 3 March 1861, FO60/256.

in Shiraz the city was in the grip of a 'great outcry' against the governor
on account of his hoarding a huge quantity of grain and only offering
it for sale at unaffordable prices.[37] In 1871, during the great famine, as
several bread protests threatened in Tehran and other cities, it was again
being popularly asserted that there was in fact a moderate amount of
corn in the country, but that it was being hoarded by influential people
for the sake of gain. The shah himself was loudly and openly blamed for
tolerating or conniving at what was described, in a hint at an underlying
popular religious discourse, as impiety.[38]

Popular beliefs about hoarding were no mere rumours but were
based on firm grounds.[39] Indeed the poor, as labourers and servants,
were often well-placed to have intimate knowledge of their masters'
stocks of grain. No element among the elite escaped popular odium.
Government officials, themselves drawn from the landowning class,
were inclined to collude in such practices even though they were
theoretically responsible for market regulation. The ulama were also
large landowners, with multiple ties to the merchant class, and were
correctly identified as among the most active speculators while the shah
was the largest landowner of all and, by the end of the century, most
implicated in the practice.

For protesters, the price of bread was first and foremost a political,
not an economic, issue, and they directed their anger accordingly. Their
disbelief in any genuine dearth determined their strategy. The initial,
main and sometimes sole demand of most Iranian bread protests was for
'setting the price', for the responsible authorities to intervene to regulate
the market in accordance with law and custom. To this end, the usual
object of their action was to petition the highest accessible political
authority, if possible the shah himself. Occasionally, as the century wore
on, attempts were made to mobilize representatives of the European
powers. The crowd begged, importuned and finally threatened any
available figure of influence, demanding that they exert control over
those whom the protesters believed to be the real authors of their distress,
the rich landowners, merchants, and hoarders and speculators generally.

The price riot was the most common form of bread protest, but
blockades and the taking of *bast* (sanctuary), both types of action

---

[37] Shiraz Agent's Journal, Alison to Russell, August 11, 1865, FO60/290.

[38] Alison to Granville, 16 August 1871, FO60/335.

[39] The significance of hoarding, speculating and profiteering was first noted in the
early article by Okazaki, 'The Great Persian Famine'. Its mechanics have most
recently been investigated by Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'. Kazemi emphasizes that
it is the scale of hoarding, not its uniqueness, which characterizes the nineteenth
century, 'Of Diet and Profit', p. 336.

legitimized by the customs of Qajar political practice, were also sometimes used. Blockades were everywhere especially common in ports and other export centres. One such episode shows the Iranian crowd exhibiting an extraordinary discipline and sense of purpose. Placing an embargo on food exports from areas threatened by shortages was, like price controls, a key policy of Qajar paternalism. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Iranian government repeatedly issued *farmans* prohibiting the export of grain from areas suffering from shortages. Their ability, as well as their willingness to enforce these orders was, however, limited and, from the 1870s onwards, further hampered by a powerful British diplomatic establishment almost fanatically committed to free trade. Hungry populations accordingly took it upon themselves to force compliance with royal edicts. In 1870 at the height of the famine, the minister for foreign affairs announced an interdict on the export of grain from the port of Bushihr. A British-protected merchant nonetheless made preparations to ship out a quantity of corn, while British diplomats put the strongest possible pressure on Iranian officials, both local and at Tehran, to permit this export. Consequently, a crowd of about two thousand local people, men and women, assembled with the intention of preventing the shipment. They occupied the local telegraph office and forwarded a telegram to the merchant saying that they and their families, being threatened with hunger and starvation, were resolved to use force if necessary to prevent the export of grain from Bushihr. They were, however, ready to purchase the corn belonging to the merchant at more than double its original cost.[40] The merchant abandoned the attempt to export the corn.

In the more common 'price riots', the protesters would first aim to petition in person the highest figure of authority within reach. In Tehran this was the shah himself. In provincial cities crowds would usually begin by targeting the governor. As communications between the provinces and Tehran improved, local populations became increasingly dissatisfied with petitioning their nearest authorities and more determined to address their protests to the shah himself. This they did by occupying telegraph offices and putting themselves directly in touch with the government and the court in the capital. The telegraph clerks often transmitted these telegrams out of fear for their lives.[41] In 1865, for example, during serious bread riots in Shiraz, a crowd of women stormed the newly opened telegraph office and demanded that a telegram be sent to the

---

[40] Alison, Tehran, to Clarendon, 28 June 1870, FO60/327.
[41] British Agent, Shiraz, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf to Nicolson, 7 August 1886, FO248/436.

shah stating their grievances against the governor whom they blamed for the high price of bread.[42] In the summer of 1870, at the onset of famine and as prices rose in Qum, crowds gathered and about two thousand men and women went to the telegraph office demanding the shah be telegraphed and informed of their complaints.[43] In Bushihr, in 1870, the crowd blockading the export of grain used the telegraph to make their demands, to explain their grievances and the justification for their action and, with their promise to pay for the blockaded grain, to emphasize their legitimacy.[44] Bread rioters would also vent their resentment on their supposed protectors, senior members of the ulama. In Mashhad in 1859, the *Imam-i Jum'ah*, known to be hoarding grain, was attacked in his own mosque and dragged from his pulpit.[45]

In Iran, as elsewhere, women were always central to bread riots, acting alone or as initiators to be joined by men at a later stage, and provide much of the ritualized aspect of the action. There are very few, if any, cases recorded of a bread protest in Iran in which women were not involved.[46] Although women are sometimes mentioned as taking part in public protests over other issues, their perennial presence in bread demonstrations is notable. This was probably due to their strictly defined but essential gender roles. Responsible for feeding their families, they would have been most alert to the price and quality of bread and most concerned about likely future price movements and how they would cope with them. With a natural collective consciousness, born of a collective social life, neighbourhood and family connections, and shared roles and responsibilities, their everyday meetings in front of bakers' shops to buy bread almost invited a demonstration when prices rose. Their actions during bread protests were heavily gendered and typically displayed a strong ritual and symbolic aspect. They might remove their chadors, throw dust on their heads, rend their garments and engage in theatrical demonstrations of weeping, emphasizing their own supposed weakness in a bid to shame their oppressors. Women, although scurrilously abusive

---

[42] Shiraz Agent's Journal, Alison to Russell, 11 August 1865, FO60/290.
[43] Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, pp. 50–1.
[44] Alison, Tehran, to Clarendon, 28 June 1870, FO60/327.
[45] Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, p. 378.
[46] For a discussion of the role of women in popular protest in Iran, see Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, pp. 95–112; Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran'; 'Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class'. The role of women in bread riots has been noted in a wide variety of historical periods and geographical locations. For a discussion of the role of women in contemporary popular protest, see Walton and Seddon, *Free Markets and Food Riots,* pp. 82–9. For the role of women in coping with hunger, see Khudadad and Manzuralajdad 'Payamadha-yi Ijtima'i-yi Qahtiha-yi', pp. 23–6.

and destructive of property, rarely used physical violence towards people. They were not, however, immune from violent reprisals.

Bread protests almost always began with a confrontation with the political authorities. Direct attacks on the bazar, on bakers, and looting and theft appear to have been relatively unusual, occurring only when tensions had already risen and the situation deteriorated. Indeed, bakers appear only to have been targeted when they refused to sell at the agreed price or refused to sell at all. It is noticeable too that when bakers were attacked, other shops, including those selling provisions, were left unmolested. Bakers sometimes found themselves squeezed between powerful local notables and the hungry population. When rioters raised the demand for setting the price, the authorities frequently concluded that a simple order to the bakers, not necessarily intended to be taken very seriously, would be sufficient to calm the crowd. If the bakers complied, this was indeed often enough, but sometimes they could not or would not. At the mercy of the grain prices demanded by the landowners, and often speculators on their own behalf, their reaction to orders from the authorities to lower their prices was often simply to shut their bakeries and shops, thus further enraging a hungry population.[47] The closure of the public bakeries meant that bread was no longer available at any price. Bakers were also the favourite target of the authorities for a demonstration of retribution, thus diverting the rage of a crowd away from themselves.[48]

Although bread rioters, especially women, were not initially violent, they were far from placid. They were always ready to heap abuse on high officials, and the destruction of property of those they considered responsible, especially government property, was common. In March 1861, in Qazvin, for example, where there was great hunger, a mob of women wrecked the governor's palace. Women would frequently simply ambush officials in the street, accosting and abusing them; a favoured tactic being to pull them off their horses. Yet, before the 1890s and the revolutionary years, serious assaults on persons by protesters, especially female protesters, rarely went beyond the throwing of stones and mud along with the hurling of abuse.

Protesters might, however, themselves be the victims of substantial violence from the authorities. When confronted by an angry and hungry crowd, the authorities had limited options available to them although their first inclination seems to have been suppression by force. When besieged by angry crowds, they would most often resort to using their

---

[47] Consul-General, Tabriz, 29 August 1898, FO248/675.
[48] For the scapegoating of bakers, see also Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit', pp. 350–1.

own retainers and dependents for their defence. The levels of violence might reach shocking levels. In a bloody confrontation in Shiraz in 1865, about twenty rioters were wounded and two killed. In April 1871, during the great famine, a crowd of hungry men and women forced their way into the Shiraz telegraph office and three people were shot by the governor's riflemen.[49] Although the government's ability to suppress bread riots using military force was very uncertain, this did not mean it shrank from violence. Indeed, in order to stave off perceptions of weakness, the authorities might, when the immediate danger had passed, resort to the performance of salutary punishment for rioters, including public whipping in the bazaars and mutilation, usually the cutting off of ears.[50]

  Given the general coercive weakness of the state, the authorities were ready to deploy a variety of tactics in efforts to appease crowds which they could not suppress. The politics of negotiation remained an option and the discourse of paternalism might be temporarily resurrected. In 1866–7 in Shiraz the governor and the crowd, especially the 'widows, orphans and "gossipy women"' of the city, engaged in an elaborate game of riot, promise and concession over a number of months.[51] Another common reaction by Tehran was the dismissal of a governor. This was a cheap and easy tactic, only inapplicable in the few cases where the governor was too powerful to be dispensed with easily. In any case, dismissed officials would often return to their posts after a decent interval. Since the principal demand of the crowd was often precisely for the dismissal of a governor, the shah's compliance might be interpreted as sympathetic. It has been estimated that half of the bread riots in the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in the dismissal of a high secular or religious official.[52] Local governors, *kalantars*, *pishkars*, *karguzars*, *na'ib al-tawliyyahs*, government ministers and even prime ministers might thus fall victim to ejection from office as a result of a bread crisis.[53]

  The authorities had one final tactic up their sleeves for dealing with recalcitrant crowds, and that was to divert the anger of the crowd away from themselves and towards a scapegoat. In many bread riots, it appears that there was a degree of consciousness of a shared interest among the poor, especially the female poor, of the various communities within a

---

[49] Agent to Alison, 14 April 1871, FO248/267.
[50] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, pp. 184–5.
[51] Heribert Busse, History of Persia under Qajar Rule (translated from Hasan Fasa'i, Farsnamah-yi Nasiri, 1821 or 22) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 356–8.
[52] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, p. 191.
[53] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, pp. 205–6.

city.[54] Occasionally, however, the authorities were successful in diverting the anger of hungry people away from themselves towards other targets, Babis and Jews particularly useful for this purpose.[55] During the very lean years of 1865–7, when famine threatened in the south of Iran, the city of Shiraz appeared to be in the grip of a simmering class war, which erupted occasionally into bread riots. In August 1865, a particularly serious outbreak took place, led as usual by women of the town. The authorities tried all the methods at their disposal, first ordering riflemen to fire on the crowd. They then ordered bakers to sell bread cheaply. The government in Tehran ordered the dismissal of the governor and the *Imam-i Jum'ah* ascended the pulpit in the man mosque and also tried to restore calm. But the situation instead degenerated into chaos, with gangs of *lutis* attacking and looting the Jewish quarter, the entire city reduced to chaos and finally left cowed and in a state of high alarm and fear.[56]

The Hungry 1890s: A Prelude to the Constitutional Revolution

The late nineteenth century appears to have been a golden age of bread riots in Iran. The bread protests that raged across the country in the 1890s and early 1900s were novel in their frequency, their scale and their duration. Not only is there evidence of an increase in the occurrence of bread riots, but the significance of the such actions itself seemed to change. Rather than being isolated episodes, as in earlier decades, easily ended by suppression or concession, they rather constituted the heart of prolonged, almost permanent, urban crises.[57] Not only were the bread crises of the 1890s capable of simmering for months and even years, and often prone to a sudden descent into serious violence, but they also erupted in every part of the country, wracking both the capital and all the major provincial cities. By the 1890s, such protests had become enmeshed in a web of much deeper political and economic antagonisms. Indeed, by that time Iranian cities, and especially the capital, were in the grip of a pervasive sense of impending crisis.

Available sources begin to appear making regular mentions of bread protests from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. One partial list has

[54] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, p. 201.
[55] For a discussion of communal conflict, see Kazemi, 'Neither Indians nor Egyptians', pp. 308–93.
[56] Shiraz Agent's Journal, Alison to Russell, August 11, 1865, FO60/290.
[57] See Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*.

estimated the second half of the century saw forty-seven such protests although this list is based on incomplete source material and is certainly a considerable underestimate.[58] Yet the list clearly shows an acceleration in the number of protests as the century neared its end, the 1890s seeing the greatest frequency.[59] A note of caution is required here. The often expressed belief that material conditions worsened and popular protests increased as the century neared its end is complicated by the fact that this period also saw a considerable expansion of source material.[60] The late nineteenth century, with its expansion of the British consular network, was especially important in generating quite novel weekly, and sometimes daily, reports of urban disturbances. It is then that the protests multiplied or rather that the sources about them are more numerous? A first answer is that sources from which protests had been absent in earlier decades begin to make repeated mention of bread riots in the later years of the century. The British consulate in Tabriz in the late 1850s, for example, reported extensively on 'astronomical' prices and widespread hunger, but made no mention of riots.[61] By the 1890s, however, it is constantly reporting on turbulence resulting from high prices. Second, several other factors may be adduced which support the notion of a growing political, economic and financial crisis affecting the poor. The first and most important of these factors was the general collapse of the system of market regulation represented by the figure of the *muhtasib* and the final death of Qajar paternalism, with all its implications for elite legitimacy. Other contributory factors included wider economic changes associated with the arrival of capitalism, specifically the swelling of the numbers of the poor in towns and cities, inflation and a currency crisis, a growing sense of injustice arising from each of these issues finding its sharpest expression in struggles over bread and profit.

The system of religiously sanctioned market supervision had survived across the Islamic world until the nineteenth century when it disintegrated everywhere, although at different times and at various speeds. It seems to have functioned reasonably well in Iran under the Safavids. The chief *muhtasib* was appointed by the Safavid shah, and *muhtasibs* also existed in most of the larger cities. Every month the heads of guilds would submit their prices to the chief *muhtasib* for his consent. Failure then to abide by the agreed prices might make the malefactor liable to sometimes quite harsh punishment. The system may have begun to decline under

---

[58] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, pp. 204–5.
[59] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, pp. 204–5.
[60] See, for example, Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'.
[61] Report on the State of Azerbaijan, 28 November 1860, Consul-General, Tabreez, to Alison, 29 November 1860, FO248/192.

the early Qajars but at mid-century the monthly price list drawn up by the chief *muhtasib* in consultation with the guilds was still being published in the *Tehran Gazette*, and was still being transmitted to the wider population more directly by town criers.[62] Yet towards the end of the century the cities began losing their *muhtasibs*. The last mention of a Shiraz *muhtasib* comes from 1880, the office had apparently been abolished in Isfahan by 1877, in Tabriz it survived until the beginning of the 1890s.[63] The decision to abolish market supervision seems to have been a deliberate one. The *muhtasib* did not disappear simply as a result of the decay of Qajar administration. On the contrary, in the late nineteenth century his public order role seems to have been formally assigned to the new police force, the *nazmiyyah*, while his role of market supervision was simply eradicated.[64] The last mention of a *muhtasib* in Tehran comes as early as 1853, although his office seems to have lingered on.[65] In the capital, the *muhtasib* seems to have fallen victim to new ideas circulating among reformers regarding the desirability of replacing older Islamic structures of urban government with a modern secular administration, that is a municipality, that would, of course, have no role in regulating prices or hoarding.[66]

The final suppression of the *muhtasib* and the system of market regulation which he represented, and the de facto arrival of the free market, synchronizes strikingly with the proliferation of bread riots in Iran. For the Iranian poor, official market regulation was not merely a distant memory but was still a living reality. Indeed, the abolition of the *muhtasib*, after more than a thousand years of market supervision, took place over a very short time span, a few years in the mid- to late nineteenth century.

The collapse of the Islamic system of market regulation was accompanied by the demise of royal paternalism, which had in the past complemented religious doctrine and which now also ceased to operate. The last performance of a traditional paternalism by the Qajar state and

[62] *Rūznāma−i Wakāyi'-i Ittifakiyya*, no. 127, 29 Ramadan, 1269/1853, cited by A. K. S. Lambton, 'iii Persia'. Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 122. See also Floor, 'The Office of Muhtasib in Iran'; 'The Market Police in Qajar Persia: The Office of Darugha-yi Bazar and Muhtasib', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 13, 1971, pp. 212–29.

[63] Floor, 'The Office of Muhtasib in Iran', p. 67.

[64] The *muhtasib* seems to have been occasionally supplemented by another official, the *darugha-yi bazar* (market superintendant), who possessed very similar functions. The *darugha* was also incorporated into the modern police force in 1878–9. Floor, 'The Market Police in Qajar Persia', p. 221.

[65] A. K. S. Lambton, 'iii Persia'.

[66] Hoseyn Farhūdi, 'City Councils (*anjoman-e šahr*) in Persia',' *Encyclopaedia Iranica* vol. 5, fasc. 6, pp. 646–8.

the monarchy may be dated to the serious bread riots of 1861. Indeed, the bread riot of 1861 marks the symbolic death of Qajar paternalism. Elite and royal paternalism depended for its legitimacy on reciprocity. The ruled, but also the ruler, each had their own specific responsibilities. The poor, when driven beyond endurance, were entitled to demand justice and bread but, equally and crucially, the shah was obliged to act. In 1861, the last serious bread riot took place in Tehran in which the shah observed this script.[67]

Each actor in the performance of this riot clearly understood the part they were expected to play. Trouble had begun in mid-February, the price of bread having risen by two hundred per cent, when the shah was 'mobbed and hooted' in Tehran and an attempt made to pull the governor of the city off his horse.[68] The bakers' shops were soon besieged by the hungry clamouring for bread. On 28 February, the shah, on returning from hunting, was surrounded by several thousand women yelling for bread. They gutted the bakers' shops and were so violent that as soon as the shah entered the palace, he ordered the gates of the citadel to be shut. The next day thousands of women forced their way into the citadel, and began to attack the guards with large stones, being urged on by their men. The shah summoned the *kalantar* of Tehran, Mahmud Khan Kalantar Nuri, who promised to put down the riot and himself went into the crowd, and began laying about the women with a large stick. The women, now displaying their bloody clothes, called on the shah for justice, in which demand they were supported by mullahs in the crowd, who loudly impressed on the shah his obligations. The shah, apparently deciding that further force was unwise, changed tack. He summoned the *kalantar* and ordered that he be strangled on the spot. The corpse of the *kalantar* was then stripped and dragged through the streets amid thousands of protesters and finally hung up by the heels at one of the city gates where it was left for three days. Nevertheless, protests continued next day. The shah appeared dressed in a red robe, as a sign of further blood-letting, and ordered that all the *kadkhudas*, (heads of urban quarters) of Tehran were to be bastinadoed. He crowned

[67] Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe,* pp. 378–82; Kazemi, 'Neither Indians nor Egyptians', pp. 269–87. This episode has attracted considerable attention owing to its scale and to the fact that it generated unusually graphic and detailed reports. See Edward Backhouse Eastwick, *Journal of a Diplomat's Three Years' Residence in Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1864), 2 vols, vol. 1, pp. 287–92; *Yaddashtha-ye Farhad Mirza Mo'tamed al-Dawlah*, cited by Nabavi; Heinrich Brugsch, *Reiser der K. Preussischen Gesandtschaft nach Persien 1860 und 1861* (Leipzig: J. C Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1862–3) 2 vols; Alison to Russell, Tehran, 18 February 1861, FO248/195.
[68] Alison to Russell, Tehran, 18 February 1861, FO248/195.

these measures by throwing open all the royal granaries. The crowd, finally reassured of royal protection, was calmed.[69]

This was the last occasion on which the shah subjected a responsible high official to an exemplary and public physical punishment, and also the last occasion on which he performed a legitimizing act of generosity in symbolic solidarity with the hungry, a theatrical distribution of the contents of the royal granaries. From now on, hoarders no longer needed to fear the shah's wrath. From now on the equation of reciprocity on which the traditional choreography of the bread riot depended was no longer operational. On the contrary, rather than engaging in performances of symbolic solidarity, the shah was increasingly identified as colluding with rings of speculators, himself the principal hoarder. The inability of the crowd to evoke a recognizable response from the authorities contributed to a change in their own mentality and an increase in violence on both sides.

The last remaining vestiges of paternalism melted away during subsequent decades. The shah's strategic and sometimes theatrical distribution of free food ceased owing to the declining fiscal base but expanding fiscal requirements of the state, the fall in revenue in real terms, and the shah's need for money, partly to fund expensive modernization projects, particularly a regular army, and partly to fund his own induction into modernity via luxury imports and foreign travel.[70] Remissions in taxation, routinely granted by the shah in times of hardship, dwindled and finally ceased.[71] Embargoes on food exports, designed for a pre-modern economy, were more difficult to enforce as the state's waning coercive power was unable to counteract the powerful incentives of an increasingly profitable regional and international trade, and especially to resist the determined opposition of British officials acting in the name of free trade.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of rapid economic change in Iran.[72] Cash crops for export began rapidly replacing subsistence farming, production for profit replacing production for consumption, and money overtook barter as the most important

---

[69] Alison to Russell, Tehran, 3 March 3 1861, FO248/195.
[70] Willem Floor, *A Fiscal History of Iran in the Safavid and Qajar Periods* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1998), p. 462.
[71] See, for example, Report on the State of Azerbaijan, 28 November 1860, Consul-General, Tabreez(*sic*), to Alison, 29 November 1860, FO248/192.
[72] For recent accounts of the political economy of nineteenth-century Iran, see Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'; 'The Black Winter'; Ram Baruch Regavim, 'The Most Sovereign of Masters: The History of Opium in Modern Iran, 1850–1955', University of Pennsylvannia (2012). Available at https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/687.

instrument of economic activity.[73] A generalized commercialization of agriculture turned land into a commodity which might be bought and sold, ownership passing from military and civil elites to merchants and ulama, social groups more attuned to profit. The search for cash crops and cash profits was made urgent by a trade deficit which had developed directly from Iran's enforced opening to European economic penetration as a result of its military defeats in the early nineteenth century.[74]

A newly monetized economy provided ample incentives to speculation.[75] Disincentives, conversely, opprobrium or worse from an energetic *muhtasib* or indeed from the shah himself, had vanished. Since grain could be purchased by the better off when prices were low and stored for up to a year, to be resold when prices were high, hoarding was a perennial problem.[76] It had always been a feature of the agricultural cycle, occurring when harvests were plentiful as well as when they were not. By the late nineteenth century, however, the financial incentives had exponentially increased.[77] The constraints imposed on profit by the limitations of a pre-modern, barter-based, localized economy began to melt away while new banking institutions and possibilities for international trade made the secure accumulation of financial wealth both possible and worthwhile. Landowners and officials were joined by commercially minded merchants and ulama in forming sophisticated 'rings', cornering everything which had a market price, but especially bread, leading to an almost permanent crisis in the politics of food.

These developments appear to have contributed to a series of devastating famines that Iran suffered during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the mortality rates difficult to assess with precision but certainly staggeringly high. Indeed, the great famine of 1870–2 was of apparently unprecedented severity and national scale. Certainly Iran, along with other predominantly rural economies, suffered from the ecological turbulence of the late nineteenth century. But the better documented cases of China and India would seem to confirm that it was not the ecological disaster of drought alone, but the economic and political context, specifically 'the free marketing of grain combined with

[73] Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 120.
[74] Regavim, 'The Most Sovereign of Masters', p. 24.
[75] See Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'; Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*.
[76] For the production of bread, see Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'; Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*.
[77] For the 'monetization' and 'over-commodification' of grain, see Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'.

local failure of incomes' which produced the catastrophic scale of the 1870–2 famine in Iran.[78]

Famines were inimical to the organized and political character of the bread riot. The occurrence of famine is relevant, however, in two respects. It contributed to the accumulation of a numerous, hungry and embittered lumpenproletariat in Iran's towns and cities while its impact on popular consciousness, producing both a permanent state of fear and a heightened sense of class consciousness, was profound. The sufferings endured during 'great hungers' entered folk memory, and the resulting fear was persistent and pervasive. As E. P. Thompson remarked, the poor, especially in oral cultures, have long memories, and the experience of famine, especially the great hunger of 1870–2, conditioned future responses to any hint of bread shortages and price rises.

The towns and cities of Iran were transformed by famine, especially the great hunger of 1870–2.[79] Many of the famished resorted to flight to areas where it was hoped affordable food might be found.[80] While their strength remained, groups of the starving would move from the rural areas to the towns, from town to town, and eventually to the capital, wherever they moved constituting a presence at best unwelcome, and at worse a menace. The scale of this population movement was very considerable and usually permanent.[81] Refugees permanently abandoned their former lives, their employment or trade and any small plots of land they may have worked, and sank into the mass of pauperized newcomers in the towns and cities. Especially after the 1870–2 famine, the urban centres were swollen by famine victims, who carried with them the trauma of starvation and of the loss of land, possessions, livelihood and family, and who were entirely dependent on the market for food.

Famine on the scale of the later nineteenth century resulted in mass mortality but it was also destructive to social bonds.[82] Its appearance destroyed such vestiges of reciprocity as remained between the classes while any lingering sense of responsibility among the wealthy vanished into self-preservation or even profiteering. Fortunes were made in famine years by speculation in grain, that is to say, through hunger, and funded

[78] Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1944), p. 160, quoted by Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, p. 9.

[79] In the countryside too the change engendered was profound, notably on patterns of landownership. Dariush Rahmanian and Mahdi Mir Kiyayi, 'Ta'sir-i Khushksali va Qahti bar Vaz'iyat-i Malikiyyat-i Zamin dar Iran-i 'Asr-i Nasiri', *Mutala'at-i Tarikh-i Islam*, 1393, no. 23, pp. 219–54.

[80] Khudadad and Manzuralajdad, 'Payamadha-yi Ijtima'i-yi Qahtiha-yi 'Asr-i Nasiri', pp. 35–9.

[81] Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, p. 58.

[82] Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, p. 85.

the adoption by the elite of new and supposedly 'modern' patterns of consumption. Examples of the wealthy dying, during even the most severe famine, are rare indeed while accounts in abundance describe paupers starving in the midst of lavish weddings, extravagant dinners held by the rich in Tehran as bread riots raged outside.[83] The immunity of the rich to hunger contrasts with the impact of that other scourge of the nineteenth century: epidemic disease. Epidemics were feared by both rich and poor, although the poor tended to suffer more from the arrival of contagion as they lacked the means to escape infected areas, flight being the principal response of the better off and the authorities. Nonetheless, contagion retained a veneer of impartiality in its choice of victims, the rich sometimes dying as well as the poor.

Although famine saw some local attempts at charity, they were haphazard and grossly unequal to the task.[84] Meanwhile the money newly made from speculative hoarding, in fact from famine and dearth, had diametrically opposed long-term economic consequences for different classes, permanently impoverishing the poor while enabling the rich to accumulate fortunes. Food shortages, partial famines and catastrophic episodes of starvation were opportunities for a substantial transfer of resources from the poorest to the better off and the rich.[85] Money and possessions might be squeezed out of the urban hungry while famished peasants, driven into hopeless indebtedness by their landlords, who advanced money to them against the future produce of their labour at exorbitant rates of interest, fled to towns.

The famished poor were embittered by their knowledge of the existence of plentiful stocks of food. The bitterness of the starving was matched by the apprehension of the wealthy. The hungry poor, in Iran as elsewhere, were seen by respectable society as a menace, as individuals prone to criminality or as mobs of unimaginably destructive power, in either case to be feared, controlled and kept distant. Their hunger and desperation made the starving poor dangerous, both in the imagination of the better off, but also in reality. Famine swelled the numbers of the itinerant poor in the towns and cities, worsening shortages and causing further price rises, and increasing the numbers ready to take desperate action. The poor were not always supplicant. Although mass violence was perhaps surprisingly rare, 'swarms of beggars' might easily

[83] Brittlebank, *Persia During the Famine*, p. 148; Durand to Salisbury, 9 January 1899, R. M. Burrell and Robert L. Jarman (eds.), *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965* (Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1997), vol. 1, p. 432.

[84] Amanat, 'Of Famine and Cannibalism in Qom', pp. 1,018–20.

[85] The unequal impact of famine and its possible contribution to urban discontent has been noted by Kazemi, 'Of Diet and Profit'.

turn from importuning to menacing.[86] Furthermore, every famine was inevitably accompanied by the outbreak of epidemic disease. Cholera and typhoid spread like wildfire among the malnourished while their unusual mobility in their search for the means of survival spread contagion far and wide. The starving incubated disease, especially cholera, and the flight of famished peasants from their villages to nearby towns, and of the urban poor from town to city, all possible carriers of famine fever, contributed to heightening the sense among the better off of the menace they presented. Famine produced a predictable rise in crime, notably theft and murder, adding to the tensions in the cities and the feelings of danger experienced by the better off.[87] The panic engendered by the presence of the desperate starving is perhaps best exemplified by the widespread terror of cannibalism, gangs of the starving committing murder for food, this terror fuelled not only by rumours but by official reports and arrests.[88] Whatever the degree of truth in the reports, the fear of crimes of kidnap and murder for food was real, deep and pervasive.[89]

The swelling of the populations of the major cities in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is staggering. Hunger and famine had certainly stalked Iran in earlier periods but, before the nineteenth century, the peasantry had starved in silence and invisibility while the small numbers of the urban poor had only rarely been able to mount the kind of action that found its way into the sources. Now the urban poor were beginning to appear more menacing than supplicant. Estimates suggest that Tehran, with a population of 85,000 in 1867, possessed 200,000 by 1900 and grew to 350,000 by 1913. Tabriz, between the same dates, doubled and then trebled, reaching 300,000.[90] In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Isfahan, Shiraz and Kirman also saw huge increases.[91] The labour markets of these cities were quite unable to absorb this migration and most of the new arrivals sank into a semi-employed, semi-destitute underclass.[92]

Inflationary pressures in the bloated cities were intense while any contrary constraining presence represented by the *muhtasib*, even if only

---

[86] Brittlebank, *Persia During the Famine*, p. 137.
[87] See Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, pp. 58–9. For a list of victims of cannibalism in Qum, see Gurney and Safatgul, *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg*, pp. 192–3.
[88] See, for example, the *Tehran Gazette*, Alison to Granville, 29 May 1871, FO248/269.
[89] For a consideration of the accuracy of reports of cannibalism see Amanat, 'Of Famine and Cannibalism in Qom'.
[90] The population movements in the north-west were even greater than this figure implies, as the migration across the border to the Caucasus was substantial. See Hakimian, 'Wage Labor and Migration'.
[91] Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran*, p. 19.
[92] Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran*, p. 63.

partially and temporarily effective, had vanished altogether. Iran was accustomed, like all predominantly agricultural countries, to seasonal fluctuations in prices of grains and cereals during each year, to a rise and fall in prices from year to year resulting from abundant or poor harvests, and even fluctuations over periods of years. Prices would rise but would, sooner or later, return to customary levels. The last third of the nineteenth century, however, witnessed a sustained price rise due to large increases in the numbers of the poor in Iran's towns and cities, a decline in food production for domestic consumption and a growing export market. Bread simply became more and more expensive, never falling back to earlier levels, presenting the increasing numbers of the urban poor dependent on the market for food with an entirely novel situation and creating an unprecedented level of anxiety and political tension.

The two areas whose cities saw a particular concentration of bread riots, the north-west, including Tehran and Tabriz, and the south, especially the cities of Shiraz and Isfahan, experienced spectacular inflation. For the cities of the north-west and the south, the 1880s and especially the 1890s were decades of severe inflation. In Tehran and Tabriz in the 1880s and 1890s prices increased by an estimated 500–600 per cent, prices peaking in the late 1890s. Isfahan and Shiraz and the south generally saw lower inflation, although even here prices doubled. In Mashhad, on the other hand, prices remained more or less stable, inflation only appearing towards the end of the 1890s.[93] When inflation hit Mashhad, after 1897, serious bread riots also multiplied.[94]

Inflationary pressures were dramatically intensified in the 1890s when another lethal threat to the ability of the poor to purchase bread emerged in the form of a currency crisis. As was the case with grain, this crisis too was the result of a combination of global developments, the collapsing value of silver provoked by the United States's Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890 and domestic deregulation. Middle Eastern rulers had traditionally exercised a tight control over mints and currency, these possessing a profound political, as well as purely monetary significance. They had been assisted in this task by the *muhtasib* who, as part of his general remit regarding the propriety of commercial activity, monitored coins and minting. He thus provided at least some protection against

[93] Gad G. Gilbar, 'Trends in the Development of Prices in Late Qajar Iran', Iranian Studies, vol. 16, no. 3–4, 1983, pp. 177–98, pp. 196–7; Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran*, p. 71.
[94] Wages also rose in this period, but more slowly. Amirahmadi, *The Political Economy of Iran*, p. 73.

counterfeiting and debasement, and fraudulent assaying. By the 1890s, the office of *muhtasib* was no more, this fragile layer of independent supervision gone. Power to mint coins had, furthermore, now been concentrated in one person and his assistants. Before 1877, coins had been minted by nineteen mints in various cities around the country, each one subject to local control. In that year the provincial mints were closed and silver reserves collected, the minting of the silver *qirans*, the key unit of currency, made the prerogative of the Tehran mint which was then farmed to a wealthy notable, providing the shah with a substantial income.[95]

The 1890s saw a spectacular depreciation of the *qiran*. By 1893–4, the international exchange rate of silver had halved.[96] The stability of the currency was now left at the mercy of the mint master. The silver crisis was immediately transformed into a catastrophic assault on the living standards of the poor by rings, of officials, merchants and *sarrafs*, formed to protect themselves from the consequences of the crisis. They hoarded silver and colluded to maintain an artificial domestic exchange rate against the copper *shahi*, the unit of currency most used by the poor, while the mint master and his ring systematically debased the coinage.[97] The mint produced *qirans* containing less and less silver but, most disastrously, flooded the country with copper coin, so-called *pul-i siyah*, 'black money', which had no or at best a nominal intrinsic value.[98] As with the bread rings, again there were winners as well as losers. The mint master's ring, and smaller rings of *sarrafs* throughout the country, hoarded silver, making vast profits from the artificial exchange rate. Labourers, meanwhile, soon found themselves being paid entirely in copper coin of uncertain but certainly decreasing value.

As a result of the currency crisis, in the 1890s Iran entered a period of giddying price rises and trade shrank, the economy affected by 'uncontrollable shock waves' of inflation and depression.[99] The standard of living of the lower classes was hit hard by the unpredictable depreciation of the coin in which they were paid but, as was the case with bread price rises, it was the sense of injustice and manipulation, the creation of an artificial crisis, which was strongest. Again, the urban

[95] Avery and Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver', p. 274.
[96] Avery and Simmons 'Persia on a Cross of Silver', p. 262, where you will find a full discussion of the impact of the USA's Sherman Silver Purchase Act.
[97] Avery and Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver', pp. 279–80.
[98] For a full discussion of Iran's fiscal and monetary position, see Floor, *A Fiscal History of Iran*; Rudi Matthee, Willem Floor and Patrick L. Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran: From the Safavids to the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
[99] Avery and Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver', p. 279.

poor remembered religious injunctions against hoarding, which applied to any commodity in short supply, and looked back to a period of greater regulation. As with the speculation in grain, so it was well known and widely repeated that that the mint master and other high officials were manipulating the currency and both responsible for and benefiting from its depreciation.[100] The 1890s saw severe discontent over currency depreciation throughout the country, especially in the cities of Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan and Mashhad.[101] Falls were precipitate and often caused an outright panic. In the three years between 1896 and 1899, the value of the copper *shahi* depreciated by nearly four hundred per cent. Across the country bread or price riots were now also currency or 'copper riots'.[102]

The Tobacco Protest of 1890–2 had revealed profound political and ideological discontent among the mercantile and religious elites. The urban poor, however, had their own grievances, which often implicated precisely those elites. The most vulnerable to price rises owing to their dependence on the market and their lack of reserves of either cash or grain, they had, by the 1890s, not only swollen in numbers but were increasingly desperate. Peasants driven from the rural areas by successive waves of famine joined artisans evicted from the collapsing handicraft industries to create a perpetually hungry lumpenproletariat. Newly dependent on the cash nexus, the urban poor were subject to a long-term process of pauperization, rampant inflation and a specific currency crisis resulting in a potentially lethal decline in the purchasing power of their wages. They were now exposed to the shocks of the domestic and global free market as never before.[103]

The swollen cities which were the sites of the most notable episodes of bread protests in the 1890s experienced no famine but only famine prices, currency depreciation and inflation lethally undermining the ability of the poor to pay the market prices which bread reached. As food prices in the cities fluctuated wildly in the short term and increased inexorably in the long term, and the money in which they were paid lost its value, the urban poor found themselves facing a crisis which had no apparent solution. The result was a rising sense of desperation and foreboding made acute by memories of the mass mortality and the breakdown of conventional moral and social norms endured during the many famines of the later nineteenth century. Such memories, of

[100] Monthly Summary, 3 May to 30 May 1899; Burrell and Jarman, Iran Political Diaries, vol. 1, p. 573.
[101] Summary of Frontier News, 16 March to 15 April 1896, Durand to Salisbury, 15 April 1896; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries s*, vol. 1, p. 322.
[102] Avery and Simmons, 'Persia on a Cross of Silver', p. 281.
[103] Gilbar, 'Trends in the Development of Prices', p. 195.

speculation and hoarding by the rich, the indifference of the authorities, both secular and religious, their own suffering, starvation and disease, and the desperate and shameful resorts to which they were driven, remained vividly present in the consciousness of the urban poor.

Not only were the urban lower classes becoming much more numerous and confronted by a number of interrelated assaults on their living standards, but the respect for the authorities' legitimacy, conventionally buttressed by an older royal paternalism, was rapidly ebbing away. The 1890s saw the cities of Iran subject to rapid change and seething with discontent, varying in character from place to place but everywhere resulting in multi-layered crises of power and legitimacy.[104]

By the 1890s, Iran was experiencing an almost permanent bread crisis. Sudden rises in the price of bread had always provoked protests. Now, however, the struggle over bread in Iran appears to have acquired rather a permanent character, the cities constantly simmering with apprehension, everyone's eyes on the weather, the news, the daily price fluctuations at the bakers' shops, the poor fearing hunger, the rich seeing financial opportunity but also the possibility of disorder and even violence. This struggle arose, not from insuperable difficulties in the actual supply of food, but rather directly from the operations of the market. The determination of the privileged to free themselves from the constraints of an older paternalism and to use the market to maximize profit from food, and the constant attempts of the poor to defend what they saw as their just rights by intervening to regulate prices, may thus be seen as an example of a bitter class warfare rarely glimpsed in narratives of the Qajar period.

The towns and cities of Iran were scenes of a mortal struggle between rich and poor over the price of bread. In these urban centres bread crises, always announced by sudden hikes in price, became political issues of the most urgent intensity. Cities, and their elites and authorities, were exposed to the dangers of bread riots as never before as the growing numbers of the urban poor, caught between a disintegrating Qajar paternalism and the imposition of a brutal free market in grain, fought to defend what they understood to be their rights. Of all Iran's many towns and cities that experienced bread riots, the most explosive was the capital, Tehran. Here was the greatest concentration of both poverty and wealth, here was the final destination of those fleeing hunger who had been unable to find refuge elsewhere, and here were concentrated the palaces of the rich and the embassies of the foreign powers. It was

---

[104] See Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*.

in Tehran that a food riot had the potential to become a threat to the survival of the political order, and it was the Tehran poor who presented the most dangerous threat.

The 1860s, 1870s and 1880s were punctuated by episodic bread riots but the 1890s inaugurated a period of intense conflict. It seems that for the 1890s at least, there is no reliable correlation between bread riots and actual harvest failures or other natural disasters. Indeed, the worst riots often took place after good harvests, when hoarding led to prices remaining high. This was the case in, for example, Isfahan in 1893 and 1898, Tabriz in 1898 and 1899, and Tehran in 1900. In fact, bread riots took place not where bread shortages were most serious but where the sense of injustice was strongest.

By the 1890s, the economic and political environment of Iran's cities had been transformed. As far as the authorities were concerned, market regulation had been abolished. The urban poor, however, clung to the tradition and gradually withdrew legitimacy from those who refused to honour and abide by this tradition. Bread protesters continued to use the same methods and tactics as in the past and exhibited the same underlying mentality. Complaints of hoarding and profiteering were loud and constant. The shah in Tehran, the provincial governors and senior ulama, and even foreign consuls, were repeatedly targeted by crowds, who continued to demand that bread be sold at an agreed price.

During the hungry 1890s, in Tehran it was repeatedly and generally stated that the doubling and trebling of prices of staples was due to the profiteering of officials at the Royal Court, who were also large landowners, at the expense of ordinary people. A prolonged bread crisis in Isfahan in October 1893 saw the population openly express its anger at the duopoly who controlled the politics and economy of the city, the governor, the shah's eldest son, Zill al-Sultan, and the chief mujtahid, Aqa Najafi, who, it was said, possessed between them vast quantities of grain stored away in their villages.[105] Placards publicly, albeit anonymously, accused Aqa Najafi of hoarding. Women crowded into his mosque and prevented him from leading the prayers, accusing him of forcing prices to rise. He was finally forced to go into his pulpit and swear on the Quran that he possessed no grain, but he was still not believed.[106] Again, in 1898, when new disturbances took place as a result

---

[105] Preece, Isfahan, 28 October 1893, FO248/572.
[106] Walcher, *In the Shadow of the King.* The Isfahan bread riots are fully described and contextualized by Walcher, *In the Shadow of the King,* pp. 181–2; Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*, pp. 79–93. A narrative of the successive bread crises of the 1890s may be traced in the reports of the British consul, Preece, and the vice-Consul, Aganoor. See especially FO248/572, FO248//676.

of prices continuing to be high although the harvest was known to be excellent, placards were again posted throughout the city abusing Aqa Najafi and blaming him for the high price of bread.[107]

The shah remained the target of choice for bread protests. Their recognition of his authority, however, implied no automatic deference or even basic respect. If they were unable to gain direct access to the environs of the palace, the women of Tehran were quite ready to lie in wait for the shah in the street, surround his carriage and openly insult him.[108] High prices in the bazar would see the monarch at constant risk of public confrontation and execration.[109] In November 1899 as the price of bread was steadily rising, reaching twice what it had been the previous year, the shah was publicly insulted by a crowd of women.[110] In April 1903, following serious bread riots in Mashhad, while the shah was out driving in Tehran a crowd, numbering some 200 women, surrounded his carriage, and demanded, by shouting loudly, redress for the oppression of the governor. They were dispersed by the shah's servants, but only after he had promised them that an inquiry would be held into their grievances.[111]

In provincial cities crowds besieged the governor. In Tabriz, in 1895, bread rioters attacked the house of the chief provincial official, Qa'im Maqam; in Ardabil in the same year a group of women, with stones carried in chadors tied round their waists, attacked the governor's residence; in 1903, a hungry crowd in Mashhad sacked the house of the *bayglarbaygi*, an unpopular senior local official; in 1906, in Mashhad a bread riot began with a demonstration against the provincial governor and in Hamadan women mobbed the governor's residence during bread riots.

The ulama were not spared the attentions of angry crowds. At the peak of the bread riots in Tabriz in 1898, the most lethal conflict was between the hungry poor and Nizam al-Ulama, a wealthy landowning cleric. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, senior members of the ulama, who had taken full advantage of the commercialization of

[107] Walcher, *In the Shadow of the King.*

[108] See, for example, I'timad al-Saltanah, Muhammad Hasan Khan, *Ruznamah-i Khatirat-i I'timad al-Saltanah* (ed Iaj Afshar), (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1371), pp. 236, 387, quoted by Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat,* pp. 84, 197.

[109] Durand to Salisbury, 14 November 1899; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries,* vol.1, p. 590; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries;* Hardinge to Lansdowne, 28 April 1903; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries,* vol. 2, p. 110.

[110] Durand to Salisbury, 14 November 1899; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries,* vol. 1, p. 590.

[111] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 28 April 1903; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries,* vol. 2, p. 110.

land, were increasingly the target of popular anger over hoarding and speculation, joining the older culprits, officials and landed magnates. Low-ranking clerics, however, especially religious students, often played a different part in bread crises, joining demonstrations and acting as interlocutors for the crowd. However, it was the shah who suffered most in popular esteem. Just as the shah was exalted as the ultimate provider of bread, so he was blamed for its dearth.

During the early 1900s, another tactic was deployed, protesters exploiting the growing influence of foreign consuls, using this as a lever to move their own officials, and using consulates as places of safety, beyond the reach of their own authorities. This tactic was in evidence as early as 1857, when Tabrizi bread rioters asked for the intervention of the Russian consul.[112] In the years before the constitutional revolution, however, it becomes increasingly common. During a severe famine in Kirman in the early 1900s, over two hundred people, 'respectable Musulmans', in fact mainly shopkeepers themselves, took refuge in the British consulate, asking for British protection.[113] Their leader, a sayyid, explained to the consul that the price of bread was so high that they could not live any longer under Iranian authority. The consul offered them charity, an offer they rejected with the retort that they were not beggars. They further said that they were quite ready to become Christians if they could only get cheap bread. The result of this protest was that the consul paid an unofficial visit to the governor and extracted from him a promise that bread should be lowered to a more or less normal price by gradual reductions spread over a period of ten days.[114] The intention to bring consular pressure to bear on the local government, rather than the avowed desire to become either British subjects or Christians, was clearly the aim of the protest and it was successful. The tactic was repeated in Kirman in 1902 when, following a bread riot in the city, three hundred of the poorest people took refuge in the British consulate. Here too the consul successfully extracted a promise from the local governor to lower the price of bread.[115] Bread protesters also sought help from the Russian consulates. In Tabriz in 1898, for example, rioters made repeated and finally successful efforts to take *bast* in the Russian consulate.

Another kind of bread protest also began to appear more frequently in the 1890s. By the 1890s, *nizam* (modern) troops, who received part of

[112] Murray to Clarendon, 18 April 1857, FO60/217.
[113] Malcolm Napier, *Five Years in a Persian Town* (London: John Murray, 1905), pp. 235–6; Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 122.
[114] Napier, *Five Years in a Persian Town*, pp. 235–6.
[115] Summary of Events, 2 April to 28 April, des Graz to Lansdowne, 27 May 1902; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 59.

their wages in bread, were experiencing the same difficulties as the civilian population, and were expressing serious discontent. In the 1890s, the Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashhad authorities all found their troops too few and to unreliable to risk using them against bread riots, and in the capital the troops openly sympathized with the crowds and refused to take action against them.[116] The declining authority of the Qajar state was symbolically illustrated by its inability to rely on its *nizam* (modern) troops, built up at such huge expense throughout the century, as the hungry soldiers sided with the hungry poor.

Communal conflict might also sometimes be overcome by the common suffering of the poor. In May 1906, there were bread riots in Hamadan, mainly by Muslim women, one or two of whom were severely wounded in fights in the town. They then took refuge in the churches in the Armenian quarter of the town, where they were fed and looked after by the Armenians.[117] The Shiraz Jewish community also participated in protests, on one occasion carrying pages from the Talmud.[118]

Bread protesters still initially confined their attacks to property. In June 1900, for example, bread rioters assembled in Tehran, invaded the town hall, and partially wrecked it. Nonetheless the temperature of protests now rose very quickly and the level of violence involved in protests also rose, crowds more willing to respond to violence from the authorities with violence of their own. In Tabriz in the 1890s the death toll steadily mounted over several years. In August 1895, five bread rioters were killed on one day, another two on the next and one man and one woman on a third day. In April 1897, three people were killed. But the violence reached a crescendo in August 1898, local reports stating that some thirty men had been killed during a bread riot and many more wounded.[119] In Mashhad three people were killed in 1906. Nor was the presence of women in the crowd any deterrent to the use of force. In 1895, in Ardabil, the governor ordered a crowd of women assembled in front of his residence complaining about a bread shortage to be fired on.[120]

Looting also appears to have become more common from the 1890s. Tabriz, where political tensions ran high throughout the 1890s, saw several spates of looting. In 1895, the bazars were rushed and many

[116] Monthly Summary, Spring-Rice to Salisbury, 27 June 1900; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 642.

[117] Monthly Summary, Grant Duff to Grey, 19 July 1906; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 3, p. 31.

[118] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, p. 201.

[119] Consul-General, Tabriz, 29 August 1898, FO248/675.

[120] Mir Kiyayi, *Nan va Siyasat*, p. 185.

shops looted, and again in 1898 a crowd of women and religious students marched to the bazars and attacked the bakers' shops, several of which were sacked and wrecked. In Shiraz in May 1902 several bakers' shops were looted, and one baker killed, and in the riot in Tehran in 1903 a baker was nearly killed.[121] The bakers were more than capable of fighting back. In the Tabriz riot of 1898, after several bakers' shops in the bazar were sacked and wrecked, one woman was severely wounded and another shot dead by a baker.[122] The authorities also visited violence on the bakers in occasional echoes of an older paternalism. In Astarabad, near the southwestern shore of the Caspian Sea, in 1896, where the price of bread was high, the governor attempted to placate the discontented population by mutilating a baker, although with no effect on prices.[123] During the high tension in Tehran in 1898, the authorities decided to make an example of some shopkeepers, and a common sight in the bazar was that of bakers and butchers convicted of extortionate charges or adulteration hanging head downwards in their own shops. In Tehran in December 1905, just before the eruption of the constitutional revolution, the authorities had the head of the bakers' guild bastinadoed, extracting a promise that he would solve the bread problem, only to find prices rising further the next day.[124]

In the 1890s, Tabriz, a city then in the throes of change and subject to a range of radical influences, saw a series of riots. Indeed, these riots amounted almost to a bread war.[125] By 1898, the population was so convinced that the entire elite of Tabriz, especially the ulama, was guilty of hoarding and profiteering, that the rioting, which had erupted periodically since 1895, turned into an armed conflict. The properties of a wealthy clerical speculator were besieged by townspeople, rifle fire exchanged for many hours over two days.[126] The local chief of the artillery, another extremely wealthy landowner, even placed a couple of small field guns near the scene of the trouble, though he thought better of actually using them.[127] After the victory of the townspeople, the flight

[121] Hardinge to Lansdowne, 27 April 1903; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 2, p. 110.

[122] Monthly Summary, 1–26 August 1898; Durand to Salisbury, 26 August 1898; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 412.

[123] Summary of Frontier News, 10 July–8 August 1896; Durand to Salisbury, 8 August 1896; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 332.

[124] Katouzian, *The Persians*, p. 174.

[125] For Tabriz in this period, see Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*, pp. 44–61.

[126] Consul-General, Tabriz, 29 August 1898, FO248/675.

[127] Consul-General, Tabriz, 29 August 1898, FO248/675.

of the cleric, and the looting of his properties, it was reported that thirty men were left dead. The next year the riots resumed.

The cities of southern Iran were experiencing similar eruptions, all following the same pattern. Isfahan and Shiraz were the scenes of serious and repeated bread riots, Yazd at one point enduring daily demonstrations and Kirman seething with barely contained discontent, a full-scale riot occurring in 1902. By the end of the 1890s Mashhad, in the north-east, was also suffering in the same way.

During the same period Tehran was also wracked by an almost permanent bread crisis, although the resulting riots never reached the levels of violence experienced in Tabriz. By the late 1890s, the city was in the grip of hunger and deep discontent while the supply of wheat was tightly controlled by a ring of the highest officials, landowners and ulama. Riots broke out in 1899, recurring in 1900 and again in 1903. An especially ominous development was the tendency of bread riots to become coordinated, to break out in different cities at the same time. In 1898, for example, riots erupted simultaneously in August in Tabriz and in Isfahan, and in Yazd in September. In April 1903, the authorities feared contagion as almost simultaneous bread riots broke out in Mashhad and Tehran.

In earlier periods, hoarding had been largely an individual activity but by the end of the nineteenth century, coordinated 'rings' had appeared, partly as a defence against the accelerating financial and economic crisis, capable of exercising complete control over the market, even in the capital. Between the late 1890s and the constitutional revolution, Tehran was wracked by an ongoing political crisis caused by a ring of high officials operating to keep prices at approaching famine levels. This ring included, among others, most of the members of the government, the governor of Tehran, the *Imam-i Jum'ah* and the regent acting for the shah during his absence.[128] This powerful ring not only hoarded wheat but took active political measures to guarantee its control of supplies. In 1900, for example, since the new harvest was known to be exceptionally good, the governor of Tehran, in order to guarantee that the 'ring' would be able to dispose of its stocks at high prices, issued orders temporarily prohibiting grain from being brought into the city. The stranglehold which this ring exercised over the supply of grain led to repeated bread riots, notably that of April 1903 when the ring still operated by the then governor, together with other high officials, exasperated and enraged the population of the city. Nonetheless, despite their knowledge of the

---

[128] Monthly Summary, Spring-Rice to Salisbury, 27 June 1900; Burrell and Jarman, *Iran Political Diaries*, vol. 1, p. 642.

involvement of specific senior officials and members of the ulama, the population reserved its sharpest hostility for the shah himself. By the early 1900s, serious, deep-seated disaffection with the Qajar elite as a result of its failure to address the bread question and its open participation in profiteering existed throughout the country, but especially in the most important cities of Tehran and Tabriz, within a few years to be the sites of the outbreak of the constitutional revolution.

During 1905 the political, economic and social crises that had been sharpening since the 1890s erupted into revolution. Rocketing bread prices led to repeated women's demonstrations in Tehran. On May 6, women confronted the shah himself, two days later, the shah having left for Europe, protesters moved to the crown prince's palace, by the end of May these demonstrations took place on a daily basis.[129] For many of the plebeian elements who fought for the revolution, particularly in Tehran and Tabriz, an easing of their daily struggle for bread was an important motive. Now the bread problem began to find its way into modern political discourse, complaints about speculation and adulteration appearing in the new critical press. New tactics were also used to deal with speculators. In 1911, the head of the bakers' guild, a well-known speculator, was dealt with by the modern method of assassination.[130] By this time too, the older relative aversion to physical violence on the part of women protesters had vanished. In 1907, the richest merchant in Tabriz was killed by a mob including women for cornering the market in wheat. In 1909 in Tabriz, the head of the committee which was in charge of the city's bread supply was attacked by a crowd of women who accused him of hoarding. They killed him and mutilated his body which was then stripped and displayed in the main square. In Isfahan, in 1911, a crowd of starving women killed the head of the municipality and hung his body in the Maydan-i Shah. They were only dispersed by rifle fire ordered by the governor.[131]

The older customs were deeply embedded in popular political culture and bread riots of the classical kind, usually led by women, continued throughout the years of the First World War and the rise of Reza Khan, the last major bread riot taking place in the dying days of the Qajar regime, in September 1925.[132] They were hardly in evidence during the 1930s, a general decline in popular protest a result of the new monarchy's

---

[129] Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 133.
[130] Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, p. 135.
[131] Floor, *History of Bread in Iran*, pp. 125, 135; Martin, *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism*, p. 136.
[132] Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran'.

destruction of urban quarters under the guise of town planning, the removal or neutralization of popular leaders, the co-option of the clergy and the establishment of a modern police force. These decades also saw the growth of a working class in an embryonic industrial environment, and the increasing salience of trade unionism and the prioritizing of demands centring on wages and conditions. Nonetheless bread riots re-emerged to be a constant feature of the hungry years of the Second World War, even threatening the stability of the government in 1942.[133] Indeed, the choreography of the bread riot, rather than being simply superseded by modern political modes, in fact merged with them, often creating hybrid forms of protest which persisted until the 1979 revolution, this contentious creativity clearly illustrating both the dynamic character of subaltern 'traditions' and their utility to protest.

Although the fear and occasionally the reality of dearth continued to threaten the poorest, the grim years of 1917–19 were the last in which actual famine stalked Iran. The interwar decades, although they saw hardship and hunger, experienced nothing remotely comparable to the famines of the earlier period. It has attracted little attention, but it seems that the new Pahlavi order was able, finally, to guarantee that its population would not starve in large numbers. The new Pahlavi authorities experienced deep anxieties and apprehensions of the political consequences whenever dearth threatened the big cities. Existing literature, focusing on the urban elite and the political classes, has assumed that Reza Shah's legitimacy was eroded and finally destroyed by his authoritarianism and eventual arbitrary rule. Perhaps, however, from the perspective of the poor his ability to provide bread demonstrated, on the contrary, his maintenance of the Circle of Justice and gave him at least a veneer of legitimacy so manifestly absent from the later Qajars.[134]

What did the bread riots in Qajar Iran achieve? Pre-modern Middle Eastern polities, the Mamluks, Ottomans, Safavids and others all possessed long traditions of market supervision, and all valued social stability and political order above the maximization of profit. Bread protest, therefore, that 'petitioned as much as it denounced, supplicated a much as it threatened', often eventually succeeded in extracting a satisfactory response from the authorities.[135] It is impossible that the traditional bread riot would have been so widespread a tactic,

---

[133] Majd, *Iran under Allied Occupation*; McFarland, 'Anatomy of an Iranian Political Crowd'.

[134] For a further discussion of the paternalist discourse which frequently characterized early Pahlavi Iran, see Cronin, 'Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class'.

[135] Grehan, 'Street Violence and Social Imagination', p. 231.

and would have persisted over such a long period of time, had it not been at least occasionally successful in realizing some of its objectives. Indeed, within the confines of a pre-modern economy, the bread riot functioned to preserve a rough and ready equilibrium, disrupting this equilibrium only momentarily and offering no fundamental challenge. The bread rioters of late nineteenth-century Iran operated essentially within this traditional framework. Their objectives were the old limited ones: to rectify immediate problems of supply and price, to restore order to markets and to force officials and merchants to take remedial action. While the bread riots retained their older key features, however, the context within which they occurred, and the response of the elites and the authorities, were changing rapidly. Certainly, they still sometimes resulted in an amelioration of immediate hardship, by the emergency distribution of food or by elite obedience to government proclamation, but this was only ever temporary and declined as the century advanced. The adhesion of both protesters and monarchy to an ideology of paternalism concealed the reality that while rulers and ruled might still, in the second half of the nineteenth century, have shared a common discourse, their economic interests were diverging ever more sharply. Although the 'symbolic solidarity' represented by the periodic and crisis-driven reversion to an older paternalism was still available to the authorities, it was increasingly empty. In particular, the demand for setting the price, for market regulation, enabled the government to deal with protest by the dismissal of a governor or by the issue of a royal order. These now largely meaningless tactics merely diverted blame away from speculative landowners, the real culprits, onto the bakers, whose response was simply to close their bakeries and shops rather than sell at a loss, thus aggravating the crisis. The urban poor also remained always vulnerable to savage government repression.

It was this transformation of context and elite behaviour which confirms the late Qajar Iranian bread riot as an example of pre-industrial class war, as Thompson claimed for the English bread riots. Popular protest in Iran and across the Middle East has often been analysed within the framework of the politics of negotiation or mediated governance, a fundamental 'pact' between ruler and ruled containing a tradition of legitimate protest through which conflict between rulers and ruled could be choreographed and ultimately resolved.[136] The narrative above suggests that however cohesive elite and royal paternalism may have been

---

[136] See Martin, *The Qajar Pact*; Grehan, 'Street Violence and Social Imagination'.

in earlier periods, either as practice or as ideology, by the second half of the nineteenth century it was rapidly breaking down. The transition to the free market in England took place over more than a century. For the Iranian poor, however, this process happened almost overnight. Instead of a rough and ready paternalism, occasionally enforced by popular action, a war over profit erupted, openly pitting classes, the rich and the poor, those with property and those without, against each other. By the late nineteenth century, bread rioters had irrevocably joined the dangerous classes in Iran.

Much of the literature on famine, dearth and subaltern strategies of survival and resistance in Iran has focused on the speculative practices of the elite as an explanation for periodic food crises, or at least of their intensity. But this is a description of the situation, not an explanation. In thus apportioning responsibility and blame, the literature has tended to reflect and echo attitudes found in key source material, records left by British observers, diplomats, travellers and missionaries. It is as if historians of the Irish famine of the late 1840s took at face value the 'moralism' of the contemporary British authorities, which attributed the famine to fundamental defects in the Irish national character. The narrative presented here, on the contrary, does not seek an explanation of bread shortages in Iran in the turpitude, singly or collectively, of the Iranian elite. It sees their speculative practices, which were certainly real and extensive, rather as a symptom of a rapidly changing economic environment. They were simply playing by new rules, the rules and the game different to those of their domestic antagonists. Their behaviour resulted from the way Iran's integration into the global economy was structured and was entirely consonant with the logic of the free market.

Each of the disasters which befell the urban poor in the second half of the nineteenth century had its origins in financial and economic developments taking place in the globalizing economy. Grains and other staple foods became more valuable as markets opened up beyond Iran's borders and demand grew and transport improved, the trade deficit resulting from European economic penetration following the treaties of Gulistan and Turkomanchai made the search for cash profits by the merchant class ever more urgent, while the collapse in the value of silver originated far beyond Iran's control, exemplified by the disastrous Sherman Silver Purchase Act passed by the United States in 1890. If the Iranian government itself was hardly conscious of the motor and significance of global economic, financial and trade developments, and was unable to formulate appropriate responses, how much more opaque did the causes of their distress appear to the urban poor. Able only, at

best, to discern the local instruments of these profound changes, the Iranian moral economy had no effective answer to the free market and globalized trade.

Bread riots offer a glimpse into the lives of those largely unrepresented in the history and historiography of social change in Iran. Through the active role of women, they offer, first, a challenge to conventional understandings of gender relations.[137] In another sense too they ask us to reconsider existing interpretations of late nineteenth-/early twentieth-century history. The attitude of the protesters in Tabriz and Isfahan, and their readiness to take radical action against the most senior clerics, perhaps indicates an undercurrent of popular anti-clericalism which has so far been little investigated. Even the methods of the constitutional revolutionaries, the mass *basts* of 1906 in the British embassy, appear not as a novel phenomenon, but as a development of a tactic dating back to at least the 1850s. Bread riots suggest further possibilities of penetrating into a subaltern cultural universe through the excavation of the *charivari* practices commonly deployed by rioters to parody and humiliate their rulers.[138] In Tabriz in 1857, for example, those impelled 'to go to bed every night cold and hungry' paraded the streets leading a mangy dog and calling out that here was the prime minister.[139] In 1925, during a serious bread riot in Tehran, the women in the crowd staged a theatrical parody of a parliamentary sitting, breaking many chairs and chandeliers in the process.[140]

Furthermore, through the prism of popular responses, especially bread riots, to price rises and the ever present threat of hunger, a more general light may be shed on the ways in which, throughout the nineteenth century, the subaltern presence continually intervened in, and exerted pressure on, elite politics in Iran, constrained elite options and shaped agendas. This may be seen, for example, in the Qajar state's dying paternalism, periodically galvanized into action by popular pressure, its vigilance regarding market fluctuations and its fear of the resulting urban discontent combining with its consciousness of its own coercive weakness to result in erratic attempts at concession and repression. In addition to highlighting the impact on elite politics

---

[137] See Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, pp. 95–112; Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran'.

[138] *Charivari* (France), *skimmington* (England) and *scampanate* (Italy) are varieties of public demonstration by lower class elements of moral disapproval and community censure. They are designed to humiliate an individual or individuals and have been investigated to shed light on the beliefs and attitudes of the European unlettered.

[139] Murray to Clarendon, 18 April 1857, FO60/217.

[140] Cronin, 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran', pp. 194–5.

of the dynamics of class antagonisms, a focus on their active responses to hunger aims at restoring a sense of agency to the rural and urban poor. It was they who bore the brunt of hunger and both famine and its constant companion, epidemic disease, and who have typically been cast, not as combatants in a class war fought out over bread and markets, but rather as helpless victims of unavoidable natural disasters.

The 1890s are often seen as an interregnum, a period between the Tobacco Protest of the early 1890s and the constitutional revolution of 1905, when political activity was in abeyance or semi-clandestine, revolution finally galvanized as much by external events as domestic politics. Yet the story of the bread riots paints a different picture, and writes into the narrative of these years the experience of the urban poor. Iran's cities in these years were convulsed by popular protests at intolerable conditions. The year 1905, and the outbreak of the constitutional revolution, marked the decisive entry of the mass of the population into active politics. Yet revolutions, drawing in large sections of the population, do not erupt overnight. They rather simmer, for years and sometimes decades, before boiling over. The genealogy of the constitutional revolution has been traced back to the Tobacco Protest and the growing dissatisfaction of merchants, ulama and lay reformers. Yet how may be explained the involvement of the many thousands who took *bast* in the British Legation in Tehran in the summer of 1906, calculated at one-third of the labour force of the city and including cobblers, walnut-sellers, tinkers and cotton carders?[141] From the perspective of the hungry poor, the revolution of 1905/6 appears, not as the project of a discontented intelligentsia, dazzled by European constitutionalism, nor of a modernist, oppositional clergy, but as the logical outcome of a deepening political and social crisis. Iranian bread riots traditionally aimed at defending what was popularly perceived as a religiously and politically sanctioned entitlement. Yet a radicalizing context transformed the significance of bread protest. The Iranian revolution of 1905 can no more be separated from the bread riot that can other revolutions, that of February 1917 in neighbouring Russia most obviously demonstrating the ease with which a bread riot might turn into something much more transformative. Alienated from their rulers, their cities riven by remorseless class conflict, the Iranian poor during the years of the constitutional revolution demanded both bread and justice.

---

[141] Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 55–6.

Appendix

Petitions are an obvious source for (mediated) subaltern voices and have been extensively used, generating a considerable literature. So far, however, no petitions from the Qajar period concerning bread and hunger have been located. Petitions complaining about food shortages and asking for redress may be found in the Iranian National Archive and in the Majlis Library, but they mainly concern the first Pahlavi period and the years of the Second World War. Nonetheless, such petitions still contain strong echoes of an earlier Circle of Justice discourse emphasizing the reciprocal nature of rights and responsibilities. They exhibit a mixture of constitutionalism, notions of pre-Islamic Iranian greatness bolstered by references to the *Shahnamah*, and a barely concealed class resentment, typically concluding with veiled threats regarding the consequences of the authorities' failure to meet their side of the bargain. Interestingly, although Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Kashani is one of the addressees of the second petition, neither refers to any specific religious justification. One such petition is reproduced here in full. In this example, the petitioners themselves appear to have been illiterate, as they append thumbprints rather than signatures. It is followed by extracts from a second such petition, dated ten years later. These and other similar appeals may be found in the Majlis Library and the National Archive in Tehran.[142]

From: A list of signatories (Hendijan)

To: National Parliament (Majlis)

Date: 11 April 1932

You, who sit on the chairs of Baharistan and are surrounded by the riches and blessings and have all kinds of pleasure and gratification [at your disposal]; you who have embraced the good fortunes and spend your luxurious lives untroubled and at ease and breathe the fresh and pure air of Shemiran, take a look upon the appalling living situation in Hendijan and at the miserable and ill-fated people who are deprived of all standards of living. You, [who should be] the reflection of the nation's passions, take note of the state of these unfortunate famine sufferers, [and see how] some of them, who have endured extreme starvation, have left their houses and villages, searching from house to house and from one place to another, and how hard they try to protect their families and children from death. [As for] others who tried their best to endure famine and starvation, hunger has pushed them to the end and every hour, death manifests itself before their eyes and they have surrendered to despair.

---

[142] Majlis-i Shura-yi Islami, Kitabkhanih, Muzih va Markaz-i Asnad (Library, Museum and Document Centre of Iran Parliament) www.ical.ir/ical/en. Sazman-i Asnad va Kitabkhanih-yi Milli-yi Iran (National Archive Organization and Library of Iran) www.nlai.ir.

If something is not immediately done by the government and the representatives of the people and if [these] starving people are ignored, you will soon hear that they have deserted their houses and fled from the fear of death. Or, that because of starvation, we have ended [this] painful and miserable and dark life in the most gruesome way. Then, how will you wipe off this dark stain from your [claims of] devotion to Iran and its ethnic groups, that your brothers and compatriots and their wives and children died in this way!

Come and see this miserable and deplorable place where there is famine and agony all throughout. Destroyed villages, inhabitable houses, dying people whose souls have been crushed. To those who have a happy and joyful life, living off of our endeavours, come and see the dark and wretched state of our lives with your own eyes. Hear with your own ears, the cries of [our] children and the pain of our wives. Look at the deplorable state of our beloved children. They too, like your children, were once treasured by their parents and were raised with love and care and had a good life. Now come and see the state of these smiling blossoms [and how they] are no longer flourishing and how they have become depressed and lifeless and how are spending the last moments of their lives in hunger and [falling] into the arms of death.

Imagine if you were in our state and God forbid, you saw your children in this state. How would you feel? It is true that we, the people of Hendijan, do not have a representative in Parliament. Each constituency has their own representation that is elected to parliament. However, all members of parliament are in fact the representatives of all the people of Iran. You need to see all people in equal terms and be united in defending the rights of these people. This is why we have come to you for help and we are asking you for a cure to our misery and pain.

Have you forgotten Tahmuras [a figure from the *Shahnamah*] of the Pishdadian [dynasty], our great king, during whose reign there appeared a great famine. In order to prevent the death of the poor and assure [the essence of] justice, he ordered the rich to share their food with the poor on a daily basis. It is now the time to learn from our great leaders and follow the path of that great king.

Look at history and the deeds of the good people, you are legacy of these forefathers.

If the rebellious nature of this writing is improper or unsuitable, do not blame us as these come from our inner emotions and deep pains and appear on the page without control and turn in to letters and words. Nature does not have mercy and emotion and it does not have compassion. You, who manifest the true passions and delicate emotions [of the nation], will you [also] not have mercy and compassion [upon us]? We, with our lives at the point of ruin, are informing you of the essence of what is taking place. If you do not help us, we shall soon end our lives in defiance.

If there is an ear to listen, saying [something] once shall suffice.

[List of Signatures]

From: the people of Kashan

To: the Prime Minister, The Ministry of Food, The Ministry of Interior, the head of the National Parliament (Majlis), the MP for Kashan, Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Kashani and others.

Date: 24 November 1942

The petition begins by praising Kashan as an 'industrial city of Iran', with art work that is 'exceptional' and 'constantly praised by art lovers, both foreign and Iranian'. It also points out that previous monarchs have paid special attention to this city. It then states that 'unfortunately, from some time ago … [Kashan] lost the good will of those in charge and relevant officials have not given the slightest attention/effort to provide food for this city during this time'. The situation has therefore been pushed to a point where 'most people can't even get enough food to survive and in every corner and every street, there are cries and howls and sobs of young and old'. The petitioners point out that the people of Kashan have always considered it a duty upon themselves to obey government rules, pay high government taxes sooner than everyone else and obey all the laws.

However, is it fair (or deserving) that the wretched people [of Kashan] do not receive any attention from the ruling officials of the democracy of Iran [Kishvar-i Dimukrasi-yi Iran]Is it right that [the price for] our bread is not taken out from the budget… do you think that the heartbreaking cries of hunger of our children won't have any impact? why don't you care for our lives why don't you consider us like [you do] other cities and provide some bread [for us] from the budget why should the poor people of this city who can't eat anything other than bread be deprived of even that for God's sake, do something for us. We can no longer take it and our patience has run out… if nothing is done about our bread situation, thousands will soon lose their lives and history will count this murder as the responsibility of the current ruling bodies.

3 The Dark Side of Modernism
The 'Dangerous Classes' in Iran

Around the world, scholarly interest in the 'dangerous classes' has flourished recently and, especially as a result of the work of Michel Foucault, in marginality in general and in the role of the marginal in the construction of modern regimes of surveillance and discipline. As far as the Middle East is concerned, Foucault's paradigms have been incorporated into a number of studies of state-building, and marginality has also begun to attract a growing amount of attention.[1] Scholarship specifically on Iran has also begun to make use of these perspectives, and monographic work has appeared on elements of the dangerous classes themselves, on elite attitudes towards them and on their role in shaping modern institution-building. Thus far, however, this work has not been synthesized into a general analysis of the arrival of what is usually called modernity in Iran. This, contextualized within a comparative perspective, is the objective of the account which follows. It has at its centre the lives and experiences of various groups of the marginal, disreputable and criminal. In order to understand such lives and experiences, however, it pays equal attention to the changing character of the political, economic, social, cultural and ideological contexts within which those experiences are formed, and the practices and discourses of the authorities whom the 'dangerous' seek to placate, avoid, evade, cheat or, occasionally, resist.[2] By integrating the marginal and the apparently peripheral into a larger historical narrative, indeed by shifting them from the periphery and placing them at the centre of such a narrative, the account aims at contributing to a greater understanding not only of the marginalized themselves, but also of elites and reformers,

---

[1] One of the best known examples of the application of Foucauldian paradigms to the Middle East is Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[2] Compliance, even or perhaps especially when feigned, is harder to research and has attracted less attention. See Milen V. Petrov, 'Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2004, pp. 730–59.

of power and authority, of nationalism, modernism and state-building, of economic, political and social transformations and of their parallel discursive accompaniments.

The Dangerous Classes

What then is the origin of the notion of the dangerous classes? Who were they and what was it exactly which made them dangerous, not merely a perhaps regrettable but unavoidable feature of urban life? The notion was in fact born in early nineteenth-century France and spread rapidly across a Western Europe then in the throes of unprecedented and sometimes traumatic political, economic, social and cultural transformation, reaching the United States with the publication in 1872 of a book with the same title by the American social reformer Charles Loring Brace.[3] The dangerous classes, sometimes the criminal classes, sometimes the lumpenproletariat, became a common way of describing all those who had fallen out of the respectable working class into the lower depths of the new urban and industrial environments, and survived there by their wits and by various amoral, disreputable or criminal strategies. It included beggars and vagrants, paupers, gypsies, pickpockets, burglars and fences, prostitutes and pimps, army deserters, ex-prisoners, tricksters of all kinds, drug-dealers, the unemployed and unemployable, indeed every type of the criminal and marginal, and who were drawn from among women as well as men, and children as well as adults. Such representatives of the dangerous classes were extraordinarily well represented in literature, notable by Emil Zola, Victor Hugo and Charles Dickens in the nineteenth century and by Maxim Gorky and Bertolt Brecht in the twentieth, and in popular culture of all kinds.

  The dangerous classes, sometimes barely distinguishable from the newly assembling proletariat from among whom they invariably originated, were a constant preoccupation, indeed obsession, of the emerging European bourgeoisie, an apparent threat both to its property, through crime, and to its political power, through revolution, or at least social and moral chaos.[4] The resulting fear permeated both the discourse

---

[3] Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work Among Them* (New York: Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1872). The phrase is perhaps most associated with Honoré Antoine Frégier, whose book, *Des Classes Dangereuses de la Population Dans Les Grandes Villes, Et Des Moyens De Les Rendre Meilleures …*, was published in Paris in 1840.

[4] A linkage captured particularly sharply in Louis Chevalier's *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth-Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).

and the policies of the period, including, and perhaps especially among, elite reformers, and was central to the establishment of new mechanisms of control, including policing, legal and penal, and even medical and psychiatric, systems. Although the term fell into disuse in the twentieth century, it is often argued that the concept remains embedded in elite formulations of the connections between propertylessness, poverty, immorality, criminality and the 'underclass'.

The construction of the concept of the dangerous classes was not the exclusive preserve of right-wing or conservative political observers. Indeed, for much of the Left, including the Iranian Left in the twentieth century, the dangerous classes and the lumpenproletariat were synonyms and equally lethal to the interests of the working class.[5] This view owed its origins to Marx himself. In 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon', Marx provided a colourful description of the lumpenproletariat.[6] He wrote: 'alongside ruined and adventurous scions of the bourgeoisie, there were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged criminals, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, confidence tricksters, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, sleight-of-hand experts, gamblers, *maquereaux* [pimps], brothel-keepers, porters, pen-pushers, organ-grinders, rag-and-bone merchants, knife-grinders, tinkers, and beggars'. Concluding his list, Marx, assessing their social existence, predicts their political inclinations: an 'indeterminate, fragmented mass, tossed backwards and forwards'.[7] His ferocious attitude is of key importance in explaining what he considers, in contrast to often romanticized views, to be their typically reactionary political role. Potentially available to any political tendency, such elements were most likely to be mobilized in opposition to the organized working class and, for Marx, it was in this that they constituted a serious danger.

What, then, is the explanatory power of the concept of the dangerous classes when applied to Iran? Who were and are the members of this category? Do they correspond to their eponymous counterparts in Europe? What were the conditions in which they emerged, survived and sometimes finally disappeared? To what extent were they perennial features of urban life and how did they and their roles in society mutate as Iran made the transition to modernity? What do we possess in terms

---

[5] Olmo Gölz, 'The Dangerous Classes and the 1953 Coup in Iran: On the Decline of *lutigari* Masculinities', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Mddle East and North Africa*, pp. 177–90.

[6] Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon', *Surveys from Exile* (trans. and introduced by David Fernbach) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 146–249, p. 197.

[7] Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire', p. 197.

of narratives of their lives? What was their relationship with 'respectable' society and with the organs of the state, especially the police and the penal institutions? What were their political inclinations and potential? How did elite desires to control, reform and eradicate them shape the new disciplinary institutions of modern Iran, legal/penal/military/educational/medical/psychiatric and so on? What spaces did they occupy and how were they affected by the changing morphology of Iran's urban landscapes, for example, the disintegration of urban quarters and the displacement of coffee houses, taverns and *zurkhanahs* (lit. house of strength, a traditional gymnasium) by parks, shops, boulevards and cinemas? How were they seen, by themselves, by their own milieux and by elite discourses? How were they represented in high and in popular culture?

Such figures were certainly not themselves a modern phenomenon, either in Europe or beyond. Indeed, a subaltern subculture had thrived among the urban lower classes across the Middle East and North Africa for centuries. Pre-modern Middle Eastern cities, like their European counterparts, seem to have had no lack of the lumpen, the marginal and the semi-criminal.[8] Indeed, classical literature, medieval poetry and shadow-plays are replete with descriptions of these 'tricksters of all kinds',[9] known collectively as the *Banu Sasan*.[10] One example of this literature is the medieval manuscript, the *kashf al-Asrar* by Abdurrahman al-Jawbari, which provides vivid details of their elaborate deceptions.[11] His list of such characters is remarkably similar to Marx's lumpenproletariat and includes all kinds of swindlers, imposters, snake charmers, jugglers, slave-traders, fraudulent jewellers, drug sellers and money-changers, quacks and alchemists.[12] A particularly tricky sub-group of the *Banu Sasan* included those posing as sufis and dervishes in order to exploit the piety of the faithful to obtain money from them.[13]

---

[8] For a discussion of marginality and the marginal in the medieval Middle East, see Alexandre Papas, *Thus Spake the Dervish: Sufism, Language, and the Religious Margins in Central* Asia (Leiden: Brill, 2019), pp. 1–27.

[9] C. E. Bosworth, 'Banū Sāsān', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol, 111, fasc. 7, 1988, pp. 721–2; *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banu Sasan in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1976). See also A. Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 32–67.

[10] For a discussion of the most important works dealing with the Banu Sasan, especially from the Mamluk period, see A. Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, pp. 46–8.

[11] S. Wild, 'Jugglers and Fraudulent Sufis', Frithiof Rundgren (ed.), *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Visby 13–16 August, Stockholm 17–19 August 1972* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1975), pp. 58–62.

[12] Wild, 'Jugglers and Fraudulent Sufis', p. 58.

[13] Wild, 'Jugglers and Fraudulent Sufis', p. 60–1.

Members of this underworld even had their own argot, a manuscript from the fourteenth century, 'Kitab-i Sasian-i ba-Kamal' (Book of the Most Consummate Beggars), giving the slang vocabulary with Persian equivalents.[14]

Tales of the Banu Sasan, together with the attitudes towards the lower classes which they betrayed, circulated widely.[15] During the nineteenth century, however, such groups and figures ceased providing picturesque vignettes for European travelogues but were transformed into the 'dangerous classes'. Their transition from being merely a nuisance, a threat confined to unwary individuals, to a collective menace is inextricably connected to the arrival of modernity. Certainly, the poor had been an historically permanent presence in cities and towns, both in Europe and the Middle East, as were the more colourful and marginal figures and groups which emerged from among them. However, again in both Europe and the Middle East, the poor, the disreputable and even the criminal were not, before the nineteenth century, conceptualized as an existential threat to the moral, social and political order. Perceptions changed, however, in tandem with the accelerating transformations of urbanization and industrialization. The populations of the cities exploded, the large majority, poor and even semi-destitute, concentrated in slums and threatened with starvation by the smallest rise in the price of bread.[16] In these environments, the modern poor were different to the poor of the past, there were more of them in absolute terms and in terms of their proportion of the population, and elite attitudes towards them changed accordingly. Crime, for example, was no longer an incidental and exceptional occurrence with no wider significance beyond the damage to the victim but, now commonplace, anonymous and pervasive, began to be perceived as a threat to society, along with the poor who perpetrated it, part of the fabric of the city, a veritable product of the new environment itself.[17] Indeed the modern city itself increasingly seemed to represent a site of menace, this new sensibility to a specific urban pathology expressed in novels such as Sayyid Murtaza Mushfiq-i Kazimi's *Tehran-i Makhuf* (*Terrible Tehran*).[18] Across the region,

---

[14] Bosworth, 'Banū Sāsān'.

[15] For a discussion of the of the Banu Sasan stories, see Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, pp. 49–50.

[16] This was largely a result of considerable levels of migration from the countryside.

[17] Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes*.

[18] Hasan Mir 'Ābedini, 'Moshfeq-e Kazemi, Sayyed Mortaza', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2011). Available at: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/moshfeq-kazemi. See also Rasmus Christian Elling, 'Urbanizing the Iranian Public: Text, Tehran and 1922', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2019, pp. 301–18.

modernists themselves began to fear the consequences of modernity, especially for women and especially as symbolized by the city, which became synonymous with anonymity, danger and sexual crime.[19]

In these new 'modern' circumstances prevailing both in Europe and, slightly later, also in the Middle East, criminals, a straightforward threat to life and property, were an obvious danger. Crime itself came to be constructed as a class problem, committed by the poor against the better off. The most common type of crime was crime against property, often accompanied by violence, and was naturally most likely to be carried out by the poor, the line between the lowest levels of the working class and the so-called criminal class permeable and indistinct. The poor were not only adjacent to individual criminality but were also perceived as inclined to collective violence, the bread riot a universal, and often menacing, phenomenon. By the early twentieth century, the criminal class and the poor were joined by an entirely new category, an embryonic proletariat concentrated in its thousands in conditions of the utmost misery, with new and powerful weapons, for example the industrial strike, at its disposal. The ranks of the dangerous classes were further swelled as, with the advance of modernity, a variety of the 'traditional' survival strategies of the poor were also criminalized. Begging, vagrancy and prostitution, formerly tolerated, managed or ignored, were increasingly constrained by legal and police supervision and repression. Furthermore, not only were thieves, beggars, prostitutes and pimps to feel the weight of new legal and penal practices but they, along with *lutis*, the idle, opium addicts, gangs of destitute children, fortune tellers and other elements deemed undesirable, and even socially pathological, by the rising elites, were to be reformed and moulded by education, sport and conscription into obedient citizens. A major prerequisite for the vanquishing of the backwardness and ignorance supposedly embodied in such representatives of the dangerous classes was the transformation of the physical environment and the creation of a new culture of modernity. From now on, not only would the poor and marginal be arrested by the police and imprisoned by the legal and penal processes, but the spaces they occupied, physical and cultural, would be denied them and they themselves made healthy, industrious and respectable.

This was an ambitious project. Everywhere, the implementation of such a modernist agenda required the state to develop massively

[19] Cyrus Schayegh, 'Criminal-Women and Mother-Women: Socio-Cultural Transformations and the Critique of Criminality in Early Post-World War II Iran', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, pp. 1–21; Houra Yavari, 'Fiction, ii(b)', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. ix, fasc. 6, 1999, pp. 580–92.

enhanced coercive instruments. It also required, perhaps even more importantly, a series of cultural offensives that would facilitate, indeed make unavoidable, an internalization of modernity on the social and on the individual psychological levels. People would be subject to modern institutions, but they would also live in modern dwellings, look modern and wear modern clothes, behave in a modern way, with 'civilized' manners, and even experience appropriately modern emotions, arranging their family and personal relationships according to the new templates. For the European bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, followed by the modernist elites of the Middle East in the twentieth, the poor, the criminal and the immoral were linked, and the management and even eradication of the novel threat they represented required both repression and, especially, reform. Repression required the construction of a nexus of institutions, police, legal, penal and even municipal, while the second, reform, produced a discourse of rescue and redemption and the eventual emergence of an activist state with a paternalist agenda expressed through state provision of social services.

This agenda, when implemented in the Middle East and North Africa, has often been described as essentially colonial in character. Yet it was not only countries under direct European control, Egypt and French North Africa, which experienced this sometimes traumatic transition to modernity. Still independent states, the Ottoman Empire and then the Turkish republic, and early Pahlavi Iran, untrammelled by fears of inauthenticity and assertive in their nationalisms, were perhaps even more aggressive than colonial authorities in reshaping their populations through twin processes of repression and reform. Richard Keller's comment that representatives of the French *mission civilisatrice* often depicted their voyage into North African space 'as a regressive journey away from civilization into a foreign universe of misery, filth and infectious disorder', might be applied with equal force to the middle-class urban ideologues of Iranian and Turkish modernism as they contemplated the slums of their own cities.[20]

For the rising elites of the early twentieth-century Middle East, the transformation of public space and its control, in fact its policing, was a vital component of creating a modern 'civilized' society. Cities, especially capital cities most ostentatiously under the European gaze, as well as their inhabitants, were required to *look* modern, as an essential prerequisite of *being* modern. Remnants of the 'traditional', the 'oriental', the 'uncivilized', even occasionally the Islamic, had to be removed from sight,

---

[20] Richard C. Keller, *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 22.

the streets and squares no longer the natural home of beggars, vagabonds, mendicant sufis, popular entertainers, flagellation processions and so on. People and activities which had customarily been tolerated unless and until they became actually disruptive were now deemed an affront to modernity and criminalized. As well as offering unfortunate individuals a sometimes compulsory alternative, the modernist campaign came to imply a war of attrition against an entire urban subculture.[21]

The result of this campaign was a veritable mania for institutionalizing the marginal. Criminals were to be confined to prisons, the insane to asylums, street children to orphanages, women of unconventional morality to red-light districts and brothels, beggars to poorhouses, the contagious sick to hospitals. Such institutions were advertised as modern, sharp contrasts drawn with the older and traditional dungeons and madhouses, and were based on overtly reforming impulses, especially the desire for rehabilitation. Even the names of the new institutions reflected this new agenda, destitute children in Ottoman cities, for example, being consigned to reformatories (*islahhane*), prison inmates in Iran to places of repentance (*nadamatgah*).[22] Criminals might now be identified, apprehended and punished but also possibly reformed. Similarly, the mentally ill, the physically disabled and those with contagious diseases might be placed in institutions and again possibly cured. In any case, society would be protected from them. Concealed behind high walls, they would no longer be allowed to impart a sense of sickness and backwardness to the streets of towns and cities, where health and hygiene, of individuals but also, by extension, of society, had become a modernist obsession.[23] Out of this panoply of panopticons gradually emerged the social sciences and the new profession of social work, while a growing interest in eugenics supposedly offered scientific possibilities for improving the newly conceptualized racial health of society.[24]

---

[21] For an interesting discussion of the application of this reform agenda to Ottoman Gypsies, see Faika Çelik, '"Civilizing Mission" in the Late Ottoman Discourse: The Case of Gypsies', *Oriento Moderno*, vol. 93, 2013, pp. 577–97.

[22] Nazan Maksudyan, 'Orphans, Cities, and the State: Vocational Orphanages ("Islahhanes") and Reform in the Late Ottoman Urban Space', *International Journal of Middle Eastern* Studies, vol. 43, no. 3, 2011, pp. 493–511.

[23] Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'The Haves and Have Nots: A Historical Study of Disability in Modern Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2010, pp. 167–95; 'Hallmarks of Humanism: Hygiene and Love of Homeland in Qajar Iran', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 4, 2000, pp. 1,171–203; Cyrus Schayegh, '"A Sound Mind Lives in a Healthy Body": Texts and Contexts in the Iranian Modernists' Scientific Discourse of Health, 1910s–1940s', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, pp. 167–88.

[24] See, for example, Cyrus Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong: Science, Class and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

But it should not be assumed that the respectable classes themselves escaped the proliferating forms of confinement. New bureaucracies pioneered new discourses and practices of work. Binaries were established between work and leisure and between home and office, new anxieties were generated by the newly discovered social and moral danger of laziness, and a fixed and lengthened working day was disciplined by first gas, then electric, lighting and chiming clocks,[25] while the young found themselves not only in schools but also in scouting organizations and, especially, in the barracks of the new armies.[26] Such profound and cumulative changes to the way of life of the 'respectable classes' further emphasized and made visible the distance separating them from those remaining outside and even resistant to the world of modernity. Nonetheless, danger continued to lurk everywhere, indeed at the very heart of the modernist project. A too-ready adoption of European clothing produced, for example, the reviled 'dandy', while the emancipated woman harboured the potential not only for immorality but for undermining the very structure of family life and therefore of society.[27]

In Iran, as elsewhere in the Middle East, the modernist project possessed physical but also cultural and social dimensions. Its physical dimension encompassed town planning, architecture, the building of new infrastructure and institutions, most notably prisons, as well as boulevards, parks, shopping malls and cinemas, cumulatively transforming urban spaces. Its social and cultural dimensions targeted especially the dangerous classes, who were discursively constructed as the enemies of modernism. Prostitutes, *lutis*, beggars, criminals, the mentally and physically sick, and sometimes slum dwellers and the poor in general, would be either reformed or eradicated with the help of elite discourses of hygiene, health, work, sport, eugenics and national regeneration. The modernist project implied destruction as much as construction. All that was identified as belonging to the old and the backward, and to recall the previous Qajar dynasty, must be demolished in order for the new to triumph.

---

[25] The importance of changing conceptions of time and the increasing use of modern clocks has recently received attention. See, for example, Avner Wishnitzer, *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Nil Birol, 'Managing Time of the Ottoman Bureaucrat: Time Schedules for the New Tanzimat Institutions', *Archivum Ottomanum*, vol. 30, 2013, pp. 217–46. For an indication of the effect of the introduction of gas lighting, see Jens Hanssen, *Public Morality and Marginality in Fin-de-siècle Beirut'*, Eugene Rogan, (ed), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 183–210.

[26] Melis Hafez, 'The Lazy, the Idle, and the Industrious: Discourse of Work and Productivity in Late Ottoman Society', PhD thesis, UCLA (2012). Available at: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3pj7009t.

[27] Schayegh, 'Criminal Women and Mother-Women'.

The very cities themselves, the quintessential sites of modernity which nurtured the new middle classes, began to generate new fears.[28] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Iranian cities, like cities across the Middle East, experienced an extraordinary explosion of their populations in general, but especially of their poor. Population estimates for Iranian cities, especially Tehran, vary wildly, but all are agreed upon a massive expansion in these decades. Slums grew up, relative as well as absolute poverty increased as did the struggle for employment and housing. Crime also increased, the perception of crime increasing even faster. The presence of such numbers in such conditions led to both specific legislation and to more ambitious plans for the general remodelling of urban space along modernist lines. Street life, especially vagrancy, attracted a mass of legislation. Such individual measures, however, did not satisfy the enthusiasms of modernism for the creation of entirely new urban environments. In the major cities of the Middle East, plans were drawn up and energetic efforts made to remove from public view or monitor those who were troublesome or unsightly and to remodel especially the capital cities according to new principles of spatial order, health, policing, political control, culture and, eventually, consumerism.[29] Older notions of organic urban space were cast aside, residential quarters based on communal affiliations dissolved, their relationship to bazar/suq and mosque destroyed, to be replaced by wide boulevards á la Hausmann constructed on a grid, or left to the poorest of the population to die slowly of neglect, from now on always synonymous with disease, disorder and backwardness.

Before the twentieth century, Middle Eastern societies had possessed an organic integrity. There were certainly sharp divisions into social classes, immense wealth down to abject poverty, and into estates, landowners, ulama, men of the sword and of the pen, artisans and paupers. But although possessing vastly unequal access to material resources and power, these classes and strata recognized each other as parts of the same society, broadly shared a common culture and inhabited the same mental universe. Quality and expense aside, they wore similar styles of clothing, appreciated the same kinds of entertainment, understood gender roles and family structure according to similar expectations. The twentieth century, however, brought with it a new and eventually utterly unbridgeable gulf, introducing into Middle Eastern societies a binary division between the 'traditional' and the 'modern'. This division was eventually reflected in an actual division of physical space in the changing cities across the region.

[28] Schayegh, 'Criminal Women and Mother-Women'.
[29] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Khaled Fahmy, 'Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman, and Nasser Rabat (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 173–99.

First in Egypt, then in the Ottoman Empire and in French North Africa, the modernist agenda and its rationale first appeared in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Iran, however, although it too eventually followed a similar path, began the journey later than other countries across the region. The Qajar rulers, although preserving Iran's formal independence, lacked the strength to implement an effective state-building programme either in part or in full. Although the constitutional period generated various reform discourses, it was only with the arrival in power in the 1920s of a relatively coherent and determined modernism that substantive change began to be realized. In the interwar decades, Iran embarked on an almost revolutionary programme of social reformation and urban redesign, which had, as it central objective, the creation of an environment on European lines suitable for the modern society that was coming into being in which there would be no place for those deemed vestigial remnants of an impoverished, backward, fanatical and diseased Qajar past. Changes and even transformations which had taken centuries in Europe and decades in other Middle Eastern countries were, in Iran, compressed into a few years. The suddenness and headlong pace with which much of this programme was implemented in Iran is well illustrated by, for example, the building of modern prisons. First discussed in the early 1920s, an ambitious programme of prison construction was announced in 1928, just after the abolition of Capitulations and the consequent removal of the legal immunity possessed by Europeans, and the first modern prison opened the next year, in 1929. Implementation at such speed and largely 'from above' also lent the process a marked ruthlessness. Of the town planning, one observer commented in the 1930s that parts of Tehran looked as if they had been bombed from the air.[30] The changes of these years are often conceptualized as separate individual measures, limited in scope and ambition. Yet in fact they had an extraordinary ripple effect, producing profound transformations far beyond their original intention. This can be seen, for example, in the radical implications of the decision to develop Tehran on a grid. The new grid made necessary an entirely different style of dwelling, the apartment rather than the courtyard house, this in turn bringing with it fundamental changes in family life and gender relations.

The nationalist and modernist elites of the Middle East in the twentieth century, like their European predecessors, were agreed on the nature of the threat represented by their own dangerous classes. There was, however, an additional dimension to the problem, a dimension resulting from the complications introduced by the intrusion and persistence

---

[30] Eckart Ehlers and Willem Floor, 'Urban Change in Iran, 1920–1941', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 26, nos. 3–4, 1993, pp. 251–75, p. 259.

of European imperial and colonial power. Emerging discourses were obliged to configure the nature of the threat posed within the context of a generalized critique of foreign domination. Prostitution, for example, a threat to the physical and moral health of society, became also a metaphor for national degradation and powerlessness against foreign sources of corruption. As the nation was ever more frequently symbolically depicted as a woman, who required protection from violent penetration by foreign powers, so the prostitute became a powerful symbol of national and masculine humiliation and shame.[31]

The Prostitute

Indeed, the figure of the prostitute in Iran, as elsewhere in the Middle East, is in many respects exemplary, in terms of what she reveals about the character of the dangerous classes, the position occupied by them in modernist discourses, and the opaqueness of their own mentality. She (the male prostitute was absent from both discourse and policy) perfectly illustrates the essential liminality of the dangerous classes and their capacity to become freighted with a wide range of elite fears, anxieties and even hopes. Like other supposedly socially pathological elements, she became the object of both repression and reform, to be contained and even punished but perhaps also rescued by the intervention of an activist and paternal state. Indeed, her discursive role is perhaps as illuminating as are the conditions of her actual historical existence. She also represents the enigma of the marginal, efforts to recover her authentic voice and agency frustrated, she herself silenced by an elite discourse with the power to define her.

From a traditional point of view, women were, as such, intrinsically dangerous, their sexuality a cause of *fitna* (discord or disturbance), a source of potential corruption to both individual men and to society more generally. The answer traditionally given to the problem thus discursively presented by women, therefore, was their strict guardianship and control by men and, as far as possible their seclusion, either literally, within the confines of the home, or symbolically, by the veil. Given the strict limitations imposed on women, few options were available to them should they, for whatever reason, find themselves ejected from the world of family and kin-based respectability.

Commercial sex was therefore by no means a modern phenomenon in Iran. The practice was well established and similar in its main features

---

[31] See, for example, Hanan Hammad, 'Between Egyptian National Purity and Local Flexibility: Prostitution in al-Mahalla al-Kubra in the First Half of the 20th Century', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2011, pp. 751–83; Jairan Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion: The Red-Light District of Tehran, 1922–1970', Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 39–50.

to that in other countries across the Middle East. From Morocco to
Iran, prostitution was a common feature of larger cities and commercial
and pilgrimage centres, ports being particularly well known for the
trade. It was also highly diverse, encompassing highly paid courtesans
catering to the requirements of elite men, skilled entertainers, singers
and dancers, who also offered sexual services, and abjectly poor
and desperate women catering to the lowest end of the market.[32] It
took place in or in the neighbourhood of brothels, taverns and coffee
houses, which were usually subject to some sort of informal red-light
zoning, but also, more discreetly, in private homes. The demarcation
line between prostitutes and working-class women, especially those
engaged in service roles, such as maid or laundress, was often blurred.
Further uncertainty arose from the 'professional', or alternatively casual
and part-time, possibilities offered by the trade, from a legal failure
to differentiate between fornication, adultery and prostitution, and
an inclination to equate the latter with a vague moral looseness.[33] A

---

[32] Rudi Matthee, 'Prostitutes, Courtesans, and Dancing Girls: Women Entertainers
in Safavid Iran', Rudi Matthee, Beth Baron and Nikki R. Keddie (eds.), *Iran and
Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (Costa Mesa,
CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000), pp. 121–50, Willem Floor, *A Social History of Sexual
Relations in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2008), pp. 171–276.

[33] Prostitution in the Middle East and North Africa has recently attracted considerable
attention and there is now a substantial literature. Among the most recent studies
are Francesca Biancani, *Sex Work in Colonial Egypt* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018);
Liat Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East*
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017); Hanan Hammad, *Industrial Sexuality: Gender,
Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas
Press, 2016), pp. 141–208; Mark David Wyers, *Wicked Istanbul: The Regulation of
Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic* (Istanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık,
2012). In addition to the works cited elsewhere, see also James E. Baldwin,
'Prostitution, Islamic Law and Ottoman Societies', *Journal of the Economic and
Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, 2012, pp. 117–52; Fariba Zarinbaf, *Crime
and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press,
2010), pp. 86–111; Elyse Semerdjian, *'Off the Straight Path': Illicit Sex, Law, and
Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008),
pp. 94–137; Khaled Fahmy, 'Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Egypt', Eugene
Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B.
Tauris 2002), pp. 77–103. Bruce W. Dunne, 'French Regulation of Prostitution
in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria', *The Arab Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no.
1, 1994, pp. 24–30; 'Sexuality and the "Civilizing Process" in Modern Egypt',
unpublished PhD thesis, Georgetown University (1996); Hanan Hammad,
'Regulating Sexuality: The Colonial-National Struggle over Prostitution after the
British Invasion of Egypt', Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (eds.), *The Long
1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh
University Press, 2014), pp. 195–221; Marinos Sarriyannis, 'Prostitution in
Ottoman Istanbul, late Sixteenth-Early Eighteenth Century', *Turcica*, vol. 40, 2008,
pp. 37–65; Müge Özbek, 'The Regulation of Prostitution in Istanbul, 1875–1915',
Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 46, no. 4, 2010, pp. 555–68; Aytu Çakıcı, 'Immoral
Earnings: Portraying Prostitutes in Ottoman Turkey', Andrea Ruthven and Gabriela
Mádlo (eds.), *Illuminating the Dark Side: Evil, Women and the Feminine* (Witney:
Interdisciplinary Press, 2010), pp. 275–82.

particularly knotty ambiguity arose in Iran from the practice of *mut'a* or pleasure marriage, a temporary union contracted for a limited period of time, and sometimes, though by no means invariably, amounting to little more than a legitimized form of prostitution.[34] Although a woman's motives for contracting such a marriage might in fact be varied, clerical insistence that financial gain for her, and physical satisfaction for the man, were the only legitimate justifications increased its apparent similarities to prostitution.[35]

Most of what is known about pre-modern prostitution in Iran comes from accounts by foreign travellers whose somewhat salacious gaze tended to fix itself upon the upper layers of the trade, on the beauty, wealth and accomplishments of courtesans, who must have constituted a tiny minority of those engaged in selling sexual services.[36] Of the poor, who worked in brothels or from their own homes, or who walked the streets, we know very little. Of male and child prostitution we again know almost nothing. In other parts of the Middle East, especially the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and colonial North Africa, the survival of more extensive archives, especially court archives, has made possible the construction of a somewhat fuller picture of the everyday realities of prostitution, of the lives of prostitutes and of the reaction to their presence of local communities. The everyday realities were complex indeed. The legal position was clear: sex outside marriage or concubinage was against Shari'ah law and subject to the severe *hudud* penalties. However prostitutes, let alone their clients, rarely found themselves facing such charges because of the difficulties of providing sufficient proof and because false accusation carried an equally severe punishment.[37] They were rather brought to court, usually by their neighbours who petitioned against them, to be charged with lesser offences, disorderly behaviour, encouraging drinking, gambling and crime, and generally making a nuisance, the undesirability of such activities emphasized by the use of euphemistic allusions.[38] Punishment was usually banishment, convicted women finding return relatively easy after the lapse of a decent interval. Given the very close similarities between Iran and Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, it may be assumed that similar legal and social attitudes prevailed there too. Evidence of neighbourhoods collectively petitioning against the presence of prostitutes, for example, survives

---

[34] Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989).
[35] For a full discussion of *mut'a* marriage, see Haeri, *Law of Desire*.
[36] Matthee, 'Prostitutes, Courtesans, and Dancing Girls'.
[37] Baldwin, 'Prostitution, Islamic Law and Ottoman Societies'.
[38] Zarinbaf, *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul*; Semerdjian, '*Off the Straight Path*'.

in Iranian archives from the constitutional period, and it was almost certainly a much older practice, while Iranian police reports from the late nineteenth century confirm these local attempts at neighbourhood control.[39]

In Iran, as elsewhere, a pervasive attitude that prostitution was a necessary evil, a guarantee of social order, even facilitating the sharp gender segregation prevailing in respectable society, governed the behaviour of the authorities and possibly also the reactions of the population in general. Pragmatism tinged with a degree of ambivalence was the order of the day, punctuated by bouts of sometimes harsh but always short-lived repression should the trade become a public nuisance or should a ruler wish to demonstrate his piety to his subjects, to himself or to some recalcitrant cleric.[40] Iran and other pre-modern states in the Middle East and North Africa, like their contemporaries across Europe, regulated, taxed and zoned prostitution as far as their very limited capacities permitted. The encroachment of modernity, however, fundamentally disrupted this rough and ready equilibrium. From the late nineteenth century, the emergence of a modern gender discourse advocating the emancipation of women, their education and employment, and an end to veiling, seclusion, child marriage, polygamy and male repudiation, gave rise to profound new anxieties.[41] How was this transition to modernity be managed and what might its consequences be? How would the boundaries of respectability be preserved as women intruded ever more into male public space? How could the disruptive power of female sexuality be contained and family honour protected? Amid these uncertainties, prostitution was transformed from a necessary evil and occasional localized nuisance into a vehicle for new and entirely modern fears. This new awareness of prostitution led social commentators, secular and religious, intellectuals and novelists to begin to concern themselves with the nature and consequences of the trade and modernizing states to adopt a new interventionism. Gradually a binary came to be established between respectable, emancipated modern women and their antithesis, the prostitute, this binary policed with extraordinary energy.

[39] Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion', p. 40; Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations*, p. 244.

[40] Matthee, 'Prostitutes, Courtesans, and Dancing Girls'; Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations*.

[41] Palmira Brummett, 'Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1995, pp. 433–60.

Across the Middle East and North Africa, for both independent states and colonial and imperial authorities, the most common initial response to the new fears about prostitution was to attempt to impose modern systems of regulationism, of French origin, involving legally regulated brothels, clinics for medical supervision and prisons for the recalcitrant.[42] The introduction of modern regulationism was an integral element of much wider state-building projects. Unlike its medieval precursors, it depended for its effectiveness on the existence of institutions, bureaucratic, police, judicial and medical, of considerable power and complexity. As in Europe, it both required and drove a massive expansion in the claims of the state to impose its authority over the bodies of its citizens. Regulationism has, accordingly, often been described in overtly Foucauldian terms, as a regime of surveillance and discipline. However, in both Europe and the Middle East, regulationism was in fact predicated on a serious overestimation of the power, actual and potential, of the state and of the obedience of its citizens. Most importantly, it failed to take into account the likely reactions of the women themselves who, it was discovered, were not after all completely lacking in agency. The system was indeed fatally undermined by the evasion, avoidance and passive resistance of its targets, who often succeeded in reducing the policy to a dead letter.[43]

As the nineteenth century reached its end, it was becoming clear that regulationism was failing in its own declared objectives. It was now increasingly challenged by new ideas of abolitionism. Officials, doctors and especially social reformers across the Middle East and North Africa, like their counterparts in Europe, increasingly began to believe that prostitution should not be controlled but eradicated, state regulation implying an unacceptable toleration.[44] Perhaps most importantly, partly as a result of the newly audible voices of female reformers, prostitutes themselves began to be seen as victims, as 'fallen women' capable of redemption. Abolition became their goal. Abolition in practice, however, tended to mean only criminalization.

Regulationism had been attempted in various countries of the Middle East during the nineteenth century as part of the expanded claims to political and cultural hegemony being asserted by modern states, whether under colonial authority or independent. In Iran, however,

[42] Timothy J. Gilfoyle, 'Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 1, 1999, pp. 117–41.
[43] Dunne, 'French Regulation of Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria'; 'Sexuality and the "Civilizing Process" in Modern Egypt'.
[44] Hammad, 'Regulating Sexuality'.

the Qajar state was quite incapable of envisaging such an assertion of power, lacking entirely the administrative, police and medical resources necessary to such a project. Nonetheless towards the end of the century the subject of prostitution gradually penetrated into reforming discourse and, as elsewhere, concerns seem to have first appeared in the context of public health, particularly the spread of syphilis.[45] A steady stream of publications, asserting the dangers of disease and the responsibility of prostitutes for its spread, followed.[46]

During the constitutional period and in the 1920s, however, a profound discursive shift took place, as it had already taken place elsewhere across the Middle East, with the emergence of 'compassionate' attitudes which insisted on the prostitute as a victim, a woman in danger, rather than a threat.[47] Novel ideas about gender produced a new emphasis on the hardships experienced by women in an unreformed society, to the difficulties resulting from their powerlessness within the family, to what might befall them at the hands of unscrupulous men, and finally to the ever present risk of their helpless fall into prostitution. 'Fallen women' thus emerged from the constitutional period not only as victims but as victims who might be rescued. Such a view was expressed by not only social reformers but was a major theme in literature, several widely read novels taking it as their central theme, and even in the new film industry.[48]

Other changes in relations between men and women reinforced these new views about prostitution. The ideal of companionate marriage gradually became generally accepted, men encouraged to seek emotional and intellectual as well as physical satisfaction from their wives. The decline of the old aristocratic extended households, and particularly the example of the new 'middle-class' Pahlavi court, made courtesans obsolete and even redolent of a discredited past. By the 1920s, prostitution had been thoroughly modernized. As elsewhere, most obviously with the transformation of Japanese geishas into sex workers, prostitution

[45] Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, ''The Politics of Reproduction: Maternalism and Women's Hygiene in Iran, 1896–1951', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1–29, p. 14.

[46] Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion', pp. 40–2.

[47] Gahan, in a perceptive survey of the entire Pahlavi period, has charted the emergence of a discourse of 'compassion' in the context of the never resolved struggle between regulationist and abolitionist impulses in Iran, especially as epitomized by the tensions existing around the red-light district of Shahr-i Naw, the emergence of the profession of social work and the increasing sublimation of the fight against prostitution into a 'rescue mission'. Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion'.

[48] Houra Yavari, 'Fiction, ii(b)'; Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations*, p. 255.

became reduced to its essentials: the exchange of sex for money between strangers.[49]

The new post-1921 Iranian state was confronted with a range of contradictory but urgently expressed demands from its modernist constituencies, both abolitionists and regulationists, who were agreed on the dangers of a supposed rapid rise in prostitution.[50] In deference to regulationist pressures and middle-class sensibilities, the government's first action was to encourage the concentration of prostitution in an in an informal red-light district of Tehran, which dated from the late nineteenth century, called Shahr-i Naw, followed by the very gradual imposition of medical checks and police surveillance. But efforts at regulation, always hampered by the still rudimentary nature of Iran's state institutions, now came up against the opposition of women's organizations and wider modernist opinion. Even the zoning represented by the existence of an acknowledged red-light district was fiercely criticized by reformers who advocated 'houses of hope' to rescue women from the 'forced crime' of prostitution.[51] The Iranian women's journal *Alam-i Nisvan*, following organizations such as the Egyptian Feminist Union, was even more hostile to prostitution than regulationist opinion, and was crucial to popularizing the idea that prostitution was degrading to a modern society and should not be tolerated.[52] Gradually abolitionism gained ascendancy, although its triumph was never total, and in the years after the Second World War Iran accordingly saw a mushrooming of state and private welfare organizations aimed at the rehabilitation of prostitutes.[53]

Elite discourses on prostitution during the Pahlavi period were captured by the victimhood template, although reformers continued to demonstrate a marked ambiguity towards, even disgust at the trade and its practitioners, abolitionists even fiercer then regulationists in their denunciations.[54] Popular attitudes, however, especially as articulated in popular mass cultural productions such as the commercial cinema and popular music, tended towards romanticized and broadly sympathetic narratives. The immensely popular pre-revolutionary Iranian genre of

[49] For the modernization of the prostitute elsewhere from courtesan to sex worker, see, for example, Sue Gronewold, *Beautiful Merchandise: Prostitution in China, 1860–1936* (New York: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1982); Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[50] Schayegh, *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong*, p. 140.

[51] Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion', p. 43.

[52] See Kozma, *Global Women, Colonial Ports*.

[53] Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion', pp. 43–50.

[54] Gahan, 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion', p. 43.

filmfarsi, for example, which featured heroic 'tough guys', sometimes showed these characters rescuing or reforming prostitutes.[55] Another example of the readiness of the Iranian lower classes to embrace highly romanticized versions of morally ambiguous women is that of the entertainer Mahvash. Becoming a prostitute in Shahr-i Naw after an unhappy childhood, sexual abuse and several unhappy marriages to abusive men, Mahvash, whose talents were recognized while she was still working in a brothel, became hugely popular as a singer of the despised *mutrabi* genre, unwesternized popular urban music relating the hardships of the life of the poor and underprivileged. She appeared in many films and wrote an explicit autobiography, making no attempt to conceal, indeed even revelling in her past, and when she died, in 1961, her funeral attracted perhaps a million or more mourners.[56]

The narrative of her own life provided by Mahvash illustrates the difficulty of penetrating beyond the dominant discourse on prostitution to uncover the authentic experiences of prostitutes themselves. Their voices are rarely audible at all, and when they are, tend to mimic elite understandings of their motivations, attitudes and behaviours. The woman lured into prostitution as the victim of unscrupulous male exploitation and deception, Mahvash's own version of her 'fall', is for example, a common trope.

Again, Kamran Shirdel's documentary *Qal'ah* (*The Castle*), shot in 1966 in Shahr-i Naw and commissioned by the Women's Organization of Iran, perfectly illustrates the contours of the rescue discourse and the strategic or perhaps compliant mimicking by prostitutes of elite attitudes.[57] The film, although superficially saturated with the discourse of rescue and the paternal legitimacy of the monarchy, also implicitly critiques it through the reality of the stark hopelessness of the women's lives, using images to subvert the narrative, to the extent that it was not shown until after the revolution. The women who relate their stories openly to camera, with no attempt to disguise their identity, typically

---

[55] Hamid Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: Volume 2, The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 266–90.

[56] H. E. Chehabi, 'Voices Unveiled: Women Singers in Iran', *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History*, pp. 151–66; for Mahvash see also G. J. Breyley and Sasan Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment: From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). For another dancer-actress, Kubra Sa'idi, known as Shahrzad, see Kamran Talatoff, *Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran: The Life and Legacy of a Popular Female Artist* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011). For a general discussion of female performers, see Ida Meftahi, *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

[57] For a discussion of Kamran Shirdel's films, see Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*. All three of Shirdel's films referenced in this chapter are available online.

blame their family, their parents or their husbands, for forcing or cheating them into a life of degradation. They present themselves as powerless and innocent, gullible, often child victims, sometimes tricked or even sold to brothels. Not one voice deviates in any significant way from this narrative. Not one claims any choice or agency of any kind. The women present themselves as eager for rehabilitation, although weak, and request and implore assistance, even from Princess Ashraf herself, the patron of the Women's Organization. Their agency, like that of other highly marginal groups, is expressed essentially through their denial of agency and through their reproduction of elite notions about their own victimhood, helpless misfortune and desire for rescue. Their accounts thus possess a generic quality, homogenizing the experience of prostitution and making the prostitute-as-victim singularly representative. These women's testimonies, shaped by elite concerns, marginalize themselves in favour of highlighting the redeeming moral character of their rescuers.

Regulationism saw the prostitute as an active danger. The discourse of abolitionism, on the contrary, often tended to absolve the prostitute altogether of any agency, seeing her 'fall' either as a result of unbearable hardship, or as a result of the immoral and criminal activities of those around her, especially men. In the modernist iteration of prostitution, the line between respectable and fallen was absolute. Were any women to cross this line, rehabilitation was necessary, any measure of which required energetic intervention by the authorities. The hegemony of this discourse, as powerful in Iran as around the globe, tended to silence other voices. It compressed prostitution into a single phenomenon, eradicating the diversity of pre-modern sex work and creating a binary between 'respectable' and 'fallen' women. Gone were the wealthy accomplished courtesans with powerful patrons, the singers and dancers, the part-timers supplementing meagre resources, the receivers of presents, the loose behaviour perhaps voluntarily adopted by the young. Yet in Iran the phenomenon of *mut'a* marriages continued to demonstrate the 'multiplicity of issues and complexities of the lives' of *sighehs* (temporary wives) and by extension, of other women engaging in some kind of sex work.[58] In the versions of their own lives provided to Shahla Haeri by *sighehs* in 1970s Iran, unhappy marriages, male deception, lack of education and employment opportunities and, especially, divorce figure prominently. Yet their narratives also depict themselves acting autonomously, making difficult choices in the context of limited options, trying to satisfy their own emotional and physical as well as social and financial needs and refusing to submit to intolerable conditions.

[58] Haeri, *Law of Desire*, pp. 105–52.

In Iran, as elsewhere, the possession by prostitutes and other women living severely circumscribed lives of any agency, its degree and character, have been vexed questions. Yet the historical realities, up to and including the present, were certainly more varied and complicated than the victim/rescue discourse implies. In practice regulationism led to an increase in state control of prostitutes, while abolitionism led only to the criminalization of prostitution, not its eradication or even its diminution. The response of prostitutes themselves to these attempted extensions of state control over their lives was to devise strategies of avoidance, evasion and deception.[59] Prostitutes, furthermore, sometimes energetically and skilfully resisted rescue. In cities such as Istanbul and Cairo, European prostitutes insisted on their immunity from the police under the Capitulations, local women, lacking this legal status, relied on bribery and forged documents.[60] Nor were they necessarily ostracized by their communities. The location of prostitution within the world of work has shown how women in various environments, the Kabyle Ouled Nail tribal population in Algeria, for instance, and the women of colonial Nairobi, appear in fact to have attached no shame to temporary prostitution but to have seen it as a legitimate means of accumulating cash resources in order to preserve and assist family structures.[61] Far from undermining the family, or being the product of family collapse, they thus rather contributed to family stability and prosperity. The ease with which Ouled Nail women might return to their families and marry is remarkable. Indeed, in the pre-modern Middle East, the reintegration of former prostitutes into the societies that produced them seems to have met with few obstacles, requiring nothing more than public repentance, possibly followed by a hurried marriage.[62] As in working-class Victorian London, so in the Middle East including Iran, prostitution, casual and temporary, or sometimes simply an expression of indifference to middle-class moral values, often implied no irrevocable personal or family catastrophe, nor any lasting stigma. Prostitutes did not always experience the shame considered appropriate for them by abolitionists, nor were their attitudes to 'respectable' society always as deferential as

[59] Dunne, 'Sexuality and the "Civilizing Process"', p. 219.
[60] Malte Fuhrmann, '"Western Perversions" at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870–1915)', *History and Anthropology*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 159–72; 'Down and Out on the Quays of İzmir: "European" Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port Cities', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2009, pp. 169–85.
[61] Dunne, 'French Regulation of Prostitution', p. 26; Gilfoyle, 'Prostitutes in History', pp. 124–6; Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).
[62] Dunne, 'French Regulation of Prostitution'.

implied in the documentary *Qal'ah*. Prostitutes in nineteenth-century Khartoum, for example, mainly ex-slaves, challenged local social norms in a variety of aggressive ways, with alcohol, outspoken obscenities and a loud contempt for the wives of any potential clients.[63] Against this background, the elite abolitionists of twentieth-century Iran, like their counterparts elsewhere, appear to have been engaged not primarily in a project of rescue but rather in disciplining the sexual attitudes and behaviour of the lower classes and enforcing middle-class moral values on a recalcitrant society.

Immediately after the 1979 revolution Shahr-i Naw was bulldozed and the new authorities, overturning a long tradition and viewing prostitutes not as victims but as dangerous polluters, imposed *Shari'ah* penalties on prostitutes on several occasions. Nonetheless, aggravated by the social upheavals of the revolution itself and the ensuing war with Iraq, prostitution did not remain purely a religious matter, its existence a challenge to the legitimacy of the Islamic republic, but soon re-emerged as a social problem of considerable complexity, once again at least partly framed within a public health discourse, no longer syphilis but drug addiction and HIV, and the old debates between abolitionists and regulationists re-emerged with it.[64] Once again too, the authorities grappled with prostitution in the context of a much wider campaign to regulate and control female sexuality, *mut'a* marriages, for example, proposed by certain clerics as a solution to the supposed dangers both of prostitution and of illicit sexual activity by young people.[65]

The Serial Killer

From the late nineteenth century, concerns about prostitution had been both gender and class based and were integral to a wider obsession with an allegedly rising crime rate. Thus, the conditions were created for the arrival of a truly modern phenomenon as anxieties about gender, sex and prostitution, crime and the menace of marginality came together to produce the sensational murder and the serial killer, usually with sexual motives. The phenomenon of the serial killer is quintessentially modern. Yet it is harder to be sure whether the cases of multiple murder

---

[63] Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, 'Slavery and Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Turco-Egyptian Khartoum,' Terrance Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 165–6.

[64] Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations*, pp. 265–76.

[65] Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations*, pp. 273–4.

that acquired such notoriety in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Middle East were really novel. The anonymity and shifting populations of modern cities across the Middle East certainly created the right conditions for the perpetration of such crimes but, although the scale was much greater than in the past, these conditions were not new. It is quite possible that serial killers are a perennial, if rare, problem, and stalked Middle Eastern cities undetected, as they stalked European cities, in earlier periods.[66]

In the Middle East, as in Europe, the social phenomenon of the serial killer, if not necessarily the multiple murderer him or herself, was indelibly imprinted with modernity. The phenomenon required four indispensable elements: an identifiable victim and perpetrator, one or preferably both marginal; a police force with powers of, or at least aspirations to, modern detective work; a national press; and a professional class capable of interpreting the event to the wider public and drawing appropriate lessons. Across the Middle East, these conditions were beginning to be fulfilled. The combination of a new fascination with unbridled female sexuality and prostitution, the frightening consequences of uncontrolled lower-class migration and the growth of urban slums, the development of a modern police force equipped with forensic science, and the stimulation of an appetite and a market for crime fiction and lurid press reports resulted inevitably in the emergence of localized variants of Victorian England's panic over 'Jack the Ripper'.[67]

Four of the most notorious such cases may be mentioned here, each one training a searchlight on contemporary anxieties and preoccupations, on changing mores, on emerging institutions, the police and the press and even on new commercial opportunities. One early but typical episode, which created a furore in Istanbul in 1896, concerned the murders of an Ottoman Greek woman, her mother and their servant. Reporting graphic detail of the violence itself, the newspapers also titillated the growing public interest by offering supposed biographical information about the woman, hinting at her moral transgressions. The culprit was, it turned out conveniently enough, an Armenian, motivated by sexual jealousy.[68] In 1920, an even more spectacular episode hit the newspaper headlines, the first full blown case of serial murder in the Middle East.

[66] James Sharpe, *A Fiery and Furious People: A History of Violence in England* (London: Random House Books, 2016), pp. 507–39.

[67] Nurçin İleri, 'Between the Real and the Imaginary: Late Ottoman Istanbul as a Crime Scene', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 95–116.

[68] İleri, 'Between the Real and the Imaginary'.

A police search in Cairo for four missing women led to the discovery of seventeen bodies buried under the floors of houses in a district with a reputation for crime and deviance.[69] Two women, Raya and Sakina, both prostitutes, were arrested, and after interrogation confessed to murder. They had apparently, together with their husbands, lured women, also prostitutes, back to their houses, plied them with drugs and alcohol, then robbed and killed them. In Tehran, in 1932, Muhammad Ali Sayf al-Qalam confessed to the murder of ten alleged prostitutes and pimps, claiming that he had been motivated to commit these murders by a desire to rescue Iran 'from the clutches of moral corruption'.[70] He was, however, soon eclipsed by an even more stunning serial murder case when Ali Asghar Burujirdi, who quickly acquired the soubriquet Asghar Qatil (Asghar the murderer), was arrested and confessed to the killing of eight boys, most of them homeless vagrants. He further confessed to having previously, while living in Baghdad, sexually abused adolescent boys and to having killed twenty-five of them.[71]

All four of these cases received massive press coverage. Over the months following the arrests of Raya and Sakina, the Egyptian press published thousands of articles on the case, which obsessed public opinion, in the process cultivating a lucrative appetite for tabloid titillation. Burujirdi's murders also produced a vast number of texts and commentaries, both popular, in the daily newspapers, and elite, in scientific journals and in reprints of the minutes of the trial. The press reporting in particular was a vehicle through which the modern intelligentsia attempted to shape understanding of these episodes and draw specific lessons. Each of the cases seemed to embody the very dangers posed by modernity itself. The Cairene discussions displayed a new fear of 'subaltern threats', in this case prostitutes and vice in general, to the idealized middle-class family, and of the danger of corruption to respectable women brought into illicit spaces by emancipation.[72] In Iran, the circumstances of Burujirdi's life, his character, the part played by heredity or by environment, were all used by Iranian modernists to construct a model of the pathology of the lowest

[69] Shaun Lopez, 'Madams, Murders, and the Media: Akbar al-Hawadith and the Emergence of a Mass Culture in Egypt', Arthur Goldschmidt and Amy J. Johnson (eds.), *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919–1952* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), pp. 371–97. See also Mary Nefertiti Takla, 'Murder in Alexandria: The Gender, Sexual and Class Politics of Criminality in Egypt, 1914–1921,' PhD thesis, University of California (2016), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4r35401hm.

[70] Cyrus Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran: Crime, Science and the Formation of Modern State and Society in Interwar Iran', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 47, no. 4, pp. 836–62, p. 859.

[71] Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran', p. 836.

[72] Takla, 'Murder in Alexandria', p. 160.

classes among Tehran's slum dwellers, who had unconsciously nurtured him, and to produce recommendations regarding the steps necessary to elevate these classes to the level of the civilized world. As in the cases from Istanbul and Egypt, this discourse harboured more specific lessons. The case was deployed as an opportunity to issue a warning to any potential criminals lurking in the slums, and to demonstrate to the lower classes more generally the power of the new state as embodied in the modern police, described as an instrument of 'moral and intellectual reform', and the hopelessness of any attempt to evade justice.[73]

Both Iranian serial killers, Asghar Qatil and Muhammad Ali Sayf al-Qalam, demonstrated a very modern obsession with moral, social and sexual marginality and deviance, their similar defences, that they were saving Iran from moral corruption and physical disease by their violent elimination of prostitutes and vagrants, echoing, in a distorted form, emerging elite fears. Such echoing may also be found in the Cairo case when one of the men convicted as an accessory to the crimes and executed along with the women was reported to have used his final words to denounce prostitutes and street walkers who betrayed their husbands and sold their honour.[74] Deemed unreformable, Asghar Qatil and Raya and Sakina were tried and executed, entering urban mythology in Tehran and Cairo much as Jack the Ripper had done in the Victorian London of forty years earlier, and for much the same reasons, Raya and Sakina particularly finding also a similar afterlife in film and television.

Crime, the Police and the Prison

Such spectacular media events focused public attention sharply on crime, on the dangers of marginality, and on the role of the police. Whatever the realities of crime in the pre-modern Middle East, the late nineteenth century brought with it real fears, which haunted both old and new elites. The growth of cities and of the population of the poor within them, migration, including of lone women, the new anonymity of urban life, the decline of family supervision and the lure of new possibilities, all combined to create an impression of gender boundaries transgressed, moral chaos and the threat of violent crime. The growth of slums was inevitably accompanied by unemployment, vagrancy and petty criminality among both men and women, and especially

---

[73] Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran', p. 860. Schayegh notes the relevance of Burujirdi's case in 'illuminating the volatile co-existence of fear of social pathologies and faith in the possibility of progress', Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran', p. 862.
[74] Takla, 'Murder in Alexandria', p. 198.

casual prostitution among women and young boys, while the inevitable disintegration of the stability of the older and much smaller urban quarters brought with it nightmares of subaltern policing. Furthermore, not only were perceptions changing but crime itself was modernizing. Urban spaces offered a welcome anonymity for petty criminals, department stores a tempting opportunity for shoplifters and the new transport hubs for pickpockets.[75]

In tandem with a rising fear of crime among the respectable classes came demands for remedies and solutions. Sometimes anxieties were stimulated by the very efforts of the authorities to demonstrate their control of the problem. In the late nineteenth century, for example, governments in various Middle Eastern states had begun to collect and to publish crime statistics. The consequences of this were double-edged. The statistics published by the Ottoman government, for example, first alarmed the public by demonstrating a high level of crime in Istanbul but then tried to reassure by also showing rising trial and conviction rates.[76] A heightened awareness of crime also arose from the burgeoning circulation of newspapers. Press reporting too simultaneously aggravated, by its sensationalism, but also tried to assuage, by its glamourizing of police work, fears both about rising crime and about the changing nature of crime. Press reportage drew on the conventions of the increasingly popular genre of crime fiction, both possessing the same stylized and reassuring structure of crime, detection, arrest and conviction, cases invariably ending with the triumph of the police over their adversaries.[77] The newspaper reports of the investigation into the 1896 Ottoman murders, for example, apparently based their depiction of the police detective in charge of the case closely on Sherlock Holmes.[78]

The use by the press of themes and personality types familiar from fiction derived its power from the growth from the late nineteenth century of a reading public that eagerly consumed both the major works of European literature and the products of an expanding indigenous literary scene.[79] The popularity of a literary romanticism, imported from Europe and exemplified by translations of Alexandre Dumas' novel, *La Dame aux Camelias*, provided the reading public with sympathetic

[75] Hanan Hammad, 'Disreputable by Definition: Respectability and Theft by Poor Women in Urban Interwar Egypt', Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 65–77.

[76] İleri, 'Between the Real and the Imaginary'; Mario M. Ruiz, 'Criminal Statistics in the Long 1890s,' Booth and Gorman (eds.), *The Long 1890s in Egypt*, pp. 141–66.

[77] İleri, 'Between the Real and the Imaginary'.

[78] İleri, 'Between the Real and the Imaginary', pp. 112–14.

[79] See Murat R. Şiviloğlu, *The Emergence of Public Opinion: State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 174–221.

pictures of prostitutes, contributing to the emergence of a 'compassionate' discourse.[80] Crime fiction, especially translations from English novels, was also of immense significance. The stories of the detectives Sherlock Holmes and Nat Pinkerton and the gentleman thief Arsène Lupin were translated, and local versions of these figures soon followed.[81] Arthur Conan Doyle's 'The London Police' appeared in Persian as early as 1904, and by the 1920s translations of Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers were also becoming popular.[82] Even the police themselves were apparently sometimes captivated by their fictional role models.[83] Reading habits, literature and the press, and later film therefore prepared the public for a much greater intrusiveness of the police into everyday life by fostering conceptions of them as successful crime fighters and guarantors of bourgeois security.

The police force was one of the most important, and certainly the most visible, of the new disciplinary instruments required by modernity. Early nineteenth-century Britain, facing the problems associated with the emergence of the bloated cities of the industrial revolution, had pioneered modern policing. Other European countries quickly followed and, beginning in the mid-century, both colonial authorities, in Egypt and North Africa, and the still independent indigenous polities, the Ottoman Empire and Iran, took similar steps. Indeed, for much of the urban population, the police became the most tangible representation of the state itself and a powerful vector for its values.[84] The police were also, and particularly, the front line in the long war with the dangerous classes. Across the Middle East, the police asserted their central role in the modern state's project of establishing its hegemony by monopolizing coercive power over society, presenting themselves as upholders of the abstract concept of the law. They gradually became recognized by the population at large as the sole agent for the enforcement of law and order, while crime itself became something which could be detected, especially through the new science of forensic medicine, solved and the perpetrator tracked down and punished, and even possibly rehabilitated. The new police forces, together with modern legal codes enforced by the courts and reformed penal systems, constituted a nexus which revolutionized state-society relations.

---

[80] Hammad, 'Regulating Sexuality', p. 213.
[81] Ferdan Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2000, pp. 149–64, p. 153.
[82] Karim Emami, 'English v. Translation of English Literature into Persian', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. viii, fasc. V, 1998, pp. 450–2.
[83] See Golnar Nikpour, 'Prison Days: The History of Prisons and Punishment in Modern Iran', PhD thesis, Columbia University (2015), https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8154GF6.
[84] Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire', p. 149.

Pre-modern Middle Eastern cities had possessed a variety of officials responsible for maintaining peace. In Iran, these city officials, known as *bayglarbaygis* or *kalantars*, relied on the existing hierarchical structures of the urban quarters to provide some elementary security.[85] Each quarter was under the authority of a *kadkhuda* who would deploy his own servants or personal retainers in the event of any trouble. After dark, only those in possession of a password and carrying an obligatory lantern were allowed to be abroad on the streets, which were patrolled intermittently by night-watchmen, the gates to quarters locked to keep out strangers. This system relied essentially on the stability of the urban quarters and the pressure of public opinion. Such rudimentary guardians of the peace might catch criminal or disorderly elements in the act, especially if the malefactor was known locally, and may have had some deterrent effect, but the detection of crime beyond this was foreign to them.

Such a system was quite incapable of dealing with the new urban environments. The solution was the modern police force which not only maintained a rudimentary order as its predecessors had done, but whose role was greatly enhanced and magnified by the strident demands of new elite conceptions of an activist modernity. Modern police forces were founded in various countries of the Middle East at different points during the nineteenth century, part of the wider state-building projects proceeding at different speeds but essentially similar across the region. In Iran a modern police force can be traced to the late 1870s, elsewhere, in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, their origins were rather older. Everywhere, however, these police forces received an especial fillip in periods when the nationalist project itself was accelerated due to rapid political change. This is especially noticeable in, for example, the Ottoman Empire in the years after the revolution of 1908, and in Iran after the coup of 1921.[86]

---

[85] W. M. Floor, 'The Police in Qajar Persia', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morganländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 123, 1973, pp. 294–315.

[86] Police forces in the Middle East and North Africa have received relatively little attention, despite their crucial civil and political roles. Although Riza Shah, for example, has conventionally ben seen as primarily dependent on the army, in fact from the late 1920s, if not earlier, the police were the principal support of the regime. For police forces see, *inter alia*, Floor, 'The Police in Qajar Persia'; Hamid R. Kusha, 'Impediments to Police Modernisation in Iran, 1878–1979', *Policing and Society*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2013, 164–82; Khaled Fahmy, 'The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1999, pp. 340–77; Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire'; Laleh Khalili and Jillian Schwedler (eds.), *Police and Prisons in the Middle East: Formations of Coercion* (London: Hurst, 2010); Nora Lafi, 'Policing the Medina: Public Order in Tunis at the Time of the Tanzimat', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 55–71.

The formation of uniformed professional forces, tasked with supervising the civilian population and acting under the orders of centralized interior ministries, executing the will of the state as represented in codified legislation, was an entirely novel innovation across the Middle East. Although initially the new police forces in practice often based themselves on, and incorporated older institutions and methods, as they became established both the actual roles they performed, in apprehending criminals and upholding the law and public order more generally, as well as public perceptions of them, changed dramatically. The police themselves even began to publish newspapers in an effort to shape public perceptions both of themselves and of their criminal adversaries. In Iran, the Mashhad police newspaper, *Ittila'at–i Yawmiyyah*, for example, had as its emphatic central message the police's success in ensuring justice both for the victim and for the culprit, the former compensated, the latter punished according to the law.[87]

As perceptions of crime changed, so too did perceptions of punishment. The intense discussions generated by the more spectacular murder cases, as well as of myriad smaller examples of criminal transgression, gave rise to new considerations of motivation and responsibility. Rigid binaries having been created between the criminal and the law-abiding and between the respectable woman and the prostitute, the question became not why did people commit illegal or immoral acts, but why did they *become* criminals or prostitutes? Attention shifted fundamentally from the act to the person, and the person was potentially reformable, if only the key to their pathology could be found. Crime was no longer analysed in religious but in scientific terms, using concepts drawn from European criminology, including social-environmental influences, genetic heredity, individual physiological and racial degeneration, social pathology and so on. The police might solve crimes and bring criminals to account, but scientific criminology seemed to offer the grand possibility of the reform and rehabilitation not only of actually or potentially criminal individuals but also, and more importantly, of the milieux, especially an amoral, deviant and constantly shifting slum population, which produced and nurtured them.[88]

In Iran, during the constitutional and early Pahlavi periods, the rehabilitation discourse entered discussions about crime just as it had already begun to dominate the narrative on prostitution. With

---

[87] Farzin Vejdani, 'Illicit Acts and Sacred Space: Everyday Crime in the Shrine City of Mashhad, 1913–1914', *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 22–54, p. 25.

[88] Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran'.

the establishment of police forces that were able to detect and arrest suspects, and courts that were able to determine guilt and innocence in accordance with modern legal standards, it became possible for modernism to envisage an active penological policy, which might have a role not just in retribution but in rehabilitation. A new kind of punishment, with a new objective, demanded a new institution. The 1920s accordingly saw the rise of the prison in Iran, an institution of immense symbolic significance to the modernist project. The prison represented the supremacy of the state over all intermediary or informal authorities, the state's own adherence to the sovereignty of the law, the protection of society by the removal from its midst and the punishment of the criminal and the aspiration to the reform and rehabilitation of transgressors.

The process by which incarceration for a fixed term after due legal process replaced all other forms of punishment, other than in exceptional circumstances, came late to Iran and was very compressed.[89] European countries and then Middle Eastern states such as Egypt and the Ottoman Empire had long preceded Iran on this path. The period of change had often been protracted. In England, for example, a pioneer of the prison, it stretched over a century or more. England entered the eighteenth century with public corporal punishment, whipping, the pillory, the stocks, various subaltern *charivari* practices of humiliation for both legal and moral offences, and at its pinnacle, the 'the spectacle of the scaffold'.[90] Imprisonment was usually for short periods pending trial while public shaming was an important element of most physical punishments.[91] This array of punishments had, by the early nineteenth century, been replaced by confinement for specified periods of time in specially built institutions, with capital punishment remaining as a last resort. An important aspect of this process had been the removal of punishment from public view, the 'spectacle of the scaffold' increasingly seen as more likely to produce crime and disorder and to encourage the atavism of the mob than to impress the population with the majesty of the law. This transformation was embedded in the much wider political and intellectual transformations of the eighteenth century. It was driven certainly by new sensibilities, revulsion at existing punishments and the conditions in gaols. But at its heart was a strong reforming impulse and a

---

[89] Abrahamian has pointed to the very low number of executions in interwar Iran. Ervand Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1999, p. 26.

[90] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

[91] Sharpe, *A Fiery and Furious People*, pp. 373–404.

new concern not just with punishing criminal acts but with the problem of crime itself. The purpose of imprisonment in the new institutions was to provide an environment within which the individual convict might find an opportunity to reform through examining his conscience in isolation, solitude and silence. In Foucault's formulation, attention shifted from the body to the soul.[92] The most notorious symbol of the new approach was Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, designed so that prisoners might be under a constant yet invisible surveillance and thus forced to internalize the discipline of the institution. The radical Quakers and dissenters in England and the United States, who drove this programme, as they had driven the contemporaneous campaign for the abolition of slavery, were far from wishing to lighten the burdens on the imprisoned nor were their views indicative of a softening regarding crime itself. They wished, rather, 'not to punish more mildly, but to punish more effectively'.[93] As a result, a radical programme of 'prison reform', actually the construction of networks of entirely new institutions with avowedly novel objectives, spread rapidly throughout Western Europe and the United States in the early nineteenth century.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the idea of the modern prison conquered most of the rest of the world. Elites everywhere were entranced by the new 'penitential ideal' and eager to adopt it.[94] The prison became a 'monument to modernity', a marker of progress and civilization, a way of demarcating the humane, efficient and purposeful present from the savage and despotic past.[95] For non-European elites it represented the possibility both of emulating and 'catching up' with Europe and of distancing themselves from the barbaric practices of their own societies.[96]

Prison reform reached the Middle East and North Africa in the early to mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire in the period of the Tanzimat, Egypt under Muhammad Ali and Algeria from the beginnings

---

[92] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

[93] Sharpe, *A Fiery and Furious People*, p. 400.

[94] Frank Dikötter, 'Introduction,' in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 1–13, p. 3.

[95] Dikötter, 'Introduction', p. 4; Clare Anderson and David Arnold, 'Envisioning the Colonial Prison', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 304–31; David Arnold, 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India,' in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 148–84, p. 159.

[96] Dikötter, 'Introduction', p. 5.

of French colonial rule.[97] Here nineteenth-century reforms followed the pattern established only slightly earlier in Europe. Everywhere the same process might be observed, the increasing role given to incarceration and the decline of other forms of punishment, corporal and capital, and, as the century progressed, the gradual improvements in prison conditions, if only from truly appalling to merely very bad. Executions were moved inside prison and torture either banned, at least in theory, or at any rate much less employed.

The rise of the prison was embedded in a much broader programme of legal reform. In general, Middle Eastern modernism, like the English and American Quakers and dissenters of a slightly earlier vintage, did not intend its legal and penological reforms to imply any softening of attitudes to crime. On the contrary, the police, the new courts and new legal codes, and the new prisons were intended together to enable a more consistent, predictable and successful approach to the detection and punishment of criminals. Ottoman modernists, for example, argued that the new state (*nizami*) courts would in fact be harsher on criminals than their Shari'ah predecessors, which they considered to be hampered by their demanding rules of evidence and their punitive inadequacy when dealing with serious crimes such as murder which might be resolved by only the payment of compensation. The modernist argument insisted that new courts with their investigative procedures would possess a stronger deterrent effect, their procedures much more likely to bring criminals to book.[98]

Modern courts relying on imprisonment as a method of punishment had, therefore, one particular and very significant advantage in terms of extending the power of the state. The mushrooming slums of the cities had been identified as sites of particular danger. The option of imprisonment provided the state with a mechanism capable of addressing

---

[97] Anthony Gorman, 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance in the Middle Eastern Prison', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 95–146. See also Kent F. Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Rudolph Peters, 'Prisons and Marginalization in Nineteenth-century Egypt,' in Eugene Rogan (ed.), Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 31–52; 'Controlled Suffering: Mortality and Living Conditions in 19th-Century Egyptian Prisons', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2004, pp. 387–407; 'Egypt and the Age of the Triumphant Prison: Legal Punishments in Nineteenth Century Egypt', *Annales Islamologique*, vol. 36, 2002, pp. 253–85; Ufuk Adak, 'Central Prisons (*Hapishane-i Umumi*) in Istanbul and Izmir in the Late Ottoman Empire: In-Between Ideal and Reality', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 73–94.
[98] Petrov, 'Everyday Forms of Compliance', p. 742.

the prevalence of petty crime in the urban context and its proliferation as cities expanded and populations and their mobility increased. The prison, the police and the courts meant that every thief and pickpocket became liable to arrest and confinement.

This very advantage, however, brought with it new problems. The greater reach of the system, together with the decline in other, more expeditious, forms of punishment, meant that the prison population expanded exponentially. This presented the authorities with novel problems of management and control, and efforts to cope with these problems drove many of the reforms of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Always incubators of disease, prisons became more prone to epidemics as the prison population increased. In order to combat the threat to public health, improvements in hygiene were made and some rudimentary medical care provided. The security concerns arising from the concentrations of large numbers of male prisoners kept in idleness led to the development of work and even education programmes.[99] By the early twentieth century, in the Ottoman Empire, for example, rehabilitation had become a central objective of the prison system. Although undoubtedly influenced by the now global penological debates, this process of prison reform possessed a powerful state-building logic of its own.

In Iran, as late as the early twentieth century, brutal physical punishments, gruesome public violence designed for deterrence, were still being meted out. In fact, however, practical considerations meant that such punishments could only be imposed on exemplary occasions and on those whose crime merited particular attention, especially where some threat to political authority was involved. Neither most crime nor most punishment was of this type. A study of everyday criminal activities, small scale and offering no political challenge, in early twentieth-century Mashhad has shown, for example, that petty crimes, that is most crimes, were usually punished by short periods of detention or public humiliation, while thieves were also obliged to return stolen property or compensate the owner.[100] This approach involved a strong moral dimension, deterrence certainly, but through public censure as much as physical punishment, aiming at a restoration of social harmony.

Harsh punishments, although indeed sometimes imposed, do not therefore seem to have been typical of everyday life in Iran. The modernist construction of the past as a period of barbaric physical retribution by a vengeful state was, therefore, to some extent an exaggeration or

---

[99] Schull, *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 112.
[100] Vejdani, 'Illicit Acts and Sacred Space'.

distortion of older practices. Having thus constructed such a past, it then of course became necessary for modernism to distance itself from these habits and practices, the savage punishments that were identified with backwardness, tradition and reaction, not worthy of the new Iran. Critiques of prevailing methods of punishment began to emerge in the late nineteenth century and crystallized during the constitutional period. As in Europe, where an oppressive royal power had been symbolized by the pre-revolutionary French Bastille, so too in Iran, these cruel punishments were identified with despotism and arbitrary rule.

The constitutional period saw the introduction of a few very minor reforms. Substantive change, however, had to wait for the 1920s. Then, the rise of the prison signalled Iran's determination to assert its membership of the civilized world. This was coupled with a desire to put an end to the periodic assemblage of unpredictable bloodthirsty mobs which posed a danger to public order, to Iran's image abroad and, perhaps most importantly, to modernism's self-image. Indeed, the subaltern enthusiasm for the public execution of the serial killer Asghar Qatil was used by modernist opinion as another indication of the atavism and degeneracy of the lower classes.[101]

In the 1920s, the Iranian government drew up plans for the construction of a massive new prison system, the most important new prison being the famous and later notorious Qasr-i Qajar in Tehran.[102] Iran, however, lagged far behind other Middle Eastern states, which had begun programmes of penological reform in the mid-nineteenth century. Iran entered the 1920s almost entirely lacking the historical experience with prison reform then possessed by countries like Egypt and Turkey. Iran had nothing on which to build. Rather than a leisurely adoption of piecemeal change driven by its own internal dynamic, the transformation of Iran's prison system was carried out almost overnight. The intense pressure to implement this transformation rapidly and comprehensively was a direct result of the government's intention to abolish the system of Capitulations.[103] One of the strongest European objections to the abolition of Capitulations, a mechanism which had been introduced in the early nineteenth century under intense European pressure to remove foreigners from Iranian jurisdiction, had been the arbitrary and brutal sentences occasionally meted out and from which they wished

[101] Schayegh, 'Serial Murder in Tehran', p. 857.
[102] For an extremely useful survey of the history and politics of the prison in Iran, see Nikpour, 'Prison Days'.
[103] Iran's membership of international bodies such as those dealing with prisons, drugs, contagious diseases, etc., was an important element in its struggle for international recognition of its status as a fully fledged modern sovereign state.

to protect their nationals. For Reza Shah, as for nationalist sentiment across the Middle East where similar systems had been in place, the abolition of Capitulations was a matter of the most immediate urgency. The construction of modern prisons, together with comprehensive judicial and legal reforms, was intended to remove any pretext for the maintenance of Capitulations, and such a political calculation lent energy and funds to the project of prison reform. But, although the timing of the prison building programme was certainly connected to the campaign for the abolition of Capitulations, the programme itself had a longer ideological pre-history and a deeper connection to modernist aspirations, the prison having become representative not just of new penological practices and ideals, but of modernity itself.

By the early 1920s the modern prison still hardly existed in Iran.[104] Serious preparations for a building programme began in 1923 and in 1925 Iran joined the 'global dialogue' on modern penology that had emerged during the nineteenth century by sending a representative to the International Prison Congress in London.[105] Work began on Qasr-i Qajar, the first and most important new institution, in the capital, Tehran, in 1928, the year after Capitulations were abolished and as new civil and criminal legal codes were promulgated and the judiciary centralized and brought under the control of the state.[106] The first inmates arrived in 1929. Qasr was the centrepiece of a truly grandiose national scheme, a pyramid which envisaged the construction of a huge number of prisons, five large prisons at the apex, then fifty medium-sized, thirty small and a number of very small prisons at the base. Probably driven by the rapid and continuous rise in the prison population during the 1920s, with its accompanying overcrowding, the scale of this scheme was more a projection of the modernist imagination than a practical plan. Quite unrealistic at the time, it was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the capacity of the prison system approached these levels.[107]

Plans for Qasr had been drawn up by Nikolai Markov, a Tiflis-born Russian military officer who had served with the Iranian Cossack Brigade and had remained in Iran after the Russian revolution.[108] Markov had

---

[104] See Nikpour, 'Prison Days', p. 112.

[105] Gorman, 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance', p. 95.

[106] See Hadi Enayat, *Law, State and Society in Modern Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[107] Nikpour, 'Prison Days'.

[108] Lana Ravandi-Fadai, 'Reconstructions of a Native in Exile: Cossack Brigade Fighter and Architect of Tehran – Nikolai L'vovich Markov (1882–1957)', Rudi Matthee and Elena Andreeva (eds.), *Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), pp. 217–39.

studied architecture in St Petersburg before the First World War and his plans for Qasr were based on ideas about the design of the modern prison that had become universally accepted during the nineteenth century. This design incorporated elements of Bentham's concept, consisting of a central watch tower, radiating cell blocks and high perimeter walls, although it lacked the more sinister ambition of a true panopticon. The Eastern State Penitentiary built in Philadelphia in the 1830s, followed by Pentonville in London in 1842, were pioneering examples of this pattern and Qasr followed suit, with its geometric design, hubs containing guard houses and radiating corridors containing the cells.[109] By the 1920s, however, global penology had abandoned older and psychologically traumatic notions of reform through solitude and silence and Iran was also aware of more recent notions of rehabilitation, particularly through its representative's attendance at the 1925 International Prison Congress. Qasr accordingly incorporated a more humane vision and included a clinic, a *zurkhanah* and a mosque.[110] Despite its forbidding external appearance, new inmates appear to have been relieved at the relatively tolerable conditions.[111] The prison's new purpose was emphasized by its description as a place for repentance (*nadamatgah*), a neologism but one which echoed older Islamic notions of repentance.[112]

Notions of rehabilitation, however, were still of recent origin in Iran and only entered official discourse to a significant degree after the Second World War. In the 1950s, an activist paternalist state, conscious of its international reputation, supported by the new profession of social work and underpinned by critiques of existing practice from the intelligentsia, began to advertise itself energetically as an agent of rehabilitation.[113] The government established two organizations, the Institution for the Cooperation and Industry of Prisoners and the Organization for the Protection of Prisoners, and presented them publicly as centrepieces of their rehabilitation programme. According to the official discourse, Pahlavi prisons, with their factories and educational and medical facilities, were now primarily therapeutic spaces, offering criminals the opportunity of returning to society as honest and productive citizens.[114]

This discourse, the essence of modernism's understanding of the role of the prison in Iran, drew for its power on more than a century of

---

[109] Ravandi-Fadai, 'Reconstructions of a Native in Exile', p. 227.

[110] Ravandi-Fadai, 'Reconstructions of a Native in Exile', p. 226.

[111] Abrahamian, *Tortured Confessions*, p. 27.

[112] Ravandi-Fadai, 'Reconstructions of a Native in Exile', p. 226.

[113] Nikpour, 'Prison Days'. Nikpour provides a very informative and original account of the emergence of this discourse, pp. 106–52.

[114] Nikpour, 'Prison Days', pp. 106–52.

discussion covering most of the globe. In Iran it functioned particularly as an extremely important device for legitimizing the monarchy.[115] Yet it tells us little about the realities either of prison life or of public attitudes. The rehabilitation discourse of the Pahlavi state, as of states elsewhere, seems to have had little or no resonance or reality for its targets, the incarcerated themselves. In fact, what prisoners thought of their prison and their treatment in general, and indeed what view was taken of the new prisons by the social milieu from which they came, is difficult to discern and often rendered completely invisible by the power of the modernist vision. There is certainly a vast literature on imprisonment for political offences, produced by an array of erstwhile political prisoners under both the monarchy and the Islamic republic. This literature, however, tells us little of the experiences of 'ordinary' criminals, separated from inmates held for political reasons by unbridgeable differences of social class, education, consciousness and collective power. Ordinary criminals, almost invariably from the lowest social strata, often illiterate, and sometimes with powerful motives for silence, have left little in the way of testimony.

Nonetheless, there are clues to grasping the realities of prison experience in Iran. Far from offering the hope of a new life, the perpetually expanding prison population would suggest a high degree of recidivism. Everywhere, including in Iran, a prison sentence has tended, contrary to Foucault, to mark the beginning of a criminal career rather than the moulding of a submissive subject. Whether those entering prison in Iran ever, and to what extent, were willing to participate in the rehabilitatory process is impossible to say. It is clear, however, that actual conditions inside prison and outside it militated strongly against any such engagement.

The realities of prison life received some exposure during the relatively liberal 1940s. Iranian prisons, like prisons around the globe, were revealed to be sites of considerable tension, riven by multi-layered conflicts, between the convicted and their warders and the higher authorities, and among the prisoners themselves. A description of prison life published in 1946 by Hakim Ilahi and entitled 'Come with Me to Prison', detailed the many vices to be found, the corruption of the warders, their openness to bribery, the filth and the bad food, the tyranny of stronger prisoners, the pervasiveness of physical violence and of drug use, with open and aggressive dealing by prisoners from which the warders profited, and so on.[116] Iranian prisons possessed a powerful

---

[115] See, for example, the photograph provided by Nikpour, 'Prison Days', p. 148.
[116] The account here of Hakim Ilahi and Ahmad Shamlu is drawn from Nikpour, 'Prison Days', pp. 116–26, 1–25.

subculture that was far more relevant to the lives of inmates than the discourse of the authorities and from which it was difficult to escape. The real preoccupations of Iranian prisoners are vividly illustrated by their prison argot. The lexicography of vernacular language, 'Book of the Street', compiled by the poet and Tudeh Party member, Ahmad Shamlu, includes the slang words and expressions that made up this prison argot, which was dominated by preoccupations with drugs, homosexual sex, violence and the oppression of the authorities.[117] The prison came too late to Iran for the riots, mutinies and mass escapes that erupted from time to time in nineteenth-century Egypt and India.[118] Inmates were more likely to offer an apparent co-operation while exploiting any available avenues for subterranean subversion. Prison subcultures, prisoner hierarchies and corrupt warders offered ample such opportunities.

Another critical glimpse into prison life was provided by a documentary film about women in prison again made by Kamran Shirdel.[119] Like his film about Shahr-i Naw, this piece also implicitly contrasts the official discourse with the realities of the lives of women prisoners inside and outside of prison. The film perfectly illustrates the formal approach of the authorities with their efforts with literacy classes to 'turn the prison into a school', the prison's purpose being to instruct the women 'how to think well, live properly and prepare themselves for an honourable return to society'. Yet through its interviews with the women themselves, all poor, some illiterate, and several drug users, the film starkly highlights the irrelevance and unreality of this discourse and, mired in poverty, the hopelessness of the women's plight.

The extent to which the Pahlavi monarchy was able to mobilize its paternalist prison discourse to shore up its legitimacy is doubtful. It was rather the notion of prison rehabilitation that suffered in public estimation as a result of the patronage of the court. This was particularly the case as the promotion of the rehabilitation discourse coincided with a reversion to the much more systematic use of torture, although this was reserved for political offenders.[120] In general, popular attitudes to

---

[117] Nikpour, 'Prison Days', p. 23.

[118] Gorman, 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance', pp. 133–4; David Arnold, 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India', in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 148–84, 150–2.

[119] The particular experiences of women prisoners in the Middle East has received little attention in the literature. For one study, see Anthony Gorman, 'In Her Aunt's House: Women in Prison in the Middle East', *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, vol. 39, 2005, pp. 7.

[120] Nikpour, 'Prison Days', p. 16. See also Darius M. Rejali, *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society and State in Modern Iran* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).

prison depended on much wider assessments of the legitimacy of the authorities and the legal and judicial systems. In any case, it seems from other contexts that a profound cynicism prevailed among the classes from which inmates were almost invariably drawn, and among these classes little stigmatization attached to imprisonment.[121] This was even more the case as far as political prisoners were concerned. Here the state had no interest in rehabilitation, although it did sometimes induce such prisoners to recant. In stark contrast to the reform discourse, for both political offenders and those embarking on a life of crime, a prison sentence offered a rite of passage which might lead to considerable prestige in the world beyond the prison walls.

The Undeserving Poor

The vast majority of the criminal inmates of Iran's new prisons were from the poorest layers of society, as the middle-class architects of the programme assumed they would be, thus strengthening modernist notions of the connections between poverty and crime. In modernist eyes the poor in general became assimilated to the dangerous and criminal classes and it was primarily through the targeting of the lowest ranks among them, those who had fallen into actual pauperism, that their disciplining would take place. Begging, and its apparently more dangerous sibling, vagrancy, became particular preoccupations.

Begging was, across the pre-modern Middle East, a permanent feature of urban life. Pauperism was a perennial hazard, a menacing backdrop to the lives of all but the most wealthy and secure. Actual destitution might be episodic, caused by famine, war or some manner of temporary difficulty from which recovery was possible, or it might be permanent, caused by illness or the loss of a breadwinner.[122] Pauperism and begging in the Middle East, as elsewhere, were profoundly gendered experiences, women and children always at far greater risk of falling into the condition, although elite literary traditions invariably depicted beggars as male, thus imparting to them a greater aura of menace.[123]

---

[121] Peters, 'Prisons and Marginalization in Nineteenth Century Egypt'.
[122] Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 146–75.
[123] Eyal Ginio, 'Living on the Margins of Charity: Coping with Poverty in an Ottoman Provincial City', in Michael Bonner, Mine Ener and Amy Singer (eds.), *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 165–84. See also Gülhan Balsoy, 'Haseki Women's Hospital and the Female Destitute of Nineteenth-Century Istanbul', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2019, pp. 289–300; Failka Çelik, 'Living at the Margins of Poverty: The Begging Poor in the Ottoman Empire (1550–1750)', PESA, vol. 3, no. 4, 2017, pp. 214–19.

In Iran, as in the rest of the Middle East, beggars had therefore always been an organic part of the urban landscape, an unremarkable presence outside mosques and shrines and in bazaars. They were tolerated, provided an opportunity for the faithful to perform pious acts, and were otherwise ignored, apart from occasional crackdowns by the authorities when they became too numerous or troublesome. Religion, especially popular religion, inculcated a certain benevolence and caution towards beggars. A general belief in the religious merit of charitable acts was reinforced by theatrical displays of generosity by shahs and sultans, sometimes apparently intended to emphasize their own piety and legitimacy. Begging itself and certain kinds of beggars also possessed a sheen of religious legitimacy.[124] Some sufis and wandering dervishes adopted mendicancy as a sign of their total dependence on God, always carrying a begging bowl, while other typical recipients of alms, the mentally ill, often left to wander the streets, were widely believed to possess special gifts from God such as divination.[125]

In pre-modern Middle Eastern cities, charity was haphazardly available, offered occasionally by individuals but mainly by religious endowments and mainly to the passive, supplicant, but particularly deserving and grateful poor, within a context that emphasized their weakness, their utter dependence on their benefactors and, by implication, their own lack of agency.[126] Erratic generosity and indifference, however, lived side by side with other, less benign, attitudes. Those deemed undeserving were

---

[124] For an account of the construction of a moral, medical and reformist discourse critical of begging as a religious pursuit, see Nile Green, 'Breaking the Begging Bowl: Morals, Drugs, and Madness in the Fate of the Muslim Faqīr', *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, pp. 226–45.

[125] M. Dols, *The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). For a description of attitudes towards the insane in Iran and the arrival of modern institutions, see Kashani-Sabet, 'The Haves and Have Nots'. It may be noted here that for Foucault, the insane asylum performed the same function, and performed it in the same way, as the prison. Driven by a humane impulse, Quakers again prominent, during the nineteenth century the asylum replaced physical restraint and coercion with attempts at rehabilitation in which observation and judgement by the authorities was central. For the Middle East and North Africa, see Keller, *Colonial Madness*; Nina Salouā Studer, *The Hidden Patients: North African Women in French Colonial Psychiatry* (Köln/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2015); Eugene Rogan, 'Madness and Marginality: The Advent of the Psychiatric Asylum in Egypt and Lebanon', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris 2002), pp. 104–25; Calayan Ayhan, '"In the Name of Modernity, for the Sake of the Nation": Madness, Psychiatry and Politics from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic (1500s–1950s)', MA thesis, York University (2005).

[126] Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*.

often subsumed into a category altogether more sinister, acquiring the reputation of being charlatans, begging a well-organized and lucrative racket run by professional confidence tricksters.[127]

Beggars were therefore the object of deep ambiguity. As well as compassion they had always aroused revulsion but such an attitude was traditionally mitigated by religious obligation. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, elite perspectives on begging began to change. Ambiguities certainly remained but they were differently configured to the ambiguities of the past. Like prostitutes and criminals, beggars continued to arouse profound suspicion and dislike, occasionally disgust, but they too were now allocated a role in the modernist project. Like criminals and prostitutes, they too could be rehabilitated by an energetic paternalism. Beggars became an opportunity for the demonstration not of piety but of modernity.

The discussions about appropriate responses to pauperism and begging were embedded in much wider and rapidly changing attitudes. Religious literature had always had a tendency to distinguish those who were entitled to charity, the deserving, from those who were not. But Quranic criteria for eligibility were essentially defined in religious terms, were rather vague, and were not specifically associated with ability to work, although there was certainly a general sense that working was better than begging.[128] With the approach of modernity, the distinction between the deserving and undeserving began to change. A new emphasis was placed, in journals, pamphlets and novels, on notions of the dangers of idleness and laziness, and the benefits, to the individual, but also to society and to the nation, of work and a productive, self-disciplined life.[129] Begging turned into an affront to modernism, a defiance of the new culture of work and productivity and a very public indication, to domestic but also and especially to foreign observers, of the poverty, neglect and backwardness of society.

From the mid-nineteenth century, one Middle Eastern state after another introduced laws and regulations designed to clear the streets of vagrants, beggars and other socially undesirable elements. Vagrancy in particular began to be perceived as a real threat, a symptom of uncontrolled flight from rural to urban areas, of the growing numbers of the poor within the city, of unemployment and even hunger inevitably

---

[127] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*; C. E. Bosworth, 'Begging', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. IV, fasc. 1, 1989, pp. 80–4.

[128] Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, pp. 165–70; Sabra, *Poverty and Charity*.

[129] Hafez, 'The Lazy, the Idle, and the Industrious: Discourse of Work and Productivity in Late Ottoman Society', PhD thesis, UCLA (2012).

giving rise to criminality. Vagrants, necessarily mobile, were usually young and single. Women were liable to prostitution, men to crime, possibly violence and, adrift from family constraints, both were open to all kinds of vice. Child vagrants were corruptible, representing a threat to the future. In early modern Europe and, slightly later, in the Middle East, vagrancy, increasingly associated with modernity itself, attracted a mass of legislation. Vagrancy laws were introduced which, in their broad and often ill-defined reach, enormously strengthened the hand of the police against not only actual vagrants but the unemployed and even the urban poor in general, especially young single men, always a reservoir of troublesome elements, but also, increasingly, women too.[130] Efforts were made in Egypt, for example, especially through the 1880 Police Act, to discipline the perceived chaos on the streets, especially, according to article 5 of the Act, those 'who wander about as they pleased without work, home or source of income'.[131] This was followed by a new law in 1897 prescribing a week's imprisonment for those begging in unauthorized public places. In 1908, child vagabondage was specifically targeted and, in 1923, legislation provided for the imprisonment of 'those without means or fixed address, gamblers, procurers of prostitutes, gypsies and suspicious persons'.[132] Meanwhile in the Ottoman Empire, in 1909, the Committee of Union and Progress introduced the 'Law on vagrants and suspected persons', an exemplary tool for disciplining the urban poor in general, especially young, single men.[133] Vagrants often, of course, ended up in the new prisons.

Where they were strong enough, various states in the Middle East and North Africa took further steps to mitigate the problem of begging. As well as periodic sweeps of the streets, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire opened new institutions or renovated older ones, poorhouses to receive

---

[130] Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire', p. 151; Müge Özbek, '"Disorderly Women" and the Politics of Urban Space in Early 20th Century Istanbul (1900–1914)', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa,* pp. 51–63. For the perceived and actual turbulence of young men, see Farzin Vejdani, 'Urban Violence and Space: *Lutis*, Seminarians, and *Sayyids* in Late Qajar Iran', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2019, pp. 1,185–211; Nalan Turna, 'Ottoman Apprentices and Their Experiences', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 5, 2019, pp. 683–700.

[131] Liat Kozma, 'Wandering about as She Pleases: Prostitutes, Adolescent Girls, and Female Slaves in Cairo's Public Space, 1850–1882,' *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, vol. 10, 2012, pp. 18–36, p. 19.

[132] Gorman, 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance', p. 125.

[133] Ergut, 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire'.

the deserving indigent expelled from the streets.[134] These institutions incorporated a degree of confinement, in mid-century Egypt, for example, official release from the shelter was only through the intercession of a relative. Yet they were nonetheless besieged by paupers eager to gain access. These poorhouses were not workhouses in the British sense, designed to enforce the new industrial discipline on an inexperienced and only recently urbanized proletariat. Nor did they attempt any reform of the beggar other than the promised cessation of begging. Towards the end of the century, however, the discourse of reform and rehabilitation reached the begging classes. Numerous philanthropic associations were formed, in which the emerging middle class played a key role, providing health and education services to the poor. Associations founded by elite women concentrated in particular on offering education, training and support to poor women and girls.[135] By the early twentieth century, eliminating pauperism, especially among children, had become an issue of national significance, vital to the future of the nation.

As with prostitutes, the modernist approach to beggars demonstrated a humanitarian dimension. Here too, however, the binary of deserving and undeserving became more rigid, a general condemnation obscuring a complex and context-dependent historical reality. Begging, like prostitution, was in fact capable of assuming an almost infinite variety of forms. Begging was often certainly the result of genuine and insuperable hardship, but there were also rackets, sometimes organized, and between these two extremes were a variety of conditions, experiences and responses which were not easily categorizable. From the perspective of the destitute themselves, the demarcation between professional beggars and the honestly destitute was not clear-cut. Drawing attention to their plight by exaggerating, even inventing, their physical and mental misfortunes and making themselves as visible, indeed as unavoidable, as possible, were necessary strategies for anyone wishing to induce the giving of alms.[136] Sometimes too, as with criminals, beggars resisted or rejected the terms of the rehabilitation offered by their social superiors in favour of autonomy and perhaps greater financial rewards on the streets.

---

[134] Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, p. 193; Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); 'Prohibitions on Begging and Loitering in Nineteenth-Century Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1999, pp. 319–39; 'Getting into the shelter of Takiyat Tulun', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 53–76

[135] Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, pp. 206–16.

[136] Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam*, p. 32.

In Iran, scepticism about complaints by the poor of their hardships and cynical views of beggars and the frauds supposedly perpetrated by them had continued to appear and reappear in various forms in narratives into the twentieth century and shaped elite attitudes on a profound level. Apocryphal stories about wealthy beggars, children available for hire to female beggars, workshops in south Tehran slums manufacturing false limbs, continued to appear in the press throughout the Pahlavi period.[137]

Before 1921, charity was mostly of the traditional type, provided by *awqaf* (religious endowments), occasionally by the shah and from the nineteenth century by Christian missionaries. As in other spheres, so too here, almost nothing had been done beyond this to address the problem of chronic pauperism and begging. In the early 1920s, however, the new Iranian government appears to have inaugurated a concerted effort to clear the streets of all manner of people whose way of life was deemed undesirable. The authorities targeted especially the overlapping categories of vagrants, beggars and the mentally and physically ill. Yet there were few institutions to receive them, or any other provision by which they might ensure their survival.

Both the genuinely destitute and professional beggars contradicted and denied the language of the new architecture and morphology of Tehran. What was tolerable in bazaars and outside mosques was intolerable in shopping malls and boulevards. Beggars seemed to constitute an affront to a new culture of modern sensibilities, health and hygiene, and a living reproach to the new state and its supporters. During the 1920s and onwards new institutions began gradually to appear, poorhouses offering shelter to paupers, orphanages for street children, hospitals for those with infectious diseases and asylums for the mentally ill.[138] They were however few in number, their conditions primitive. After the Second World War the state made more energetic efforts, through its ministries, to provide social services and many of the needy made use of these institutions, some voluntarily, some, the indigent, the sick, compulsorily. As well as these paternalist policies, beggars were still periodically rounded up, the able bodied consigned to labour camps, the old and sick to poorhouses, and children to orphanage/reformatories. Persistent beggars who fled the camps were sometimes deported far from their place of origin.[139]

Yet neither state paternalism nor police repression succeeded in stemming the rise in the numbers of beggars. Since the problem of poverty

[137] Bosworth, 'Begging'.
[138] Kashani-Sabet, 'The Haves and Have Nots'.
[139] Bosworth, 'Begging'.

was not addressed, indeed even increased during periods of hardship, the anti-beggar drive was always only ever temporarily effective. Removed from one area, they would simply reappear elsewhere. Many beggars resisted their banishment from the streets. They fought back, relocating themselves to promising modern sites, shopping malls, hospitals and pharmacies, bus and railway stations, and availing themselves of the help of religious foundations and the new state welfare institutions as and when they could. Beggars proved adept at survival, and their ranks were periodically swelled by modernity itself, the dislocations of the land reform of the 1960s and the war with Iraq in the 1980s driving multitudes, especially of children, onto the streets of Tehran and other big cities.[140]

A Spatial Revolution: Reforming the City

The remarkable adaptation of beggars to the changing urban topography of Iranian cities illustrates the vital importance of space in the formulation of modernist utopias and the ways in which modernist appropriations of space might be challenged. The streets of pre-modern Middle Eastern cities were no mere urban corridors but teemed with subaltern and marginal life. Shirine Hamadeh has described the 'mishmash of pedlars, casual and seasonal workers, Gypsies, demobilized soldiers and sailors, homeless people, street musicians, and vagrants', who lived, worked, formed relationships and generally survived entirely on the Istanbul street.[141] These people, typical of urban marginality, were a floating population, unattached and unsettled, not even homogenized into a true underworld culture, and were the object of a colourful and varied lexicon of abuse from the authorities and from the respectable classes.[142] During the nineteenth-century Egypt and the Ottoman Empire took steps, with varying degree of success, to cleanse the streets of their major cities of such undesirables. In Tehran, by the early 1920s, such street life still survived and thrived untouched by modernism. At that point, however, the Iranian government also implemented a drive to remove 'uncivilized' or 'barbaric' behaviour from the streets of the capital.[143] Prohibitions were imposed on an array of people and behaviours, including the use of opium or the selling of alcoholic drinks, singing or fighting, or generally

[140] Bosworth, 'Begging'.
[141] Shirine Hamadeh, 'Mean Streets: Space and Moral Order in Early Modern Istanbul', *Turcica*, vol. 44, 2012–2013, pp. 249–77, p. 250.
[142] Hamadeh, 'Mean Streets'.
[143] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, p. 23.

disturbing the peace, carrying knives, daggers or swords, begging, loitering and, specifically, the trades of snake charmer, bear trainer, monkey trainer, storyteller and magician.[144]

Merely clearing the streets, however, was not enough to satisfy the grander objectives of Middle Eastern modernism. The city itself had to be 'reformed' and made healthy, hygienic and even beautiful. Cairo was the first city in the region to experience the attention of ideologically motivated urban planners, followed in the 1920s by Tehran. The influence of Baron Hausmann's massive programme of urban reconstruction in Paris in the mid-nineteenth century is palpable. Hausmann's project had been motivated by concerns about public health, aesthetics and security. Bourgeois observers in the first half of the nineteenth century had perfectly articulated fears about the relationship between urban design and the dangerous classes, the overcrowded medieval quarters of Paris harbouring a population believed to be prone to the interconnected evils of poverty, disease, crime and political unrest. For Hausmann, the destruction of the slums clustered in the centre of the city and the building of wide boulevards and parks would make the city more beautiful, would allow the provision of clean water and sewage facilities, but would also remove the ability of the Parisian poor to engage in urban uprisings and would permit the easy movement of troops through the city. Hausmann himself wrote of his gutting of 'the quarter of riots and barricades' in Paris. Certainly, the insurrectionary tradition of the Parisian poor ended at this time. Other than the Paris Commune, which originated in defeat by the Prussians, there were to be no more urban uprisings until May 1968.

Health and hygiene had been official concerns in Egypt from early in the nineteenth century, but it was after Khedive Ismail's visit to Paris to attend the Universal Exposition in 1867 and his appointment of Ali Pasha Mubarak, 'the Baron Hausmann of nineteenth-century Cairo' that efforts to transform Cairo into a 'Paris on the Nile' began in earnest.[145] The new neighbourhood of Ismai'liyya, for example, was built on a grid, with intersecting vertical, horizontal and diagonal streets, inevitably recalling Bentham's Panopticon. Aesthetics were important to Hausmann and his Middle Eastern followers. Indeed, the new and immensely popular Paris parks had been vital to the success of his wider project and were imitated in Cairo and later in Tehran. Undoubtedly,

---

[144] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, p. 23. This is probably the most subtle interpretation of the *luti* phenomenon.

[145] Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat, 'Prologue: The Project of Making Cairo Medieval', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 1–8, p. 3. For a critique, see Fahmy, 'Modernizing Cairo'.

however, security was central. The narrow alleys of the old cities, their dark interiors, were identified as founts of disease, physical, social and moral, and of crime.[146] The new boulevards, conversely, in Cairo as in Paris, enabled supervision and easy access for the new police forces and, if necessary, the army.

As in Egypt, so too in Iran, although the dangerous classes had been discursively constructed by modernism as relics of the past, many elements among them had proved extraordinarily adept at responding to changing social environments. Yet they had undoubtedly particularly flourished in the spaces of pre-modern cities. Their spatial linkage to the 'traditional' urban fabric thus provided the post-1921 Iranian government with a powerful weapon to use against them. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Iranian government implemented a massive programme of urban planning. This programme had as its central objective the total reorganization of cities throughout the country, using Tehran as an exemplar. Its broad aim of eliminating vestigial remnants of the Qajar past and replacing them with an entirely westernized and modern city also meant depriving the dangerous classes of congenial spaces which had customarily supported their ways of life and was enthusiastically supported by the modern middle class.[147]

Pre-modern Iranian cities were broadly similar to those across the Middle East in terms of the principles that governed the organization of space and the management of the population.[148] They were, in general, small and surrounded by walls. Important institutions such as the Friday mosque and the main bazar were usually located in the centre of the city, while the residential areas were divided into quarters (*mahallah*) with gates that might be closed for security after dark. The quarters were usually based around communal or ethnic affiliations, rather than class or wealth. Each quarter was semi-autonomous and was run by local notables. It possessed its own social hierarchies and its inhabitants a strong sense of identity, reinforced by daily use of its own local institutions, small bazars, mosques, bath-houses, coffee houses and traditional kitchens.[149] Although Tehran had grown substantially in size

[146] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, pp. 65–6.
[147] Ashkan Rezvani-Naraghi, 'Middle Class Urbanism: The Socio-Spatial Transformation of Tehran, 1921–41', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 97–126.
[148] Ehlers and Floor, 'Urban Change in Iran'; Gavin R. G. Hambly, 'The Traditional Iranian City in the Qajar Period', in *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 7, pp. 542–89.
[149] For a very useful discussion of the spatial transformation of Tehran, see Mina Marefat, 'Building to Power: Architecture of Tehran 1921–1941', PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1988), https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/14535.

and population during the nineteenth century, it remained a walled city made up of semi-autonomous quarters, continuing to obey established notions of spatial organization.[150] Little by way of modernization had been attempted or achieved.

From the mid-1920s, and at an accelerating pace in the 1930s, Iranian cites became the site of a massive experiment in physical and social engineering.[151] In Tehran, a blueprint for the rest of the country, this experiment consisted of four elements. The first was town planning. A grid was superimposed over the existing city, the old narrow alleys to be sliced through, replaced or dominated by broad tree-lined boulevards intersecting at squares where statues would introduce a new urban iconography. As in Cairo the previous century, this project involved massive levels of demolition as well as construction, perhaps with 15,000 to 30,000 residential buildings razed in Tehran.[152] Beautification was important here too, around 9 per cent of the city being given over to open squares and parks.[153]

The second element consisted of opening up the city to unrestricted expansion, especially to the north, by the destruction of the citadel, the gates and the ramparts.[154] The axis of Tehran thus tilted ever more decisively northwards, the new boulevards becoming commercial hubs, undermining the viability of the bazar.

The third element consisted of the introduction of entirely new architectural principles governing the arrangement of domestic space which transformed the appearance of the city. Instead of the traditional inward-looking courtyard house, residential buildings were now terraces, apartment blocks and villas, their main façades oriented outwards to the new avenues.[155] The new living spaces were a powerful incentive to the reorganization of family relationships and even to patterns of consumption, families now more dependent on the mass production and commercial sale of food which could no longer be produced at home. This in turn contributed to the freeing of women from some domestic labour and their entry into education and the workplace. Made

[150] Marefat, 'Building to Power', p. 64.
[151] Marefat, 'Building to Power'.
[152] Talinn Grigor, 'The King's White Walls: Modernism and Bourgeois Architecture', Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 95–118.
[153] See Kathleen John-Alder, 'Paradise Reconsidered: The Early Design History of Pardisan Park in Tehran', Mohammad Gharipour (ed.), *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 120–48.
[154] Rezvani-Naraghi, 'Middle Class Urbanism', p. 98.
[155] Marefat, 'Building to Power'.

unavoidable by the grid, the new domestic dwellings facilitated family life on the Western pattern, replacing the courtyard house which had supported quite different domestic arrangements, occasionally polygamy but always the cohesion of the extended family grouped within and around it.[156]

The final element was the rise of the municipality which, together with the police, eventually replaced completely the *mahallah*-based authority of the *kalantars, kadkhudas, muhtasibs* and *darughas* who had previously been responsible for maintaining order. During the latter part of the nineteenth century ideas of modern local government had begun to circulate and, in 1907, the constitutional authorities established municipalities. These bodies were then enormously strengthened during the 1930s. The municipality assumed wide-ranging powers over urban life. It was responsible for all matters of local government, the raising of urban taxes, the construction of streets, squares and parks, the provision of electric light and clean water, the management of sanitation and hygiene, and the supervision of coffeehouses, restaurants and cinemas.[157] The municipality became the chief instrument through which the city was modernized.

The Tehran municipality took the spatial war directly to the venues that had nurtured traditional, but now deeply undesirable, forms of social life, coffee houses, traditional kitchens, *zurkhanehs* and *takiyahs*. The ground for political and administrative action was prepared by an ideological campaign waged in the newspapers and journals of the modern middle class which depicted these spaces as unhealthy and obsolete.[158] The municipality then issued a series of regulations (*nizamnamahs*), establishing its own control over these places and the right to supervise and re-order them on the ostensible grounds of health and hygiene. This control, however, was used to undermine gradually their socio-spatial roles and relevance. The communal life of coffeehouses and kitchens was disrupted by rules that required the mimicking of modern cafes and restaurants, with their mandatory use of chairs, separate tables and partition between food preparation and service.[159] This determination to replace communal with individual spaces even extended to bath-houses, a municipal *nizamnamah* issued which required that individual cabins and showers replace the old communal pool.[160] Such internal physical

---

[156] See Z. Pamela Karimi, *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

[157] Hosayn Farhūdi, 'City Councils,' *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. v, fasc. 6, 1991, pp. 646–8.

[158] Rezvani-Naraghi, 'Middle Class Urbanism', pp. 105–6.

[159] Rezvani-Naraghi, 'Middle Class Urbanism', pp. 103–4.

[160] Rezvani-Naraghi, 'Middle Class Urbanism', footnote 7, p. 117.

partitioning, with its unavoidable psychological dimension, eventually contributed to the decline of the collective life which had typified the old city *mahallah*.

These accumulated changes had a transformative effect on Tehran. The old *mahallah*-based networks of kin, ethnicity and religion melted away, the new spaces now organized exclusively around money and class. The better off moved out of the old city into the new neighbourhoods, while impoverished rural migrants moved into the spaces they vacated.[161] Tehran became divided between an old, traditional, shrinking and neglected kernel, with a population of declining social and political significance, and a rapidly expanding, increasingly prosperous modern urban environment, mirroring divisions within society itself.[162] Tehran was increasingly polarized. The old city, with its Friday mosque, bazar, courtyard houses, its *zurkhanas* and coffeehouses, represented the old social classes, the ulama, the bazar merchants and a superseded Qajar aristocracy, beneath them the poor, the traditional and the religious. The north represented the emerging bourgeoisie, the institutions of the modern secular state, and its forms of leisure, cinemas, parks and shopping malls.[163] Eventually the old city, abandoned by most of those with the means to do so, became identified not only with the lower classes, but with the socially undesirable, the reactionary and the criminal.[164] Indeed the old city became increasingly orientalized, appearing ever more medieval and Islamic by contrast to the burgeoning new areas.[165]

This new bifurcation between north Tehran and the old city was especially sharp on the cultural level, where Iranian modernism waged a series of campaigns on the unlikely fronts of music, dance and sport. The first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence and fostering of a profound and entirely novel gulf between high and low culture, the former elite and modern, the latter traditional and the preserve of the poor and uneducated. Until the late nineteenth century, the *mutrib*, for example, was a musician who, although lacking the status of classical musicians, nonetheless provided entertainment for all social classes,

---

[161] Ehlers and Floor, 'Urban Change in Iran', p. 265.

[162] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*.

[163] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*; Ehlers and Floor, 'Urban Change in Iran'.

[164] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*.

[165] For a discussion of this phenomenon in Cairo, see Nairy Hampikian, 'Medievalization of the Old City as an Ingredient of Cairo's Modernization: Case Study of Bab Zuwayla', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds.), Making Cairo Medieval (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 201–34.

the wealthy, even the shah himself, as well as for popular festivities.[166]
From the 1920s, he gradually became identified with the old city and its
milieux, his music considered mediocre and vulgar, he himself illiterate
and associated with morally dubious cafes and cabarets and *filmfarsi*
productions.[167] *Mutribi* music came to represent every kind of contrast,
the social as much as the artistic, to Iranian classical music, performed
in the concert halls of north Tehran. A similar bifurcation took place
in the even more morally compromised field of dance. Pahlavi Iran
saw the parallel development of the cabaret dancer and the national
dancer, separated by an utterly unbridgeable cultural distance. The
cabaret dancer, barely distinguishable from a prostitute, performed in
disreputable venues to *mutribi* music. *Raqs-i milli* (national dance), by
way of contrast, was considered a high art form, was performed on a
Western-style stage to the accompaniment of Iranian classical music
with the audience watching in silence, the dancer's dress inspired by
Persian miniature painting and an imagined ancient Iranian past.[168]
Even sport did not escape the new culture wars. The *zurkhanah*, or
house of strength, a kind of traditional gymnasium for the performance
of prescribed collective and ritualized exercises and also for wrestling
was, from the 1920s, increasingly denigrated as at best old-fashioned
and unhygienic and at worst a place of moral corruption, particularly of
homosexuality, frequented by petty criminals and *lutis*.[169] Modernism
demanded its replacement by Western sports, cycling, boxing and so on,
and especially team sports, such as football and volleyball. These were
deemed beneficial to health and also, and more importantly, perhaps
in imitation of the English public school system, as character-forming.
Eventually, after a period of decline, a new use was found for *zurkhanah*
exercises, which were reinvented as 'ancient sport' and adopted by the
regime to emphasize the achievements of Iran's pre-Islamic past.[170]

---

[166] Keivan Aghamohseni, 'Modernization of Iranian Music during the Reign of Reza Shah', in Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 72–94, p. 74.

[167] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*.

[168] Meftahi, *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran*.

[169] Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Zur-Kāna', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2006). Available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zur-kana.

[170] Cyrus Schayegh, 'Sport, Health and the Iranian Middle Class in the 1920s and 1930s', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2002, pp. 341–69; Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Mir Mehdi Varzandeh and the Introduction of Modern Physical Education in Iran', in Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 55–72; 'Sport and Politics in Iran: the Legend of Gholamreza Takhti,' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1995, pp. 48–60.

Liminality and Ambiguity: Gangsterism and the Rise and Fall of the *Luti*

The modernist revolution in urban design was most devastating to one particular, and perhaps most iconic, element of the dangerous classes in Iran, the *lutis*. These gangs of young men, illiterate and drawn from the poor of their own local area, embodied all that Pahlavi Iran wished not to be. They had always thrived in the spaces of the traditional city, were intimately connected to the power structures and hierarchies of the *mahallah*, and were hit hard by the arrival of new ways of life within new urban environments, their entire social existence predicated upon a dying urban order. The ability of elements of the dangerous classes to adapt and survive within the changing environment of Iranian modernity has already been noted. Certainly, the *lutis* evolved in early Pahlavi Iran and, uniquely among the dangerous classes, played a prominent political role in the overthrow of Muhammad Musaddiq in 1953. However, their very political significance made them unpalatable to the post-coup authorities and neither they nor their leaders were unable to reinvent themselves in a form which was tolerable to the apparently stable monarchy of the 1950s and 1960s.

The actual historical existence of the *luti* is almost impossible to decipher, given their profound liminality and the range of their discursive representations. They may perhaps best be understood as an Iranian variant of the associations of young men typical of pre-modern cities, poor and marginal and at the disposal of local bosses, the Italian *lazzeroni* whom Marx included in his list of lumpenproletarians, or the *qabadayat* of Syria and Lebanon.[171]

By the early twentieth century, their main features might be summarized as follows. In ideological terms, *lutis* drew on medieval notions of *futuvvat* or *javanmardi*.[172] Physical strength and courage were important, as was honour, and a reputation for being ready to defend it with violence, on his own behalf, that of his quarter and sometimes

---

[171] For the *qabadayat* see, for example, Phillip S. Khoury, 'Abu Ali al-Kilawi: A Damascus Qabaday,' Edmund Burke III and David N. Yaghoubian (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 152–63; Rebecca Joubin, 'The Politics of the Qabaday (Tough Man) and the Changing Father Figure in Syrian Televsion Drama,' *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2016, pp. 50–6. For an earlier iteration of this type of social formation in the medieval Middle East, the *ayyaran*, see Alexandre Papas, *Thus Spake the Dervish*, p. 2.

[172] Mohsen Zakeri, 'Javanmardi,' *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2008, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/javanmardi.

of the vaguely defined oppressed in general.[173] In political terms, *lutis* also had recognized roles to play. Although often posing as popular representatives of their quarter, many gangs and their leaders also had actual connections to local notables and especially to religious figures, for whom they would provide muscle in conflicts, with other urban quarters, hostile notables or the government. In social terms, they were entertainers, performers with monkeys and bears, snake charmers, conjurers, jugglers, puppeteers, musicians and dancers, and even athletes and wrestlers, the *zurkhanah* the centre of *luti* life. Attitudes towards these figures encompassed a wide spectrum depending on the social position of the observer and the particular context. Elite descriptions tended to stress their thievery, idleness and troublemaking, while their own self-image seems to have been largely accepted and perpetuated by the urban poor, from whose ranks they were drawn, although even here they retained their marginal, even sometimes deviant, status.

The Tehran legislation of the early 1920s was specifically aimed at removing the *luti* presence from the streets of Tehran. Their professional existence was in any case being rapidly undermined by the changes taking place in culture, taste and entertainment, while the official promotion of Western sport further discredited their principal communal space, the *zurkhanah*. During the 1920s and 1930s, a process of class differentiation seems to have taken place among *luti* elements. Some successfully modernized themselves. A few became wealthy by establishing mafia-style rackets, taxing small shopkeepers in the old city, opening gambling houses, brothels or opium dens and fighting for control of Tehran's lucrative fruit and vegetable market. The remainder acted as their rank and file enforcers on the streets.[174] It was such *luti* leaders, most notoriously Sha'ban Ja'fari and Tayyib Hajj Riza'i, who provided the truck-loads of thugs instrumental to the overthrow of Musaddiq in 1953, giving that episode a popular sheen.[175]

Between the 1920s and the 1950s, the similarity between *lutis*, now known as *jahils* or *gardan kolofts*, and mafia-like criminal organizations around the world seems to have increased or at least to have become more visible, perhaps as result of expanded economic opportunities in

[173] For the lutis in Iran, see Martin, *The Qajar Pact*; Willem Floor, 'The Lutis: A Social Phenomenon in Qajar Persia: A Reappraisal', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 13, no. 1–2, 1971, pp. 103–20; 'Luti,' *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2010), www.iranicaonline .org/articles/luti; Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, pp. 20–33.

[174] Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, p. 25.

[175] Gölz, 'The Dangerous Classes'; Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*, pp. 26–7.

the growing capital city. Their resemblance to gangsterism, shielded to some extent by an earlier integration into existing ideological and cultural tropes, became more open and more obvious and they shed any residual romantic associations with medieval chivalry and a supposed role as defenders of the poor and oppressed. Their traditional links to political power and their inherently reactionary inclinations reached an apogee with their mobilization by the forces which carried out the coup against Musaddiq. They subsequently found themselves increasingly an embarrassment to the 'modern' monarchy and at odds with their one-time patrons. They were either repressed, Tayyib, for example, was executed after expressing support for Ayatullah Khomeini in 1963, or marginalized and turned into figures of folklore, archaic and harmless. Any residual influence their leaders may have possessed was finally eliminated completely by the Islamic republic.[176]

Nonetheless, from the 1950s, again rather like the Sicilian mafia, *lutis* became a spectacular presence in popular culture, especially in the *filmfarsi* genre of 'tough guy' movies, these productions displaying the full range of ambiguity and liminality which had always surrounded the luti phenomenon.[177] Hugely popular with the urban poor, especially the rural migrants in the shanty towns around Tehran, their largely male audience identified with their depictions of the hardships of life and, in a period of state-sponsored women's emancipation, with their simple portrayals of an imaginary masculinity and an uncomplicated homosociability. As popular as they were with the poor, they were equally unpopular with elites, both conservative and leftist, who found them artistically worthless, the Left in particular disliking their glorification of the lives of the lumpen.[178]

Conclusion

Iranian modernism needed the dangerous classes. Indeed, to a very large extent it invented them. The marginal and the criminal constituted a perfect foil for the self-image of the emerging middle classes, representing the sharpest possible contrast to their social existence, their aspirations and their political agendas. The dangerous classes were, also and more specifically, a mechanism through which the monarchy attempted to demonstrate its paternalism, its membership of a Western, now global,

[176] Gölz, 'The Dangerous Classes'; Breyley and Fatemi, *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment*.
[177] Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, pp. 261–324.
[178] Naficy, *A Social History of Iranian Cinema*, pp. 262–4.

civilization, in short its legitimacy. Given its clarity and its utility, this very specific class war, between the dangerous and the respectable was necessarily a permanent feature of the new society. Although modernism discursively framed the dangerous as reformable, transformable and eventually eradicable, in fact only the configurations of the conflict changed, not its fundamental presence. As Iran continued to urbanize, began to industrialize and underwent a land reform, so prostitutes, beggars and criminals multiplied in the swelling cities, joined by other varieties of street people, notably drug addicts. This is most strikingly illustrated by Kamran Shirdel's film, *Tehran is the Capital of Iran*. This short film, like his work on prostitutes and women prisoners, again contrasts the official narrative with the actual conditions prevailing in the slums of the capital. From the opening shots of homeless and destitute labourers sleeping in ruined buildings, through his depiction of a range of inhabitants of Iranian society's lower depths, brick kiln workers, rubbish scavengers, casually employed day labourers, those who survived by repeatedly selling their blood, beggars, and especially their wives and children, Shirdel paints a vivid picture of the almost unimaginable gulf separating the rhetoric of elite modernism from the reality of everyday life for the poor.[179]

Modernism early understood the links between poverty and marginality and crime. However, it chose to concern itself not with poverty, but with managing the poor. It was the marginal and the criminal, and by extension the poor in general, individually and collectively, who represented a menace to the new state and society. Despite the crystallization of a discourse of reform and rehabilitation, modernist elites in the Pahlavi period remained profoundly suspicious of the faceless populations of the urban slums, a suspicion that proved all too prescient in the months leading up to the 1979 revolution.

Iranian modernism may be understood as a Foucauldian project but this describes its ambitions, not its achievements. The actual history of its experiments in Pahlavi Iran reveals, paradoxically, not the strength of the new state, but rather its weakness. Iranian poorhouses were not replicas of Victorian Bastilles, as British workhouses were tellingly known, nor were its prisons panopticons. Iranian efforts, by a newly born and still flimsy modern state, to supervise and control prostitution never became even a pale shadow of French regulationism. Nothing approaching Foucault's 'great confinement' can be found in Iran. Indeed, no rapid and traumatic industrialization made it necessary. The extensive system of

---

[179] This film, like Shirdel's film of Shahr-i Naw, was also not shown before the 1979 revolution.

British workhouses, for example, served several useful purposes. It was an essential component of the production of a proletariat, forcing ex-peasants, accustomed to seasonal work supplemented by occasional recourse to public assistance, into long, daily and time-managed factory shifts. It cleared the indigent from the streets, it was a source of cheap labour and was itself cheap to run, less of a demand on middle-class resources than other methods of providing for the starving. In ideological terms it trumpeted the supremacy of the work ethic, and penalized especially those outside the protection of the newly valorized nuclear family headed by a male breadwinner, notably abandoned women and children. In the context of the industrial revolution, it was a significant disciplinary tool. In Iran, by contrast, few factories with time segmented into shifts and workers 'clocking on' awaited the poor. Despite the new rhetorical emphasis by the middle classes on the virtues of work, the poorhouse evoked little of the terror among the poor such as surrounded the British workhouse until well into the twentieth century. The Iranian poorhouse, where it existed, merely offered shelter to paupers, nothing more. The utopian, or perhaps dystopian, ambitions of Iranian modernism were unrealizable. The reform and rehabilitation discourse remained largely confined to rhetoric, a reality hinted at with great subtlety in Kamran Shirdel's films.

Just as a Foucauldian perspective leads to an overestimation of the strength of the state, so it underestimates the agency, or perhaps merely the powers of survival, of the marginal. In Iran, the dangerous classes rarely or never confronted the new disciplinary discourses and institutions head on. Nonetheless they were far from lacking any agency. Beggars swept from the streets simply relocated themselves to other public places, prostitutes avoided or bribed clinics and police, and female prisoners mimicked and echoed the rehabilitation agenda of the authorities, while male prisoners either voluntarily or were obliged to enter a prison subculture which combined an outward compliance with a range of strategies of survival and amelioration. The strategic appropriation of elite discourses in their defence by the more or less powerless is particularly marked. Seen above in the cases of women prisoners, prostitutes and even serial killers in Iran, similar tactics may be observed in a wide variety of national contexts. Female poisoners brought before Ottoman courts, for example, frequently adopted the language of the legal authorities and exploited cultural stereotypes to exculpate themselves, presenting themselves as weak-minded women, susceptible to external pressures and with limited agency.[180] Marginality

---

[180] Ebru Aykut, 'Toxic Murder, Female Poisoners, and the Question of Agency at the Late Ottoman Law Courts, 1840–1908', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2016, pp. 114–37, pp. 127–30.

and illiteracy did not necessarily imply ignorance. *Lutis* relied on the medieval notions of *futuvvat* or *javanmardi* and the very lowest social groups occasionally displayed an astonishing knowledge of and capacity to make use of legal and social conventions. This is clearly demonstrated by the petition of 'the non-Muslim beggars' presented to the sultan in early nineteenth-century Istanbul, which was directed against a competing group of beggars. Their petition demonstrated an 'impeccable' grasp of legal procedure and their request for an imperial decree against their rivals was granted.[181] Nor were the new institutions models of disciplinary effectiveness. Prisons in Iran, as around the globe, seethed with tensions and covert violence, a custodial sentence the surest way to produce not disciplined subjects but incorrigible recidivists. Modernism in the Pahlavi period never became a truly hegemonic discourse, the huge popularity of 'tough guy' movies and the manufactured life stories of singers and actresses like Mahvash indicating a subterranean but persistent resistance to narratives of respectability and obedience.

In early 1979, the Iranian revolution swept away the monarchy and the elites who had supported it. Modernism and its Foucauldian methods, however, survived, and the war with the dangerous classes, although differently configured, continued. Although the rhetoric of the Islamic republic, echoing Franz Fanon's wretched of the earth, valorized the dispossessed (musta'zafin), the growing numbers of drug addicts, sex workers and the homeless on the streets posed a serious challenge to the objectives and legitimacy of the new authorities. Such street people were, during the 1990s, now redefined. No longer the dispossessed, they became *arazil va awbash* (riffraff), and once more found themselves the target of a discourse of rehabilitation and repression.[182]

---

[181] Hamadeh, 'Mean Streets', pp. 255–6.
[182] Maziyar Ghiabi, ''The "Virtual Poor" in Iran: Dangerous Classes and Homeless Life in Capitalist Times', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 190–208, p. 198; *Drugs Politics: Managing Disorder in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Part II

The Wider Middle East

4   Noble Robbers, Avengers and Entrepreneurs

Eric Hobsbawm and Banditry in Iran,
the Middle East and North Africa

Banditry, on land and sea, and allied trades such as smuggling, have been widespread and endemic across the Middle East and North Africa. That this is so is attested to by a variety of sources, some hostile and emanating from elite origins, state archives, court records, chronicles, accounts of European travellers, and some more sympathetic, popular song, poetry and folklore. Yet the Middle Eastern experience of banditry has thus far failed to receive sustained academic attention and the figure of the bandit has found fuller representation in literature, most notably in the novels of the Turkish author Yashar Kemal.[1] In particular, the debates stimulated by Eric Hobsbawm's thesis of social banditry has elicited only a few responses from scholars of the Middle East and North Africa, and those largely negative, failing to spark the kind of

---

[1] See, most notably, Yashar Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk*, trans. Edouard Roditi (London: Harvill Press, 1990). The possible existence of the social bandit has received more attention very recently. See, for example, Abolhassan Hadjiheidari, *Nāyeb Ḥoseyn Kāšī, Strassenräuber oder Revolutionär? : eine Untersuchung zur neueren iranischen Geschichte (1850–1920)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2011); Ezzeldin, 'History and Memory of Bandits in Modern Egypt'. See also Antonin Plarier, 'Rural Banditry in Colonial Algeria (1871–1914)', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800*, pp. 105–16; Mattin Biglari, '"A State of Tribal Lawlessness"? Rural and Urban Crime in Fars Province (c.1910–1915)', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800*; Murat Metinsoy, 'Rural Crimes as Everyday Peasant Politics: Tax Delinquency, Smuggling, Theft and Banditry in Modern Turkey', in Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa*, pp. 135–154.

comparative and theoretical interest that has proved so productive for Latin America, China and southern Europe.[2]

The purpose of the survey which follows is threefold. First, to encourage a discussion within Middle Eastern and North African Studies of the social significance of crime in general, and specific phenomena such as banditry and smuggling in particular. Second, to provide some historical context for the startling re-emergence in the ungoverned spaces created by state collapse of types of actors and activities associated with banditry and smuggling and often thought of as belonging to the past. These include mafia-type gangs, militias/warlords sometimes with quasi-political ambitions, smuggling, now of a wide variety of commodities, including people, weapons and drugs, on a massive scale across the Middle East and North-West Africa. Finally, and particularly, the survey offers an explanatory framework for the profoundly ambiguous popular attitudes often displayed towards such figures and their behaviour.

The publication of Eric Hobsbawm's *Bandits* in 1969 was a foundational event.[3] Although criticized as methodologically unsound, theoretically flawed, empirically limited and latterly, after its influence had spread

---

[2] The literature on social banditry, for and against, in these areas is very substantial. For Latin America, see, *inter alia*, Gilbert M. Joseph, 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1990, pp. 7–53, and the subsequent debate in that journal. See also Richard W. Slatta (ed.), *Bandidos: the Varieties of Latin American Banditry* (New York: Greenwood, 1987); on China see Patrick Fuliang Shan, 'Insecurity, Outlawry and Social Order: Banditry in China's Heilongjiang Frontier Region, 1900–1931', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2006, pp. 25–54; Robert J. Antony, 'Peasants, Heroes, and Brigands: The Problem of Social Banditry in Early Nineteenth-Century South China', *Modern China*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1989, pp. 123–48. Tibet is discussed by Tsering Shakya, 'Ga rgya 'gram nag: A Bandit or Proto-rebel? The Question of Banditry as Social Protest in Nag chu', *Trails of the Tibetan Tradition: Papers for Elliot Sperling* (Dharamshala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2014). For India, see David Arnold, 'Dacoity and Rural Crime in Madras, 1860–1940', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 6, 1979, pp. 140–67; Kim A. Wagner, 'Thuggee and Social Banditry Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2007, pp. 353–76; for south-east Asia see Greg Bankoff, 'Bandits, Banditry and Landscapes of Crime in the Nineteenth-Century Phillipines', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1998, pp. 319–39; Boon Kheng Cheah, *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah, 1900–1919: Historical and Folk Perceptions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988); for Africa, Allen Isaacman, 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique, 1894–1907: An Expression of Early Peasant Protest', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1977, pp. 1–30; Donald Crummey, 'African Banditry Revisited', undated. Available at www.brunel.ac.uk/creative-writing/research/entertext/documents/entertext042/Donald-Crummey-African-Banditry-Revisited-an-essay.pdf. The literature on social banditry in Europe is very extensive. For a recent account, see Shingo Minamizuka, *A Social Bandit in Nineteenth Century Hungary: Rósza Sándor* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2008).

[3] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*.

among scholars working on the non-European world, as Eurocentric, the book itself and its central notion of social banditry are still, several decades after its first appearance, compulsory referential starting points for any discussion of banditry, of pre-modern rural crime, indeed for the social history of crime in general. Even though the search for the social bandit often failed, the quest itself has offered productive ways of thinking about contested definitions of crime, the nature and scope of peasant resistance and the subaltern psychological world.

Hobsbawm's location of social banditry within a world of peasant resistance was originally part of a wider intellectual endeavour aimed at redefining the phenomenon of crime; the criminal no longer simply a pathological individual but criminal action a rational activity.[4] A further step was taken as crime came to be seen as, under certain conditions, a form of subaltern resistance, conscious or unconscious, and an embryonic form of social protest. Especially in the context of the arrival of modernity, exemplified by eighteenth-century England and entailing the disintegration of pre-capitalist social and economic structures and the ruthless consolidation of new 'modern' relationships enforced by harsh and novel legal, judicial and penal systems, lawbreakers and outlaws of every kind, food rioters, smugglers and poachers, along with bandits and pirates, were rehabilitated, emerging as crypto- or proto-rebels.

Hobsbawm's thesis of social banditry was a contribution to this wider historical revisionism. For Hobsbawm, this specific form of rural crime functioned as a manifestation of peasant protest, the designation of social bandit applying to peasant outlaws whom the authorities regarded as criminals, but who remained within their own peasant communities, and were 'considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation, and in any case as men to be admired, helped and supported'.[5] He insisted on the essential connection between the peasantry and social banditry, rejected modern forms of urban terrorism or gang activity as banditry, and clearly distinguished social banditry from both the professional underworld of common robbers and communities, such as bedouin, for whom raiding was a normal economic activity. As well as the noble robber, Hobsbawm identified the avenger, who shared many of the characteristics of the noble robber, and was also a symptom of peasant discontent, but for whom to be 'terrifying and pitiless' was at least an important as being a friend

---

[4] Stanley Cohen, 'Bandits, Rebels or Criminals: African History and Western Criminology', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 56, no. 4, 1986, pp. 468–83.
[5] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 20.

of the poor.[6] A third type, the haiduk, largely a Balkan phenomenon, was rather more particular. In addition to living by robbery, the haiduk was also, and equally, a patriot, even a nationalist, and a fighter against foreign (usually Ottoman) oppression.

It should be noted, first, that Hobsbawm's social bandit was a rather conservative figure, his actions a form of protest against intolerable conditions, lacking any vision of social transformation and often aiming at a return to an idealized past. Only rarely, and under strictly circumscribed historical conditions, could such social bandits summon the potential to transcend the parochial limitations of peasant ideology and politics and assume a revolutionary role. Second, Hobsbawm, his conceptualization rather more subtle than his critics allowed, suggested social banditry only as one variant of banditry, and did not claim that all bandits or bandits in general fell into this category, this vulgarization of his original thesis later becoming rather widespread among his critics.[7] He particularly distinguished the social bandit from two quite separate categories of rural brigands, simple robbers or rural desperadoes, and bandit gentry or robber barons, warlords in contemporary Middle Eastern parlance.

Two lines of objection to the Hobsbawmian social bandit appeared immediately. The first and perhaps most obvious was his romanticization of the phenomenon, based on an uncritical use of the literature and legend of banditry. As he himself later conceded, very little about the historical reality of social banditry, let alone the careers of specific individual bandits, might actually be inferred from the songs sung and the stories told.[8] The second objection was to his equally uncritical acceptance of Balkan nationalist historiography for his construction of the haiduk.[9] The first charge against Hobsbawm was originally elaborated in an extremely influential article by Anton Blok.[10] Basing his critique on his research into the Sicilian mafia, Blok argued that any analysis of banditry must look at the actual behaviour and actions of bandits, not at their popular perception. Blok insisted that far from representing the grievances and incipient defiance of their own peasant communities, bandits rather developed connections to local elites, landlords and others,

---

[6] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 67.
[7] See Joseph, 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits', note 41, p. 38; Anton Blok, *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860–1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), note 10, p. 101.
[8] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 182.
[9] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 182.
[10] Anton Blok, 'The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1972, pp. 494–503.

to whom they looked for political protection and for whom they actually acted as enforcers against the peasants, citing as evidence the Sicilian Giuliano Salvatore's attacks on communists and trade unionists just after the Second World War, and his contemporary, Luciano Leggio's reign of terror against peasants mobilizing to demand agrarian reform.[11] In addition, banditry offered the bandit social mobility and an escape from peasant life and, by siphoning off young unmarried men, the most combative elements of village society, removed potential foot soldiers of revolt. Far from challenging local power structures, Blok concluded that banditry contributed both materially and ideologically to weakening the capacities of peasants to resist.

The polarities offered by Hobsbawm and Blok were taken up and explored by scholars working within and across a range of disciplines and geographical regions to produce an increasingly sophisticated body of work on bandits and banditry. The taxonomic approach, sometimes reduced to the simple question of whether the social bandit existed or not, was soon superseded by inquiries into methodology and meaning. The distinction between bandit reality and bandit mythology quickly came to be generally acknowledged, including by Hobsbawm himself. It was not conceded, however, that this meant that the social bandit could be dismissed as a mere figment of the imagination. The almost universal existence of Robin Hood legends across the world suggested, on the contrary, their profound historical, political and social significance.[12] As a consequence, both sympathizers of the social bandit thesis and those sceptical of the thesis, and occasionally also of the politics behind it, began to take a closer and more contextualized look at the folklore itself, interrogating the production, transmission, transmutation and, perhaps most importantly, reception, of stories of bandit heroics. A number of case studies painstakingly deconstructed bandit legends, tracing their manipulation within the strategic discourses of power-seeking elites, particularly an urban nationalist intelligentsia. Perhaps the most comprehensive such deconstruction was that of Balkan nationalism's romanticization of the bandit klephts and haiduks. Although preying ruthlessly on the peasantry and motivated largely if not exclusively by the prospect of booty, klephts and haiduks became the embodiment of anti-Ottoman freedom-fighting in Balkan nationalist historiographies, myths about brigand heroes manipulated by post-independence ruling

---

[11] Blok, 'The Peasant and the Brigand', p. 499.
[12] Graham Seal, 'The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History and the Social Bandit', *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2009, pp. 67–89.

classes.[13] Again, the Lithuanian popular cultural icon, Tadas Blinda, 'a leveller of the world', who was reputed to take from the rich and give to the poor, seems to have been in fact a horse-thief lynched by an angry mob who was transformed into a noble bandit by urban intellectuals first in the service of Lithuanian nationalism and later, in the Soviet period, as a progenitor of peasant class struggle.[14] Nonetheless such demolitions still failed to account for the origins of the myths in folk culture and their enthusiastic embrace by all manner of subaltern. The dynamics of myth-creation remain complex. Where and how the myth originates is as important, though harder to trace, as the way in which it is subsequently shaped. Popular responses to literary reworking of oral or folk history have, in their turn, their own impact on future cultural representation. The bandit himself may even strive to conform to the script. Far from reducible to a unilinear process whereby harsh peasant reality is appropriated and glamourized by remote literati, subalterns as well as elites each made their own contributions to the profoundly contested meaning of bandit legends.[15]

Hobsbawm's own interest in banditry had originated in an interest in peasant discontent and resistance. The centrality of a focus on the meaning of banditry in peasant consciousness and the place of crime in class conflict was famously reasserted by Ranajit Guha in his study of colonial India published thirty years after Hobsbawm's book. Guha pointed out, first, that the peasant was typically prepared to tolerate, and 'often positively approve of a wide variety of crimes induced by poverty'.[16] Second, actual peasant revolt was preceded by a 'wave of "preliminary outrages"', an increase in rural criminal activity which was often a feature of periods of immiseration and which signalled a lowering of the peasant's tolerance of his conditions of existence.[17] Third, such rural crime, including banditry, possessed an inversive function, symbolically or explicitly challenging social hierarchies and codes of deference, introducing a blurring within which peasants were increasingly enabled to invest rural lawbreaking and violence with new

[13] John S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Maria Todorova (ed.), *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), p. 21; Alice Blackwood, 'Criminal or Nationalist? The Social Purposes and Results of the Creation of a "Social Bandit" Mythos in the Balkans', *Balkan Folklore*, pp. 1–11.

[14] Tomas Balkelis, 'Social Banditry and Nation-Making: The Myth of a Lithuanian Robber', *Past and Present*, no. 198, 2008, pp. 111–45.

[15] See Seal, 'The Robin Hood Principle'.

[16] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 91.

[17] Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, p. 83.

meanings, such code switching facilitated by the fact that the peasants' attitude towards activities labelled as crime in any case differed greatly from that of their class antagonists.[18]

Guha's direction of attention towards the necessity of interpreting sources differently in order to gain access to the consciousness of both peasant and bandit was made within the context of wider methodological debates.[19] Although Hobsbawm himself acknowledged the difficulties raised by his reliance on folklore and literature, his supporters countered that sceptics of the social bandit themselves often neglected to interrogate their own reliance on written texts emanating from elite sources, especially police and judicial records. Such sources, in addition to reflecting a tendency to conflate all types of rural lawbreaking into a single undifferentiated criminal category, were in particular hardly likely to reflect any popular perceptions or bandit self-images of legitimate resistance. Whereas state archives might be useful for chronologies of action, they say little, might even be profoundly misleading, about meaning. A single action, or category of activity, might appear to the authorities and therefore in the archives under the catchall rubric of banditry, but might have been interpreted by the archivally silent lower echelons of rural society as invested with defiance, resistance or protest. Much work on banditry in the Middle East has indeed displayed a sometimes unconscious privileging of the written text, an assumption that elite-generated archival sources are relatively free of the subjectivity and bias which allegedly mars orally transmitted material. This approach has been particularly problematic where the events addressed are within living memory and popular voices thus easily accessible.

Another and quite novel line of criticism emerged when feminist scholarship began to try to gender bandit studies. This endeavour did not only involve the search for female bandits but examined such issues as the division of labour within peasant societies that might facilitate bandit activity, the role of extended households and domestic organization.[20] Gender studies particularly asked whether the continuing interest in banditry concealed a romantic view of male violence.[21] Certainly for southern Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, deeply embedded cultural codes of honour and shame and notions of masculinity have been identified as important tropes in shaping popular

[18] Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, p. 93; Joseph, 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits', pp. 20–2.
[19] For a full discussion, see Joseph, 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits'.
[20] Joseph, 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits', pp. 34–5.
[21] Donald Crummey, 'Introduction: "The Great Beast", in Donald Crummey (ed), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: Currey, 1986), p. 12.

sympathies for a range of picaresque figures on the margins of, or even outside, social and legal boundaries.

To what extent, then, does the recent work done in the wider field of bandit studies help to elucidate the experience of the Middle East and North Africa? How can we explain the absence of the Middle East and North Africa from the historical controversies described above? Why has there been such a lack of interest in banditry when the phenomenon itself, and rural crime in general, was so widespread? Why are so few individual bandits celebrated or reviled? Why is there no Middle Eastern or North African counterpart to the Mexicans Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa, the Brazilian Lampiao, the Australian Ned Kelly, the Sicilian Salvatore Guiliano or the Chinese Bai Lang, let alone to the female Indian 'bandit queen', Phoolan Devi.[22] What do we mean by banditry in the Middle Eastern context, who became a bandit, why and in what circumstances, what did bandits do and how was this perceived by elites and subalterns, what were the connections between bandits and peasants and between bandits and the worlds of power and, perhaps most importantly, who has written about bandits and what sources have they used?

Hobsbawm's elaboration of the concept of social banditry as a form of peasant protest was largely based on his analysis of European history. His central concept, however, proved particularly tempting to scholars working on the non-European world where both numerically preponderant peasant populations, and banditry itself, either still existed or were a very recent memory. This was particularly the case for parts of the world which had still living traditions of peasant populism, especially Latin America, or where peasants, and their fringe of bandits, had been allocated a politically salient historical role and their activities incorporated into a hegemonic discourse, most notably China.[23] Unfortunately, neither of these conditions held true for the Middle East and North Africa. Although in every country of the region the vast majority of the population was, until very recently, rural, national historiographies have been dominated by the politics of urban elites.

[22] For bandit biographies and (semi-)autobiographies, see for example, Billy Jaynes Chandler, *The Bandit King: Lampiao of Brazil* (Texas: Texas A&M University Press: 1978); Phoolan Devi, Marie-Therese Cuny and Paul Rambali, *I, Phoolan Devi: The Autobiography of India's Bandit Queen* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

[23] Such incorporation has been important in assisting the collection of material. See for example the assiduous research carried out under official auspices in China into the bandit Bai Lang and his movement. Elizabeth J. Perry, 'Social Banditry Revisited: The Case of Bai Lang, a Chinese Brigand', *Modern China*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1983, pp. 355–82, note 3, p. 379.

In contrast to nationalisms elsewhere, Middle Eastern varieties have in general not valued the peasantry as the living reservoir of an authentic 'national' culture but have rather tended to exclude the rural areas and those who inhabited them from both actual political action and from the imagined historical community.

One reason for the lack of interest in banditry in the Middle East and North Africa and scepticism of social banditry in particular may, therefore, be found in the fact that, in general, bandits have not been incorporated as heroic figures into nationalist historiographies or state-building ideologies. A major exception is the Balkans under Ottoman rule, where a specific construction of banditry, Hobsbawm's klephts and haiduks, became central to an elite liberation discourse, and where, accordingly, scholarship followed. Another partial exception is French North Africa where the context of the anti-colonial struggle produced several candidates for the status of social bandit or *bandit d'honneur.* Indeed, only Algerian nationalism has truly embraced the bandit as a figure of political significance.[24] In relation to the central lands of the Middle East, however, banditry has been allocated rather the contrary role. Here state-building was often authoritarian and undertaken at the initiative of entrenched rulers and elites. With certain partial exceptions, for example colonial North Africa and mandatory Palestine, there was no place here for the revolutionary haiduk, let alone a Zapata. Across the Middle East, an anti-bandit discourse was appealing to indigenous elites and to colonial and imperial authorities alike, elite oppositional movements also sharing this perspective. Even the radical post-1967 Palestinian nationalist movement found peasant approbation of certain well-defined types of banditry somewhat embarrassing as a manifestation of backwardness.[25]

Nonetheless, a small number of scholarly engagements with the phenomenon of banditry in the Middle East have emerged. Three of the most significant are those of Nathan Brown on late nineteenth-century Egypt, of Karen Barkey on the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire and of Andrew Gould on nineteenth-century Anatolia. Yet all three reject the notion of social banditry and find the significance of banditry in its connection to the worlds of power, and more specifically

---

[24] See, for example, Hasina Amrouni, 'Les bandits d'honneur d'Algérie', available at: www.memoria.dz/sep-2016/dossier/les-bandits-dhonneur-dalg-rie; Settar Ouatmani, 'Arezki L'Bachir Un "bandit d'honneur" en Kabylie au xixe siècle', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 136, 2014.

[25] Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 94–6.

to its role in state-building.[26] For both Brown and Barkey, for example, bandits were an unmitigated curse and a tool of oppression, perpetrators of violence against and exploitation of a helpless peasantry and in league with local power-holders of every kind. Brown goes even further than Blok, stressing the complete self-interest of bandits, no more tied to the interests of notables than representing those of peasants.[27]

Brown's main interest is in the utilization of an anti-banditry discourse in the pursuit of an elite nationalist state-building project. In late nineteenth-century Egypt, the khedivial government, struggling to survive, based its resistance to the encroachment of British imperial power and its claims to legitimacy on its ability to maintain security in the countryside.[28] Indeed, the Egyptian elite shared its fear of rural native defiance with Britain and was at least as concerned as the British about its own physical safety and the security of its property. Here, unlike the Balkans, no nationalist leadership unleashed the power of bandits across the vast rural hinterland in a challenge to foreign authority, nor did a nationalist intelligentsia celebrate the valour and deeds of brigand heroes. On the contrary, Brown shows how, in the 1880s, immediately after the British occupation, the khedivial authorities discovered, or perhaps invented, an unprecedented crisis of violent rural crime. They then deployed this imagined crisis for two purposes: to enhance their claims to sovereignty vis-à-vis the British, and to strengthen their control over their own peasantry, using the banditry 'crisis' as a justification for an ambitious state-building agenda, constructing new and strengthening existing disciplinary institutions, including a centralized police force, prisons and courts, and national legal codes. The newly established and draconian Brigandage Commissions failed and were abolished in 1889. But the British occupying authorities then appropriated the ideological weapon forged by the khedivial government and turned it against its creators, using the continuing rural insecurity to justify their own increasing presence within the Egyptian administration. Yet the discourse of order remained as central to the British as it had been to the Egyptian authorities, and the bandit continued as the symbolic representative of chaos and violence, a threat to life and property of Egyptians and British alike.

[26] Nathan Brown, 'Brigands and State Building: The Invention of Banditry in Modern Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1990, pp. 258–81; Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).
[27] Brown, 'Brigands and State Building', p. 263.
[28] This account is drawn from Brown, 'Brigands and State Building'.

For Barkey, closely following Blok, bandits were certainly a feature of the drastic material deterioration in the Ottoman Empire typical of the global crisis of the seventeenth century, but their significance lay in their ambitions vis à vis the patrimonial Ottoman state, not in representing a rebellious peasantry.[29] Their proliferation was a direct consequence of Ottoman state-building, as they were recruited into new regular armies, trained in the use of weapons, but then casually demobilized. Cast adrift, they became mercenaries, either joining the retinues of local warlords or notables, or turning themselves into bandit gangs, becoming instruments of repression in the hands of landlords, officials or warlord-rebels. The Ottoman government responded with a policy of bargaining and incorporation. Where possible, bandit gangs that became too menacing were suppressed by force. More frequently they were simply absorbed, their leaders offered state appointments, successful elite incorporation indeed, according to Barkey, the main objective of bandit activity.[30]

Certainly, as Brown and Barkey argue, banditry across the Middle East and North Africa, as elsewhere, was often not exclusively a subaltern activity. Bandits often possessed, as Blok noted in relation to Sicily, a symbiotic relationship with such rudimentary forces of law and authority as existed on the local level, collusion sometimes open, sometimes covert, bandits acquiring protection in return for a share of the loot. For the Middle East and North Africa, this was especially the case where tribal ties of kinship, real or fictive, linked bandits directly to local landowners or state officials. Banditry might even constitute a route of upward social mobility. Bandit figures often intruded into the politics of pre-modern Middle Eastern and North African states, thereby forcing themselves into the archives, but they resembled Hobsbawm's robber barons, not his social bandit. The offer of elite incorporation in return for submission was a central strategy of states for dealing with troublesome or rebellious elements which were too powerful to suppress and bandit leaders and local warlords often graduated into legitimate and high-ranking official positions. Their performance of power notwithstanding, pre-modern Middle Eastern and North African governments and their armies were in reality small and weak, lacking the material means to enforce their will across large territories, and political survival depended on an ability to manipulate and accommodate a variety of interests with

---

[29] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*. The notion of a generalized crisis of the seventeenth century was first proposed by Eric Hobsbawm in two articles published in *Past and Present* in 1954. For a recent assessment of the state of the debate and the literature thus generated see the articles collected in the *American Historical Review*, vol. 120, no. 4, 2015.
[30] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*.

only the occasional application of exemplary force. Examples abound of negotiation with, and incorporation and utilization of, bandits and all manner of rural adventurers.[31] A classic case of the bandit-turned-governor is that of Sharif Mawlay Ahmad al-Raysuni in nineteenth-century Morocco.[32] Beginning as a cattle rustler and gun-runner, al-Raysuni progressed to kidnapping and ransoming Europeans, a particularly lucrative business, establishing himself as a local strongman and warlord in north-western Morocco. He eventually obtained from the sultan of Morocco the governorship of the coastal town of Asila, from which position he went on to establish good relations with the emerging Spanish protectorate.

A case of a 'bandit elite', rather than an opportunist individual, is that of the *derebeys*, local tribal rulers of Cilicia, in south-eastern Anatolia.[33] The *derebeys* were among the last local rulers to resist the centralizing expansion of the nineteenth-century Ottoman state, surviving until the 1860s. They were notorious in Istanbul for their brigandage and a *derebey* was conventionally described in Ottoman documents as *shaki*, outlaw or brigand or possibly rebel. Their speciality consisted of presiding over gangs drawn from the local population who held up caravans in mountain passes and raided villages on the surrounding plain, the *derebeys* becoming effectively 'lords of the bandits'.[34] The Ottoman government, wishing to bring the region under its direct control but lacking the resources, and perhaps the inclination, to confront the *derebeys* militarily, instead approached them as a ruling elite in their own right and offered them high positions and generous salaries in return for submission. The *derebeys*, sharing the culture and politics of patrimonialism and perhaps reading the writing on the wall, acceded, leaving their tribespeople to cope alone with the collapse of their economy and forced settlement in the plain below their mountain home. Patrimonial strategies were reserved exclusively for local elites, including bandit leaders.

Hobsbawm conceded the prevalence of such connections, between bandits and the worlds of power, but his social banditry was a quite different phenomenon, and interesting insofar as it functioned, under

[31] David M. Hart, *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria and the Pakistan North West Frontier* (Wisbech: Menas Press, 1987), p. 7. Such strategies were not confined to the Middle East and North Africa. Indeed the 'poacher turned gamekeeper' is probably a universal phenomenon.

[32] Hart, *Banditry in Islam*, pp. 19–26.

[33] This account of is drawn from Andrew G. Gould, 'Lords or Bandits? The Derebeys of Cilicia', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1976, pp. 485–506.

[34] Gould, 'Lords or Bandits?'.

certain circumstances, as an articulation of peasant discontent. Barkey's rejection of the social bandit was, on the contrary, crucially embedded in a denial of the very existence of strategies of rebellion among Ottoman peasants. In her view, the failure to rebel was certainly not the result of a lack of material distress, Ottoman peasants experiencing many of the hardships that produced rural revolts across Europe during the seventeenth century. It was rather the result of the existence of preferable alternatives to the risky strategy of open defiance, Ottoman peasants, apparently lacking the profound attachment to the land typical of peasant consciousness, preferring to leave the land rather than to fight for it, straightforward criminal banditry itself becoming a favoured survival strategy of vagrant ex-peasants in headlong flight from their villages.[35]

A broader general scepticism regarding peasant rebellion may thus constitute a further reason for the general unpopularity of social banditry in studies of the Middle East.[36] Much of the recent research into banditry in other areas of the world has been prompted by a more general interest in peasant resistance. As far as the Middle East and North Africa is concerned, the rise of peasant studies as a discrete field of research in the 1970s found comparatively little response. Since the region appeared to lack the large-scale risings characteristic of countries such as China, or the politically significant peasant movements of Latin America, historians of the Middle East and North Africa tended to dismiss the countryside as uninteresting and the consciousness and agency of its inhabitants has been little investigated. If historians of the region have often been content to share Marx's characterization of peasants as so many potatoes in sacks, their view of nomads/bedouin, often prime candidates for bandit gangs, has sometimes been actively hostile. Following the medieval scholar Ibn Khaldun, scholarship has tended to depict tribal nomads as mere instruments of their khans, any resistance from them merely a symptom of an eternal conflict between tribal chaos (the desert) and state-imposed order (the sown).[37]

[35] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 9.

[36] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 86. Brown's reluctance to accept the notion of social banditry stems from a perspective that sees both rebellion and banditry as symptomatic of the relations of power, rather than as authentic peasant political activism. For a discussion of forms of peasant political activity in Egypt, see Nathan Brown, *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle Against the State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990). The supposed absence of peasant rebellion has been theorized. See Farhad Kazemi and Evand Abrahamian, 'The Nonrevolutionary Peasantry of Modern Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1978, pp. 259–304.

[37] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History,* (eds.) N. J. Dawood and Franz Rosenthal (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul in association with Secker and Warburg, 1967).

Brown's dismissal of the social bandit in Egypt, and Barkey's in the Ottoman Empire, are based largely on close reading of official documents located in state archives. That a different methodology might produce different results can clearly be seen in Barkey who, when she turns to popular traditions, becomes more sympathetic to the possible existence of social banditry. State and elite-generated sources on rural dissent, indeed on crime in general, are replete with perennial problems of interpretation: generic labelling, the subsuming of widely differing types of rural violence under the heading of crime, the use of words with the connotation of banditry/brigandage as part of a search for legitimacy. The late nineteenth-century Egyptian banditry commissions, for example, lumped all rural violence together into a single undifferentiated category, the work of 'miscreants' (*ashqiya*').[38] Barkey's use of the term banditry applies to an even more diffuse phenomenon, the so-called Celali rebels of the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman government referred to all its armed opponents in the countryside, whether rebel bands numbering thousands or small groups of robbers, as Celalis, using this designation to delegitimize any and all rural unrest by identifying it with the traumatic rebellion of Sheyh Celal at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[39] In any case, for states such as the Ottoman Empire, banditry and robbery were indeed both a form of rebellion against its authority and the sources often deployed a colourful vocabulary of undifferentiated abuse, individual words containing the meaning of both brigand and rebel.[40]

The meta-language of official sources has therefore made it difficult to disentangle the different activities of different kinds of groups. Given the strong ideological imperatives embedded in the archival material it is extremely unlikely that bandit activity, or indeed any kind of rural violence, would appear in anything other than an extremely negative light. Egyptian and Ottoman archives are, naturally enough, replete with vivid accounts of the brutality of bandits and the suffering of the poor at their hands, including petitions and appeals to courts for justice by peasants themselves. Yet none of this evidence is unmediated, the petitions of illiterate villagers and supposedly verbatim statements by

---

[38] Brown, 'Brigands and State Building', p. 260.
[39] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, pp. 153–4.
[40] For a discussion of this vocabulary see Marinos Sariyannis, '"Mob", "Scamps" and Rebels in Sevententh Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1–2, 2005, pp. 1–15; Leslie Peirce, 'Abduction with (Dis)honor: Sovereigns, Brigands, and Heroes in the Ottoman World', *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 15, 2001, pp. 311–29, p. 320.

bandits surviving in court records having passed equally through the filter of scribal pens.[41]

Although most bandit activity in the Middle East and North Africa, as Hobsbawm pointed out regarding Europe, was simple robbery and extortion targeting the accessible and defenceless poor, yet the generic labelling for ideological purposes typical of official records renders invisible different and more complex stories. Perhaps the most famous appellation of the term banditry to an authentic case of peasant resistance is the British labelling of the 1936 revolt in mandatory Palestine. British officials and press reports routinely branded the rebel peasant fighters as outlaws, bandits, gangsters and highwaymen, as a ploy to discredit the uprising's nationalist aims, a linguistic practice continued by Israeli academia.[42] Another much earlier but similar contest over naming may be found in the case of the activities of post-*Reconquista* Andalusian *manfiyyun* (exiles). These Muslims and Moriscos, described as bandits in Spanish sources, have, on the contrary, been reclaimed by North African scholars as the last remnants of Moorish resistance to the *Reconquista*.[43]

The possibilities suggested by the deconstruction of contests over labelling and meaning are well illustrated in a study of colonial Algeria.[44] Here we find the invention, by French settlers, of the 'myth of Algerian banditry', a myth which was then utilized to delegitimize both Algerian claims to the land and indigenous resistance to dispossession.[45] This case provides a classic illustration of the social and political consequences of the revolutionary impact of capitalism on a pre-industrial economy. Across a forested region near the city of Annaba (Bône) in northeastern Algeria, the local population maintained a precarious ecological equilibrium through a practice known as *kcar*, the controlled burning of the forest to obtain pastures and farmland. The arrival of increasing numbers of French colons after the conquest of Algeria in 1830 inaugurated first a struggle over concepts of land ownership and use leading to dispossession, then the criminalization of the customary practice of *kcar*, and finally the labelling of *kcar* as banditry and a symbol of political and especially religious resistance. The Algerians, although they conceded formal ownership of the forest to the Ottoman landlords, believed that

[41] Faroqui, *Coping with the State*, pp. 148.
[42] Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*, pp. 94–6.
[43] Hart, *Banditry in Islam*, pp. 2–3.
[44] David Prochaska, 'Fire on the Mountain: Resisting Colonialism in Algeria', in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: James Currey and Heinemann, 1986), pp. 229–52.
[45] This account is drawn from Prochaska, 'Fire on the Mountain'.

they too, as those who worked it, possessed rights over it. In particular, they considered the areas they cleared through their own labour as their own property, an inheritance for their children. The French colonial authorities, on the other hand, disregarded the customary claims of the Algerians and embarked on a policy of the conversion of all of the forest into pure private property and its expropriation and concession to French businessmen for commercial exploitation, specifically the production of cork.[46] The Algerians' use of the forest was accordingly increasingly restricted, upon pain of punishment by large fines and collective responsibility. The Algerians responded using a variety of tactics, evading the forest guards, presenting petitions to the colonial authorities and, occasionally, deliberately burning the forest down.[47] The practice of *kcar* had always contained the possibility that fires might accidentally get out of control. The French, however, could or would not distinguish accident from arson. They increasingly identified all *kcar* fires as arson and tried to ban the practice altogether, which for the Algerians represented a disastrous assault on their way of life. The French were committed to the destruction of the indigenous political economy, and could neither recognize the legitimacy of, nor tolerate, resistance. Their solution to their dilemma, by which they made their own situation comprehensible, was to turn the Algerian resisters into bandits practising arson.[48]

Yet elite discourses were always capable of considerable plasticity. The case of Egypt demonstrates how the significance of activities that were, in times of political stability and elite consensus, mundanely relegated to the purely criminal might be transformed into resistance by the wider political context. The late nineteenth-century Brigandage Commissions had defined all rural violence as crime. In 1919, however, similar actions by peasants, the killing of village elders, attacks on police, theft of moveable property, food, cattle, sheep and fodder, especially that which had been hoarded by the wealthy during the war, were briefly reinterpreted as manifestations of a peasant revolt, part of a national struggle, indeed a revolution, directed against the British Protectorate and in favour of independence and led by the middle class liberal nationalists of the Wafd party.[49]

Prevailing ideologies of modernism continued in the twentieth-century Middle East to confine the bandit to the pathological margins of society,

---

[46] Prochaska, 'Fire on the Mountain', pp. 231–3.
[47] Prochaska, 'Fire on the Mountain', p. 237.
[48] Prochaska, 'Fire on the Mountain', pp. 239–47.
[49] Ellis Goldberg, 'Peasants in Revolt – Egypt 1919', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1992, pp. 261–80.

while the label was applied indiscriminately to a vast range of rural opposition. From the 1920s onwards, the new Turkish republic combined all manifestations of armed rural dissent, whether Kurdish nationalist, religious, peasant or robber, into a single category of bandit, this category then defined as a threat to the state and crushed. Mustafa Kemal's contemporary, Reza Shah of Iran, similarly deployed the discourse of the 'man of order' to establish the new state's physical control throughout the countryside, over rural criminals of all sorts, bandits, highway robbers and nomadic raiders, but also, and as part of the same process and often using the same justificatory vocabulary, over tribal khans and semi-autonomous local rulers and their agricultural-pastoralist populations.[50] For the nationalist elite of Pahlavi Iran, the suppression of banditry was a central trope in the wider transformation of troublesome pastoral nomads into settled productive farmers. Reza Shah's son, Muhammad Reza Shah, continued the project. Although tribal power had been decisively crushed, partly by military force but mainly by socio-economic transformation, a phenomenon defined as banditry re-appeared. Just as in the Turkey of the 1960s and 1970s, the nomenclature of banditry was applied to Kurdish opposition in the rural areas, so in Iran, the designation bandit was applied to guerrilla movements who launched armed actions in the 1970s against the shah's regime.

The practice of nomadic raiding, endemic across the pre-modern Middle East and North Africa, has also magnified uncertainties about the activities and identities of bandits. Hobsbawm himself specifically excluded communities for whom raiding was part of the normal way of life, such as nomads/bedouin, from consideration as social bandits. But were such raiders, at least in their own eyes, even bandits? The literature has, in general, adopted the perspective of those who were the targets of such raiding. Yet what may be deduced regarding the perspectives of the raiders themselves? Across the Middle East, tribal nomads adopted, for example, the role of paid protectors of caravans that carried people and goods along trade and pilgrim routes. This system, which appeared from the outside to be a kind of protection racket, was seen from the inside as legitimate recompense for the passage of strangers through tribal territories. It frequently broke down, with tribes attacking the caravans they had been paid to protect.[51] Such breakdowns were recorded by local authorities and European travellers as resulting from the nomads'

[50] Touraj Atabaki and Eric J. Zürcher (eds.), *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).
[51] Fulya Özkan, 'Gravediggers of the Modern State: Highway Robbers on the Trabzon-Bayezid Road, 1850s–1910s', *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2014, p. 225.

instinctive preference for loot over obligation, or even from some atavistic nomad savagery, but certainly other factors were operative. A failure to pay the agreed sums, either in part or in full, for example, might sour relations between merchants and tribes, leading the latter to take what they considered themselves to have been cheated of. From the mid-nineteenth century on, state-sponsored changes in landownership and the loss of customary rights of pasturage might also prompt dispossessed nomads to compensate themselves through attacks on formerly secure trade routes, even though these routes were guaranteed by their own chiefs and khans. Bedouin robberies of pilgrims on the Hajj road were notorious, although the bedouin tribes, or rather their leaders, received subsidies from the Ottoman government to discourage raiding. The Ottoman sources were quick to attribute such robberies to a natural bedouin inclination to crime.[52] Yet again the subsidy system frequently broke down, the bedouin then obliged to take what was necessary to their survival.[53]

Bandits of this kind originated from within peasant and pastoral communities, especially those with a tribal organization and they remained in varying degrees of contact with local populations. This contact might be very close and supportive, especially where ties of kin existed, but might also be deeply antagonistic and exploitative. Both nomadic and settled communities often gave succour to bandits, but, where succour was denied, the bandits' treatment of 'hostile' villages might be extremely brutal. To some extent, Hobsbawm's distinction between nomadic raiding and banditry proper breaks down in the Middle Eastern context, the boundaries between nomads and peasants often fluid and permeable. Settled cultivators might be recently sedentarized former nomads, communities might be mixed cultivators and pastoralists, and peasants and nomads linked by tribal ties. Thus, it is possible to see certain instances of nomadic raiding not as a phenomenon necessarily disconnected from and hostile to peasant life, but rather as an aspect of peasant economic activity, hardship and perhaps discontent. On the other hand, however, although they did not necessarily divide nomad from peasant, tribal ties might nonetheless impede as much as augment wider geographical or class-based bonds of solidarity, their privileging of vertical hierarchies and their fostering of inter-tribal violence often fatal to sustained rebellion.

---

[52] Faroqui, *Coping with the State*, p. 183.
[53] Faroqui, *Coping with the State*, p. 182. For a most enlightening study of Ottoman 'colonial' attitudes towards the peoples of its own periphery, see Selim Derengil, '"They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2003, pp. 311–42.

Banditry has therefore been significant in both peasant and pastoralist strategies of survival in the Middle East and North Africa. This does not necessarily imply the presence of permanent bandit gangs. For many rural communities, a resort to banditry might not imply a way of life, involving an irreversible departure from peasant or pastoral origins, but might rather be a temporary activity, taken up in times of hardship and abandoned when the hardship passed, or might be seasonal or part-time, engaged in to supplement the inadequate rewards of agricultural or pastoral labour. Banditry might also be a strategy of the socially excluded, the marginal and the desperate, those with nothing to lose. Nineteenth-century Morocco gives us many stories of fugitive slaves becoming highway robbers. The escaped slave Bilal, for example, gathered a band around him and pillaged travellers, moving from one tribe's territory to another whenever he felt threatened, his career lasting ten years. Other slaves operated in both northern and southern Morocco, always, interestingly, in association with free people.[54] Such slaves typically became bandits after some interruption to their slave career. Often having been bodyguards or otherwise familiar with weapons, they simply struck out on their own when opportunity offered.[55] Another figure, more truly an outlaw than the peasant or nomad robber, was the military deserter, possessing the advantage of military knowledge and training and sometimes also weapons. Demobilized soldiers have perennially provided bandit material. Rapid and chaotic demobilization produced waves of Celalis in the seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire, while the imposition of modern conscription in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created many fugitives from enlistment and especially deserters. Deserters might have any of a range of motives, political opposition, personal antagonism, a simple wish to avoid military service, the need to leave the army to return home for family reasons or even merely to help with the harvest. Once outside the law, the deserter often linked up with civilian bands of robbers. By the 1920s, in countries where military service was considered a pillar of the new state, such as Iran and Turkey, the deserter, from both the gendarmerie and the army and with some military experience, had become a specific and serious threat to rural security.[56]

Middle Eastern banditry, like crime in general, is often assumed to have been not only endemic but unchanging, its supposedly final

---

[54] Mohammed Ennaji, *Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco*, trans. Seth Graebner (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), p. 50.
[55] Ennaji, *Serving the Master*, p. 49–51.
[56] For an account of one such deserter, see Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp. 107.

elimination a consequence of modernization in general and the successful creation of rural police forces or gendarmeries in particular. Yet is it possible, on the contrary, to detect in the Middle East and North Africa epidemics of banditry reflecting 'the disruption of an entire society, the rise of new classes and social structures, the resistance of entire communities or peoples against the destruction of its way of life'?[57] A rise in the incidence of banditry is generally and naturally associated with an increase in rural immiseration and pauperization and periods of economic crisis, thus constituting a strategy of survival. But given the much greater availability of source material, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries seem to demonstrate not only an increase in banditry but to suggest that this increase may be a direct consequence of, and form of resistance to, accelerating political and economic change, sometimes called modernization, including political centralization and the development of capitalism and its penetration into the rural areas.

The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Middle East certainly possessed the two conditions proposed as necessary for the emergence of social banditry: class conflict producing communal solidarity in the countryside, and an absence of institutionalized mechanisms such as political parties and peasant unions for expressing and managing this conflict.[58] The rapid commercialization of agriculture as the region was drawn into the global economy, the resulting criminalization of customary rights to the land for peasants and to pasturage for nomads producing dispossession and impoverishment in the countryside combined with authoritarian political systems, whether colonial or independent, to deprive the rural poor of viable alternatives to illegality.

The connection between modernization and banditry has been concretized in relation to late nineteenth-century Ottoman state-building. The Ottoman road-building programme, for example, was intended to improve security, enhance trade and knit the empire together. The new roads, however, were not only an instrument of state power, but also provided space and opportunity for contesting that power.[59] Not only were the new roads a product of Ottoman modernization, but so too were the highway robbers who infested them. These robbers included a variety of fugitives from new state institutions and policies, nomads fleeing compulsory sedentarization, peasants forced off the land by the spread of private ownership and impoverished by the commercialization

---

[57] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 27.
[58] Pat O'Malley, 'Class Conflict, Land and Social Banditry: Bushranging in Nineteenth Century Australia', *Social Problems*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1979, pp. 271–83.
[59] Özkan, 'Gravediggers of the Modern State', p. 225.

of agriculture, rogue gendarmes, deserters from the army and evaders of conscription. In Egypt too, an increase in banditry seems to have resulted from similar changes initiated by the khedivial state, the collapse of the older subsistence economy and its replacement by production of cash crops grown for export, rural indebtedness, and the ever heavier hand of the state itself, with its demands for service in the army and forced labour. Organic connections between peasant resistance and banditry in the new Turkish republic, for example, may be discerned in the low-level violence endemic in the rural areas during the interwar period. Such violence was a last resort of the peasantry in the face of social and economic crisis and state policies, this violence taking the form of individual attacks on tax officials, gendarmes, village headmen, moneylenders and the violation of the property rights of landowners and monopoly companies.[60]

The contemporary period in Iran saw the introduction of similar policies with similar results. Here too a determined assault on the way of life of the rural poor had begun in the nineteenth century with the twin processes of the integration of Iran into the global economy and the deepening penetration of capitalist relations into the countryside. In 1927, the newly consolidated Iranian monarchy launched an accelerated programme of unprecedented legislative radicalism, introducing a number of measures, conscription, land laws leading to the loss of customary cultivation and pasturage rights, dress laws aimed at the destruction of tribal culture, nomadic settlement and monopolies on opium and tobacco production, which had an immediate and devastating impact on the rural population, both peasants and pastoralists. The results were exactly the proliferation of outrages identified by Guha as precursors of rebellion in India, successive waves of rural violence which began in the mid-1920s with increasing lawlessness and robbery, duly reaching a crescendo in 1929 with outbreaks across the country of nomad and peasant risings of an intensity which threatened the very survival of the regime. After the suppression of these risings, the rural areas reverted to lawlessness and banditry, serious insecurity continuing for several years. At the core of this violence were rebellions by the still armed and mobile nomadic tribes, accompanied by peasant discontent, many peasants in fact sedentarized former pastoralists with tribal links to the nomads. Widespread banditry was also an integral feature of these uprisings, again by elements with tribal connections. The actions of the tribal insurgents and bandit gangs were indistinguishable, as

indeed were the two groups themselves, but both occasionally displayed a striking sensitivity to their wider base of support worthy of a social bandit. For example, the opium monopoly, which drastically reduced the income from poppy cultivation, had been the state policy, above all others, which had unified the opposition of the disparate elements of the rural poor across southern Iran. When tribal rebels took control of a small town in eastern Fars, they drove out the government officials and took possession of the government stores of opium. They then returned the opium to the cultivators for sale on the open market, less ten per cent, the equivalent of the government tax, which they kept for themselves. A similar story came from further north, in the region of Isfahan. Here one of the largest bandit gangs, together with tribal rebels, again captured the government opium store, took out the government percentage of 10 per cent, and returned the remainder to the peasants, taking receipts.[61]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, modernization, as well as stimulating banditry, also produced modernized types of crime, and led to further innovations in the panoply of subaltern avoidance and resistance. As new states consolidated their control over national territories, imposed controls and taxes on the movement of goods and people, and established borders of theoretical and legal impermeability, smuggling erupted on a massive scale. Across the Middle East and North Africa, as elsewhere, smuggling and banditry were closely allied, bandits engaging in smuggling and vice versa. Both, but especially smuggling, were directly related to state policies. Wherever restrictions were imposed, and especially where those restrictions were deemed illegitimate, individuals and entire communities devised ways of evading them.

Smuggling, like banditry, might be a means of survival in hard times, an economic opportunity, or a form of resistance to authority. The outbreak of a veritable war in the late Ottoman Empire between a French-owned tobacco company with a newly granted monopoly, the Régie, and local growers abetted by smuggling rings, demonstrates the presence of all three motives.[62] For the professional and well-organized smuggling rings, the Régie's efforts to control the production and sale of tobacco represented an opportunity to make fortunes, perhaps as much as half the tobacco grown escaping Régie control.[63] For the peasant

[61] Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, p. 128.
[62] This account is drawn from Donald Quataert, 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908, Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).
[63] Quataert, 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', p. 21.

cultivators, smuggling became a way of compensating for the reduced income resulting from the operation of the monopoly. Selling to smugglers also meant avoiding the government taxes and, if the cultivator were a sharecropper, handing over any portion to the landlord.[64] It was not only the producers who were complicit in the smuggling, but consumers also, who willingly purchased tobacco from smugglers going from door to door in villages. Even representatives of the Ottoman state, officials and gendarmes, turned a blind eye to smuggling, or even participated in it.

For the peasant cultivators, smuggling was a strategy of both survival and resistance. But its success depended on its being embedded in a sympathetic environment where it was widely perceived as legitimate and even, insofar as it hampered and frustrated the Régie, as a social good. The general population and even the Ottoman government itself resented the encroachment on sovereignty represented by the increasing foreign presence throughout the empire and the Régie's lack of legitimacy contributed to a general readiness by wide layers of Ottoman society to evade and resist the company's monopoly.

Smuggling was a covert, but very effective, means of undermining the Régie. It was one aspect of a broader struggle against the monopoly that combined legal and recognized traditions of protest, such as demonstrations and presenting petitions to the sultan, with violent defiance, rioting and stoning Régie offices, and attacks on Régie troops.[65] The struggle between the Régie and the smugglers was indeed both bitter and violent. According to one Ottoman report, in the first fourteen years of the company's operation, not less than two thousand people every year had lost their lives in this struggle.[66] Such resistance harried the operations of the Régie on the ground but it failed to offer any broader challenge to the continuation of the foreign monopoly. It remained scattered and sporadic, confined to the countryside and small towns, and almost completely subaltern in character. Its limitations are revealed by its contrast to neighbouring Iran, where a mass urban movement led by a powerful coalition of ulama, merchants and reformist intellectuals forced the cancellation of a similar tobacco monopoly. Although the Régie strained every nerve to suppress the illegal trade, in the end the company learned to live with it and the Ottoman government to live with the company. The Régie survived all the vicissitudes of revolution and war until it was finally nationalized by the new Turkish republic in 1925, the Kemalist authorities rejecting foreign control but retaining

[64] Quataert, 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', p. 24.
[65] Quataert, 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', p. 20.
[66] Quataert, 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', p. 34.

a monopoly as part of their *étatiste* economic policies. The smuggling continued.

Most smuggling was not, of course, either on the scale, nor possessing the overt political significance of the Ottoman tobacco war. Nonetheless, smuggling everywhere, like banditry but perhaps to an even greater extent, required the active collaboration of elements among the larger local community. Both, but again especially smuggling, were extremely difficult to suppress. Prescribed penalties might be severe but their application depended on apprehending the elusive malefactors. Since proof against the accused, and even the accused themselves, might be hard to find, the authorities often resorted to collective punishments, fixing blame on villages in the vicinity of the crime, local peasants being ready scapegoats.[67] Subsequent scholarship might debate the existence and character of the relationship between bandits and peasants but the Ottoman authorities were in no doubt regarding their mutually supportive links. In Iran too collective punishment, especially against nomads in the form of the authorized plundering of tents, was common, and often resulted in the generation of further banditry by the impoverished and vengeful tribal communities.[68]

Both banditry and smuggling might also be carried out at sea as well as on land and contemporary authorities made a similar assumption about the existence of close and friendly connections between local coastal communities and sea bandits or pirates. Villagers might provide pirates, who prowled along the coast, waited and watched just outside harbours and hid in coves and bays, with news of approaching ships, as well as food and shelter.[69] One example comes from the early eighteenth century when an Ottoman court ruled that local villagers on the Aegean coast must recompense the owner of a tobacco shipment looted by pirates as it had been proved that one of the villagers had passed information about the cargo to the pirates. As not only the pirates themselves, but even the villager who had alerted them escaped, it was the remaining villagers who paid the price.[70]

As in the case of land banditry, both scholarly and popular interest in sea-banditry, especially in the Mediterranean, has adopted an elite

---

[67] Özkan, 'Gravediggers of the Modern State', p. 244.

[68] Mansoureh Ettehadieh (Nezam-Mafie), 'Crime, Security and Insecurity: Socio-political Conditions of Iran, 1875–1924', in Roxane Farmanfarmaian (ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 174–82, p. 179.

[69] Eyal Ginio, 'Piracy and Redemption in the Aegean Sea during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Turcica*, vol. 33, 2001, pp. 137–8.

[70] Ginio, 'Piracy and Redemption', pp. 137–8.

perspective. Regarding the Barbary corsairs in the western Mediterranean from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, for example, we know a great deal of their place in interstate relations, in naval warfare and the strategic, economic and legal dimensions of their activities, of the role of corsairing in the slave trade and Muslim–Christian relations as seen through the prism of the ransoming of captives.[71] Of the pirates or corsairs themselves, however, and of pirate crews, we know very little. This is in stark contrast to our knowledge of the 'Golden Age' of Atlantic piracy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries where we find studies both of the lives of individual pirates and of piracy as a collective response to the brutalities of naval life.[72]

Yet corsairing in the Mediterranean, both Muslim and Christian, may also be approached from a subaltern direction, tracing not only the macro-economic and political roles of the corsairs, but also something of their background, their motivation and the character of their activities. The Barbary corsairs, from the point of view of their own societies, seem to resemble very closely Hobsbawm's 'avenger'. Indeed, as *kursan* they are quite clearly differentiated in Arabic from ordinary sea-robber (*liss al-bahr*).[73] The Barbary corsairs were the seaborne counterparts of the Morisco bandits of sixteenth-century Andalusia. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Spain had begun the mass expulsion of the Moriscos, Spanish Muslims who had converted to Christianity after the *Reconquista* but who remained objects of suspicion. The numbers deported by ship and abandoned on North African shores amounted to at least half a million, and possibly many more. Hundreds of thousands of these Moriscos settled where they had been forced to disembark from the Spanish galleys, in North African coastal towns. Dispossessed and exiled, they devoted themselves to harrying their former compatriots, launching what became known in Arabic sources as a seaborne jihad, the corsairs described by Arabic sources as *ghazi* (religious warrior). The 'Corsair Republic' of the Moroccan port of Salé was populated largely by expelled Moriscos, some of whom became famous. These

[71] See, for example, Alan G. Jamieson, *Lords of the Sea: A History of the Barbary Corsairs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012); Catherine Wendy Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

[72] Marcus Rediker has attempted the rehabilitation of Atlantic pirates rather as Hobsbawm did for bandits. See Marcus Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail* (London: Verso, 2014); *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (London: Verso, 2004).

[73] Kursan (corsair) is an Italian loanword, adopted into Arabic in order to mark the distinction with pirate, known as *liss al-bahr* (sea-robber). J. B. Kelly, C. H. Imber, and C. Pellat, 'Ḳurṣān', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: 1960–2004).

corsairs found representation in elite biographical and polemical literature, but also in popular poetry and song, where they took on the quality of Hobsbawm's avenger, memorializing injustice and offering hope of retaliation.[74]

The phenomenon of the Barbary corsairs, so terrifying to early modern Europe, may thus be related directly to the catastrophe that befell the Spanish Moriscos and their individual and collective strategies of revenge and compensation. In general, major waves of piracy, like banditry, were not a perennial and random hazard but rather arose from social dislocation and military conflict. As Celalis were produced by the military mobilizations of the seventeenth century, and swarms of deserters by twentieth-century conscription, so pirates proliferated in times of, and especially after the end of, large-scale naval conflict. The Mediterranean Sea east of Malta, for example, witnessed an explosion of Greek piracy in the 1820s linked to the Greek war of independence. Again, these Greek pirates may be seen as the exact counterparts of the mainland klephts and were romanticized accordingly, by both Greek nationalists and philhellenic sentiment in Western Europe.

Corsairing, like certain types of banditry, was an integral element of pre-modern local and regional economies throughout the Mediterranean, Christian as well as Muslim, both sides combining material benefit with religious justification. It was distinguished, at least theoretically, from piracy proper by the stipulation that its legitimacy depended on its being carried out under the auspices of a recognized authority, who shared by right in the booty.

In practice corsairing activity exactly resembled piracy, the only distinction being the formal possession of the patronage of a recognized ruler. It was thus extremely easy, and almost inevitable when times were hard, for legitimate corsairs to turn into pirates. Maltese seamen, for example, accumulated centuries of experience under the patronage of the Knights of Malta.[75] Although their activities were theoretically limited to the traditional enemies of Christianity, Maltese corsairs would often, 'when legitimate prey ran short', close their eyes 'to the fussy terms of their letter of marque', and attack 'friendly and unfriendly shipping alike', even though this actually turned them into pirates, subject to

---

[74] Daniel J. Vitkus (ed.), *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 11–12.
[75] Giovanni Bonello, 'Pirates in the Early British Era – The Malta Connections', *Histories of Malta, Confusions and Conclusions*, vol. 12 (Valletta: Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2013), pp. 69–98.

the death penalty.[76] When corsairing was legally abolished at the end of the eighteenth century, these coastal communities were left without the means of making a legitimate living. Many complied with the new legal prohibition, some ceased corsairing but took up other seaborne crime, especially smuggling, some emigrated to North Africa taking their skills with them, and some simply continued as before, their activities now purely criminal. Many narratives of their activities, their capture and their fates may be found in the archives of the Vice-Admiralty Court established in Malta by the British.

Sea-banditry or piracy and smuggling were closely connected and were as endemic to the waters of the Middle East and North Africa as robbery was to the land. Just as pastoral nomadism lent itself easily to banditry, so the economic activities of coastal communities, fishing and sea-faring, might similarly slide, almost imperceptibly, into illegality, smuggling and sea-banditry. Mediterranean piracy was often on a small scale, the crews made up of ordinary fishermen or local seamen, their vessels small boats powered by oars,[77] the picture they presented far from the images of galleons armed with cannon familiar from the popular imagination of Caribbean piracy. In this sense, they may also be seen as connected to peasant strategies of survival and resistance. Towns along the North African coast, for example, which had earlier played a role in the corsair economies, seem to have adapted to seaborne smuggling particularly easily.[78]

Both sea-banditry or piracy and smuggling in the Mediterranean also allow a glimpse of the smugglers and pirates themselves. To some extent, outlaw life offered an inherent challenge to existing hierarchies. The little that we know of the precise composition of Middle Eastern and North African bandit gangs or pirate crews seems to indicate the fluidity of social, religious and ethnic boundaries officially depicted as rigid and impermeable. This may hint at the irrelevance of these boundaries to those sharing outlaw status, or perhaps at a deliberate challenge to convention, or it may be evidence of an actual plebeian indifference to and disregard of such boundaries typical of lower class life. Marinos Sariyannis has noted the remarkably mixed religious and ethnic character of urban criminal gangs in seventeenth-century Istanbul and the linguistically and religiously mixed pirate crews.[79] Although Andalusian exiles were

[76] Bonello, 'Pirates in the Early British Era'.
[77] Bonello, 'Pirates in the Early British Era'.
[78] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migrations, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 171.
[79] Marinos Sariyannis, '"Neglected Trades": Glimpses into the 17th Century Istanbul Underworld', *Turcica*, vol. 38, 2006, pp. 155–79, p. 162.

a dominant force in Barbary corsairing, a single crew might include not only Spanish and Moroccan Muslims but also renegades and Christians, Greeks, Russians, French, Dutch and so on.[80] They were indeed motley crews. Piracy even appeared to offer opportunities for, or at least held out the hope of, rapid changes in individual fortune, even a kind of social mobility, an Ottoman pirate novel of the late seventeenth century, a rare surviving specimen of popular literature, telling the tale of a slave becoming a pirate commander.[81]

The case of North Africa also highlights particularly the connections between Christian and Muslim subalterns in the nexus of extra-legal seaborne activities. Malta, as a result of its earlier role as a hub of corsairing and piracy, had become by the nineteenth century the centre of Mediterranean smuggling, of slaves (after the abolition of the trade), weapons and gunpowder, tobacco and spirits, and the Maltese its principal practitioners.[82] Poor European migrants settled in the port cities, especially the experienced and extensively networked Maltese, and played a key role in connecting Mediterranean suppliers of smuggled commodities with the North African interior, such smuggling again usually on a small, domestic scale with women closely involved in the hiding and selling of goods.[83]

What we know of pre-modern, and even modern, Middle Eastern land and sea bandits, comes from two quite separate and contradictory categories of sources, on the one hand official reports, court records and the rarely independent and always elite press, on the other hand folk stories, poems and songs. The former invariably emphasize the anarchic violence of bandits and their threat to life and property, primarily of the rich although peasant suffering is also sometimes mobilized. Folk stories and songs, on the other hand, conform very closely to their cultural counterparts elsewhere, making sense of the bandit phenomenon from the point of view of those at variance with the prevailing political, social and economic order, turning the bandit sometimes into a picaresque hero triumphing over the authorities against the odds, sometimes into an avenger of injustice.[84] Much attention has focused on trying to explain these contradictory narratives and to reconciling them, in other words to establishing the 'truth' about bandit activities. But it is perhaps

[80] 'Ḳurṣān', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
[81] Marinos Sariyannis, 'Images of the Mediterranean in an Ottoman Pirate Novel from the Late Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, vol. 39, 2012, pp. 189–204.
[82] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, p. 177.
[83] Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans*, pp. 172–3.
[84] See the case of Adham al-Sharqawi, Mohammed Saaid Ezzeldin, 'History and Memory of Bandits in Modern Egypt'.

more useful to regard them as symptomatic of fundamentally opposed worldviews, of those who prospered under the status quo, and those who did not. Rather than reconciling them, they might be decoded, to glimpse, not an accurate picture of what bandits did, but rather how the lower classes perceived them and, perhaps more importantly, how the lower classes perceived the authorities, the common enemies of themselves and the bandits.

To what extent, then, does Middle Eastern folk culture really allow us access to the subaltern psychological world? Despite the re-invention of bandits by Balkan nationalists and Turkish Marxists, it seems that much Middle Eastern popular bandit mythology has genuinely popular origins. The folk tales emerged and crystallized within an oral tradition. They were spread by professional story-tellers who were free to improvise, thus shaping their narratives in response to the demands of their audiences. More generally, popular attitudes towards authority and legitimacy, justice and resistance, are crucial to understanding the ways in which bandit narratives were constructed and incorporated into popular discourses. Folk stories often contained an element of rudimentary class consciousness, contrasting a worthless and stupid king with a poor man seeking justice and true happiness, concluding with the triumph of the latter.[85] Hints at subaltern subversions of elite notions of crime and criminality may be found in Ottoman folk stories in which crimes are frequent but any sort of disapproval rare.[86] Executed robbers might find admiration from the poor of Istanbul because of their 'manliness and gallantry', and there seems to have been some popular sympathy for prisoners and attacks on jails were common features of Istanbul revolts.[87]

Many of the admirable traits bestowed by folklore on the bandit-hero may be traced to a broader popular cultural consensus, reinforced by the glamour of the picaresque and local codes of honour and masculinity. This combination of attitudes may be seen very powerfully in an urban context in relation to the *qabadayat* of Ottoman cities, the Iranian *lutis* and the Egyptian *baltagiya*.[88] These well-organized gangs of young men,

[85] Jiři Cejpek, 'Iranian Folk Literature', in Jan Rypka (ed.), *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), pp. 654–5.
[86] Sariyannis, ''Neglected Trades', p. 172.
[87] Sariyannis, ''Neglected Trades', pp. 172–3.
[88] The ideological similarity between social bandit and *luti* tropes has been examined by Asghar Fathi, 'The Role of the "Rebels" in the Constitutional Movement in Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, pp. 55–66; Anja Pistor-Hatem, 'Sattar Khan', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2009; 'The Iranian Constitutional Revolution as lieu(x) de mémoire: Sattar Khan', in Houchange E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin (eds.), *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformation and Transnational Connections* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

illiterate and drawn from the urban poor, were important features of pre-modern Middle Eastern cities.[89] Both their actual activities and attitudes towards them recall the social bandit story. 'Manliness' was vital to the gang member and a code of chivalry was important, the protection of women and children emphasized.[90] Attitudes towards these gangs were as varied as towards bandits. Elite descriptions stress their thievery, idleness and troublemaking, while their own self-image seems to have been largely accepted and perpetuated by the urban poor, from whose ranks they were drawn, although even here they retained their marginal, even sometimes deviant, status. Although often posing as popular leaders of their quarter, many gangs also had actual connections to local notables and especially to religious figures, for whom they would provide muscle in conflicts with other urban quarters, hostile notables or the government.

Such gangs had no necessary political inclination or affiliation. *Lutis*, for example, were to be found on both sides during the Iranian constitutional revolution. [91] Although their plebeian origins and their self-proclaimed role as defenders of the poor might appear to make them candidates for the patronage of the Left, in fact during the twentieth century the links between the gangs and political tendencies of a more or less reactionary character became more overt, and the gaps between gang mythology and the actual roles they played became wider, the similarities with Blok's mafia emerging more strongly. *Lutis* were key mobilizers of the crowd which provided support on the Tehran streets for the overthrow in 1953 of the nationalist prime minister Dr Muhammad Musaddiq, and even more recently the Egyptian *baltagiya* were identified as the prime instigators of the violence against anti-Mubarak protesters in Tahrir Square during the Egyptian uprising in 2011.

Such bandit biographies as have emerged in the Middle East and North Africa must then be read within the context of these pre-existing scripts. One of the earliest and most famous bandit-heroes whose actual

---

[89] For the *lutis* in Iran, see Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, pp. 113–32; for the *qabadays*, see Phillip S. Khoury, 'Abu Ali al-Kilawi: A Damascus Qabaday', Edmund Burke III and David N. Yaghoubian (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 152–63; for a discussion of the *baltagiya* in contemporary Egypt, see Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp. 139–45.
[90] Martin, *The Qajar Pact*.
[91] Fathi, 'The Role of the :Rebels''', p. 57.

existence is more or less certain is the sixteenth-century Ottoman Koroglu. The Ottoman records make it difficult to distinguish his social banditry from his straightforward robbery, but it seems that he either actually did, or quickly attracted a reputation for, attacking officials singled out as oppressors of the poor.[92] Within a generation, Koroglu had become a favourite subject of story-telling, transformed from a coarse but amusing trickster into an avenger against tyranny. Commemorated in verse as 'the people's sword', he became a hero, reputedly calling on the peasants to take up arms against the sultan in the quest for justice. [93]

More recent history allows the contours of bandit figures, and even social bandits, to emerge somewhat more reliably.[94] The French colonial presence in North Africa, like foreign domination elsewhere, appears to have provided particularly fertile ground for the emergence of social bandit legends, the colonial authorities and the local populations having a mutual interest in the manufacture of bandit stories. While colonial or imperial authority labelled resistance as banditry, local opinion appropriated banditry as resistance.

A wave of banditry, or at least violence, swept the Algerian countryside following the 1871 uprising in Kabylia, a mountainous coastal region in the north of the country, and its suppression by the French. It flared up again in the 1880s and 1890s, producing the famous story of Muhammad Abdun.[95] Unjustly accused of murder and imprisoned on Devil's Island, Muhammad Abdun escaped and, after a series of extraordinary adventures, returned to exact vengeance. Whether the local population supported Abdun or merely feared him is unclear, nor can his robbery be easily distinguished from his rebelliousness, but his activities led to a spreading attitude of non-co-operation with the French authorities, especially a refusal to pay taxes or to accept office as French-appointed village headmen or to join the police. The French certainly believed themselves to be facing the beginnings of a revolt and responded accordingly.

A neighbouring region of Algeria produced the better-known 'bandit of honour' Messaoud Ben Zelmat, active in the Aurès between 1917

[92] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, pp. 181–2.
[93] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p. 181; Judith M. Wilks, 'The Persianization of Köroğlu: Banditry and Royalty in Three Versions of the Köruğlu "Destan"', *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2001, pp. 305–18.
[94] Amrouni, 'Les bandits d'honneur d'Algérie'; Ouatmani, 'Arezki L'Bachir'.
[95] The story of Abdun is drawn from Hart, *Banditry in Islam*, pp. 37–40. See also Emile Violard, *Le Banditisme en Kabylie* (Paris: A. Savine, 1895).

and 1921.[96] The story begins in 1915 when Ali Ben Zelmat, a shepherd, was denounced for theft and sentenced to prison, escaped, returned to kill the man who had denounced him and then took to the forest. He joined a group of army deserters and they established themselves in the mountains. In 1917, after government forces attacked the band, Ali was found dead. His brother, Messaoud, took command of the remnants of the band and vowed to avenge his brother, and he and his men carried out a series of robberies and murders, these operations taking place within a context of serious local tension. The First World War, in which the Ottomans and French were on opposing sides, was unpopular, and conscription into the French army was especially hated and resisted, a situation which gave Messaoud Ben Zelmat's activities a sheen of political significance and genuine local support and even admiration. According to a report by a French gendarmerie officer, the bandits were able to rely on local people for everything they wanted, food, ammunition, shelter and information.[97] Eventually Messaoud Ben Zelmat's luck ran out and, betrayed by local shepherds, in 1921 he was killed by native Algerian soldiers.

Massaoud Ben Zelmat's reputation rests on two local sources, songs sung by local women, and the reminiscences of a rather marginal European who had befriended him, Jean-Baptiste Capeletti, this material shaped into a story of social banditry, although not national resistance, in an article by Jean Déjeux. Capeletti had spent most of his long life in the Aurès mountains, where he made a living as a miller and married a local Berber woman. In 1975, at the age of one hundred, Capeletti gave a description of his great friend, Messaoud Ben Zelmat, bestowing on him the title of bandit of honour, whose main aim was to protect the 'little people' against the local notables who exploited the poor and weak, Capeletti confirming both Messaoud's popularity among his own people and the fear in which he was held by the army and especially by the notables.[98] Another important element in the creation of the Messaoud legend was the repertoire of songs composed about him and sung by local women. Using the imagery of love poetry, these songs celebrated Messaoud's bravery, chivalry, generosity, protection of the poor, and contempt for material possessions. Conforming closely

[96] Jean Déjeux, 'Un Bandit d'Honneur dans l'Aurès, de 1917 a 1921', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 26, 1978, pp. 35–54. Ben Zelmat's story is summarized by Hart, *Banditry in Islam*, pp. 42–5. see also Fanny Colonna, *Le Meunier, les moines et le bandit: Des vies quotidiennes dans l'Aurès (Algerie) du xxe siècle* (France: Sindbad, 2010).

[97] Cited by Déjeux, 'Un Bandit d'Honneur', p. 42.

[98] Déjeux, 'Un Bandit d'Honneur', p. 45.

to generic bandit narratives, the songs marvel at his miraculous powers and mourn his death through betrayal, using poetic conventions to incorporate Messaoud into widely shared folk traditions.[99]

Messaoud Ben Zelmat, however, remained a figure of only local legend, and was never incorporated into the genealogy of Algerian nationalism. Indeed, Middle Eastern and North African Zapatas are rare. Iran, however, does provide one example of a bandit turned revolutionary who still occupies an important place in collective memories of the popular struggle for justice.[100] Sattar Khan was a one-time bandit and *luti* who became a renowned fighter in the constitutional revolution of early twentieth-century Iran. Sattar's reputation, still alive and fostered in the Islamic republic, is largely the result of the work of populist Iranian intellectuals who have glorified him and his activities, this perspective triumphing over that of elitist historians writing in the Pahlavi period who have been much more sceptical, insisting on his being nothing more than a bandit.[101] Born in 1868, Sattar's youth included periods of imprisonment punctuated by both brigandage, in which trade he followed his elder brother who had been executed, and service in the local gendarmerie. Sympathetic biographers, however, subsequently provided him with a version of his early life more appropriate to a *luti* as a righteous, if violent, defender of the oppressed. The constitutional revolution which broke out in Iran in 1905, and especially the civil war of 1908/9 between constitutionalists and supporters of the shah, which centred on Sattar's home, the northern city of Tabriz, gave him the opportunity to become a national figure and he became, and was recognized internationally as, a leading fighter of the constitutionalist forces. His is one of the earliest Middle Eastern examples of mythologizing through photography, images of him as the archetypal bandit-hero, draped in bandoliers, disseminated widely through the press and as postcards. Probably understanding little of the national political objectives of the constitutional movement, and possibly motivated by a desire for revenge against the authorities who had executed his brother, Sattar's new role was predicated on his *luti* background. His familiarity with weapons, his need to maintain his reputation for courage and manliness and his status as defender of his quarter, made him a natural militia leader and he soon came to be credited by local opinion with the possession of magical powers,

---

[99] For examples, see Déjeux, 'Un Bandit d'Honneur', pp. 46–9.

[100] For Sattar Khan see Pistor-Hatem, 'Sattar Khan'; 'The Iranian Constitutional Revolution as lieu(x) de mémoire'.

[101] Reza Afshari, 'The Historians of the Constitutional Movement and the Making of the Iranian Populst Tradition', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1993, pp. 477–94.

the protection of a saint and invulnerability to bullets.[102] Perhaps more Pancho Villa than Zapata, Sattar's later political failures and personal weaknesses, much in evidence after the constitutionalist victory, did nothing to tarnish his reputation, rather his humble origins, his illiteracy, his reputation for piety (deserved or not) and as a defender of the poor, made him an icon for the revolutionary movement of the 1970s.[103]

The Middle East and North Africa has experienced every type of banditry imaginable. It has seen bandit-kings and warlords presiding over extensive raiding networks, entire communities, Turkish and Iranian nomads, desert bedouin, integrating banditry and smuggling as essential elements into their precarious local economies, 'everyday' banditry as a last resort of pauperized peasants and pastoralists in the face of economic catastrophe and social marginalization, banditry as a form of rural resistance and even, occasionally, bandits as revolutionaries. Banditry on land and sea has occupied a key place in elite discourses and has also spawned a vast repertoire of popular iconography, these contrasting and entirely irreconcilable interpretations revealing an often submerged but perennial ideological war between state and subaltern. If Robin Hood has been hard to find on the ground, the avenger has exercised an extraordinary power over the popular imagination.

A widespread scepticism about the capacity of Middle Eastern peasantries for collective action, an inclination to interpret peasant violence as tribal or religious rather than economically motivated and class-based, a lack of interest in peasant resistance, an outdated and unsophisticated methodological approach that privileges elite textual sources and takes little or no account of advances in oral history and memory studies, have combined to produce an emphasis in Middle Eastern scholarship on the relationship between bandits and the worlds of power. A different approach, however, provides different answers. In particular, close attention to the deconstruction of the language of existing elite sources, the semiotics of banditry, the adoption of a micro-historical perspective and the incorporation of approaches derived from non-elite sources can tease out subaltern stories. In particular, the perspectives discernible within folk culture might be, not accepted uncritically, but treated with equal seriousness to those found within state archives. Stories about bandits may be myths, but whose myths are

---

[102] Fathi, 'The Role of the 'Rebels', pp. 62–3.
[103] For a further discussion of the role of bandits and desperadoes in the political turmoil of the constitutional years, see the recent study of Na'ib Husayn Khan Kashi and his gang. Hadjiheidari, 'Nāyeb Ḥoseyn Kāšī, Strassenräuber oder Revolutionär?'

they? Ballads and poems about Greek or Bulgarian haiduks may have been appropriated by local nationalist elites, but they were originally genuinely popular creations, produced by the rural communities themselves who clung to them. The songs about the Algerian *bandit d'honneur*, Messaoud Ben Zelmat, were sung by local women before they were picked up by French intellectuals, while the seventeenth-century Anatolian bandit Koroglu achieved his fame across the Turkish- and Persian-speaking worlds by oral repetition and popular shaping of the legends surrounding him.

Banditry has constantly reinvented itself in response to state policies and especially to modernization. In the classical sense, it did decline across the Middle East and North Africa in the decades after the Second World War, as the peasantry itself shrank rapidly or found new, if muted, representation in radical regimes with programmes of land reform. Strong states, with powerful armies and gendarmeries and modern infrastructure, reduced the scope for rural crime while the 'mobile margin' of peasant society,[104] disaffected young men, found opportunities in education and expanding economies and massive migration to the cities and abroad. Yet smuggling became more profitable than ever, and urban crime offered new opportunities, especially in the drug trade.[105] Since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, banditry has indeed, together with its partners, smuggling and piracy, recently experienced a massive resurgence in the ungoverned spaces, on land and sea, created by the collapsing states of the modern Middle East and North Africa. In many of the countries of the region, militias now occupy the ambiguous space once filled by bandits. Just as demobilized Ottoman soldiers of the seventeenth century joined bandit gangs, so Iraqi troops, suddenly turned out after the US invasion of 2003, provided much of the personnel for the mushrooming militias. The meta-language of terrorism now obscures a complex reality, as did once a similar meta-language of banditry. Vast fortunes are being made smuggling the same commodities as in the nineteenth century: cigarettes and drugs across the Sahara to North Africa and then into Europe, people across the

---

[104] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p. 35.
[105] Ryan Gingeras, 'Beyond Istanbul's "Laz Underworld": Ottoman Paramilitarism and the Rise of Turkish Organised Crime', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2010, pp. 215–30; Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). For a recent discussion of smuggling and the interrelationships of smugglers, bazaaris and state agents in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran, see Narges Erami and Arang Keshavarzian, 'When Ties Don't Bind: Smuggling Effects, Bazaars and Regulatory Regimes in Postrevolutionary Iran', *Economy and Society*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2015, pp. 110–39.

Mediterranean and weapons everywhere. Piracy is now a multi-million dollar industry in the seas off the Horn of Africa, causing the cost of maritime insurance to rocket and, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries so once again, people captured for ransom are as valuable as cargoes. Yet, in addition to the ruthless egoism of the people-smugglers of the Mediterranean, often refugees themselves, the contemporary Middle East also suggests instances of such activities as representative of political protest and resistance, the smugglers of the Gaza tunnels a striking example. Banditry, as economic opportunity, survival and, perhaps occasionally, rebellion, is once again endemic across the region.

5   Islam, Slave Agency and Abolitionism in Iran, the Middle East and North Africa

Western understanding of the institution of slavery and the experience of slaves themselves has, in general, been defined and dominated by a template drawn from the modern plantation slavery of the Americas.[1] Images of slave agency and of abolitionism have been derived from the same template in which slave agency is equated with unambiguous resistance to slavery as such, and abolitionism attributed to a moral response originating within the slave-owning society and possessing a strong redemptive dimension.[2] The domination of this historically very specific template has often seemed to eclipse all other forms of slavery, even that of classical antiquity, because of the sheer scale of Atlantic slavery, its historical significance in the birth of the modern world in general and of capitalism in particular, its creation throughout the Americas and subsequently in Europe of numerically substantial and politically significant black diaspora communities, the role of abolition in imperial and national, especially British, mythology, and perhaps also to the reach of the US media.

The prevalence of this template has tended to produce a distorting effect on attempts to understand slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, especially concerning the emergence of a discourse of abolitionism. Resulting perceptions have been reinforced by an 'Orientalist' inclination to view the Islamic world as absolutely *sui generis*. Slavery in the Middle East and North Africa has almost always, and uniquely, been situated, not within a geographical or chronological

---

[1] A good example of this dominance is provided by James Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery* (London: Penguin, 2007). Of the book's 235 pages, only the first 34 deal with slavery outside the Americas.

[2] For an early critique of the notion of the redemptive character of abolitionism, see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

context, but within an ideological, Islamic framework.[3] Defined as Muslim, these societies, unredeemed by abolitionism, are thus rendered vulnerable, their apparent failure to develop any sustained self-criticism in respect to slavery a reflection of a profound civilizational dysfunction.

Yet the significant historical rupture in the operation of the institution of slavery in the early modern period was not in fact religious or civilizational, between the Islamic Middle East and Christian Europe, but economic, arising from Iberian expansion into the Americas from the sixteenth century, the development of commercial plantations in the colonies of the New World eventually resulting in a novel super-exploitation of slave labour and an overtly racialized discourse absent from older systems on either side of the Mediterranean. Despite the common ascription of a uniquely 'Islamic' character to Middle Eastern and North African slavery, the institution shares its key characteristics with practices and notions common to medieval and early modern southern Europe, with which countries it also shares an absence of hegemonic abolitionism. Across both the Middle East and North Africa, the relative weakness of abolitionist sentiment can best be explained not by the power of an Islamic discourse but by the structures of slavery in the region and especially the specific forms of agency to which those structures gave rise. In the Middle East and North Africa neither widespread slave violence, individual or collective, nor the fear of it, pervaded society. With the exception of the medieval Zanj revolt, Middle Eastern and North African societies suffered no trauma resulting from slave resistance. Local elites, and slave-holders in particular, were spared the dramatic moments of challenge experienced by their counterparts in the Americas, abolitionism emerging slowly as slavery itself withered away. Yet, if abolitionism among literate elites indeed often remained a marginal issue, it was of greater immediate relevance to the lower classes across the region who often gave evidence of their fear and hatred for the practice, showed sympathy for and even solidarity with ill-treated slaves, and, by the early twentieth century, began to integrate opposition to slavery within a new political consciousness.

An historically accurate appreciation of the practice and ideology of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa is of more than theoretical

---

[3] The notion of a uniquely religiously defined, 'Islamic' slavery is surprisingly tenacious. See, for example, the organization of the annual bibliographies provided by the leading journal in the field of slavery studies, *Slavery and Abolition*. The bibliographies are organized by geographical area and theme, with the exception of the one religious/civilizational category, 'Muslim slavery'. Thomas Thurston, 'Annual Bibliographical Supplement (2013)', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2014, pp. 681–781.

importance. Until recently, slavery in the Middle East and North Africa was seen as an institution belonging essentially to the pre-modern world, surviving into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries only as a residue, a relic of rapidly declining significance. Yet a changing modern consciousness is increasingly highlighting the continuing relevance of slavery and its legacies in shaping Middle Eastern societies. First, it should be noted that legal slavery continued to exist on the margins of the region until very recently. Even in Iran formal abolition took place only in 1928, while slavery continued its legal existence in Saudi Arabia until 1962, in Oman until 1970 and in Mauretania until 1981. Indeed the first workers in the Qatari oil industry, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were slaves, their owners appropriating up to 90 per cent of their salaries.[4] It seems, furthermore, frequently to have survived legal abolition, forms of domestic dependence and servitude continuing on the margins of the Middle East until the twenty-first century, hardly distinguishable from past slavery.[5] A generalized amnesia regarding black slavery across the Middle East has been blamed for the social invisibility and marginalization of black communities, including Afro-Arabs, Afro-Turks and Afro-Iranians, while the contribution of black African slaves to the cultures of various Middle Eastern societies remains largely unrecognized. The legacy of slavery may even be perceived as nestling within hegemonic concepts of political authority and authoritarianism.[6]

There are more sinister developments. An alleged revival of slavery during the recent civil war in the Sudan excited extensive publicity in the West, much of it, especially its anti-Arab diatribes, rehearsing a script reminiscent of nineteenth-century European abolitionism. The recent and startling resurrection and rehabilitation of an imagined Islamic discourse on slavery has also become of central importance to radical Islamist groups such as Islamic State in the Middle East and Boko Haram in West Africa, a feature of their struggle with Islamic modernism, this imagined discourse sharing many of its fundamental premises on the primacy and historically immutable role of Islam with Western Orientalism. At the same time, this lurid pseudo-Islamist discourse has both itself arisen from, and reinforced, the crudest Western fantasies deriving from exoticized notions of female harem slavery in the Middle East.

---

[4] Suzanne Miers, 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Saudi Arabia and the Arab States on the Persian Gulf, 1921–1963', in Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2005), pp. 120–36, p. 128.

[5] See the remarks of Chouki El Hamel, *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 1.

[6] Mohammed Ennaji, *Slavery, the State and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

In understanding slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, a template drawn from the modern plantation slavery of the Americas is of most use for the contrast which it provides. The Americas between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, like ancient Greece and Rome, were slave societies; slave labour the foundation of the economic system. Middle Eastern societies were, on the contrary, societies with slaves, slave labour, although utilized in a variety of roles, only exceptionally the basis of productive activity. The type of slavery that became predominant in North and South America and the Caribbean was an entirely new and modern invention. Quickly becoming divorced from its Mediterranean origins, it developed into a system that possessed a quite novel scale, ferocity and exploitative capacity.[7] Vast numbers of Africans were transported, not into the European imperial metropolises, but into their American colonies, where they often outnumbered whites. There they were organized into work gangs on plantations producing for the European market and generating the enormous profits that became the foundation for the emergence of an entirely new economic system, that of industrial capitalism. It was, furthermore, a fully racialized system. The condition of slavery was indelibly and essentially connected to blackness.[8] They invariably occupied the most degraded and highly stigmatized social positions, and both they and their children could expect to die in slavery. Slaves in the Americas deployed the full range of strategies available to them in their struggle for survival, including collaboration and the 'weapons of the weak'. But the system of slavery itself which, on the one hand, brought them together in large numbers and encouraged a collective consciousness through the field gang and the barracks and, on the other hand, offered few hopes for amelioration or release, lent itself to marronage and slave revolt. The rapid political changes of the late eighteenth century opened up an ideological space in which slaves themselves could conceptualize their freedom and made slave-owning increasingly unpalatable to a new, democratically inclined public opinion in Europe. In the story of slavery in the Americas, the archetypal slave hero, a man, offers an ideological and political challenge to the system itself, complementing the efforts of his allies among white reformers. In this story, the figure of Toussaint Louverture looms large.

The operation of the institution of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa presents a very different picture. Slavery had existed across the Middle East and North Africa from the earliest times. The

---

[7] Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 41.
[8] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 18.

rise of Islam in the seventh century provided a new legal framework but the actual practice of slavery continued to be heavily influenced by pre-existing patterns. Elite slavery, although absent during the egalitarianism of the early years of Islam, re-appeared under the Abbasid empire, demonstrating features familiar from pre-Islamic imperial practices in the region including those of the Persians and Romans. It continued in the Mamluk states, which ruled most of the Middle East in the medieval period, reaching its fullest development in the Ottoman Empire. Muslim rulers, often of slave origin themselves, staffed their armies and bureaucracies with slaves, female slaves entered elite harems, becoming wives and mothers of high officials and even sultans, and eunuchs occupied key positions of particular trust and influence.[9] Slavery, however, as it persisted across the Middle East and North Africa until the twentieth century and even beyond, was almost indescribably various and differentiated and elite slavery, despite the attention it has received, was not typical of the slave experience. In the Middle East and North Africa, no hegemonic indigenous elite abolitionist discourse manufactured a trove of captivity narratives or moulded the various types of local slavery into a representative experience. Even recent scholarship, given the diversity of Middle Eastern slavery and the absence of collective action sufficiently significant to leave archival traces or popular memory, has produced rather a proliferation of micro-histories, stories of particular slaves located within specific historical contexts, incapable, either individually or cumulatively, of representing the slave experience.[10]

Across the region, the majority of slaves led lives far from luxury and power. Nonetheless, the roles available to them, especially if they were male, often offered some opportunities for advancement, while the real possibility of manumission encouraged co-operation with the system at all levels. Female slavery was largely domestic and sexual

---

[9] For the central role of slave soldiers see, for example, Christopher Leslie Brown and Phillip D. Morgan (eds.), *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Daniel Pipes, *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

[10] See especially Ehud R. Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2007); Eve M. Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010); Anthony A. Lee, 'Enslaved African Women in Nineteenth-Century Iran: The Life of Fezzeh Khanom of Shiraz', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2012; Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, ch. 9.

but even with such limited scope, women might devise strategies to improve their position.[11] Both male and female slavery of this kind was considered to be, and often actually was, temporary, and usually framed as some sort of subordinate incorporation into a household, family or lineage. Inevitably, however, slaves at the bottom of the pile might be, if female, used for prostitution and, if male, condemned to the harsh conditions of agricultural production, mining, pearling or the galleys. In all these occupations, however, they toiled alongside and in the same conditions as free people. Slaves were found in a variety of social positions. Often items of conspicuous consumption rather than production, slaves might function as very visible signifiers of the wealth and power of their owners. Indeed, slaves had their own shadow hierarchies, dependent upon and reflecting the status of their owners, these hierarchies complicated by gender and sometimes by race. The custom of segregation and confinement of usually 'white' elite women, free wives and slave concubines, was maintained through the authority of black male slaves, the eunuchs. Slavery was not essentially racialized. It was associated primarily not with colour but with unbelief, *kufr,* and slaves might be black or white, with black slaves sometimes occupying positions of authority over both white slaves and free white people. The quotidian operation of the institution of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, although theoretically subject to supposedly unchanging Islamic ordinances, was in fact profoundly determined by the wider political context. By the nineteenth century, as the pace of change accelerated, the institution was becoming increasingly attenuated. Male slavery was in particular declining, and slavery taking on more and more of a feminized character.[12] Nonetheless, it continued to constitute a bedrock of an elite way of life and no strong, let alone hegemonic, abolitionist sentiment emerged among local elites.

Slavery in the Middle East and North Africa clearly differed in almost every respect from the institution in the modern Americas. Yet to use the comparison to highlight difference does not imply the assumption of the existence of a unique 'Islamic' slavery which has persisted in its essential aspects throughout all historical periods and across the diverse cultural, political and economic environments of the Muslim world. On the contrary, pre-modern Middle Eastern and North African slavery emerges

---

[11] See, for example, Fuad Matthew Carswell, *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011). For a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages to women of the manipulation of their sexuality, see Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 153–88.

[12] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery.*

from this comparison not as *sui generis* but rather as possessing deep and pervasive similarities with other contemporary systems, especially those which prevailed among its near neighbours on the western coasts of the Mediterranean. In terms of the main features of the institution and the lives led by slaves, medieval and early modern Middle Eastern societies remained close to the traditions and customs that they shared with other Mediterranean countries, especially Italy, Spain and Portugal, and which had common antecedents in the world of ancient Rome, with no visible binary division between Christian Europe and the Islamic Middle East.

As in the Middle East and North Africa, so too in southern Europe, where economic activity was pre-capitalist, slavery was largely domestic, urban and temporary, the enslaved populations of diverse origins and only ever a small, sometimes tiny, proportion of the total population. Regulations in both regions defining and regulating slavery were derived from similar sources, a synthesis of Roman law and Christian Church law (the Byzantine Justinian Code), and their assimilation included the incorporation of prevailing local customs. Constant contact, both peaceful and hostile, between Christian and Muslim states, especially in the Iberian Peninsula, contributed to producing alignments in both attitudes to and practices of slavery.

Certainly, slavery in the Middle East and North Africa was ostensibly regulated according to Islamic law, a legal framework derived from the Quran and *hadith* as interpreted by religious scholars. Two questions arise. First, to what extent does the existence of this legal framework justify speaking of a distinctive Islamic form of slavery? Second, while the existence of a legal framework, albeit a hybrid derived from a multiplicity of influences, certainly provided ideological and practical guidance for regulating slavery, in what ways and to what extent did the actual practice of slavery conform to, or differ from, the norms enshrined in this framework and what role did legal prescription play in constraining the options regarding slavery available to the authorities?

Unsurprisingly, given their common origins, Islamic arguments for slavery's legal and religious legitimacy bore a striking resemblance to those of the Christian states of the Western Mediterranean. This can be illustrated by a comparison of the consensus of the main features of Islamic law concerning slavery with the provisions of the *Siete Partidas*, a legal codification compiled in Castile in the thirteenth century.[13] Both made a presumption that the natural condition of mankind

---

[13] See El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, pp. 12, 297; Christina Proenza-Coles, 'Las Siete Partidas,' in Leslie Alexander and Walter Rucker (eds.), *Encyclopedia of African American History* (ABC-CLIO, 2008), http://christinaproenza.org/SietePartidas.html.

was freedom and that proof of the legitimacy of enslavement was required. Both laid down firm regulations regarding who might be enslaved. Neither legal codification defined liability to enslavement by nationality, race or colour. It was unbelief which provoked vulnerability to enslavement. For both, captivity of unbelievers in a just war or jihad was the main legitimate source of slaves. In Islam, free and freed Muslims might not be enslaved under any circumstances, although conversion once enslaved did not bring manumission, and Jews and Christians (*dhimmis*) who were deemed to have entered into a contract with Islamic rulers and paid special taxes were free from the threat of enslavement. For the *Siete Partidas* the capture of prisoners, especially non-Christians, in just wars was also a primary condition justifying enslavement.

Both codifications provided certain rights to slaves and offered a number of legal mechanisms for manumission. The Quran urged kindness to the slave, recommended manumission and that masters allow slaves to earn or purchase their freedom through legally enforceable contractual arrangements. The slave was entitled to seek a formal contract with the owner to purchase eventual manumission and the right to adequate food, clothing and lodging. Any cruel treatment allowed the slave to seek redress through the courts, manumission or a new master. A female slave who bore her master a child gained the status of *umm al-walad*, her child was free, her own chattel condition was partially lifted and she was entitled to freedom on her owner's death. The prostitution of slaves was illegal. The slave had certain rights of ownership although he could not own a slave, and had the right to marry but with the owner's approval. The similarities to the *Siete Partidas* are striking. Here too owners were not allowed to treat their slaves with cruelty, to inflict excessive physical punishment, to separate families or to exploit them sexually, and slaves were entitled to marry with their owner's permission. Slaves were permitted to obtain outside employment and to own property and to purchase their freedom and to seek legal redress through court proceedings if their owners flouted these conditions.

As well as common Roman and Byzantine legal origins, slavery in both the Middle East and southern Europe demonstrated strikingly similar broader ideological and religious underpinnings. Both Christianity and Islam advanced a conceptualization of ideal human unity, but both also introduced a crucial practical dualism between believers and non-believers, an echo of Aristotle's idea of 'natural slaves', whom the Greeks had equated with barbarians. For both Muslims and Christians, slavery was a result of sin or *kufr* while metaphors of slavery as submission to

God survived in both Christian and Islamic theology.[14] Both Christianity and Islam relied on Biblical stories to justify enslavement, particularly Noah's curse on the 'sons of Ham', believed to refer to black Africans, and their consignment to slavery.[15]

Medieval and early modern southern Europe and the Middle East and North Africa possessed both black and white and Christian and Muslim slaves. For both Muslims and Christians, slavery was closely associated with the just war, the crusade or jihad. During the Iberian *Reconquista*, for example, both Muslim and Christian frontier states raided and enslaved with complete political and theological legitimacy, the number of Muslim slaves held by Christian states increasing with their military successes. Neither Islam nor Christianity defined slavery through colour yet, in both societies, blackness was generally stigmatized and possessed residual connotations of slave status. Not only the legal and ideological but also the practical day to day operations of the institution of slavery in the Middle East and southern Europe were remarkably similar. One study of black slaves and freedmen in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Portugal, for instance, illustrates extraordinary parallels with the Middle East in terms of legal and philosophical justifications, the daily lives of slaves, their occupations, their relationship with the legal system, with religious institutions, with the white majority, the possibility of manumission and the consequences of flight.[16]

The similarities between pre-modern European and Middle Eastern slavery undermine the notion of an essentialist binary difference. The application of the designation 'Islamic' to systems of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa may be problematized further by contrasting the legal framework, which supposedly provided ideological and practical guidance for regulating slavery, with the actual policies devised and enforced by the temporal power.

Relations between the ulama, as interpreters of Islamic legal prescriptions, and rulers and their elites, driven by secular political, military and domestic considerations, seem to have been subject to perennial tensions. In relation to slavery, and indeed in general, where the needs of the state and the opinions of the ulama collided, it was the secular authority which usually triumphed. In general, the ulama constituted a conservative force. Drawn from the same social strata

---

[14] Robin Blackburn, *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 13.
[15] See El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, pp. 62–77.
[16] A. C de C. M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441–1555* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

as slave-owners and often slave-owners themselves, their sympathies lay with the defence of private property, including property in slaves, although they were also professionally committed to ensuring that slavery did not exceed the bounds of the law. Yet as a recent discussion of Sultan Mawlay Ismail's creation of a supposedly slave army in late seventeenth-century Morocco shows, slave-owning elites and rulers were able and willing to exert strenuous pressure to bend religious opinion should the laws be clearly violated and religious opinion recalcitrant.[17]

Sultan Mawlay Ismail's creation of an army by the enslavement of free blacks and the re-enslavement of black ex-slaves vividly illustrates both the state's readiness to disregard the law on exemption from enslavement and the flimsiness of legal protection when confronted by political power.[18] Islamic opinion was unanimous and forceful on the prohibition of the enslavement of Muslims. Nonetheless, when Sultan Mawlay Ismail embarked on the project of building a new army through which to consolidate his rule, he and his officials forcibly recruited only blacks, choosing them as suitable for enslavement on the grounds of their skin colour and their often wrongly presumed, and never demonstrated, slave origins. Confronted by this gross violation of Islamic precepts, certain members of the ulama demurred. The sultan, aware of the religious untenability of his position and conscious of the need to preserve a semblance of legitimacy for his military project and his rule in general, launched a campaign to persuade the ulama to withdraw their objections. Upon their continuing to refuse to endorse the sultan's actions, Mawlay Ismail responded not by halting the project but by threatening the ulama with fines, imprisonment, torture and death. One scholar was indeed executed while others fled to the mountains. Eventually the sultan succeeded in extracting satisfactory support from those members of the ulama who were recipients of royal patronage.[19]

Another case that aroused unease and divided opinion was the Ottoman *devshirme*, the periodic levy of male children imposed on the sultan's Balkan Orthodox Christian subjects. Not only did the *devshirme* appear to be a violation of the pact between the Ottoman authorities and the *dhimmis*, but it raised the spectre of forced conversion, also unambiguously prohibited by the Shari'ah.[20] Nonetheless, the levy continued, unimpeded by its

[17] See El Hamel, *Black Morocco*.

[18] For Sultan Mawlay Ismail's army, see El Hamel, *Black Morocco*. See also Allan R. Meyers, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Slavery: The Origins of the Moroccan "Abid"', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 427–42.

[19] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*.

[20] William Gervase Clarence Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 38–9; Y. Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996), pp. 1–11.

doubtful legality, as a highly successful method of elite recruitment into the Ottoman military and bureaucracy, until superseded by newer forms of elite recruitment from among the freeborn in the seventeenth century.[21]

The cases of Sultan Mawlay Ismail's army and the *devshirme* show that Islamic regulatory practices were often either circumvented, manipulated or disregarded, although they remained theoretically universally operational. Rendered uncertain by the availability of pliant religious scholars eager for patronage, the apparent protection the law offered was often restricted or nullified by casuistry and pressing political qualifications. Customary attitudes meant that blacks everywhere were perennially vulnerable to enslavement, whatever their religious affiliation, *dhimmis* might find their contractually protected status doubtful or contested, Shias, and by extension Iranians in general, might be denied Muslim status by Sunni Ottomans, border populations, where any authority, religious or secular, was weak, might be raided and enslaved indiscriminately.

Just as the structures of slavery on both sides of the Mediterranean were similar, but vastly different to those of the early modern and modern Americas, so too were the methods through which slaves attempted to exercise their agency. Mass rebellions, of the kind that became increasingly frequent and menacing in the eighteenth-century Americas, and which led directly to abolitionism, were extremely rare in the Middle East, indeed were impossible where the majority of slaves were scattered, attached with varying degrees of emotional commitment to individual households and occupying a wide variety of roles and statuses.

Examples of mass rebellion or violence by slaves on any scale in the Middle East and North Africa remain elusive. But the medieval period can boast of one famous slave revolt, that of the Zanj, black slaves imported into Abbasid Iraq from the east Africa coastlands.[22] Here the

---

[21] The Ottoman empire provides yet another example of blatant disregard of Islamic precepts on slavery in its reliance on the 'domestic manufacture' of slave eunuchs, a practice expressly and unambiguously forbidden by law. See A. Ezgi Dikici, 'The Making of Ottoman Court Eunuchs: Origins, Recruitment Paths, Family Ties, and "Domestic Production"', *Archivum Ottomanicum*, vol. 30, 2013, p. 131. Although Muslims might use, buy and sell eunuchs legitimately, the act of castration itself was supposed to be confined to regions outside the realm of Islam.

[22] The account of the Zanj revolt given here is drawn from mainly from Alexandre Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999) and 'The Zandj revolts in "Irāk"', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2002). See also L. Massignon, 'Zandj', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1987); Dionisius A. Agius, 'A Selfish Pursuit in a Slave Uprising of Third/Ninth Century Iraq', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 3–18; Ghada Hashem Talhami, 'The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, pp. 443–61; Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1960), pp. 103–6; and Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974), pp. 367n, 501n, 509.

connection between agency, in the form of slave resistance, especially violent resistance, and abolition may be established. As in the modern Americas, the trauma of the revolt, and the enormous loss of life and property, appears to have played a significant role in putting an end to the system of plantation slavery itself.

Lower Iraq under Abbasid rule in the eighth century was the location of sugar, cotton and indigo plantations, organized as commercial enterprises on reclaimed marshland by local merchants with substantial liquid capital at their disposal. The profitability of this plantation economy, indeed a prefiguration of the later sugar complexes of European colonialism in the New World, was built on the massive exploitation of the Zanj, and their conditions, both their hardships and their collective experiences, were exactly those most suitable for the production of violent mass revolt. The agricultural labour they were obliged to perform was crippling, and their submission was not eased by any prospect of amelioration or manumission. They were organized into huge work gangs, of five hundred to five thousand men, there was apparently even one gang of fifteen thousand, and they were isolated in the remote rural region of the Shatt al-Arab, in the Basran hinterland.[23]

The Zanj rebelled three times in the late seventh and eighth centuries, until they were finally suppressed by imperial Abbasid armies, and their revolt has been described as 'the greatest servile insurrection in the history of the Islamic world'.[24] Like other such revolts elsewhere, it aimed at seizing power and alleviating and improving the lives and material conditions of its supporters. Like other such revolts, it was constrained by the ideological limitations of its leadership and the character of the period, and its social organization had no alternative but to mimic that of the surrounding imperial polities, including the replication of slavery. The Zanj themselves were eventually suppressed with great ferocity but, like the plantation revolts of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Americas, their resistance and its accompanying violence dealt a fatal blow to the system of plantation slavery itself. The Zanj revolt drowned plantation slavery in medieval Iraq in blood and the system which produced and shaped the revolt was never to be revived.[25]

---

[23] Massignon, 'Zandj'; Agius, 'A Selfish Pursuit', p. 10.

[24] Popovic, 'The Zandj Revolts in "Irāk"'.

[25] Popovic, 'The Zandj Revolts in "Irāk"'; *The Revolt of African Slaves*, p. 154. Sources about the Zanj revolt are few, elliptical and ambiguous. Nonetheless, the episode has been adopted as an early Middle Eastern example of a class war and and likened to the revolts of Spartacus and Toussaint Louverture. See for example, L. Massignon, 'Zandj'; Popovic, *The Revolt of African Slaves*, p. 2.

With the exception of the Zanj, mass slave rebellion was vanishingly rare in the Middle East and North Africa and evidence of slave agency must be sought elsewhere. As the case of the Zanj demonstrates, slave action aimed at abolishing slavery is historically entirely exceptional, even violent slave revolt rarely offering a challenge to the institution itself. Equating slave agency with ideological opposition and physical resistance to slavery as such writes the real Middle Eastern slave and his or her agency, located within specific historical conditions, out of the picture. Such an equation, in particular, marginalizes the experience of the female slave, whose life was constrained by a double, or, if black, a treble subordination. Chained to the household by children she had borne her owner, with the highly constrained and subordinate position of free women only too visible to her, notions of individual autonomy were practically meaningless for the female slave. Open rebellions were, in any case, even in Atlantic slavery, largely available only to men while females, often with children, always constituted an important, latterly numerically preponderant, component of Middle Eastern slave populations. In contrast to the Americas, Islamic law and Middle Eastern political and social customs offered slaves certain possibilities, even rights, although there was a constant tension between the rights that they possessed, according to the ideology of slavery and guaranteed by the Islamic legal framework, and the actual operation of the system as it was moulded by the interests of elite slave-holders. Elite slaves, naturally enough, tended to adopt a strategy of maximizing the opportunities available to them, offering no challenge to the institution but embracing its potential for advancement. Among non-elite slaves too, it is possible to trace personal stories showing how individuals made use of the spaces provided by the system, bargaining within its confines rather than offering a challenge to its existence, in the hope of mitigation and ultimately release.

Elite slavery generally produced collaboration, even exploitation, of the advantages the system offered. Kinless elite slaves, lacking commitments other than to their owner, were presumed to be, and often were, absolutely loyal, their efforts to enhance their own status and wealth entirely contingent upon their success in protecting and advancing the position of their owner. So successful was this bargain in co-opting slaves that slaves sometimes rejected the opportunity of personal freedom and clung to their position, sometimes functioned as the system's enforcers and sometimes became the fiercest defenders of the status quo. The Janissaries, for example, originally recruited from the *devshirme*, became notorious reactionaries, opposing all efforts at sultanic military reform in defence of their own privileges until finally suppressed with considerable violence in 1826. Another group whose

status and privilege depended on the maintenance of the system were eunuchs, their physical mutilation and their value to elite households both reducing to nothing the appeal of a life outside slavery. The black eunuchs of the Ottoman palace, for example, were both rich and influential until the nineteenth century saw the system and their place in it eroded.[26] These eunuchs, like their confrères in similarly doomed royal establishments elsewhere, the Qing dynasty court in China an obvious parallel, clung to the remnants of their position and the symbols of their former eminence until the very end.[27]

Truly elite slaves were a tiny minority of the slave population. A much larger percentage of slaves, however, appear to have concluded that their position as dependents of rich men and their households, though subordinate and ultimately insecure, was preferable to what might await them once freed, when they would have to fend for themselves without protection or attachment. A remarkably recent illustration of this kind of pragmatic calculation comes from the Aden Protectorate as recently as 1943 when a group of royal slaves revolted because they did not wish to be freed.[28] Violently resisting the ruler's efforts to free them, a move which they interpreted as simply abolishing their privileges, they were finally compulsorily liberated after the ruler summoned the intervention of British Indian troops stationed in Aden.[29] At other times and in other places, slaves might simply exploit the opportunities offered to them by their possession of a small amount of power, delegated to them by their owners, to aggrandize, to the utmost extent, their own positions.[30]

Middle Eastern slavery offered incentives to investment in the system even to those quite low in the slave hierarchy. The hope of manumission,

---

[26] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, pp. 136, 141. For an official Ottoman register from 1903 comprising the biographies of 194 black eunuchs at court, see Ehud R. Toledano, 'The Imperial Eunuchs of Istanbul: From Africa to the Heart of Islam', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1984, pp. 379–90. For a biography, see Jane Hathaway, *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (London: Oneworld, 2005). For their wealth see, *inter alia*, Jane Hathaway, 'The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt The Waqf Inventory of "Abbas Agha"', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1994, pp. 293–317. For a general account, see George H. Junne, *The Black Eunuchs of the Ottoman Empire: Networks of Power in the Court of the Sultan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

[27] See Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 149–50 for the humiliation imposed on the Ottoman Head Eunuch by the Committee of Union and Progress and the eunuch's pathetic attempts to maintain his prestige and his role.

[28] The account of this episode given here is taken from Suzanne Miers, 'Slave Rebellion and Resistance in the Aden Protectorate in the Mid-Twentieth Century', in Edward Alpers, Gwyn Campbell and Michael Salman (eds.), *Slavery and Resistance in Africa and Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 99–108.

[29] Miers, 'Slave Rebellion'.

[30] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, pp. 198–200.

perhaps with gifts or an inheritance, or possession of a *mukatebe* contract (whereby a slave might purchase his manumission after a fixed number of years or for a fixed sum of money) encouraged co-operation and hard work. Although *mukatebe* contracts would be much harder for women to obtain, as they rarely worked for wages outside the home, fixed terms for slavery, of perhaps seven or ten years, were often customarily observed for both male and female slaves. Furthermore, those born into slavery, or captured at a young age, would have little accurate knowledge of their origins, and probably nothing to which they might realistically hope to return. Running away was a very risky strategy, impossible for women with children, and marronage communities, of the kind so common in the Americas, were rare.

The meaning of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa was further complicated by another subaltern strategy, the practice of self-enslavement or sale of family members. This was a strategy most commonly found in the enslavement of white Circassian women after the Russian occupation of their lands in the mid-nineteenth century, but was also found among impoverished local people, usually women and children but occasionally men too, at all periods and especially in harsh times. It was a practice which was not confined to Muslims. In Malta, for example, a category of slaves known as the *buonavogli* continued to exist until abolition in 1802. The *buonavogli* consisted of men who had sold themselves for life to the galleys of the Order of the Knights of Malta. Such a strategy was inconceivable in the context of Atlantic slavery, and there is no evidence of it having been deployed by Africans in the slaving zones beyond the frontiers of Middle Eastern and North African states. Self-enslavement occasionally offered hope of some social advancement, through, for example, entering the harem of a rich man and, although such success was probably extremely rare, its possibility may have given the practice some legitimacy and even appeal.[31] Nonetheless, the willingness of some family members to sell should not be equated with the willingness of women to be sold. Sometimes women co-operated in their own enslavement, and sometimes they did not, and many stories of desperate efforts at escape survive.[32] The legal ban on the enslavement of Muslims does not seem to have inhibited in practice either the sale, purchase or gift of Muslim women and children. In certain circumstances, Muslim men too might offer themselves as

---

[31] Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 49–51.
[32] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p. 212; see also the stories collected by Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.

slaves, either as a result of desperate poverty or ambition.[33] The desire to gain access to the privileges believed to be enjoyed by certain categories of slaves might lead to entire communities requesting enslavement be extended to them.

The practical functioning of slavery in the Middle East and North Africa therefore did not give rise to any ideological clarity regarding either the meaning of freedom, let alone equality, or its absolute desirability. The sharp dichotomy between slavery and freedom that theoretically characterizes modernity was not present in the pre-twentieth-century Middle East where various forms and degrees of personal dependence were universal. Although in law there was a clear division between free and slave, in social and political reality there was rather a finely graded continuum stretching from one status to the other.[34] In law, furthermore, different categories of the population supposedly possessed different capacities and therefore different prerogatives and rights and were subject to different punishments. Certainly, slaves were not the legal equals of the free, but neither were women the legal equals of men, nor *dhimmis* of Muslims. The prevailing norms inevitably constrained both the practical and the ideological options available to slaves. When slaves took action, it was likely to be in search of refuge from abuse, amelioration, perhaps even a 'better' master, rather than in pursuit of an abstract liberty.[35] There is little evidence of Middle Eastern and North African slaves possessing the ability, individually or collectively, to transcend the ideological limitations of their own immediate environment.

The template of American slavery depicts the aim of slave resistance as liberation, absolute legal freedom and individual autonomy as imagined by the politics of liberal democracy and the economics of the free market. Although even here what awaited the free slave was often, in reality, social atomization, marginalization and economic exploitation, nonetheless the ideal became and remained pristine. In the context of the nineteenth-century Middle East and North Africa, the values epitomized by the American slave's flight to freedom were perceived differently. Middle Eastern societies were still predominantly agricultural and urban populations were small, and neither the rural nor the urban areas had experienced the convulsive population movements

---

[33] Ennaji, *Serving the Master*, p. 89.
[34] Ennaji, *Serving the Master*, p. 89.
[35] Dennis D. Cordell, 'No Liberty, Not Much Equality, and Very Little Fraternity: The Mirage of Manumission in the Algerian Sahara in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1998, pp. 38–56, p. 46.

of an industrial revolution. Here the lone individual, divorced from any broader integrative context, was seen rather as a source of actual and potential threat. Both for society and for the ex-slave, what awaited was marginalization, and consequently criminalization, begging, prostitution, theft and even banditry. Indeed manumission without resources or continuing patronage was a proverbial threat or punishment for a recalcitrant slave.[36] No American 'flight to freedom' was available in these contexts, on the practical or ideological level. No new cities hostile to slavery, no New York or Chicago, nor any emerging industrial enterprises eager for labour, awaited the freed Middle Eastern slave. Here the uncertainty of life after slavery, the limited opportunities of paid employment, especially for women, the impossibility of a return home, and the difficulties of surviving in an unwelcoming urban world, all militated against slave discontent crystallizing into a generalized rejection of the social order, and often led to many freed slaves accepting a continued connection to their former owner's household, often in a similar role to that which they had occupied while enslaved. Not only the slave, but local elites and the state itself had an interest in this custom, as it avoided any social disruption resulting from the accumulation in urban areas of numbers of the marginal and the destitute, always a source of anxiety and, in the case of freed women, giving rise to a particular fear of rampant immorality.

Nonetheless, the political, legal and ideological shifts of the nineteenth century certainly opened up new possibilities for slave agency. Since the slave condition was usually individual, so too were the remedies pursued, including especially flight or the attempt to obtain legal redress with the newly available help of local officials or sympathetic European consuls, sometimes these two modes of action coupled together.[37] During the nineteenth century the incidence of both absconding and slave approaches to courts, and the likelihood of success, seems to have increased dramatically.[38] Slaves now found themselves not only running away from their masters but with new destinations to which to run. Both the opportunity for escape and the actual encouragement of flight increased as the European powers, especially the British, allowed their consulates and ships to give sanctuary, possible refuges of which runaway slaves were well aware, and centralizing Middle Eastern governments

---

[36] Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, p. 156.
[37] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.
[38] For the use of the courts by slaves in an earlier period, see Yvonne Seng, 'A Liminal State: Slavery in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul', in Shaun E. Marmon (ed.), *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), pp. 25–42.

and their local representatives began to look upon slaves and slave-owners through new eyes. Such forms of newly empowered slave agency were highly effective in weakening and eventually fatally undermining the institution. Furthermore, the legal changes of the nineteenth century, coupled with the blurring of the categories of slave and African, and the common assumptions of the slave status of blacks, opened up entrepreneurial opportunities unthinkable in the context of American slavery. Ehud Toledano has excavated stories, which appear to have been quite common, of tactical collusion between ex-slaves and slave dealers to defraud government compensation and settlement schemes.[39]

Such strategies, flight, resort to the courts and so on, appear to have been adopted mainly by black slaves and especially black female slaves. Paradoxically, given her relatively privileged position, the slave least likely to seek, and least likely to obtain, manumission was the female white slave. The white slave was also the least visible. Although recent research has located significant visual evidence of African slaves in the Middle East and North Africa, very few images of white slaves have been located.[40]

The demand among the relatively prosperous for female slaves for domestic and sexual services continued and, perhaps until the mid-nineteenth century, even increased among the nouveau riche keen to mimic the mores of their social superiors.[41] Debates about the position of such women and their customary role within the household as concubine and mother aroused deep anxieties about the inviolability of the household and the prerogatives of its male head. So highly charged was this matter that the Ottoman Empire, for example, was only able to ban the white slave trade in 1909, half a century after the ending of the African trade. The sensitivity of harem slavery and its capacity to become representative of more general political and religious anxieties is illustrated by the spectacular massacre of a Russian mission in Tehran in 1828, after the head of the mission, the poet and dramatist A. S. Griboyedov, insisted on

---

[39] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, pp. 76–8.

[40] See, for example, Pedram Khosronejad, 'The Face of African Slavery in Qajar Iran – in Pictures', www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2016/jan/14/african-slavery-in-qajar-iran-in-photos?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-2.

[41] A number of memoirs of harem life which discuss the place of slaves have been composed by elite women of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Iran. See, for example, Huda Sha'rawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist, 1879–1924* (trans., ed., intr. Margot Badran) (London: Virago, 1986); Taj al-Saltanah, *Crowning Anguish: Memoirs of a Persian Princess from the Harem to Modernity, 1884–1914* (ed. and intro. Abbas Amanat, trans. Anna Vanan and Amin Neshati) (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1993); Leyla (Saz) Hanımefendi, *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans: Daily Life at the Çırağan Palace during the 19th Century* (trans. Landon Thomas) (Istanbul: Peva Publications, 1994).

the surrender to him of two captured Georgian women from the harem of a local notable, these women having converted to Islam and borne their owner children and apparently not themselves wishing to be freed. This episode, which became entangled with widespread Iranian resentment at the humiliating terms of the treaty of Turkomanchai that had ended the recent Russo-Iranian war, resulted in the deaths of Griboyedov himself and forty-three members of his mission.[42]

Most of the evidence for slave agency dates from the beginning of greater European intervention in the nineteenth century, and is mainly concerned with black slaves.[43] Indeed, during the nineteenth century, slavery in the Middle East and North Africa became ever more contextualized within a discourse of colour, slavery increasingly defined as black slavery. Black slaves became an absolute majority among the total slave population in the Middle East and North Africa, all sources of supply other than sub-Saharan Africa now closed, while this new preponderance of black slaves encouraged European anti-slavery campaigners to reproduce the tropes of Atlantic slavery and paternalistic white abolitionism. The assimilation of Middle Eastern and North African slavery to black slavery in the Americas was particularly encouraged by the work of European missionaries in late nineteenth-century Sudan who recorded, framed and circulated widely several Dinka slave narratives.[44]

In fact, it was only in the nineteenth century that an essential association between colour, or race, and slavery, of the kind that defined the modern Americas, began to be attributed to the institution in the Middle East and North Africa. In earlier periods, slave raiding and trading had followed the military successes of the states of the region. This had resulted in an almost infinite variety in the ethnic origins and racial types of the enslaved populations.[45] By the nineteenth century, however, this variety had been superseded by a much more homogenized slave population, consisting of two groups, the larger group was composed of black Africans, mainly women but also some men, as domestics and

[42] Laurence Kelly, *Diplomacy and Murder in Tehran: Alexander Griboyedov and Imperial Russia's Mission to the Shah of Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

[43] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*; Troutt Powell, *Tell this in My Memory*; Walz and Cuno, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*; John Hunwick and Eve Troutt Powell (eds.), *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002); Ehud R. Toledano, *African Communities in Asia and the Mediterranean: Identities between Integration and Conflict* (London: Africa World Press, 2011); Rita Aouad, 'Slavery and the Situation of Blacks in Morocco in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', in Driss Maghraoui (ed.), *Revisiting the Colonial Past in Morocco* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013).

[44] Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, pp. 80, 83.

[45] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p.104.

menials, and a very much smaller number of white Circassian women for elite harems.[46]

But this assimilation of black slavery in the Middle East and North Africa to Atlantic slavery also depended on an assumption, made at the time and subsequently, that attitudes to race in these societies were similar.[47] Certainly deeply entrenched beliefs about the superiority of a light skin persisted across the Middle East and North Africa, Islamic racial egalitarianism never strong enough to overcome colour prejudice, and everywhere blackness carried with it associations of slave status. Colour was crucial to the slave experience, conditioning the treatment that a slave might expect to receive, options available for amelioration or escape and prospects after manumission. Yet, although colour consciousness, even colour prejudice, was endemic, attitudes were not commensurate with the binary divisions prevalent in, for example, the ante-bellum American South. The subversion of European notions of the natural racial order by Middle Eastern slavery often caused astonishment. In 1768, Olaudah Equiano, a freed black slave from South Carolina, visited Smyrna and expressed astonishment at the way in which white slaves were 'kept under by the Turks, as the negroes are in the West Indies by the white people'.[48] Indeed, so defining a moment was this for Equiano that for a long time he dreamed of emigrating to the Ottoman Empire. In the Middle East, and perhaps especially in North Africa, hierarchies of race and colour were neither absolute, immutable nor impermeable and racial identity was constructed differently. This was in striking contrasting to the 'one drop rule' in the United States, a colloquial term hinting at a widespread fear of 'invisible blackness', which became a principle of racial classification adopted into law by some state legislatures. This notion of 'invisible blackness' illustrates the way in which, in the United States, racial identity became de-coupled from actual skin colour. In North Africa too, the descriptions 'white' or 'black' did not necessarily denote skin colour. In Morocco, for example, descent was the defining characteristic of identity, not racial purity. Consequently, sons of Arab or Berber fathers and black slave mothers would define themselves by

---

[46] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, p.104.
[47] Perhaps the fullest discussion of colour and race may be found in El Hamel, *Black Morocco*. See also Murat Ergin, '"Is the Turk a White Man?" Towards Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2008, pp. 827–50.
[48] Quoted in Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Anchor, 2002), p. 119. See Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (ed. Angelo Constanzo) (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001).

their lineage, taken from their father, not their skin colour, several Moroccan sultans falling into this category.[49]

The conceptualization of Middle Eastern and North African slavery as typically black has been further confirmed retrospectively by the post-emancipation prospects of former slaves. Freed white slaves from elite households, often with material resources and social connections, seem to have suffered from little social stigma and integrated easily, disappearing as a defined category. Female slaves from elite households, for example, seem to have been in great demand as marriage partners and were often assimilated into the same class as the families that had once owned them.[50] Freed black slaves, on the other hand, appear to have found integration more difficult. While enslaved they were, especially if women, much more frequently assigned to menial labour than white slaves and they carried their low status with them into their post-emancipation lives. They were also far more numerous than emancipated white slaves. As a consequence, emancipated black slaves constructed new communal identities and forged collective cultural practices which gave them a permanence, though not necessarily a visibility, in their host societies.[51] Recent research, in fractured, post-nationalist environments characterized by a new identity politics, has brought these histories to light. Existing black communities in Iran and Turkey have become newly visible, while creolized religious practices such as Zar cults have found their way into popular entertainment across the entire region from Iran to Morocco, likened to black American music and finding an especial popularity with white audiences.[52]

[49] El Hamel, *Black Morocco*, p. 96.

[50] Judith Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p 188.

[51] Herzog, Tamar, 'How Did Early-Modern Slaves in Spain Disappear? The Antecedents', *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, 1–7. Available at: https://arcade.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/ROFL_v03i01_Herzog_091512_1.pdf.

[52] For ground-breaking work on surviving black communities, descendants of slaves, see Alexander Lopashich, 'A Negro Community in Yuoslavia', *Man*, vol. 58, 1958, pp. 169–73; Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, *Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Esma Durugönül, 'The Invisibility of Turks of African Origin and the Construction of Turkish Culural Identitiy: The Need for a New Historiography', *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2003, pp. 281–94; Behnaz A. Mirzai, 'African Presence in Iran: Identity and Its Reconstruction in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Revue Française D'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 89, no. 336–7, 2002, pp. 229–46. Behnaz Mirzai has also made two documentary films, *Afro-Iranian Lives* and *The African-Baluchi Trance Dance*. For ex-slaves self-help organizations, see Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 173–6; Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, pp. 209–11. For the popularity of the music of former slaves, see El Hamel's discussion of the Moroccan Gnawa, *Black Morocco*, pp. 270–96, and also Richard C. Jankowsky, *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

The power and persistence of an identification of Middle Eastern and North African slavery with the trade in and possession of black slaves by lighter-skinned owners is such that that it now requires a considerable effort of imagination and intellect to conceptualize the opposite equation, an historical reality, of white slaves with owners who were people of colour. This conceptual problem is strikingly illustrated by the case of the Barbary slaves. The numbers of Europeans enslaved by Barbary corsairs, privateers operating out of the North African coast, was very considerable indeed, perhaps up to a million between 1500 and 1800.[53] As late as the mid-nineteenth century, Ahmad Bey, ruler of Tunis and a pioneer of anti-slavery legislation in the region, was the son of a Sardinian slave mother.[54] Yet these enslaved Europeans have been almost completely excised from the history of Middle Eastern and North African slavery while the narratives they produced, along with vast quantities of material relating to their cases, letters, petitions, reports and so on, have also been disregarded as a source for the analysis of the operation of the institution.[55]

It is often remarked that gaining access to the experience of slaves in the Middle East and North Africa is particularly difficult because of the absence of such slave narratives, itself a consequence of the absence of an ideology of abolitionism.[56] Here too, it should first be noted, the Atlantic

---

[53] See, *inter alia*, Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Daniel J. Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Ellen G. Friedman, *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Linda Colley, *Captives*, pp. 99–134.

[54] Ismael Musah Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), p. 2.

[55] For one of the few women to write and publish a full-length Barbary narrative, see Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh* (London: Pantheon Books, 2007). Two other narratives purportedly written by women are almost certainly fictional. See Paul Baepler (ed. and introduction), *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[56] We do have, in fact, a few indigenous slave narratives, and no doubt further research will locate more. See, for example, the accounts by Iranians of their enslavement by the Turkomans of Central Asia: Mahmud Taqi Ashtiyani (Imad al-Daftar), 'Ibratnamah: Khatirati az Dawran-i pas az Jangha-i Herat va Marv (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1387); Isma'il Mir Panjah, *Khatirat-i Asarat, Ruznama-yi Safar-i Khvarazm va Khiva 1280-1862* (ed.) Safa' al-Din Tabarra'iyan (Tehran: Mu'assasah-yi Pajhuhish va Mutala'at-i Farhangi, 1370). These texts are discussed by Abbas Amanat and Arash Khazeni, 'The Steppe Roads of Central Asia and the Persian Captivity Narrative of Mahmud Mirza Taqi Ashtiyani', in Nile Green (ed.), *Writing Travel in Central Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 113–33 and Jeff Eden, *Slavery and Empire in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 88–114. For a recent attempt to use oral history, albeit of an elite, to access the slave experience, see Josep Lluís Mateo Dieste, ''Remembering the Tatas: An Oral History of the Tetouan Elite about Their Female Domestic Slaves', Middle Eastern Studies, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00263206.2019.1692823.

slavery template encourages an unbalanced comparison. It is in relation to slavery in the Americas that captivity narratives have played the most significant role and it is here that first-hand accounts written by slaves or former slaves have been so plentiful and significant. Indeed the existence of perhaps as many as six thousand American captivity narratives makes this case quite unique, the slave societies of ancient Greece and Rome, for example, having left no extant slave narratives.[57] In the case of slavery in the Americas, the very production of so many texts was a direct result of the abolitionist movement; white abolitionists providing an audience and a market and exercising tutelage over the slave narrators.[58] One consequence was the emergence of a typical enslaved black plantation field hand who became representative of slave life. The narratives tended to homogenize the slave experience, marginalize the agency of the slave-victim, and showcase the transcendent and redeeming moral character of abolitionism.

The European Barbary slaves did indeed produce captivity narratives but neither the slaves themselves nor their accounts have been integrated into the story of Middle Eastern and North African slavery. This erasure partly arises from the fact that the narratives of the Barbary slaves were indeed the product of an anti-slavery movement but, in this case, one which was external to the region and profoundly hostile. The Barbary narratives were indeed highly ideologically inflected, replete with formulaic denunciations, propaganda designed to confirm and promote existing beliefs not only about the cruelty and tyranny of Muslim societies but also, by contrast, the virtues of the slaves' own European countries.[59] They found a ready audience and market arising from elite and popular anger at their enslavement and sympathy for their fate at home, fuelled by a public eager for tales of Oriental strangeness and excess, these appetites whetted by the ruling discourses of early colonial and imperial expansion. As a result, the Barbary narratives have become a source of unease, even embarrassment, examples of imperial myth-making rather than authentic testimonies of survivors, tainted by their association with the formulation of an emerging Orientalist discourse and their mobilization in the service of an aggressive 'othering'

[57] M. I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Penguin, 1980). p. 108.
[58] Eve M. Troutt Powell, 'Will That Subaltern Ever Speak? Finding African Slaves in the Historiography of the Middle East', Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer and Y. Hakan Erdem (eds.), *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 242–61, p. 245.
[59] Colley, *Captives*, p. 101; Vitkus and Matar, *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption*, p. 34. See also Joe Snader, *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

of the Middle East.[60] Far from contributing to the emergence of an homogenized experience of North African slavery, as black captivity narratives were made to do in North America, they have rather been quarantined and divorced from the wider experience of slavery across the region.

The production and wide circulation of Barbary captivity narratives confirmed European views of the degeneracy and cruelty of Muslim societies and was a harbinger of a stronger discourse pitting Occidental against Oriental. The character of the moral and political outrage which the stories generated is, however, uncomfortable to a modern sensibility in other respects, and impossible to mobilize in a redemptive project. The discourse to which the Barbary narratives contributed excoriated the slavery of Christian Europeans, not slavery as such. This was, after all, a period when Muslim slaves were still kept in the galleys of French, Italian and Spanish ships, and when European countries, Britain, France, Spain and Portugal, were developing Atlantic slavery to unprecedented levels. The very existence of enslaved Europeans was seen as unnatural, disrupting the European correlation between slavery and colour. The Europeans enslaved by the Barbary corsairs were irrefutably Western, Catholic and Protestant, Italian, French, Spanish, British and even American, unlike the doubtfully European Balkan Orthodox enslaved in large numbers by the Ottomans. But the changing balance of power between the early modern West and the Islamic world made the enslavement of such western Europeans appear, both at the time and subsequently, as an anomalous affront. Indeed, the simultaneous expansion and racialization of Atlantic slavery may itself have heightened this sense of outrage.

The experiences of the Barbary slaves have, accordingly, been confined within a certain uniqueness or exceptionalism, deemed irrelevant to the experiences of slaves in general, especially those of their fellow black slaves, the exoticism that surrounded them making their stories impossible to incorporate into a meta-narrative of Middle Eastern and North African slavery. Barbary captivity narratives were capable neither

---

[60] The slave narratives recorded by missionaries in the nineteenth century Sudan have been similarly deconstructed. See, for example, Troutt Powell, *Tell This in My Memory*, pp. 77–113. The same processes of the shaping and moulding of slave narratives may also be found in the case of Russians held captive in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Indeed, as was the case with British abolitionism, they were an important instrument for the elaboration of a 'Civilizing Mission' for the Russian Empire as it expanded eastwards, the liberation and emancipation of slaves advertised as a key objective, the slave narratives deployed to delineate in the sharpest possible way the superiority of European Russia over local Muslim societies. See Bruce Grant, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), pp. 91–123.

of representing the slave experience in general, nor of contributing to a redemptive project within the region or outside it.

The weakness of an abolitionist sentiment across the Middle East and North Africa has often been noted and explained by reference to the power of conservative Islamic prescriptions. Abolitionism has typically been conceptualized as an elite ideology and evidence for its existence sought primarily in textual production, including, in the case of the Middle East and North Africa, legislation by rulers, fatwas from members of the ulama, and intellectual or cultural contributions from an intelligentsia familiar with European discourses of modernity. Popular attitudes towards slavery have, on the other hand, attracted little interest and little is understood about how the free, non-slave-owning lower classes across the Middle East and North Africa viewed slaves and slavery. What evidence is there by which to assess popular attitudes? In general, slave-holding was confined to a tiny elite. Most families did not own slaves, and this must have included many who had the means and, even when markets were glutted and slaves were cheap, most men seemed to have preferred a free wife to the purchase of a slave concubine.[61] Enslavement was widely perceived to be a terrible fate, the prospect producing a general revulsion, and slavery a dismal condition. The intermingling of slaves, ex-slaves and the free poor was considerable. Most slaves lived everyday lives that were barely distinguishable from those of the free poor among whom they lived. The free and the slave worked side by side, even in the harshest occupations such as that of galley oarsmen, and domestic slaves were an unexceptional element of local societies. The very frequency of manumission, and the variety of strategies available for obtaining it, means that many of the free poor must have had slave connections.

More than this, the free poor joined enthusiastically in the public celebrations of black slaves and ex-slaves. African festivals and carnivals took place in many towns and cities, most famously in Istanbul and Izmir, where they were immensely popular with the local population, especially the young, for whom they provided a temporary space where everyday restrictions were lifted.[62] Such festivals bore clear resemblances to similar

---

[61] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, pp. 142, 146. The situation in Egypt, where possession of a least one black slave seems to have been quite widespread, seems exceptional. See Gabriel Baer, 'Slavery and Its Abolition', *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). Khartoum is another unusual case. See Ahmad Alawad Sikainga, 'Slavery and Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Turco-Egyptian Khartoum', p. 153.

[62] Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 174; Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, pp. 209–11.

practices among slaves and the lower classes across many historical and geographical contexts, including ancient Rome, early modern Europe and the New World. In the Middle East and North Africa, as elsewhere, these events seem to have offered the wider subaltern society a moment of collective liberation and a powerful symbolic inversion of the existing and oppressive social hierarchy.[63]

But is it possible to go further and find among the Middle Eastern poor that sympathy for maltreated slaves and readiness to act in their defence which is evidenced among, for example, the urban plebs of ancient Rome?[64] There was indeed in the urban Middle East and North Africa the same daily intermingling between slave and free populations, in work and social life, some at least of the free being descendants of slaves themselves, which produced a certain community of interest in ancient Rome. The plebeian riots of ancient Rome were aimed not at slavery as an institution, but at defending particular slaves from the vengeance of their masters. Similar sympathy and even active intervention to protect slaves may indeed be found among the local populations of the Middle East and North Africa. In Cairo in the 1870s, six freed Sudanese slaves were kidnapped and smuggled across the Sinai desert to Nablus to be sold. The kidnapped women apparently felt sufficiently sure of a sympathetic response to knock on a stranger's door in a Palestinian village in search of help. They were not disappointed, the woman of the house hastening to inform the authorities.[65] The case of the Circassian slave woman named Shemsigul, told by Ehud Toledano, also shows the sympathetic intervention of a compassionate neighbour, a peasant woman, who saved the abused Shemsigul and arranged a safe lodging for her.[66] At the very least, public opinion seems to have acted as a brake on excessively harsh treatment and perhaps indicates a wider subaltern unease at the total power symbolized by slave ownership similar to that shown by the British lower classes towards plantation owners in the Americas.

Occasionally, a comprehension of a common interest, or at least a common enemy, seems to have produced an active solidarity between

---

[63] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, p. 211.

[64] Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, pp. 102–3.

[65] Liat Kozma, 'Black, Kinless, and Hungry: Manumitted Female Slaves in Khedivial Egypt', in Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 197–216, p. 197.

[66] Ehud R. Toledano, 'Shemsigül: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo', Edmund Burke III and David N. Yacoubian (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

slaves and the free poor, and the latter would flock to resistance mounted by exasperated slaves. The ranks of the Zanj rebels, for example, were swollen by impoverished peasants. Indeed, the peasants of the region appeared to have possessed a general inclination to join the Zanj, probably the result of a degree of black and white class solidarity directed against their common enemies, the owners of the large estates. The ranks of the Zanj were further reinforced by other subaltern elements, runaway slaves, including white slaves, from elsewhere, poor artisans, bedouin and black deserters from the Abbasid army.[67] The nineteenth century provides many, if less spectacular, examples of collaboration between slaves, ex-slaves and the free poor. Fugitives from Egyptian conscription took refuge on slave-run estates and slave bandits operated, always in association with free people, in remote areas of rural Morocco. In Iran, riots were sometimes led by slaves and slaves seem to have joined bands of *lutis*, local toughs who sometimes acted in defence of the interests of the poor. [68]

One crucial difference between Atlantic slavery and slavery in the Middle East and North Africa conditioned subaltern attitudes. Unlike Atlantic slavery, slavery in the Middle East was not quarantined within ethnocentric boundaries nor confined to distant colonies. It was rather an ever present threat to those falling to the depths or the margins of society.[69] The poor of the Middle East and North Africa, especially in the more remote rural areas, were themselves at constant risk of enslavement, doctrinal opposition to the enslavement of Muslims notwithstanding, and this fact contributed crucially to the emergence of popular dislike of the institution.

Popular abolitionism therefore, when a wider revolutionary context enabled it to appear, emerged not primarily as a moral issue but rather as a matter of pressing political urgency. The clearest example of this phenomenon of popular abolitionism comes from Iran, where opposition formulated itself in terms of the enslavement of 'us', Muslim Iranians, not the enslavement of 'other' black Africans. The scale of Turkmen slave-raiding into north-eastern Iran, which seems to have intensified during the nineteenth century, and the social trauma resulting from it, had already made this issue central to Qajar legitimacy, the Qajars

[67] Agius, 'A Selfish Pursuit', pp. 10–11. Hashem Talhami, 'The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered', p. 445.
[68] Martin, *The Qajar Pact*, p. 157.
[69] See Suraiya Faroqhi, 'Trying to Avoid Enslavement: The Adventures of an Iranian Subject in Eighteenth-Century Anatolia', in Suraiya Faroqhi (ed.), *Another Mirror for Princes: The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and Its Reception* (Istanbul: Isis, 2008), pp. 219–32.

engaging in repeated but largely unsuccessful diplomatic missions and military incursions in order to eliminate the practice.[70] As the story of the 'Daughters of Quchan' shows, by the time of the revolutionary upheavals in early twentieth-century Iran, slavery, whether through kidnapping by tribal raiders or sale by destitute families, had become emblematic of the injustice of the rich, the tyranny of rulers and the harshness of peasant life, and had been made into a central mobilizing motif in the struggle for constitutionalism and national independence. In this narrative of slavery and abolition, Iranians were victims, not perpetrators, and protection, justice and restitution, if not formal abolition, were demanded from the new constitutional authorities.

Subaltern suspicion of slavery and slave-owners deserves further research. Elite abolitionism, its significance and even existence, has attracted more attention and has been the subject of some disagreement. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw abolitionism occupy a position of central political, economic and especially moral significance in Europe and the Americas, and the apparent reluctance of Middle Eastern elites to follow the same path has aroused unease on one hand and apologetics on the other. The weakness of abolitionism has mainly been attributed, both at the time and subsequently, to the unchallengeable authority of Islam and the relative mildness of the local practice, a relative mildness emphasized by comparisons to American slavery.[71] As Bernard Lewis most famously stated: 'The abolition of slavery itself would hardly have been possible. From a Muslim point of view, to forbid what God permits is almost as great an offense as to permit what God forbids – and slavery was authorized and regulated by the holy law'.[72] This view, adopted by both Europeans and diplomats, anti-slavery activists and missionaries, and also by their antagonists defending the practice, first emerged in the nineteenth century and has since shown a surprising resilience, trapping discussion about slavery in the Middle East and North Africa within an Orientalist hall of mirrors.[73]

Although it remained far from hegemonic, an elite critique of slavery did develop in the nineteenth-century Middle East, both among secular

[70] Jeff Eden, *Slavery and Empire*, pp. 38–47.

[71] Ehud R. Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), p. 127.

[72] Bernard Lewis, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 78.

[73] Notions of the weakness of Muslim abolitionism, and the immutable and defining primacy of Islamic texts, have recently been comprehensively critiqued. See Clarence Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*; El Hamel, *Black Morocco*.

and religious reformers and modernists.[74] It was, however, complicated by the needs of rulers to protect their sovereignty from imperial diktat and the desire of an emerging intelligentsia to defend the cultural integrity of their societies. The British presentation of their anti-slave trade measures in terms of moral superiority provoked a defensive reaction from those in the region who feared further intervention by stealth and perceived a disguised but generalized attack on their religion and culture. They responded by contrasting local slavery favourably with that of the Americas, stressing the domestic character of local practice and the benign treatment which slaves might expect.

The model of plantation slavery in the Americas has thus been used, both in the nineteenth century and subsequently, to measure Middle Eastern slavery. Each side in the debate has mobilized one particular variety of the slave experience, those who emphasized the variety and mildness of the slave experience in the Middle East focusing on white harem slavery, their opponents drawing comparisons between the trans-Saharan trade in Africans and the 'Middle Passage' of Atlantic slavery, stressing similarities in terms of the trauma of violent capture, transport across vast territories, sale and total powerlessness, each stage accompanied by high rates of mortality.[75] This 'better or not' debate, however, takes place outside of the slaves' own experience and its attempts to locate forms of slavery arising in completely different historical circumstances on a scale of brutality sheds little light on the slaves' appreciation of their own situation. In this sense, what was of relevance to both black and white slaves in the Middle East and North Africa was not the lives of slaves thousands of miles away, of whose existence they were certainly unaware, but rather how they judged their own enslavement in terms of the possible alternatives available to people such as themselves.

In the 'better or not' argument, especially as it refers to black slaves, the American model is crucial. In relation to the question of abolitionism, the American and European experience is again central, although usually only in moral, and rarely in comparative historical, terms.

The evolution of the nineteenth-century Ottoman discourse on slavery among statesmen, reformers and literary figures has been traced in detail, and its inadequacies, its hesitations, its ambiguities and its contradictions documented.[76] The Western abolitionism against which this discourse is contrasted is, however, left largely unproblematized.

---

[74] See, for example, Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran,* pp. 159–79.
[75] John Wright, *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).
[76] See, for example, Toledano, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 112–54.

Indeed, it is an exculpating self-image of Western elite abolitionism which is first constructed and then deployed as the norm against which Middle Eastern or 'Islamic' exceptionalism is judged.

It should, however, be noted that in Europe domestic slavery ended without the development of any mass abolitionist sentiment. In Spain, for example, slavery simply withered away without any legislation, in Portugal slavery was ended by the Marquis of Pombal in 1761 in the heyday of enlightened absolutism, in Malta abolition had to await the arrival of Napoleon. Even regarding colonial slavery, opposition originally arose among circles far from power, such as British Quakers and other non-conformist radicals, themselves subject to severe disabilities, and it was only after lengthy and bitterly contested struggles that notions of slave emancipation made headway on elite and official levels. Even during the high point of the emancipation campaign, elite attitudes in Europe remained ambiguous. Revolutionary France abolished slavery in 1794, only for it to be re-established by Napoleon in 1802, and in 1840s' Algeria the French colonial authorities even pondered plans to purchase thousands of sub-Saharan slaves to provide labour and military service and even, in light of the failure to crush Algerian resistance, to use them to displace and replace the existing Arab and Berber population.[77]

In fact, it is possible to locate one, but only one, episode of coherent, sustained and successful popular abolitionism. Like the form of slavery itself, late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Western abolitionism was historically unique. Slave revolt aimed at abolishing slavery, a feature of the same period, was also unique. By contrast, as typically shown by the Zanj revolt, one of the first acts of rebellious slaves was often to take slaves themselves. Prior to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, all societies accepted slavery as a legitimate social institution, elite discourses, both religious and secular, providing legitimacy and even encouragement. Neither classical Greece nor Rome, nor medieval or early modern Europe was ill at ease with slavery. Nor was Europe's ideological embrace of the practice disturbed by the unprecedented expansion and super-exploitation of the modern plantation system. This system, as it shattered older notions of slavery, also led to the generation of quite novel justifications to match the new circumstances.

The destruction of slavery in the Americas was only partly a result of a new middle-class abolitionism, which read the Bible in a new way. This abolitionism, itself a product of rapidly changing circumstances, required, for its triumph against elite resistance, vast and profound

[77] Benjamin Claude Brower, 'Rethinking Abolition in Algeria: Slavery and the "Indigenous Question"', *Cahiers d'Études Africaine*, vol. 49, 2009, pp. 805–27.

political, social and economic transformations in both the slave colonies and the metropolitan countries. These transformations were driven by epochal political events, the French, American and Spanish American revolutions, by corresponding ideological changes such as the emergence of radical democratic ideas and natural rights and 'the rights of man', and notions of the superiority of free labour, and economic developments, especially British industrialization and the accompanying rise of a middle and a working class, both contributing to the formation of a public opinion and eager to assert themselves.

Most of all, however, the abolition of slavery in the Americas required slave agency, including crucially collective manifestations of violence, endemic resistance taking myriad forms and finally culminating in the Haitian revolution of the 1790s, Black Jacobins politicizing rebellion until it could aim at general emancipation and achieving an unprecedented victory, the first slave revolt to overthrow a slave society.[78] The history of plantation slavery in the Americas is coterminous with the history of slave rebellion and its bloody suppression. Slave revolts in the Caribbean, for example, were regular events, made more fearsome by the huge disparity in numbers between slaves and their owners. In the French and British sugar islands, for example, slaves comprised 80–90 per cent of the population. Although slave rebellion was not sufficient in itself for the rise of an abolitionist movement, it was certainly necessary. The final destruction of slavery in the Americas was the result of its becoming politically untenable, condemned by the nexus of accumulated connections between 'slave rebels and anti-slavery radicals, metropolitan abolitionism and wider democratic upheavals'.[79]

The tensions which exploded across Europe and the Americas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were experienced in the Middle East and North Africa largely in terms of an immensely more aggressive imperialism. Neither the political nor the economic developments which took place in Europe and the Americas had contemporary parallels in the Middle East. Elite agendas of political reform remained authoritarian, their discourse little challenged by any subaltern radicalism, and no slave colonies generated super-profits to kick-start an industrial revolution and its accompanying class struggles.

---

[78] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 527; C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin, 2001).

[79] Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, p. 531. The exact contribution of slave revolt to abolitionism has been the subject of some controversy. See Seymour Drescher and Pieter C. Emmer (eds.), *Who Abolished Slavery? Slave Revolts and the Abolition of Slavery: A Debate with João Pedro Marquesh* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

Only a century later, when slavery had already waned, did radical and democratic ideas begin to offer a serious threat to the established order and its elites. Most importantly, and in sharpest contrast to the Americas, Middle Eastern slaves offered no organized or political threat either to individual masters, to the slave-holding elite, or to the state. Abuse and desperation might produce individual slave violence, up to and including arson and murder. Even here, however, the threat it represented was reduced by the fact that most offenders were women, unsurprising given the emotional and psychological tensions of households characterized by polygamy and concubinage.[80] The societies of the Middle East and North Africa, lacking any tradition of armed slave revolts, seem to have harboured fewer fears of slave violence, presenting a stark contrast to the societies of ancient Greece and Rome or the modern Americas, which were pervaded by such fear. No anxieties about slave resistance pervaded Middle Eastern societies nor haunted elite reformers. In contrast to Atlantic slavery, Middle Eastern slaves were imported not into colonies but into the imperial heartlands, including capital cities such as Istanbul, Cairo and Tehran. But in these environments they remained a small minority of the total population. With the exception of the medieval Zanj revolt, they never offered, were never in a position to offer, any challenge either to the institution of slavery or to the system in which it was embedded. Seeing slaves as constituting no danger or threat, Middle Eastern elites felt under no urgent compulsion to address their plight. Such compulsion came rather from European imperial pressure, its impact was ambiguous and it was resisted accordingly.

Nonetheless, during the nineteenth century, slavery across the Middle East and North Africa was progressively restricted by state action and, as in Britain, initial efforts were aimed at suppressing the slave trade rather than abolishing slavery or emancipating existing slaves. A first bold initiative came in 1841 when the Bey of Tunis prohibited both slavery and the slave trade. In 1846, Istanbul's central slave market was closed. In 1848, the Shah of Iran issued a *farman* prohibiting the trade in the Persian Gulf.[81] In 1857, Ottomans banned the African slave trade.

---

[80] Zilfi, *Women and Slavery*, pp. 174–9. See also Y. Hakan Erdem, ''Magic, Theft and Arson: The Life and Death of an Enslaved African Woman in Ottoman İzmit', in Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 125–46.

[81] Behnaz A. Mirzai, 'The 1848 Abolitionist Farmān: A Step Towards Ending the Slave Trade in Iran', in Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2005), pp. 94–102.

The years 1877 and 1880 saw, respectively, Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Ottoman Conventions for the suppression of the slave trade and in 1890 the Ottoman Empire became a signatory to the international Brussels Act forbidding the African trade. In 1909, the Committee of Union and Progress prohibited the Circassian slave trade.[82]

  The template of modern Atlantic slavery has encouraged a tendency to see an open ideological commitment to abolitionism within the slave-owning societies as crucial to the suppression of the institution. Yet, across the Middle East and North Africa, although no hegemonic abolitionist sentiment emerged, yet the nineteenth century saw a profound change in the politics of slavery, specifically the ways in which states such as the Ottoman Empire, Egypt and Tunisia, at both central and local levels, dealt with slaves. This was certainly partly a product of constant European pressure, but it was also the result of an internal dynamic of modern state-building.[83] Such change is particularly evident in the responses of the courts.[84] Hitherto the state, the courts and the ulama had all lent their weight to upholding the prerogatives of slave-owners, only freeing abused slaves in the most extreme cases, and otherwise assisting in the recapture of runaways and permitting their punishment by their owners. However, as modernizing, centralizing, secularizing elites extended their reach, they enabled the state to take over the management of slavery, gradually removing it from the ambit of the Shari'ah, and increasingly intervening in the hitherto private realm of the slave-owner's household. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state had leant decisively away from defending slave-owners' rights towards favouring the runaway slave. Running away now almost invariably ended in successful manumission and was becoming recognized as a legitimate way of obtaining liberation.[85] Egypt underwent a similar process. Here too, the owner's control of his or her slave was undermined by successive state interventions, including the establishment of manumission bureaux, to the point where ownership became a legal fiction. In 1881, the Cairo manumission bureau was instructed by the minister of the interior to issue manumission certificates

[82] For emancipation in Iran, see Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation*, pp. 180–205. For a discussion of the issue of slavery during the 1908 revolution in the Ottoman Empire, see Ceyda Karamursel, 'The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2016, pp. 138–61.
[83] For a discussion of their interaction in the North African context, see Montana, *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia*.
[84] Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*, p. 112.
[85] This process is described in detail by Toledano, *As If Silent and Absent*.

to all applicants regardless of circumstances and by the mid-1880s it appeared that any slave who desired manumission was able to obtain it.[86] Slaves were now able to make decisions regarding their work, marriage partner and place of residence and, as a last resort, simply to leave their owners.

These political and legal changes cumulatively transformed the relationship between slave and slave-owner and the perceptions of both by the wider society. At the same time, transformations in the nature of society, specifically the decline of the extended, polygamous aristocratic household, augured the end of the old order for both owner and slave. In contrast to the Americas, almost no one came to slavery's defence. By the end of the nineteenth century, slavery in the Middle East and North Africa, although still awaiting formal abolition, had become unenforceable. It finally disintegrated from below, slaves taking matters into their own hands and voting with their feet, simply walking away from their owners who now lacked both the desire and the coercive mechanisms to retain them.

[86] Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*

6 Modernism and the Politics of Dress
Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World

The decision by the French National Assembly in 2010 to ban the wearing of the *niqab* (Muslim face-veil) in public was the culmination of an intense controversy.[1] It was calculated that only a tiny minority of Muslim women in France wore the face-veil. Yet, for both supporters and opponents of the ban, the issue appeared to raise fundamental existential questions. Supporters of the ban were accused of Islamophobic racism, its opponents of endangering the secular character of the French republic. Polemics about the *niqab*, furthermore, transcended the usual faultlines of French politics, support for the ban able to draw on a long tradition of secularism and anti-clericalism on the French Left, the usual first line of defence for immigrant rights. The controversy in France over the face-veil, which followed a long, similarly articulated dispute over the wearing of the headscarf in French schools, was particularly sharp, but found echoes across Western Europe. In the broad contours of their arguments, the opposing voices reproduced debates in Europe which had already developed in majority Muslim countries, most notably Turkey and Tunisia.[2] Both sides claimed to speak for women's empowerment and agency, but were divided by issues of secularism versus religious belief, individual freedom versus social and family consensus and coercion and identity versus integration.[3]

---

[1] The National Assembly legislated against face covering in July 2010, the Senate following suit in September. The ban came into force in April 2011.

[2] The controversy in Turkey has been extensively covered in the press and the scholarly literature; the Tunisian case less so. For Turkey see, for example, Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); Emilie A. Olson, 'Muslim Identity and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey: "The Headscarf Dispute"', *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1985, pp. 161–71; Esra Özkan, *Mainstreaming the Headscarf: Islamist Politics and Women in the Turkish Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019). For Tunisia see http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2006/10/27/feature-01; http://nawaat.org/portail/2006/11/23/the-war-over-the-veil-in-tunisia/.

[3] For a recent broad survey, see Anastasia Vakulenko, *Islamic Veiling in Legal Discourse* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

The eruption in Europe of the controversy over the *niqab*, and indeed over Islamic clothing, *hijab*, in general, followed, and was partly fuelled by, the US invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, and the placing of Afghan women's emancipation at the centre of a new Western interventionist discourse. Their brutal enforcement of full veiling and seclusion on Afghan women was a key trope in the depiction of the Taliban as incorrigibly backward, indeed medieval, and barbaric. This in turn took place against a backdrop of growing hostility to the Islamic Republic of Iran where, again, the imposition of compulsory *hijab* was identified in the West as a sharp manifestation of Iran's disregard for individual human rights. The political and historical realities of these two countries, and the widely differing forms of veiling practised in each, were disregarded, the veiled woman in both Afghanistan and Iran mobilized to represent for the West the self-imposed exclusion of these societies from the modern world.

More recently, as a result of the empowerment of Islamist trends after the 'Arab Spring', the question of veiling across the Arab world, and of women's right to veil or not, has also acquired a new salience. Indeed, in general, over the last decades of the twentieth century, with the weakening and collapse of secular nationalism and the emergence and re-emergence of discourses based on Islamic tenets, veiling, voluntary and enforced, has moved to the top of the political agenda.[4] It is, furthermore, no longer an issue that affects only the world beyond Europe's borders, wherever those borders may be imagined to be. As the case of France shows, owing to the presence in Europe of substantial immigrant Muslim communities, often possessing a new level of confidence and articulating a new opposition to Western foreign policy, and the rise of an Islamophobic far-Right, debates over veiling have taken on an unprecedented significance within European domestic politics.[5] Both within the Muslim world and in Europe, polarized debates about the meaning of veiling may again be heard, these debates signifying, as in earlier periods, a much wider political and cultural clash. Once again, voices may be heard defining veiling as a symbol of the backwardness of the non-European 'Other' and counterposing Islam to the very essence of European identity.

---

[4] For a recent discussion, see Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2011).

[5] For a survey of recent anti-veiling legislation in western Europe, see www.theguardian .com/world/2017/mar/14/headscarves-and-muslim-veil-ban-debate-timeline.

Yet neither the French campaign against the *niqab* nor the Turkish secular elite's horror at the spread of *hijab* is new, but is strikingly prefigured by earlier conflicts. Across the Muslim world by the late nineteenth century, the question of female dress in general, and the face-veil in particular, had come to occupy an important place in a developing indigenous critique of existing gender relations. This critique of gender relations, in turn, was a key trope in a wider discourse of modernism which sought to explain and also, crucially, to remedy the perceived backwardness of Muslim societies. According to this discourse, the entire social organism suffered from the debilitating effects of the veiling and seclusion of half the population, and the half responsible for raising the next generation at that. It laid particular emphasis on education for women and the reform of family law, especially as it related to polygamy, child marriage and the male right of repudiation, as routes to the creation of good wives and mothers, happy companionate marriages and healthy and stable families. A *sine qua non* of this agenda was opposition to seclusion, with veiling as the symbol, and sometimes even the cause, of the degradation of both women and therefore also of men. The modernist gender discourse generated intense controversies. These controversies reached a crescendo in the early twentieth century, becoming subsumed into broader debates about Middle Eastern self-defence, on the intellectual, cultural and ideological, as well as the political and economic levels, from a relentlessly expanding European hegemony.

The modernist gender discourse, and the opposition to veiling and female seclusion which was embedded within it, appeared and took shape between the late nineteenth century and the First World War. From the early 1920s, this discourse was empowered across much of the Muslim world as a result of the seizure of state control by a variety of modernist regimes. During the 1920s and 1930s, in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans, veiling became a target of government disapprobation, was publicly ridiculed as backward and officially discouraged in a variety of ways. Although these countries were ruled by very different regimes, in Turkey a republic led by a charismatic war hero, modernizing monarchs, Reza Shah and King Amanullah, in Iran and Afghanistan, communist parties in Central Asia and the Caucasus, their anti-veiling campaigns bore, at least at first sight, certain broad similarities. For the nationalist, modernizing and secularizing elites, who identified profoundly with European mores, unveiling became a key signifier of modernity and a central element in an emerging national character. In interwar Central Asia and the Caucasus, the infant Soviet state launched anti-veiling drives as part of

its wider struggle for a revolutionary transformation, social and cultural as well as economic. Although very different political formations, these regimes, whether elite nationalist or communist, were all opposed to what they viewed as the reactionary forces of Islam and tradition, forces which they equated and conflated, and all wished to create a new and modern woman, unveiled, educated and integrated into the workforce.

These anti-veiling campaigns were everywhere presented as emancipatory. Yet everywhere the state's sponsorship of authoritarian anti-veiling campaigns led to an intense politicization of the issue. Unveiling became a battleground on which enemies of the sponsoring regimes might mobilize a more general opposition. For the secular elites, unveiling remained a signifier of modernity. For their opponents, unveiling became symptomatic of a loss of cultural integrity and a weakening of religious feeling, the last means by which European power might be resisted.

Each anti-veiling campaign of the interwar period has received its share of attention, but analysis has always remained largely within the confines of a national framework. Despite their extraordinary synchronicity, there has as yet been little or no attempt to view these movements from a comparative perspective, to try to determine precisely which features they shared and what was specific, even unique, to each country's experience.[6] Many questions remain to be clarified. What was actually meant by unveiling? What did the anti-veiling discourse envisage as the ideal appearance of the newly unveiled woman? Is it accurate to speak of the emergence of a pan-Islamic gender discourse and counter-discourse within which a critique of veiling was embedded? Did the emergence of nationalism fracture these pan-Islamic conceptualizations of veiling? What role was played in the construction of these discourses by tropes drawn from European Orientalism? How important was the circulation of ideas within the Muslim world itself? To what extent and through what mechanisms was each individual country influenced by processes of change underway among its neighbours? What was the impact of changes in fashion, in the ordinary sense of taste in dress, but also in the wider sense of major trends in social attitudes and official policies? What was the connection between anti-veiling campaigns and reforms in male clothing? How did the empowered nationalist and

---

[6] Several years ago Adrienne Edgar called for the elaboration of precisely such a comparative analytical perspective on gender policies in the interwar decades. See Adrienne Edgar, 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet "Emancipation" of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective', *Slavic Review*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2006, pp. 252–72.

communist regimes of the interwar period enforce unveiling? What role did legal change play? What was the role of coercion versus education and propaganda? Who was in favour of unveiling and who against? What was the role of women's organizations? What meaning does the concept of women's agency have in the context of the still prevailing patriarchal social structures and the authoritarian modernization characterizing the anti-veiling regimes? What strategies did women employ to manage the new expectations placed on them? What types of opposition did unveiling provoke? What was the reaction of men? How can the shocking levels of violence accompanying unveiling in Central Asia be explained? Was the conceptualization of veiling as a social evil unique or can it be better understood by placing it within a more generalized modernist preoccupation with eradicating local practices relating to women's bodies such as Chinese footbinding or female genital mutilation in Africa? What did the anti-veiling campaigns achieve? To what extent was the re-emergence of veiling since the 1970s a reaction to these campaigns or was it the product of entirely different and new circumstances?

The immense symbolic significance which the *niqab* or face-veil acquired, both for its supporters and its opponents, was a marked feature of the recent controversy in France. In fact, contemporary debates demonstrate considerable semantic and conceptual confusion regarding the veil, a confusion that is a reflection of an actually diverse reality. This actual diversity has, however, been largely ignored in the debates, as each side has struggled to impose its own interpretation of veiling. The more commonly used word *hijab* possesses a range of possible meanings. It might imply a general demeanour of modesty in public, and might also refer to any variety of headscarf worn by Muslim women, perhaps also to loose robes enveloping the body, sometimes but not necessarily including the face-veil. Complementing the vagueness of the term, a wide variety of interpretations may be observed among veiling women, depending on background. For the contemporary well-educated Islamist woman who asserts her decision to veil as one informed by choice and agency and a rejection of tradition, and for whom *hijab* is a public declaration of identity and piety, the most common form of dress is an international style of loose coat and headscarf, emphasizing her membership of the transnational *umma*. The face-veil is rarely seen in this milieu. Yet, even among those women who wish to assert the primacy of their Islamic identity, there are significant differences. Quite separately to the fashion common among the younger generation of modern female Islamists, heavily influenced by the sartorial innovations which women devised in Iran after the 1979 revolution, there has also been a reversion to, or perhaps novel adoption of, older forms of dress, including the face-veil,

under the influence of Saudi and Gulf norms and practices. Interestingly, the types of *hijab* adopted by the woman usually reflects and is reflected by the type of clothing, in particular the type of beard, trimmed or untrimmed, and robe or Western trousers, worn by her husband, indicating the continuing importance of gender complementarity and a significance of forms of male dress often submerged beneath the paradoxical visibility of the veil. This political and psychological need for gender complementarity in dress, indicating a supposed similarity of identity and outlook, has been of some significance in the historical struggle over veiling.

A similar lack of clarity and precision about what was meant by the veil, and perhaps also an ideologically charged indifference to actual social realities, was also evident among the earliest advocates of change in the Muslim world. In the nineteenth century, as in the twenty-first, forms of dress, and the presence or absence of face-veiling, varied widely depending on class, geography and social context. The face-veil was usually worn by women of the better-off classes, or those who aspired to these classes, and was primarily an urban phenomenon. It was in fact a way of demonstrating that a family possessed enough wealth to keep its female members secluded and economically inactive and therefore entitled to claim a superior social status. Face-veil and body robes might be worn by poorer urban women but in such a way as to permit interaction with the wider society.[7] The full face-veil was rarely found among peasants or nomads, by far the numerically largest element of the population, except perhaps in a modified form on the occasion of their rare visits to towns. On the other hand, some form of hair covering was universal, and rural women or working women in towns might adopt the habit of pulling their scarves across part of their faces on the appearance of strangers. In the pre-modern Muslim world, therefore, the vast majority of women rarely or never wore the face-veil and dressed in local 'folk' costume, appropriate to their lives of agricultural or pastoral labour and including culturally specific types of body, head and hair covering. Nonetheless, by the late nineteenth century, the type of clothing, including and especially the face-veil, typically worn only by better-off urban women, had come to be identified by an emerging modernist intelligentsia as a key signifier and cause of the backwardness of Muslim societies in general.

---

[7] See the photograph of the woman selling oranges in Jaffa in the late nineteenth century, 'Marchant d'Orange á Jaffa' on the Library of Congress website, www.loc.gov/pictures.

Why then, it may be asked, did the form of clothing worn only by a small minority of the female population acquire such immense symbolic significance? It was of course the urban elites that incubated the modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and it was therefore primarily urban women, especially those from the same elites, who were most present in the modernist vision. It was precisely such women who were subject to the most rigid requirements of covering in public. It was also women from such families who first began to demand, in imitation of their male relatives, access to education, to a life beyond the confines of domesticity, and to an amelioration of the disabilities placed on them by existing family codes and practices. The character of emerging critiques of gender practices and veiling itself may therefore best be comprehended if modernism itself is understood as essentially an elite project. In general, the elite character of gender modernism may perhaps be best illustrated by its prioritizing of female education as a panacea, in societies where the vast majority of men were illiterate, no more educated than their sisters, mothers and daughters. The class dimension of the modernist critique of veiling also begins to explain the very varied receptions which it received. The first women to unveil, and the most ardent advocates of unveiling, were from the socially, culturally and economically secure elites. On the other hand, the middling classes, the aspiring, the upwardly mobile and the nouveau riche were among the staunchest defenders of an imagined 'tradition' in clothing practices and were even eager to adopt anew these traditions as markers of their social advance.

The role of Europe in the construction of the modernist gender discourse, and specifically the attitude to veiling embedded within it, has given rise to considerable controversy. The new intelligentsia, originating from within elite families where veiling and seclusion was most closely maintained and reproduced, consisted precisely of those men who were most in contact with Europe and European ideas and who were becoming most sharply aware of the differences in gender relations prevailing in the West and the East. Certainly, Europeans themselves, having quickly identified Islam as the fount and source of general backwardness and every particular social evil, especially the allegedly degraded position of Muslim women, were vocal critics of veiling. The prurient gender obsessions of European travellers and officials in the Muslim world and their fascination with the exoticism of the harem and the provocative concealment represented to them by the veil have been well documented.[8]

---

[8] See, for example, Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris 2004).

It has been argued that the modernist gender discourse, and especially its critique of veiling, was, as might be expected from its elite character, directly derived from European Orientalism. The notion that elite critiques of existing gender relations were the result of the internalization of European prejudices and a conscious or unconscious capitulation to imperial hegemony has been most cogently argued by Leila Ahmed and has shaped much subsequent scholarship.[9] She asserts, for example, that Qasim Amin's seminal 1899 text, *Tahrir al-Mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*), with its call for an end to veiling and gender segregation, marked not the beginning of feminism but rather the importing of the colonial narrative of women and Islam into mainstream indigenous discourse.[10] She describes the unhealthy psychological reaction of the upper-class Qasim Amin, 'smarting under the humiliation of being described as uncivilized' by Europeans because Egyptian women were veiled.[11]

Yet Middle Eastern travellers to Europe were equally fascinated by European women and just as ready to use them as a 'metaphor for delineating self and "Other"'.[12] Reversing the Orientalist dynamic, Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi emphasizes the role played by the 'Occidentalist gaze' and rejects Leila Ahmed's depiction of the passive absorption and reproduction of European prejudices. On the contrary, attributing the emerging gender discourse to an entirely indigenous ideological and cultural dynamic, he details Iranian constructions of an imagined European woman, either an unveiled and educated model for Iranian women, or a corrupt menace to Islam and Iranian society, and the centrality of these constructs to a range of Iranian political discourses.[13]

Furthermore, as Marianne Kamp has argued, the analysis of gender modernism as exclusively a defensive response to European colonialism obscures the conflicts being played out within each Muslim society.[14]

---

[9] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

[10] Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, p. 163.

[11] Ahmed, *Women and Gender*, p. 165.

[12] Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Women of the West Imagined: The *Farangi* Other and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Iran', in Valentine M. Moghadam (ed.), *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Routledge, 1993), p. 98.

[13] Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Women of the West Imagined'.

[14] Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); 'Women-initiated unveiling: state-led campaigns in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 205–28.

A Eurocentric view, privileging Western Europe, France and Britain in particular, as the true source of modernism around the world, underestimates the power of an emerging discourse of reform indigenous to the Muslim world.[15] The unprecedented rapidity of technological change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries opened up enormous opportunities for communication and the exchange of ideas within the Muslim world, as much as or more than between the Muslim world and the West. The construction of railways, an explosion in the print media, and large migrations encouraged the formation of what Khalid Adeeb has called a cosmopolitan community of the world's Muslims and contributed to the emergence of a pan-Islamic gender discourse.[16] In fact, in terms of their general outlook, their proposals for ameliorating the lot of women, and specifically their attitudes to veiling, reformers in the Muslim world were primarily influenced by each other rather than by the unmediated example of Europe. Travel was certainly of central importance to the ideological evolution of many leading reformers, but it was primarily travel between the great urban centres of the Muslim world. Travel within the Muslim world was infinitely greater than with Europe, available to much wider layers of society, and the example of change within Muslim societies far more powerful than the observation of alien customs in societies foreign in every sense and sometimes hostile. Many of the new generation of modernists found their outlooks transformed by movement between cities within the Muslim world.[17] In addition to human movement, the establishment of print media increased dramatically in these decades and led to the dizzying circulation of books, pamphlets and newspapers, while Muslim communities such as the Tatars of the Russian Empire, whose adoption of modernism had occurred at an early stage, constituted conduits for the transmission of such ideas across the Muslim world. Tatar reformers influenced other Muslim communities within the Russian Empire, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and beyond, in the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman and Caucasian developments affected Iran which in turn transmitted new ideas to Afghanistan. Arab reformers in Cairo and

---

[15] For a discussion of the general phenomenon of eurocentrism in history, see J. M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

[16] Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA; University of California Press, 1998). See also Edgar, 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation'.

[17] For instance, the young Mahmud Behbudi, a member of the old cultural elite of Turkestan who was to become the founder of Central Asian *Jadidism*, found his outlook transformed by a journey on the Transcaspian railway from Samarquand via Transcaucasia to Istanbul, Cairo and Mecca. For Behbudi, see Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 80.

Muslims in the Balkans looked to Istanbul for inspiration. Across the Arab, Ottoman and Iranian worlds, across the Caucasus and Central Asia, and among the Muslim communities of the Balkans, reformers, operating within a newly integrated transnational Muslim intellectual environment, identified the same problem of 'backwardness' resulting from the same general and specific causes, and proposed the same remedies.

It was, however, not only those advocating change and critiquing the veil who drew strength from opinion across the Muslim world. As the reform agenda acquired a transnational character, so too did the opposition. Just as reformists might be encouraged by what they saw in Istanbul and Cairo, including changes in veiling practices, so might those of a more conservative cast of mind be horrified by the same phenomena.[18] Across the Muslim world a counter-discourse emerged, denouncing gender modernism, and the opposition to veiling in particular, as an effort to copy or mimic the West. It was argued that the modernists' treacherous embrace of European motifs hostile to Islam was a threat to the entire social order, endangering the moral purity of women and raising the spectre of chaos, of society being riven by *fitna* or turmoil.

By the early twentieth century, a modernist gender discourse had taken shape and had immediately evoked a counter-discourse. The two sides often raised similar concerns and sometimes used similar methods of argument, although reaching diametrically opposed conclusions. Appeals to Islamic legitimacy, for example, were invoked by both those in favour of veiling and those opposed, both sides swapping verses from the Quran. On the one hand, it was asserted that the *Shari'ah* required women to veil. Islamic modernists, on the other hand, most notably the famous Egyptian Muhammad Abduh, refuted the view that Islamic legal texts demanded any particular form of *hijab*. Some went even further, concluding that in fact veiling was actually an un-Islamic practice, and should be discarded in favour of a more authentic piety cleansed of non-Islamic accretions. The argument went beyond religious prescription. Both sides also expressed concern about the moral health of society. Conservatives believed that not only religion but social custom and family honour demanded veiling, which protected women from moral corruption. Their opponents retorted that veiling in reality encouraged and facilitated such corruption, either because women remained ignorant and unschooled in true morality, or because, more crudely, the anonymity of the veil facilitated illicit contact between men and women.[19]

---

[18] Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 134.

[19] Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 228.

The struggle over the meaning of veiling took place between those in favour and those against, but also within the modernist camp, which was far from monolithic.[20] Different elements of the modernist programme were adopted in different places at different speeds and in different combinations. The need to educate women, for example, was much more readily accepted than the need to end veiling, and veiling was not always seen as an impediment to education. Katherine Libal has shown how, as modernism evolved, it increasingly attempted to freeze the debate in revolutionary and absolute terms through binary constructions, 'traditional' or 'backward' versus 'modern', 'reformist' versus 'conservative', 'old' versus 'new'.[21] Yet, in reality, in each concrete Muslim society opinion changed among different social groups at different rates, prioritized different concerns, and was more variegated than a simple division into stark opposites would indicate.

Islamic modernism, which argued that veiling was not mandated by religion, was a powerful trend that might be found across the Muslim world. In the late nineteenth century, however, a clear-cut fracture appeared in the pan-Islamic reformist discourse regarding the veil. Iranian, Turkish and Balkan nationalist ideologues began to allocate opposition to the veil a role in the construction of new and specifically national, as opposed to religious, identities. These thinkers began to lay increasing emphasis on the differences between themselves and the wider Arab and Muslim worlds, and on the uniqueness and even superiority of their national cultures, sometimes expressed in racial terms. For the Iranians Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh and especially Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani, for example, the Arab invasions and the imposition of Islam on the Iranians had been a disaster and veiling was a sign of the backwardness of a social order resulting from the submission of the Iranians to Arab and Muslim hegemony.[22] Ziya Gökalp, the pre-eminent ideologue of Turkism, also argued that Turkish culture needed

---

[20] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 137.

[21] Kathryn Libal, 'From Face-Veil to Cloche Hat: The Backward Ottoman versus New Turkish Woman in Urban Public Discourse', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 39–58.

[22] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 134. Indeed, by the 1920s unveiling and the adoption of European dress could be presented not as a rupture with the past but, on the contrary, as a return to Iran's true Aryan identity. Houchang E. Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 26, nos. 3/4, 1993, pp. 209–29, p. 223. For a recent critique of Aryanism in Iran, see Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the "Aryan" Discourse in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2011, pp. 445–72; *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York : Columbia University Press, 2016).

to be protected from the deleterious impact of Islam and of Arab and Persian cultural practices and advocated returning to the pre-Islamic past to build a future in harmony with an authentic national identity. According to Gökalp, women were the equals of men in pre-Islamic Turkish societies and did not veil.[23] In the Balkans, where Muslims were often minorities and the developing nationalisms were formulated in direct opposition to Muslim Ottoman rule, the identification of the veil, and also other items of women's 'eastern' clothing such as the baggy trousers known as *shalvari,* as foreign was even stronger. The 'foreign' clothing of both women and men was centrally located in the new Balkan nationalist discourse, visible markers of a legacy of alien, Ottoman, rule, this discourse shared by secular Balkan reformers, Muslim as well as Christian.

Such ideas naturally began to produce some degree of divergence in the debates over veiling as they unfolded in the Arab, and in the Turco-Persian, worlds. In Arabic-language discussions, veiling, however heavily criticized as backward, was rarely deemed to be a cultural import, imposed on Arab society by an alien conqueror. In Turkey, Iran and the Balkans, on the contrary, notions of the veil as alien and foreign entered into mainstream thinking. It may perhaps be these differing configurations of veiling within nationalist discourses which explain why it was only in the Turco-Persian environment, not the Arab Middle East, that opposition to veiling became a state policy. No Arab country, even in the heyday of secular nationalism, officially attempted to change sartorial practices in any systematic way, yet such efforts may be found throughout the Turco-Persian world, including Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Balkans. It may be noted, in parentheses, that these arguments were ahistorical ideological constructs, veiling probably common to elite women in all ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean societies. Arguments contrary to these nationalist constructs, based perhaps more securely on available historical evidence, might just as easily have been made, whereby veiling was, for example, a Persian or Byzantine imposition on Arab societies, and integral to pre-Islamic Iranian culture.

Although Islamic modernist arguments were important in developing an anti-veiling discourse, the Turco-Persian nationalist construction of the veil as alien carried within it the seeds of hostility to religion. In Iran, in particular, opposition to veiling began to be associated with religious scepticism, heresy and unbelief, sometimes taking on an

---

[23] Göle, *The Forbidden Modern,* p. 45.

aspect not just of secularism but of anti-clericalism. Unveiling became associated with the Babi heresy, the theatrical unveiling of the Babi woman leader, Qurrat al-Ayn, having entered popular mythology, while the shocking caricatures of mullahs abusing veiled women in the radical journal *Mulla Nasr-al-Din* would have been unthinkable in an Arabic-language publication.[24] The conscious use of the veiling issue to attack Islam and clerics naturally took the issue into new political territory. Elsewhere, too, although perhaps less violently, unveiling possessed similar unwelcome connotations of unbelief. In Cairo, Christian women had pioneered unveiling while the Tatar women immigrants to Central Asia, who acted as conduits of modern ideas and practices of all sorts and had largely abandoned veiling by the late nineteenth century, were generally regarded as existing at the 'outer limits of Muslimness'.[25]

At first, the debates over veiling were an exclusively male concern, women the objects of both discourse and counter-discourse. Gradually, however, the voices of women themselves began to make themselves heard. In the major cities of the Muslim world, women began to make themselves both visible and audible, contributing to newspapers and even founding newspapers and magazines of their own. Indeed, the two decades between 1890 and 1910 saw a flourishing of intellectual, literary and educational activity among elite women, nowhere more than in newly constitutionalist Istanbul and Tehran. Although most women advocated the reforms that had become traditional to modernism, there was no absolute unanimity among women on the veil. Some women remained vehemently opposed to unveiling while others, perhaps sometimes motivated by a tactical prudence, declared they considered veiling no impediment to learning.[26] Some considered the issue of veiling a distraction from the real tasks such as education and family law reform, others pointed out that veiling avoided an otherwise total confinement to the home. Nonetheless, the unprecedented audibility of their voices transformed women from mere objects of modernist reform agendas into active participants, and announced the arrival of the wearing or discarding of the veil as an issue of female agency.

In Muslim societies of the late nineteenth century, forms of *hijab*, or modest dress, certainly varied, from country to country, class to class

[24] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 134. For reproductions of some of these illustrations, see Slavs and Tatars (eds.), *Molla Nasreddin: the Magazine that Would've, Could've, Should've*, (Zürich: JRP-Ringier, 2011).

[25] Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 227.

[26] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 137; Beth Baron, 'Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1989, pp. 370–86, p. 372.

and context to context. The modernist preoccupation centred, however, on the form of dress worn by urban women with some social status, almost invariably consisting of voluminous body and head coverings and some form of face-veil. The Egyptian Qasim Amin's critique, for example, was focused very much on the face-veil. What mattered to modernism was not variation in style and significance, nor what was culturally specific, nor its anthropological significance.[27] It was rather the perceived function of veiling, of the role played by the veil in the perpetuation of segregation, seclusion and all their attendant evils, which was crucial. Veiling was defined as operating as an extension of female seclusion, veiled women simply taking their seclusion with them, symbolically and actually, wherever they went. In this respect, in terms of its allotted place within the modernist critique, full veiling was remarkably similar across the Muslim world.[28] In Iran, it was the body-enveloping *chador* and the *picheh*, a face-veil of black horsehair mesh worn under the *chador* and tied over the head with a ribbon, or *niqab*/*ruband*, a face-veil of rectangular white cloth with a latticework panel at one end covering the eyes. In the Ottoman Empire, including the Balkans, it was a cloak, either the *çarşaf* or the *fereçe*, *şalvar* trousers and the *peçe*, or face-veil, in Egypt, a cloak, with a *burqu'* or face-veil and a *habara* or shawl or wrap worn over the head, in Central Asia, the *paranji* and *chachvon* a combination head and body covering robe with horsehair face-veil.[29] Such garments were collectively and indiscriminately the target of modernist attacks, although little interest was shown at this stage in what might replace them.

Yet women's clothing was not in fact the timeless enveloping covering of the modernist imagination but was already changing rapidly. Just as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were decades of rapid and profound ideological, cultural and political change, so too did they witness actual changes in female dress, including the manner of veiling.

---

[27] For a discussion of veiling stressing the actually almost infinite variety of styles and their sociological meaning, see Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997); Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

[28] The Anahita Gallery has a large collection of photographs of veiled women from the Middle East and Central Asia, www.anahitagallery.com/.

[29] Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, 'Expanding Agendas for the "New" Iranian Woman: Family Law, Work and Unveiling', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London, 2003), pp. 164–89; Baron, 'Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt', p. 370. Not all women in Central Asia wore the face-veil. For a discussion of the significance of the Soviet anti-veiling campaign among the un-face-veiled but yashmak-wearing women of Turkmenistan, see Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

European tastes were of course much in vogue among elites around the globe in the nineteenth century. An inclination for everyday life *alafranga* had spread like wildfire among the upper classes of the Middle East and beyond, encompassing not only public activities, such as entertainments, but also changing mundane domestic habits, the import of European furniture, for example, altering intimate personal behaviour such as table manners.[30] Dress was an area profoundly affected by such preferences. In the century's final decades, women of the Ottoman elite, especially in Istanbul, increasingly imported elements of European fashion into their own styles of clothing.[31] With this example, these fashions spread throughout the empire. Particularly striking was the adoption by upper-class women in Istanbul of a form of nominal face-veil consisting of a white chiffon yashmak, which covered only the lower face and through which the woman's features were clearly visible. Within a few years this fashion was to be seen in other major urban centres, notably Cairo.[32] Most significantly, these changes were adopted independently of any male prompting, but were largely or perhaps entirely the result of innovative behaviour by women themselves.

Change operated, however, in both directions. In the same decades, some women experienced an intensification of veiling practices. This might be produced by a range of different factors. It was sometimes the result of a new or renewed salience of Islam. In Ottoman cities, for example, in tandem with the transparent yashmak, a heavier and thicker form of veiling also appeared among some women as a feature of the newly politicized Islamic agenda of the Hamidian regime. Heavier veiling practices have also been associated with an increasing European colonial presence. Douglas Northrop has pointed out that that the heavy covering of *paranji* and *chachvon* in Turkestani cities spread with the arrival of growing numbers of Russians after the conquest of Central Asia. According to his account, the *paranji* and *chachvon*, which were later designated as definitive signifiers of Uzbek identity, were in fact then new, having replaced a much lighter and less restrictive form of covering, the *mursak*, from the 1870s.[33] In the colonial context, the adoption by Turkestani women of fuller forms of veiling appeared to serve as a mechanism of cultural and psychological defence against Russian

---

[30] Houchang E. Chehabi, 'The Westernization of Iranian Culinary Culture,' *Iranian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2003, pp. 43–61.

[31] Baron, 'Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt', p. 373. See also Nancy Micklewright, 'Women's Dress in 19th Century Istanbul: Mirror of a Changing Society', PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania (1986).

[32] Baron, 'Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt', p. 375.

[33] Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 44.

hegemony. Yet, even here, purely indigenous considerations remained important. Khalid Adeeb, for example, sees the spread of fuller forms of veiling in late nineteenth-century Central Asia rather as symptoms of what might be called 'embourgeoisement'. A growing prosperity in the cities led to a general increase in seclusion and polygamy, the ability of a man to take more than one wife and to keep his female relatives secluded and economically inactive becoming a sign of wealth and status, a form of 'conspicuous consumption'.[34]

Although acting on their own initiative, women who introduced changes based on European fashions into their own dress were following the example of men, whose clothing and appearance had already undergone much more significant alteration. Again, change was most visible among, and perhaps largely confined to, the elites. In contrast to the innovations introduced by women into their dress, however, which were largely driven by women's own desire to follow European fashion, the Europeanization of male clothing in the nineteenth century had begun as a state-sponsored or state-led initiative, a mechanism of social engineering.[35] In the 1820s, Sultan Mahmud II had launched a clothing revolution, epitomized by the introduction of the fez, headgear having special religious, cultural and social significance.[36] In Iran, the far weaker Qajar state had no such tradition of legislating on the appearance of its subjects. Nonetheless in 1873, following earlier unsuccessful attempts in the 1830s and 1840s, the frock coat and fez were made required dress for officials.[37] Even the Afghan amirs promoted European military uniforms and European dress at court. These governmental efforts were, of course, moving with the grain of broader change. In addition to policy and legislation, the example of sultan and shah and a deepening desire not only to be, but to be recognized as, modern, meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, the frock coat and fez were almost universal dress among the official classes, Muslim and non-Muslim.

These changes to male attire provoked bitter controversies.[38] By the early twentieth century, the arguments over veiling were still largely

---

[34] Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, p. 223.

[35] A similar connection between state- and nation-building and clothing regulation may be observed around the world, including in Europe. See Donald Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1997, pp. 403–25, p. 405. Peter the Great's beard tax and the banning of the 'feudal' pigtail by the new Chinese republic after the overthrow of the Manchus are apposite examples.

[36] Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society', p. 405.

[37] Patricia L. Baker, 'Politics of Dress: The Dress Reform Laws of 1920–30s Iran', in Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997), p. 179.

[38] See Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p.144.

theoretical and, in any case, men were far more visible, their status and consequently their choices about appearance of greater social significance. The struggle over meaning that swirled around male appearance was at least as intense as that which was later to engulf the veil. A levelling device as well as a disciplinary tool, the fez was resisted fiercely by those who felt their identity and economic position threatened, but was, on the other hand, as a homogenizing non-religious symbol, particularly eagerly embraced by the non-Muslims of the empire, including Christian elites across the Balkans.[39] For precisely this reason, the clerical classes in Iran staunchly rejected all such dress innovations, and were vocal in their criticisms of those who accepted them. As well as a general dislike of Europeanized dress, attacked as mimicking the infidel, clerics condemned specific elements of the new fashions. The trimming or shaving of beards was particularly condemned, men's beards, like women's veils, possessing complex meanings, signifying status, gender identity and religious observance. During the nineteenth century the ulama produced a huge body of literature declaring that shaving was strictly forbidden yet, by the 1920s, the advance of modernism meant that the controversy over the beard had subsided and the frock coat was being replaced by the suit and tie.[40] Modernism's sartorial triumph was not yet complete, however, and the European hat was everywhere avoided.[41] Nonetheless, the eager male embrace of European fashion, at least from the neck down, served to emphasize more than ever before the apparently widening gulf separating the modern man from the still veiled and therefore backward woman.

During the nineteenth century, very little official attention was paid to women's dress and such efforts as were made to control women's appearance focused on preventing, not encouraging, change. The same authorities that encouraged and sometimes demanded the Europeanization and therefore modernization of men's dress were still dominated by an entirely unmodernized view of gender. In stark contrast to the much contested and sometimes harshly imposed male clothing policies, nowhere did the imperial regimes of the pre-First World War decades even propose reforms to women's dress. Even upon taking power, avowedly modernist regimes, such as that of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire from 1908, were far from implementing, or even discussing, such steps.

---

[39] Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society', p. 414.
[40] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, pp. 142–3.
[41] Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes', p. 210.

The First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman and Russian empires transformed the political circumstances of vast numbers of the world's Muslims. In Turkey and Iran, dynamic nationalist elites led by Mustafa Kemal and Reza Shah, respectively, seized power, while the young King Amanullah placed Afghanistan on the same path. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, the new Soviet state gradually established its hegemony and, in the Balkans, independent nationalist regimes consolidated themselves and sought a recognized place within the post-war European order. In each of these environments, modernism found itself suddenly and dramatically empowered, with the unprecedented opportunity to implement its broad agenda, including its prescriptions for women. The anti-veiling rhetoric of the past decades was now to be transformed into state policy.

But for these new regimes, women's veiling was not the first priority. On the contrary, it was male dress that first attracted the attention of the authorities, where the most drastic reforms were implemented and where resistance was fiercest. In the 1920s Turkey and Iran legislated, and Afghan and Balkan nationalists strongly encouraged, further changes to men's dress within the context of a broader cultural transformation. These changes were still, as in the nineteenth century, aimed at homogenization, but their objective had now also expanded to reinforce bigger projects of nationalism, modernization and secularization through the creation of citizens marked by modernity and unmarked by symbols of ethnic or religious difference. The male clothing reforms of the 1920s were not primarily concerned with gender, their adoption necessitating no wider transformation in male–female public interaction, as unveiling was to do. They did, however, possess a gender dimension. Nationalists everywhere remained wedded to the view that changes to women's lives could best be advanced by mobilizing the patriarchal structures of society. Women would unveil when encouraged or permitted to do so by their fathers and husbands. It was therefore necessary as a first step to effect a transformation in men's consciousness and this process could be facilitated and hastened by changing men's outward appearance, ridding society of visible symbols of the backward past.[42]

---

[42] Mary Neuburger has documented this thinking particularly clearly in the case of the Bulgarian Communist Party. See Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 101 and 'Difference Unveiled: Bulgarian National Imperatives and the Re-Dressing of Muslim Women, 1878–1989', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 252–66.

Only in the Soviet Union was there no attempt to transform male appearance and therefore consciousness as a prerequisite to tackling the veil. This was the first of several key differences between the Soviet approach and that of the nationalist regimes. Although Soviet officials occasionally resorted to using male domestic power to encourage unveiling, they understood the 1927 *hujum* (attack), of which the unveiling campaign was a major symbol, as an all-out battle against patriarchy. Furthermore, unlike Kemalist Turkey or Pahlavi Iran, the new Soviet authorities had no interest in the imitation of the European bourgeoisie. Their conceptualization of modernity was not hostile to national or ethnic cultural difference and they found nothing threatening or subversive in local 'folk' costume as they strove to create the new Soviet man and woman. On the contrary, they rather promoted it, even if only implicitly, as a signifier of authentic popular culture and in the course of a nationalities policy that actually involved the creation of nation states across Central Asia and the Caucasus.

The Turkish republic was the first of the new states to embark on a project of 'sartorial social engineering'.[43] As an integral part of the drive to make Turkey resemble his vision of a secular and modern country, and as a sign of a rupture with the Ottoman past, Mustafa Kemal was determined to make the appearance of Turkish men conform to what he described as 'civilized' standards. Peaked caps were introduced into military uniforms, and in November 1925 the National Assembly passed the Hat Law banning the fez. In a striking example of the ability of simple clothing to carry varied and even contradictory meanings, the fez was turned by the republican authorities into the opposite of what it had been for the Ottomans. It was now redefined as 'an emblem of ignorance, negligence, fanaticism and hatred of progress and civilization', and the European hat, the headgear used by the 'civilized world' was made compulsory for men.[44] The Hat Law was part of a comprehensive and radical programme of political, social and cultural reforms aimed at eliminating the social and political presence of Islam, including the abolition of the sultanate and caliphate and the secularization of education and law, and this was clearly recognized by religious personnel and by the population in general. The Hat Law was popularly perceived, quite accurately, as an attack on religion, hats with brims believed to be an infidel garment preventing the worshipper's forehead from touching

[43] Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes', p. 222.
[44] Mustafa Kemal's speech of 15–20 October 1927, John Norton, 'Faith and Fashion in Turkey', in Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), pp. 149–77, pp. 161–2.

the ground during prayer. It provoked widespread opposition, which was dealt with by the draconian Independence Tribunals, established to deal with the recent Kurdish and religious uprising, and a number of men, including low-ranking clerics, were executed.

In 1927, Reza Shah embarked on a similar programme. In Iran, like Turkey, the peaked cap had already been introduced into the army, and had also been adopted by some fashionable young men in Tehran.[45] In 1927, the Iranian cabinet decided to make the Pahlavi peaked cap, not, in contrast to Turkey, the European hat, the official headgear for Iranian men. In 1928, the Majlis legislated to make the short coat and Pahlavi cap compulsory, with a few limited exceptions, failure to comply punishable by fines and imprisonment. As in the Turkish case, in Iran too the clothing reforms took place in the context of a much wider programme of reform, including the secularization of the judicial and legal systems, conscription, economic *étatisme* and tribal settlement. As in Turkey, the Iranian Uniform Dress Law was, except for the small westernized elite, very unpopular, especially among the ulama, for whom it was tainted with heresy. As in Turkey, its implementation produced serious opposition, including massive urban demonstrations led by low-ranking mullas which were suppressed with great harshness, and a swathe of tribal uprisings.[46] In 1935, the next episode of the hat story in Iran was written in blood. The government's attempt to replace the now outmoded Pahlavi cap with the 'international' or European hat, combined with other subaltern grievances, high taxation, poverty and low wages, and with rumours of unveiling, to produce an uprising in Mashhad which was only suppressed after several days by a veritable massacre by the army, sacrilegiously carried out within the precincts of the shrine of the Eighth Imam.[47]

Even in Afghanistan, where the state and the tradition of reform was far flimsier than in either Turkey or Iran, King Amanullah too appreciated the cultural power of clothing. Here too the earliest and most serious efforts at reform were in the area of male dress, not women's veiling. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had seen the frock coat make some inroads at the Afghan court, usually coupled with an astrakhan hat. As Tom Wide has described, in the 1920s Amanullah tentatively introduced some unenforceable policies that he hoped would spread the wearing of Western attire among men, beginning with the

[45] Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910–1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), p. 208.
[46] Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns*, pp. 180–200.
[47] Cronin, *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns*, pp. 32–4.

official and notable classes and moving on to the wider male population of Kabul.[48] These actions certainly contributed to Amanullah's burgeoning unpopularity outside the tiny modernist elite and aggravated the tribal crisis that was soon to overwhelm his regime. Tellingly, his opponents made the cancellation of the clothing reforms one of their first priorities.[49]

In the Balkans, male dress was also a target of nationalists and modernizers and became so at an earlier period than female dress. As in the Turkish republic, the fez was transformed into its opposite by modern nationalism. In Bulgaria the fez, worn by Christian notables as well as Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) and Turkish-speaking Bulgarians, came to represent collaboration with the Ottoman state.[50] Not only modernity but Bulgarian nationalism too demanded that it be abandoned in favour of either the hat or the peasant sheepskin *kalpak*. The first half of the twentieth century saw a long struggle to eliminate the fez and turban from Pomak and Turkish-speaking minorities. This struggle was enthusiastically embraced by Kemalists among the Turkish-speaking minority and Bulgarian nationalists among the Pomaks. A series of fragile interwar Bulgarian governments, lacking the stability of Kemalist Turkey, Pahlavi Iran and the Soviet Union, did little in legislative terms. When the Communist Party took power after the Second World War, it renewed the campaign against both the fez and the veil but the change of headgear for men was a clear priority and considered an essential prerequisite for unveiling.[51] Although the male clothing reforms were met by considerable resistance, this was of a 'weapons of the weak' character, inevitable given the minority and somewhat besieged status of the Muslim communities.

Only in the Balkans were the forms of dress typically worn by Muslim men, especially the fez, constructed as alien, relics of foreign rule, their removal allowing the reappearance of the true European beneath. In Turkey, for example, the fez was defined as a symbol of the despised Ottoman past, but the rupture represented by the hat was with backwardness, not foreign rule, the hat itself a symbol of modernity. The designation of women's veiling as alien, as well as backward, was much more common, not only in the Balkans, but also in Turkey and Iran where nationalist ideologues invented a pre-Islamic past where women's

---

[48] See Thomas Wide, Astrakhan, Borqaʻ, Chadari, Dreshi: the Economy of Dress in Early-Twentieth-Century Afghanistan', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 163–201.

[49] Wide, 'Astrakhan, Borqaʻ, Chadari, Dreshi', pp. 188–90.

[50] See Neuburger, *The Orient Within*.

[51] Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, p. 103.

status was higher and they accordingly went unveiled. Only in the Soviet Union did the anti-veiling campaign make no use of motifs stressing the nationalist character of unveiling. Although the Soviet authorities were at ease with culturally specific national costume, their *hujum* was part of a wider drive against 'bourgeois' nationalism and the social groups that supported it. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, the project of imparting a nationalist dimension to the veil was adopted by those in favour, not those against.

The male dress reforms have usually been seen purely as initiatives of the newly established regimes, announced suddenly, divorced from their historical context and implemented in an authoritarian, top-down manner. In fact, as the above narrative shows, local elites had already eagerly adopted modern fashions. Their sartorial preferences framed by a discourse articulated by a modern intelligentsia, these elites ardently pressed the new nationalist regimes to oblige the rest of society to follow suit. By the early twentieth century, the spread of European-style clothing among the official and notable classes, symptomatic of a wider social and cultural modernism, had led to the appearance of an ever more visible gulf between elite and subaltern, town and country, educated and uneducated, religious and secular, society increasingly losing sight of any shared cultural universe. The nationalist regimes saw their task as one of restoring a sense of social and national harmony through the forced imposition on the entire society of a modernism hitherto the preserve of the elites.

Unveiling possessed a similar pre-history and occupied a similar position in the post-First World War agenda of both nationalist state and elite. Although the actual discarding of the veil had hardly occurred by the 1920s, ever lighter veils were being pioneered by upper class women and the intelligentsia was pressing support for unveiling on the new regimes. Unveiling was also essential to homogenize society and to complete male modernism. The image of the European suit and hat-wearing man clashed more and more jarringly with that of his veiled wife.

Although male dress reforms had taken first priority, from the very beginning of their arrival in control of the state, modernists had begun to plan for changes to veiling practices. The issue remained controversial but the modernist voice was now infinitely more audible and authoritative as a result of its possession of the state. The counter-discourse and the social groups who articulated it, especially the clergy, were correspondingly disempowered and were increasingly cast, in this new official narrative, as historically redundant. Nonetheless, much greater caution was exercised everywhere in relation to unveiling than had been the case with male dress and hats.

In the first half of the 1920s, the new states refrained from active encouragement of unveiling but allowed the anti-veiling discourse to grow louder and to penetrate society more deeply. The importance of education and legal emancipation were still stressed but veiling was increasingly problematized. In addition to the damage it caused society through the constraints it placed on female education and employment, veiling was criticized ever more strongly on physical grounds. Modern medicine was mobilized to condemn veiling as a directly injurious to health, causing vitamin D deficiency and tuberculosis and, indirectly, as an impediment to female participation in sports and gymnastics, an important innovation in the new schools.[52]

In Iran, Turkey and the Balkans, veiling was also more systematically problematized on moral grounds. In a striking illustration of the capacity of the veil, like the fez, to carry different, indeed contradictory, meanings, the modernist answer to the traditionalist assertion that unveiling would lead to corruption was to formulate the concept of the metaphorical 'veil of chastity'. Great emphasis was placed on the moral superiority of the unveiled woman who defended her own chastity through an internalized morality instilled through education.[53] In Iran, the sexually explicit poetry of Iraj Mirza contrasted the unchaste and sexually available veiled woman with the truly virtuous, enlightened and unveiled woman, while the Albanian intellectual, Mehdi Frasheri, argued that it was fanatical and reactionary Sunni Islam that imposed veiling on women, the locally influential Bektashi Sufism only requiring women to wear the 'veil of honour'.[54]

By the 1920s, veiling and seclusion were routinely being allocated another, highly significant, sexually corrupting role in the modernist discourse, allegedly contributing to newly problematized customs of male homoerotic relations. According to this novel, binary, view of healthy sexual mores, men were driven into 'backward' homosexual emotional and physical attachments by the sequestration of women. Unveiling women and desegregating society would produce not only

---

[52] See Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 142–73; Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy and Popular Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002), pp. 80–113.

[53] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, p. 92.

[54] Iraj Mirza quoted by Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Veiled Discourse-Unveiled Bodies', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1993, pp. 487–518, pp. 510–11. Nathalie Clayer, ''Behind the Veil: The Reform of Islam in Interwar Albania or the Search for a "Modern" and "European" Islam', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 231–51, p. 237.

an educated wife and mother but an exclusively heterosexual man, able together to constitute partners in a companionate marriage, the building block of a modern society.[55]

In the infant Soviet Union, although a medicalized anti-veiling discourse was prominent, the redefinition of unveiling as a demonstration of a superior morality was completely absent. Indeed, for many of the Russian women activists who staffed the *Zhenotdel* (the Communist Party's women's department), the goal was not just the emancipation of the Soviet woman, but her complete liberation from the confines of a bourgeois morality, whether religiously underpinned or not. The leaders of the *Zhenotdel*, Alexandra Kollontai and Inessa Armand, were particularly associated with such views. This stance, and the rejection of such a redefinition of the unveiled woman as adhering more rigidly than her veiled sister to patriarchal moral codes, produced a greater ideological schism. It left Soviet women more ideologically exposed than unveiling women elsewhere and may have contributed to the uniquely violent backlash which greeted the *hujum*.

Under the umbrella of a sympathetic official discourse, women themselves began to intervene more energetically in the debate over veiling and to take practical steps on their own initiative. Lighter forms of veiling became more common as women continued the practical experiments, begun the previous century, in changing their attire . Many more women simply quietly modified their veil into something entirely nominal. The face-veil became less common, and robes such as *chador* or *çarçaf* were worn more loosely over Western clothes. At the same time, dramatic episodes of public unveiling announced the new dress conventions to wider national and international audiences. Such theatrical performances of unveiling by elite women, largely protected from the consequences of public or family hostility, were epitomized by the action of the famous Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'rawi, who dramatically removed her veil when stepping down from a train in Cairo on her return from a women's meeting in Rome. The large crowd of women who had gone to meet her broke into applause and some imitated her, removing their veils.[56] Perhaps the most famous example of the performance of unveiling was by Queen Soraya of Afghanistan whose choice of apparel, including uncovered

[55] Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, pp. 111–41; Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, pp. 146–50. See also Sivan Balslev, *Iranian Masculinities: Gender and Sexuality in Late Qajar and early Pahlavi Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Wendy De Souza, *Unveiling Men: Modern Masculinities in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019).

[56] Margot Badran, *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 92–3.

hair and décolletage, while accompanying King Amanullah on a tour of Europe and the Middle East in 1928, encouraged and scandalized in equal measure. The role of travel, or even only movement, in stimulating these episodes is clear and illustrates the depth of the changes wrought by the previous decades. Unlike the nineteenth century, the key experience was no longer travel within the Muslim world, but travel to Europe. It was, furthermore, no longer only men who could travel, but women, and even occasionally women independently of men, signifying the dramatic arrival of a degree of autonomy, at least for a minority. This ability to move between environments made available to women a strategy of flexibly adapting dress, this strategy easing the transition from fully veiled to fully unveiled. Uzbek women might veil in Tashkent and unveil in Moscow, Tehrani schoolgirls might veil in the street and unveil in school.

Women's contribution to the changing veiling praxis was important in another way. The early twentieth century had seen a new audibility of women's voices and the beginnings of a women's press and women's organizations.[57] In the 1920s, this new activism, notably in Iran and Turkey, continued to develop, charitable, educational and even political organizations mushroomed, transnational networks were established and the women's press contributed to the elaboration of new discourses and provided space for women themselves to discuss their own concerns about the shape and momentum of change. After 1928, for example, the Iranian women's journal, *Alam-i Nisvan*, became an advocate of unveiling, the debates reaching fever pitch by the early 1930s.[58] This activism was key to the reforming regimes, providing a bedrock of ideological and political support.[59] Its fate, however, was to be bleak. In Iran, for example, the modernizing state intent on its own hegemony, the independent women's associations and publications of the 1920s succumbed to ever tighter state control, and ultimately to suppression during the later 1930s.

Gradually, country by country, the changes in veiling habits initiated and carried out by women themselves began to acquire more definite state backing. At the same time as the new states tolerated and encouraged ideological attacks on veiling, so they gradually began to

[57] Ellen L. Fleischman, 'The Other "Awakening": The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900–1940', in Margaret L. Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (eds.), *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Perseus, 1999).

[58] Rostam-Kolayi, 'Expanding Agendas for the "New" Iranian Woman', p. 168.

[59] Charlotte Weber, 'Between Nationalism and Feminism: The Eastern Women's Congresses of 1930 and 1932', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 83–106.

offer protection to women who acted to lighten or discard their veils. In Iran, for example, the police were warned to cease their habit of detaining supposedly improperly dressed women and, in a dramatic episode in 1928, Riza Shah energetically defended his female relatives when they were criticized for visiting a shrine wearing only light *chadors*.[60]

Eventually this state support and protection for women who unveiled was transformed into an actual state-led campaign against veiling. The timing and context of such campaigns is highly significant as they were often synchronized with, and embedded within, much wider reform drives. Turkey had seen early examples of official initiatives in support of unveiling, although these remained only local and sporadic, taking place as a consequence of enthusiasm for the Hat Law of 1925 and its accompanying discussions of civilized and modern dress.[61] The next, much more significant stage, took place from late 1934 when the Turkish state stepped up its campaign for change in women's dress directly after women's acquisition of the right to vote. Now abandonment of the veil was presented as a necessary prerequisite to women's full exercise of their political rights. In Iran, unveiling also appears to have been mooted as an official policy immediately following the male dress reforms and in the throes of the legislative radicalism of 1927–9. But the discouraging example of the overthrow of King Amanullah in Afghanistan, and the serious discontent inside Iran resulting from the imposition of a range of new and often very unpopular political, economic and cultural policies, apparently postponed the move. It then had to wait until 1936, eighteen months after Riza Shah's visit to Turkey, his interest perhaps revived by the Kemalist example in full swing by 1935. Once more immediately following a male dress reform, the introduction of the 'European' hat to replace the Pahlavi cap, Riza Shah threw the resources of the state behind an unveiling campaign.[62] In Albania the Ministerial Council issued a perhaps rather ineffective ban on peçe and fereçe in 1929, following the introduction of the civil code the previous year and the political change from republic to monarchy. But it was in 1937, in the midst of a major reform drive, that parliament passed the 'law on the ban of face covering', which forbade women covering their faces, totally or partially.[63]

[60] Rostam-Kolayi, 'Expanding Agendas for the "New" Iranian Woman', p. 170; Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes', p. 213.
[61] Sevgi Adak, 'Anti-Veiling Campaigns and Local Elites in Turkey of the 1930s: A View from the Periphery', in Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World*, pp. 59–85.
[62] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, pp. 94–5.
[63] Clayer, 'Behind the Veil', p. 234.

Although the literature often contains claims to the contrary, recent research shows clearly that neither Turkey, Afghanistan, the Soviet Union nor even Iran ever passed legislation banning veiling. This historical reality contrasts strongly with conventional impressions. In Afghanistan, for example, despite Queen Soraya's acquisition of the status of an icon of modernity, and despite too the almost universal belief that one of the most important factors in Amanullah's overthrow was his advocacy of unveiling, in fact Afghanistan saw no legal change or official action. Amanullah issued no decree, other than a rather obscure and completely unenforceable announcement that the burqa be replaced by a light veil and coat and hat.[64] Neither Iran nor Turkey had hesitated to use legislation as an instrument of general social engineering. Both had passed laws on male clothing as well as to advance a range of other cultural changes. But in Turkey, although local bodies such as municipal councils, issued sporadic bans of the peçe and çarşaf, the government itself refrained from passing any anti-veiling laws. In Iran, as Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi and Afshin Matin-asgari have made clear, the Majlis passed no legislation nor is there any archival trace of a royal decree.[65] Even the Soviet Union resisted pleas from women activists that they needed the protection offered by legislation.[66] These regimes, avoiding the direct confrontation implied by legislation, relied rather on administrative measures combined with intensive propaganda campaigns.

Public opinion was carefully prepared and the Kemalist authorities used journals, newspapers, publications of the People's Houses and photographs to encourage acceptance of the unveiled modern Turkish woman.[67] In Iran too the *kashf-i hijab*, as the unveiling campaign was known, was located firmly within a wider regime initiative of 'the Women's Awakening', and was preceded and accompanied by a press mobilization instigated and controlled by the government. As Camron Amin has shown, immediately before the launch of the *kashf-i hijab*, the regime ensured the newspaper *Ittila'at*, Iran's main daily, was filled with images of unveiled Iranian women, the press hitherto having confined itself to showing only foreign women in its illustrations. The beginning of the campaign in early January 1936 saw the pages of *Ittila'at* full of

---

[64] Wide, 'Astrakhan, Borqa', Chadari, Dreshi'.

[65] Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi and Afshin Matin-asgari, Unveiling Ambiguities: Revisiting 1930s Iran's kashf-i hijab Campaign,' in Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World*, pp. 121–39.

[66] Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, p. 299.

[67] See Libal, 'From Face-Veil to Cloche Hat'.

coverage of unveiling ceremonies and editorials, articles and letters to the editor discussing 'the Women's Awakening'.[68]

The press in both countries was also used to provide reassurance in the face of the profound anxieties aroused by the removal of face-veil and robe and to offer practical advice on how to cope with the far-reaching change in manners and behaviour necessitated by changing veiling practices. As Afsanah Najmabadi has explained, the abandonment of the physical veil entailed a complete re-ordering of gender relations in the public sphere.[69] This required not only that women, but that men too introduce profound alterations to their everyday lives. Both women and men were required to familiarize themselves with an entirely new code of social intercourse and publications offering advice on etiquette appeared to advise them.[70] Unveiling women also had to learn new ways of presenting themselves in terms of their physical appearance and the women's press in particular devoted much space to discussions about fashion, clothing and the aesthetics of the body.[71] With unveiling, appearance, specifically conventions of beauty, became of infinitely greater importance to a woman's life-chances than hitherto.[72]

Unveiling propaganda took other forms. The launch of a campaign was often announced by a theatrical performance of unveiling. Huda Shar'awi's discarding of the veil at Cairo railway station, described above, was such a performance but was an individual independent initiative. Now the reforming state took over the tactic and paid great attention to choreographing in detail dramatic episodes of rejection. In Iran, for example, the *kashf-i hijab* was initiated by the appearance of Riza Shah and his wife and daughters, all without face-veil or *chador* and wearing hats, at a public occasion, a graduation ceremony at a teachers' training college in Tehran, in early January 1936.[73] This was the signal for unveiling ceremonies and celebrations to take place all over the country. In post-war Yugoslavia, flowing the passage of an anti-veiling resolution at the second congress of the Antifascist Women's Front of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a delegate made a demonstration of removing her veil to the applause of the other delegates and at her urging other Muslim women followed suit.[74] But it was in the Soviet Union, most

[68] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, p. 96.
[69] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, pp. 152–5.
[70] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 153.
[71] Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, pp. 157.
[72] Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran*, pp. 157.
[73] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, p. 94.
[74] Robert J. Donia, *Sarajevo – A Biography* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006) pp. 218–20.

experienced and accomplished in the practice of mass mobilization
through modern propaganda techniques, where the staging of unveiling
was most elaborate. In the Soviet Union, furthermore, such theatre
was not built around elite women, but was performed by ordinary and
poor women mobilized by the *Zhenotdel*. One early episode concerned
a delegation of Turkestani women to a Comintern meeting in Moscow
in 1921 collectively unveiling to applause and tears of joy.[75] With the
launch of the *hujum* in 1927, elaborate stagings of unveiling took place
in Central Asia itself. Kamp narrates one such episode, replete with
revolutionary symbolism, recalled by a female participant. The woman,
then a teenager, gathered with other Komsomol members and together
they marched, wearing *paranjis* and singing revolutionary songs, to the
old city of Tashkent. The woman made a speech and thereupon she and
her comrades removed their *paranjis* and threw them onto a bonfire.[76]
The event took place on the occasion of International Women's Day,
8 March 1927. Such public bonfires of *paranji* and *chachvon* came to
typify the declaration of the *hujum* in each local area.

   Governments had other methods of advancing the unveiling
campaigns, part encouragement, part coercion. The modernist
discourse had defined veiling as a symptom of a wider problem of female
seclusion. It was, therefore, not sufficient to unveil. The attendant evils
of segregation and seclusion had also to be targeted and vanquished.
Accordingly, the unveiling campaigns were everywhere accompanied by
orchestrated efforts to organize mixed social gatherings of unimpeachable
respectability. In Iran and Turkey officials and army officers were invited
and indeed obliged to attend mixed social functions with their unveiled
wives at the risk of losing their positions. In Central Asia, Communist
Party members and Soviet officials were subject to similar pressures.
These were certainly occasions which both men and women found
difficult to navigate and often painful, but they did result, quite quickly,
in a profound shift in attitude.

   In Iran and Turkey, government efforts to encourage unveiling were
aimed squarely at the new military and bureaucratic elites who were to
provide exemplary leadership to the rest of society.[77] In these circles there
was broad support for the modernist agenda of the regime, and changes
in dress codes for men, and even to some extent for women, had already

[75] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, pp. 141–2.
[76] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 158.
[77] For a vivid description of the efficacy of obliging members of the elite to conform
   to the new policy, see Sattareh Farman Farmaian, *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's
   Journey from Her Father's Harem through the Islamic Revolution* (London: Corgi,
   1992), pp. 95–6.

been accepted and even advocated. However, Iran took a further step, mobilizing not only these, its natural, constituencies but also, crucially and perhaps surprisingly, the clerical classes. The press reported, for example, clerics and their unveiled wives attending unveiling ceremonies in Kirmanshah and Qazvin.[78] Although members of the Iranian ulama were vocal in their defence of veiling in the debates of the earlier period, by the 1930s no senior cleric spoke out against the campaign.[79] The use of a docile ulama to provide legitimacy for unveiling was made possible by the fact that the clergy was, by the 1930s in both Turkey and Iran, firmly under state control, their leaderships successfully co-opted. In the Balkans too, approval extracted from religious figures was an important strategy, clerics issuing pronouncements that revealing the face was not *haram*. In interwar Albania, the state's supervision and control over the activities of the ulama, who were, in any case, largely in the Islamic modernist camp, went so far as to produce the claim that the anti-veiling policy had actually been first suggested by the leadership of the Muslim community itself.[80] In Iran, Turkey and the Balkans, Islamic modernist arguments remained important to the construction of legitimacy for the unveiling campaigns. These were deployed alongside the apparently contradictory arguments appealing to notions of pre-Islamic national and cultural authenticity. Although, in ideological terms, the Islamic modernist and the secular nationalist discourses appeared to be dichotomous, politically they were both useful and were often used in tandem, amid a general indifference to any theoretical contradiction.

Iran and Turkey were careful to present unveiling within a context of national and religious tradition. Here we find another stark contrast with the Soviet case. In Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus, unveiling was presented in precisely opposite terms, as a revolutionary rejection of tradition. The absence from Soviet propaganda in the 1920s of the 'veil of honour' argument has been noted above. Although in Central Asia, some clergy and even some Communist Party activists were ready to express Islamic modernist arguments inherited from the *Jadidi* reformers, with the advent of the *hujum* the leadership actively rejected such arguments, insisting on locating unveiling within the context of a mortal struggle against Islam and clerical influence. Unveiling was a stage in the creation of the new Soviet woman. Attempts by clerics to offer support to unveiling were deemed subversive, insidious and

---

[78] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, p. 97.
[79] See Rostam-Kolayi and Matin-asgari, 'Unveiling Ambiguities', p. 135.
[80] Clayer, 'Behind the Veil'.

more dangerous than outright opposition.[81] Thus, in contrast to Iran, Turkey and the Balkans, women in Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus unveiled without the protection of a sympathetic modernist ulama, their action contextualized within an overt, class-based, anti-religious and anti-clerical struggle.

Only the Balkans saw legislation in favour of unveiling. Elsewhere governments concentrated on creating bureaucratic frameworks to shape and advance the campaigns and keep them within some sort of legal parameters. Both the Pahlavi and Kemalist regimes were aware of the risk of provoking a backlash and the educative element of their strategy was generally much stronger than it is usually assumed to have been.[82] The scholarly literature and narratives drawn from memoirs and oral history have stressed the arbitrary, oppressive and sometimes violent character of state action, especially in Iran and Soviet Central Asia. The Iranian case, for example, certainly provides many examples of physical force being used by police.[83] Yet as new research has demonstrated, both Iranian and Turkish governments disliked such actions, and in fact emphasized the need for caution and restraint.[84] Contrary to the dominant conventional impression, the Turkish, Iranian and especially the Soviet governments all supposed that the coercive power of the state, and specifically its legal mechanisms, would be exercised not against women but in defence of women and primarily against male opposition. Such an effort to extend legal protection to unveiling women reached its most extreme extent in Soviet Central Asia. Here unveiling women faced extraordinary levels of violence from men. In the late 1920s, although there was no law forcing women to unveil, a number of laws were passed against male enforcement of certain traditional Uzbek gender customs, defined as 'crimes of everyday life'. It became illegal, for example, to coerce a woman into wearing the *paranji* or remaining secluded.[85] As the violent reaction against the *hujum* gathered pace, attacks on women who unveiled were redefined as counterrevolutionary acts, carrying a capital sentence.[86]

The debates over veiling, which were now several decades old, had been complex, passionate and bitter. They consisted largely, however, of attacks

---

[81] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 182.
[82] Rostam-Kolayi and Matin-asgari, 'Unveiling Ambiguities'; Adak, 'Anti-veiling Campaigns'.
[83] See Mansoureh Ettehadieh, 'The Origins and Development of the Women's Movement in Iran, 1906–1941', in Lois Beck and Guity Nashat (eds.), *Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 85–106, p. 99.
[84] See Rostam-Kolayi and Matin-asgari, 'Unveiling Ambiguities', p. 135.
[85] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 244.
[86] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, p. 257.

on, and defences of, face-veil and robes. Surprisingly little attention was paid to the question of what forms of clothing and appearance might replace them. Modernism did not problematize the new. It was as if it were only necessary to remove the old, the new would then emerge like a butterfly from a chrysalis. In fact, it quickly became apparent everywhere that the abandonment, willingly or not, of face-veil and robe immediately gave rise to a host of unforeseen problems. In Turkey, the regime ideal, modelled on the Western European woman, was ardently advocated through various propaganda mechanisms. In practice, however, a great latitude was allowed to women in their choice of replacement dress.[87] Although it preferred hats and even bare heads, Kemalism was quite ready to tolerate headscarves and even subversive devices such as permanently unfurled umbrellas. The Soviet authorities were completely indifferent as long as the *paranji* and *chachvon* were abandoned. Indeed, throughout the Soviet Union the headscarf had become a symbol of proletarian and peasant class identity. The confusion seems to have been greatest in Iran. Only here does there seem to have been a somewhat sporadic objection even to the headscarf and, perhaps given the prominence of the royal women as role models, a stronger determination to oblige the acceptance of 'civilized' European clothes and hats.[88]

Policy on women's dress was less positively prescriptive than had been the case with the male dress reforms. Nonetheless, the general tenor of public discussion on female appearance indicated a marked preference for a model drawn from Europe. Although female beauty, of a conventional stylized kind, had always been important and expressed especially in poetry, the conformity of the individual woman to this ideal was not a subject for discussion outside her immediate family. Now the veiling controversies gave rise to a new public preoccupation with female appearance. The press was filled with advice on beauty, fashion and hygiene, entirely new industries grew up to cater to the needs of the unveiled woman and even beauty contests were introduced to accustom public opinion to the acceptability of openly regarding and commenting upon a woman's physical appearance.[89] The adoption of such new fashions, made necessary by unveiling, was an expensive

---

[87] See Adak, 'Anti-Veiling Campaigns'.
[88] Chehabi, 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes', p. 226.
[89] See Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, ''Dressing Up (or Down): Veils, Hats, and Consumer Fashions in Interwar Iran', in Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World*, pp. 149–62 and Libal, 'From Face-Veil to Cloche Hat'. See also A. Holly Shissler, 'Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women's Liberation in Early Republican Turkey', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2004, pp. 109–26.

project and everywhere complaints could be heard from poorer women about the burden of this embryonic consumerism. The new habits were criticized on other grounds. The encouragement offered to women to become consumers of fashion, make-up and related services, and to devote more attention to their personal tastes and preferences than previously, aroused new anxieties, or perhaps rather allowed older anxieties to reappear in a new guise. There seem to have been perennial concerns focused on women as possible conduits for a corrupting luxury and waste. These now emerged increasingly strongly into public discourse. As Afsaneh Najmabadi points out, in Iran in particular, the new consumerism, heralded by the unveiling policy, gradually produced a radical critique of modernism focused on women, who were denounced as the 'painted dolls' of the monarchy, the very essence of westoxication.[90]

Everywhere, in Iran, Turkey, the Soviet Union and the Balkans, the new states took over a discourse which had gestated in civil society and themselves assumed responsibility and leadership in defining, shaping and enforcing unveiling policies. It has been argued that, in so doing, these regimes both disempowered women and turned unveiling into the target of a deeper opposition. Kamp, for example, suggests that it was the Communist Party's appropriation of unveiling which multiplied the meanings of the policy and, accordingly, the acts of violence against it.[91] In the case of Iran too, it has been argued that the unveiling campaign contributed materially to the regime's wider unpopularity, and perhaps tarnished the image of the Pahlavi dynasty itself.[92] Yet much of the assessment of the unveiling campaigns has been undertaken in contexts where the regimes themselves have been discredited or even overthrown. Contemporary memories of the 1930s in post-Soviet Central Asia or post-Pahlavi Iran have inevitably been shaped by the powerful new discourses generated by the replacement regimes. One incontrovertible fact remains: in Iran, Turkey and the Balkans, opposition to unveiling *at the time* was muted, and far less than opposition to the male clothing reforms. Only in the Soviet Union did opposition result in violence, and there, as Kamp points out, such violence was directed at women themselves, not at the authorities responsible for the policy.

[90] Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*, p. 154.
[91] Kamp, 'Women-Initiated Unveiling,' p. 233.
[92] Houchang E. Chehabi, 'The Banning of the Veil and Its Consequences', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London, 2003), pp. 203–21, p. 204.

Camron Amin perhaps hints at the reasons for the stress laid in later accounts on the trauma caused by the unveiling campaign in Iran by pointing to the psychological effects not on women but on men. It was, after all, mainly men who recorded their impressions of unveiling and through male eyes that unveiling has been understood. Pointing to the sense of powerlessness induced in men by the new state's appropriation of control over female behaviour, hitherto the prerogative of male relatives, family and community, Amin describes the 'depths of male resentment' towards Riza Shah, a resentment which spread to encompass the entire regime and which left a deep mark on the collective memory, a memory nearly always articulated by men rather than by the unveiling women themselves.[93]

The appropriation by the state of the unveiling praxis raises especially acutely the question of women's agency. Certainly, the reforming states were able to count on the support of numbers of women activists, particularly those who had already become involved in intellectual and educational activities and who shared a broad modernist outlook. Indeed, some women, as Shireen Mahdavi has argued in relation to Iran, welcomed the support of an authoritarian state as essential to overcoming still powerful reactionary forces.[94] So enthusiastic were some elite women about the prospects for emancipation under Reza Shah that they took the opportunity of his coronation in 1926 to go onto the streets unveiled, an initiative for which they were promptly arrested.[95] Sevgi Adak has described the deliberate efforts by the Kemalist state to mobilize women as leadership for its campaigns,[96] in Iran a new elite organization, the *kanun-i banuvan* (Ladies Society) was formed to promote the Women's Awakening in general and unveiling in particular, in the Soviet Union, leadership and organization of the *hujum* was provided by the women of the *Zhenotdel*. Indeed, sometimes radical women tried to push the state farther than it was prepared to go. In 1927, women activists wrote to the Soviet government asking for a decree calling for unveiling but were refused, the government insisting unveiling should be voluntary.[97]

[93] Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, p. 111. The immense increase in state power resulting from the male clothing reforms was already apparent. In Iran, for example, state exemption boards were established, in effect to grant 'turban licences'. For the boards, see Bianca Devos, *Kleidungspolitik in Iran: Die Durchsetzung der Kleidungsvorschriften für Männer unter Riżā Šāh* (Wurtzburg: Ergon, 2006).

[94] Shireen Mahdavi, 'Reza Shah Pahlavi and Women: A Re-Evaluation', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 190–202.

[95] Persidskaya Zhenschina i Rezhim Reza Shakha Pekhlevi, April 2, 1928, Archiv Rossiiskiy Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Sotsial'no-politicheskoy Istorii (RGASPI) Fond 495, Op 90, Delo 174. I am grateful to Lana Ravandi-Fadai for this reference.

[96] Adak, 'Anti-Veiling Campaigns'.

[97] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, pp. 157–8.

Yet, and this is the dimension that has usually been highlighted in the literature, women also resisted the unveiling campaigns. The negative impact on women of the authoritarianism of unveiling has been documented particularly in the case of Iran, even writers sympathetic to the broader project of female emancipation critical of the methods used by the Pahlavi regime. Yet new research introduces a more nuanced view. Although forcible measures and even violence were used in Iran, 'their frequency and extent remains unclear' and they were opposed by the authorities directing the campaign.[98] In the case of Turkey, the very silence from the authorities about the type of clothing to replace veil and robe created a space within which women might negotiate and adapt the new sartorial requirements, making the change more complex and less radical. Between 'the poles of compliance and of resistance' women creatively devised a range of strategies for coping with the conflicting demands of state and society.[99] Perhaps Kamp's discussion of the Soviet Union has most eloquently problematized the question of women's agency.[100] She has noted that in such an era of authoritarian change, women often either remained veiled as a result of family pressure, or unveiled as a result of similar but opposite pressure from family, Party, and state, possibly in combination. These were not years, across the world, when the autonomous individual was easily able to stand against authority, from whatever source that authority emanated.

What, then, may be concluded about the similarities and differences between the various anti-veiling campaigns discussed above? New narratives of unveiling appear to show that Kemalist Turkey and Pahlavi Iran were much closer in their discourse and their policy than has previously been thought.[101] They in turn deeply influenced Persian-speaking Afghan reformers and Muslim modernists in the Balkans. Soviet experience, however, diverges in significant ways.[102] The Soviet Union was the first state to launch a concerted anti-veiling drive, its *hujum* of 1927 earlier than either Turkish or Iranian campaigns. Mention has been

---

[98] Rostam-Kolayi and Matin-asgari, 'Unveiling Ambiguities', p. 121.

[99] Sevgi Adak, 'Women in the Post-Ottoman Public Sphere: Anti-Veiling Campaigns and the Gendered Reshaping of Urban Space in Early Republican Turkey', Nazan Maksudyan (ed.), *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective of Ottoman Urban History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 36–68.

[100] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, pp. 157–8; 'Women-initiated Unveiling.'

[101] Rostam-Kolayi and Matin-asgari, 'Unveiling Ambiguities'.

[102] See Edgar, 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation'. For a wider comparative discussion of interwar modernity, see Stephen Kotkin, 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture,' *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 111–64.

made above of Kamp's calculation of the extraordinary level of violence directed by men towards women during the *hujum*, violence which is notably absent elsewhere. She estimates that around two thousand women were murdered in Uzbekistan in the years between 1927 and 1929.[103] In the Iranian case, by contrast, where the unpopularity of the measure has received almost all the scholarly interest, not a single case of serious violence has yet come to light. The unique context and radicalism of the objectives of the *hujum* may provide the beginning of an explanation. In Iran and Turkey, the policies of the interwar period flowed organically from an earlier and ever-deepening constitutionalism, nationalism and modernism. Both Mustafa Kemal and Riza Shah drew on ideological tropes drawn from these traditions and utilized elites which had been shaped by them. The reforms of the interwar period in general, and unveiling in particular, were advocated and supported by elites old and new, and occasionally the state even had to exert brakes on the zeal of reformers, women as well as men. In Central Asia before 1917, *Jadidism* had been a much weaker and more conservative phenomenon and, unlike Iran and the Ottoman Empire, had generated little in terms of women's activism. After 1917, the Communist Party, therefore, had only a very flimsy tradition on which to draw. In the 1920s, in both Iran and Turkey, an anti-veiling discourse was allowed to mature, and even officially encouraged, and a transformation effected in the way the state responded to women, rather than harassing women deemed improperly dressed, as in the past, women were now offered protection when lightening their coverings. In Central Asia, the Communist Party had done little to prepare public opinion for unveiling nor had there been any critique of male dress to prepare the ground. Particularly important is the fact that Kemalist Turkey and Pahlavi Iran mobilized not only secular nationalism and the new bureaucratic and military elites in support of unveiling, but Iran in particular, perhaps surprisingly, was not afraid to invoke Islamic modernism and the active support of members of the ulama. Secular reformers reinforced the moral dimension to the campaign with the 'veil of chastity' rhetoric. In the Soviet Union, on the contrary, the *hujum* in general and unveiling in particular were an important part of the struggle against religion and against 'reactionary' elites of all kinds, including clerical, part of the ongoing class war and revolutionary transformation. Unveiling was part of a wider and deeper attack on the old way of life, a step on the path to the creation of an entirely new Soviet woman, complementing the new Soviet man, and

---

[103] Kamp, 'Women-Initiated Unveiling', p. 217.

the *Zhenotdel* had no use for modernist mullas, deemed a fifth column, or the veil of chastity. Furthermore, not only did the authorities overtly reject the co-operation of elements compromised by class or politics, but the *Zhenotdel* based itself on the very poorest women, even those outcast from local society, thus making itself an even easier target for local doubters and resisters.[104]

In the Balkans, anti-veiling campaigns suffered from something of a time-lag. An anti-fez and anti-veiling discourse was fully formulated during the interwar decades, building on older nationalist tropes. But the governments of those years, wracked by domestic political turmoil and regional chaos, lacked the stability that enabled regimes such as those in Turkey, Iran and Central Asia to embark on projects of social engineering. Such projects had to wait for the establishment of stronger post-war communist regimes buoyed up by Soviet support. Although these regimes were based on local communist parties, their clothing reform campaigns appear to have been hybrids, bearing similarities, both in terms of ideology and the methods of enforcement, as much to the interwar nationalist drives as to the Soviet *hujum*. As well as the differing political context, a further specific feature of the Balkan campaigns was the position of Muslims as marginalized minorities within those societies. Only in Albania were Muslims a small majority and here the first legal prohibition on the face-veil was passed in 1937. In Yugoslavia, the campaign began after the end of the Second World War, the prestige and legitimacy of the new authorities high as a result of the victory over fascism. In Bulgaria, the new post-war communist government at first soft-pedalled on the issue of women's dress but an unveiling campaign began in earnest within the context of the 'Cultural Revolution' and 'Great Leap Forward' of the late 1950s.[105] Mary Neuburger has described the Bulgarian praxis, but unfortunately we have no studies of the discourse and policies of other post-war Balkan communist states, nor, incidentally, do we know anything about the attitude of the Chinese Communist Party to veiling among Chinese Muslims.

The narratives of unveiling in Turkey and Iran offer new ways of understanding not only the gender discourse of modernism in the Middle East but also the more general character of reforming regimes. Kemalism, for instance, appears, as Murat Metinsoy has shown, more flexible and even responsive to pressure from below than previously assumed, and Pahlavi Iran more connected to its own constitutionalist

---

[104] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*; 'Women-Initiated Unveiling.'
[105] Neuburger, *The Orient Within*.

history and less dependent on the arbitrary will of the shah.[106] The narratives of the *hujum* in Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus also provide an opportunity to discuss the nature of Soviet rule in the non-Russian territories. For Douglas Northrop, the resistance to unveiling in Central Asia symbolized a wider resistance to Russian colonialism and this explains the high level of violence against women.[107] Kamp, however, has disputed this, pointing out that the violence was against women and not directed at male Communist Party or state officials, and that the straightforward attribution of resistance to colonialism underestimates the importance of the profound and multifaceted conflicts taking place within Central Asian and Caucasian societies themselves.[108] It was patriarchy which was being defended, not Uzbek identity. Adrienne Edgar, in a detailed comparative survey, has argued that Soviet gender policies in the 1920s resembled those of the independent state-builders in Iran and Turkey, but the response to them was closer to that of the colonized countries of the Middle East and North Africa.[109]

The debates over the character of the impact of the Soviet-organized *hujum* on its Muslim periphery takes us back to the controversies over the role of veiling in the nationalist and anti-colonial battles of the Middle East and North Africa. Northrop's analysis of Uzbekistan clearly echoes a view of the veil as a symbol of cultural authenticity and resistance to European hegemony, most famously articulated by Franz Fanon during the Algerian war of independence against French colonial rule. It appears easy, at least at first sight, to attribute an attachment to veiling to the trauma of the colonial presence. Yet this analysis is too simplistic. Unveiling proceeded gradually but relentlessly in Egypt during the period of British rule, by the 1960s almost complete among the urban elites and middle class, only to re-emerge with the rise of Islamic politics and the explosion in urbanization after 1967. In Nasserist Egypt, adherence to nationalist politics required no revalorization of the veil. On the contrary, although Nasser and the Free Officers originated from outside the old elite, still an attachment to modernism's gender discourse prevailed. Similarly, in Iraq under the British mandate, neither pan-Arab nor Iraqi nationalism was tempted to revive veiling. Among the Palestinians in the same period, veiling disappeared among the only

---

[106] Murat Metinsoy, 'Everyday Resistance to Unveiling and Flexible Secularism in Early Republican Turkey', in Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World*, pp. 86–118.

[107] Northrop, *Veiled Empire*.

[108] Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*.

[109] Edgar, 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation'.

social sector ever to have adopted it, the urban bourgeoisie. Certainly, in the course of the national struggle, Palestinian women's dress was imbued with a new symbolic significance, but here it was the 'national' embroidered dress which was mobilized to represent the collective identity. Down to the 1980s, veiling continued to diminish despite the psychological as well as political impact of ethnic cleansing and the occupation of historic Palestine, and despite the intense mobilization of subaltern classes, peasants, refugees and migrant workers. In formally independent countries like Iran that were, nonetheless engaged in a bitter struggle with the old imperial enemy, the issue of veiling also remained unproblematized in the 1940s and 1950s, absent from the high water mark of Iranian nationalism, Musaddiq's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951–3.

On the other hand, veiling certainly became symbolically important in Algerian decolonization. Rather than simply a function of the metropole-periphery conflict in general, the Algerian case may perhaps be explained by the specificity of French colonial rule and the mass, subaltern character of the independence struggle, quite unlike the peaceful transition to rule by local elites which took place elsewhere in North Africa. The deliberate Gallicization pursued by the French in Algeria, often focused on women as the vessels of a stubborn indigeneity, was quite different to the type of imperial control exercised by Britain in the countries mentioned above, British control, in contrast to French, often reinforcing traditional culture as well as relying on traditional elites.[110]

The relationship between veiling and the search for cultural authenticity must therefore be problematized by reference to class and to historical period. We have seen above the attachment to and even adoption of veiling as a sign of embourgeoisement. Yet in the 1920s and 1930s, notwithstanding veiling's value as a signifier of class identity and aspiration, and although the anti-veiling campaigns encountered opposition, the power of secularism and modernity on the European model throughout the region was irresistibly hegemonic and appeared to achieve an irreversible victory. Yet this victory was not in fact irreversible. Rather than in the struggle between metropole and colony, veiling appears to have been of greatest significance in the local struggles between secularism and Islam. It was not in the context of

---

[110] Edgar, 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation'; Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

decolonization, but rather with the rise of political Islam from the 1970s that a generalized revalorization of the veil took place.

This revalorization took place everywhere, both in countries that had experienced official anti-veiling campaigns, such as Turkey, and where nationalist movements had left veiling largely unproblematized, such as Egypt. Perhaps the most dramatic example of such a revalorization took place in Iran. After several decades during which all forms of veiling had been largely replaced by European fashion in urban Iran, in the pre-revolutionary years a modern form of *hijab* re-appeared as a sign of opposition to the Pahlavi monarchy. Iranian Islamist currents of the 1970s, including and perhaps especially the Islamic leftists of the *Mujahidin-i Khalq*, contextualized the veil as a weapon in the wider resistance to westoxication and imperialism, yet in fact its primary relevance lay within Iran, in the struggle for dominance between secular and Islamic forces. This became sharply apparent immediately after the revolution, massive demonstrations first against, and then in favour of, compulsory *hijab* in March 1979 becoming a flashpoint in the emerging post-revolutionary struggle for power.

Across the Muslim world, from the 1970s, veiling of various types, including the face-veil, re-appeared in social milieux where it had disappeared and where it had never existed. But to what extent was this reaffirmation of veiling a resurrection of an older discourse or a completely new phenomenon? Certainly, in the case of Iran, the revolutionary re-appropriation of the *chador* implied precisely the opposite of its earlier meaning, signifying a very public activism rather than seclusion, and there was no revival of interest in the face-veil. Here too, as elsewhere, the decision to revert to *hijab* was, initially, the decision of women activists themselves, although their autonomy was soon rejected in short order by the consolidating Islamic republic. By the twenty-first century, the voices of women themselves, including those who veiled, had become ever more assertive and their agency more articulated. However, a fracture had developed in the discourse on the veil, between those women and men in countries where there was either a degree of freedom of choice or an official bias in favour of unveiling, for example, France or Turkey, and those in countries where veiling was obligatory and a denial of autonomy, such as Iran. The struggle over the definition of the meaning of veiling continues.

Much of the current pro-veiling discourse has been elaborated in environments where women who wished to veil, and the men who supported them, saw themselves as a minority discriminated against by the dominant cultural and legal systems. This was the case among immigrant communities in Europe, as well as among Islamist activists in Muslim majority countries possessing secular governments, such as

Turkey, Baʻathist Syria, Tunisia and Uzbekistan. Accordingly, pro-veiling opinion has mobilized arguments emphasizing the right of individual women to make their own active choice, their decision indicative of, variously, political allegiance, piety, education, modernity and upward social mobility.[111] Even in these communities, however, where modernity and agency have been emphasized, the logic of veiling has tended to bring in its train preferences for gender segregation. Of course, not all the pro-veiling discourse has been modernist. Perhaps the most obvious inheritors of the Uzbek opposition to the *hujum* are the Afghan mujahidin of the 1980s and 1990s and their successors, the Taliban, who used veiling as one mechanism among others for the symbolic and actual reimposition of patriarchal and tribal gender codes within a domestic power struggle.

Can the discourse of the veil be better understood by wider comparisons? For the modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, veiling and seclusion strongly resembled other gender practices elsewhere in the world also identified as traditional, backward and an impediment to national progress. Chinese footbinding is a case in point. The resemblance in functional terms between nineteenth-century footbinding and veiling is remarkable.[112] Both served to hide women from European view, thus heightening their eroticism and the 'otherness' of their society. Both controlled sexual access to females and supposedly ensured female chastity and fidelity. Both were important markers of status and sometimes ethnicity, were legitimized by reference to tradition and custom, were necessary to a good marriage and family honour, and were policed primarily by women themselves. Both were diffused downwards, from elite to middle classes and then to those merely aspiring to gentility, and both became more exaggerated over time.[113] Both were also initially opposed by a combination of indigenous Enlightenment modernists and European observers. Indeed, in the 1920s, the Soviet authorities explicitly linked these practices. Northrop describes how the Commission for the Improvement of Women's Labour and Daily Life (KUTB) studied the possibility of banning the veil in Central Asia and Transcaucasia, of forbidding footbinding among Chinese families in Siberia and of outlawing other harmful customs that were oppressive to women.[114] Yet footbinding disappeared quickly and

---

[111] Göle, *The Forbidden Modern*, pp. 4–5; Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution*.

[112] The link between veiling and footbinding has been explored by Farzaneh Milani, 'Hijab va Kashf-i Chini,' *Iran Nameh*, vol. 2, 1990. See also Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, p. 38.

[113] Gerry Mackie, 'Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 61, no. 6, 1996, pp. 999–1,017.

[114] Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, p. 298.

completely and has undergone no mutation into a vehicle for nostalgia or resistance. This contrasts with another practice, initially rejected but subsequently reinvented, that of female circumcision in Africa. Like footbinding and veiling, this too was a mechanism for controlling female sexuality and justified by reference to custom, and also first condemned by a combination of Europeans, especially missionaries, and African modernists. Unlike footbinding, but rather like veiling, female genital mutilation has experienced a revival and modernization and has been allocated a place in an emerging discourse of anti-colonialism and indigeneity, actually being introduced in parts of Africa as an 'imagined return to African traditions'.[115]

Attempts to assess the significance, let alone the 'success' or 'failure' of the unveiling campaigns raise fundamental questions about the nature of historical knowledge. There is often, for example, an unacknowledged proclivity to assume that history moves in one direction only. Yet, in this case, any judgement about the impact of unveiling made in the 1960s or 1970s would have reached profoundly different conclusions to one made in the 2000s. The assessments of the long-term impact of the anti-veiling campaigns depend, to an alarming extent, on the political conjuncture from which they are viewed. But what of their impact *at the time*? The male dress reforms of the 1920s and 1930s were more comprehensive, were imposed by law and provoked widespread resistance. Yet they have been relegated to a marginal curiosity in much of the literature. It is rather the unveiling policies, which provoked almost no major upheavals, which have attracted lasting attention and been most problematized. Have they achieved this significance only through the prism of the recent and current revalorization of veiling?

Changes in male dress were, in the long run, much less ambiguous in their results. With the rise of Islamic movements in Iran and Turkey, for instance, which saw the re-invention of veiling, there was no question of any reversion to earlier forms of male headgear, nor were beards more than a marginal issue. Despite the initial defence of the fez in the 1920s, it disappeared more or less completely, its disappearance was final and there has been no attempt to revive it. Only in Afghanistan under the Taliban and recently in Syria and Iraq under the Islamic State did beards or their absence take on a dangerous political significance, shaving or even trimming the beard perceived as indicative of political disloyalty and religious apostasy. Modern Islamic movements in general imbue male appearance with little or no emotional force. Women, it seems, must still bear alone the weight of 'representation'.

---

[115] Mackie, 'Ending Footbinding', p. 1,015.

Bibliography

Archives

India Office Records and Private Papers, The British Library

Majlis-i Shura-yi Islami, Kitabkhanih, Muzih va Markaz-i Asnad (Library, Museum and Document Centre of Iran Parliament)

Sazman-i Asnad va Kitabkhanih-yi Milli-yi Iran (National Archive Organization and Library of Iran)

The National Archives of the United Kingdom

Rossiiskiy Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Sotsial'no-politicheskoy Istorii (RGASPI) (Russian National Archive of Socio-political History)

Books and articles

Abrahamian, Ervand. 'The Crowd in Iranian Politics, 1905–1953', *Past and Present*, vol. 41, 1968, pp. 184–210.

Abrahamian, Ervand. 'The Crowd in the Persian Revolution', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1969, pp. 128–50.

Abrahamian, Ervand. 'Khomeini: Fundamentalist or Populist?', *New Left Review*, vol. 186, 1991, pp. 102–19.

Abrahamian, Ervand. *Tortured Confessions: Prisons and Public Recantations in Modern Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Abrahamian, Ervand. *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Abrahamian, Ervand. *The Coup* (New York: The New Press, 2013).

Abrahamian, Ervand. 'The Crowd in the Iranian Revolution', *Radical History Review*, no. 105, 2009, pp. 13–38.

Adak, Sevgi, 'Anti-Veiling Campaigns and Local Elites in Turkey of the 1930s: A View from the Periphery', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 59–85.

Adak, Sevgi, 'Women in the Post-Ottoman Public Sphere: Anti-Veiling Campaigns and the Gendered Reshaping of Urban Space in Early Republican Turkey', in Nazan Maksudyan (ed.), *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective of Ottoman Urban History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 36–68.

Adak, Ufuk. 'Central Prisons (Hapishane-i Umumi) in Istanbul and Izmir in the Late Ottoman Empire: In-Between Ideal and Reality', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 73–94.

Adib-Moghaddam, Arshin (ed.). *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Afary, Janet. *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Afary, Janet. *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Afshari, Reza. 'The Historians of the Constitutional Movement and the Making of the Iranian Populist Tradition', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1993, pp. 477–94.

Aghamohseni, Keivan. 'Modernization of Iranian Music during the Reign of Reza Shah', in Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 72–94.

Agius, Dionisius A. 'A Selfish Pursuit in a Slave Uprising of Third/Ninth Century Iraq', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 3–18.

Ahmed, Leila. *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

Ahmirahmadi, Hooshang. *The Political Economy of Iran under the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

al-Amili, Hurr and ibn al-Hasan Muhammad. *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah ila Tahsil Masa'il al-Shari'ah*, Abd al-Rahim Rabbani (ed.) (Bayrut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1971), 20 vols, vol. 12.

al-Nuri, Husayn Taqi. *Mustadrak kal-Wasa'il* (Qum, 1984).

al-Saltanah, Taj. *Crowning Anguish: Memoirs of a Persian Princess from the Harem to Modernity, 1884–1914* (ed. and intro. Abbas Amanat, trans. Anna Vanan and Amin Neshati) (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1993).

Al Sayyad, Nezar, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat. 'Prologue: The Project of Making Cairo Medieval', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 1–8.

Altstadt-Mirhadi, Audrey. 'Baku: Transformation of a Muslim Town', in Michael F. Hamm (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 238–318.

Amanat, Abbas. 'Of Famine and Cannibalism in Qom', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 47, no. 6, 2014, pp. 1,011–22.

Amanat, Abbas. *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

Amanat, Abbas and Khazeni Arash. 'The Steppe Roads of Central Asia and the Persian Captivity Narrative of Mahmud Mirza Taqi Ashtiyani', in Nile Green (ed.), *Writing Travel in Central Asian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 113–33.

Amin, Camron Michael. *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy and Popular Culture* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2002).

Amrouni, Hasina. 'Les bandits d'honneur d'Algérie', 19 September 2016. Available at www.memoria.dz/sep-2016/dossier/les-bandits-dhonneur-dalg-rie.

Anderson, Clare and David Arnold. 'Envisioning the Colonial Prison', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 304–31.

Anderson, Perry. *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).

Andic, Savka. 'Britain and Revolutionary Iran 1906–1909 and 1976–1979: A Comparative Study', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (2016).

Antony, Robert J. 'Peasants, Heroes, and Brigands: The Problem of Social Banditry in Early Nineteenth-Century South China', *Modern China*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1989, pp. 123–48.

Aouad, Rita. 'Slavery and the Situation of Blacks in Morocco in the First Half of the Twentieth Century', in Driss Maghraoui (ed.), *Revisiting the Colonial Past in Morocco* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2013), pp. 142–56.

Arnold, David. 'Dacoity and Rural Crime in Madras, 1860–1940', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 6, 1979, pp. 140–67.

Arnold, David. *Famine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

Arnold, David. 'The Colonial Prison: Power, Knowledge and Penology in Nineteenth-Century India', in David Arnold and David Hardiman (eds.), *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 148–84.

Ashtiyani, Mahmud Taqi (Imad al-Daftar). *'Ibratnamah: Khatirati az Dawran-i pas az Jangha-i Herat va Marv'* (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1387).

Atabaki, Touraj. *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

Atabaki, Touraj. 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 298–323.

Atabaki, Touraj. 'Chronicle of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', in Karl Heinz Roth (ed.), *On the Road to Global Labour History: A Festschrift for Marcel van der Linden* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), pp. 93–128.

Atabaki, Touraj. 'Far from Home, But at Home: Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry', *Studies in History*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2015, pp. 85–114.

Atabaki, Touraj and Eric J. Zürcher (eds.). 'Incommodious Hosts, Invidious Guests: The Life and Times of Iranian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union, 1921–1939', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 147–64.

The Avalon Project, 'The Palestinian National Charter: Resolutions of the Palestine National Council July 1–17, 1968', *The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School*. Available at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/plocov.asp.

Avery, Peter W. and J. B. Simmons. 'Persia on a Cross of Silver, 1880–1890', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1974, pp. 259–86.

Axworthy, Michael. *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (London: Penguin, 2014).

Ayhan, Calayan. '"In the Name of Modernity, for the Sake of the Nation": Madness, Psychiatry and Politics from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic (1500s–1950s)', MA thesis, York University (2005).

Aykut, Ebru. 'Toxic Murder, Female Poisoners, and the Question of Agency at the Late Ottoman Law Courts, 1840–1908', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2016, pp. 114–37.

Backhouse Eastwick, Edward. *Journal of a Diplomat's Three Years' Residence in Persia* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1864), 2 vols.

Badran, Margot. *Feminists, Islam and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

Baepler, Paul. *White Slaves, African Masters: An Anthology of American Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

Baer, Gabriel. 'Slavery and Its Abolition', in Gabriel Baer (ed.), *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 161–89.

Baker, Patricia L. 'Politics of Dress: The Dress Reform Laws of 1920–30s Iran', in Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997).

Baldwin, James E. 'Prostitution, Islamic Law and Ottoman Societies', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 55, 2012, pp. 117–52.

Balkelis, Tomas. 'Social Banditry and Nation-Making: The Myth of a Lithuanian Robber', *Past and Present*, no. 198, 2008, pp. 111–45.

Balslev, Sivan. *Iranian Masculinities: Gender and Sexuality in Late Qajar and Early Pahlavi Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Balsoy, Gülhan. 'Haseki Women's Hospital and the Female Destitute of Nineteenth-Century Istanbul', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2019, pp. 289–300.

Bankoff, Greg. 'Bandits, Banditry and Landscapes of Crime in the Nineteenth-Century Philippines', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1998, pp. 319–39.

Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994).

Baron, Beth. 'Unveiling in Early Twentieth Century Egypt: Practical and Symbolic Considerations', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1989, pp. 370–86.

Batatu, Hanna. 'Shi'i Organizations in Iraq: Al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah and al-Mujahidin,' in Juan I. R. Cole and Nikki Keddie (eds.), *Shi'ism and Social Protest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 179–200.

Becker, Cynthia. 'We Are Real Slaves, Real Ismkhan': Memories of the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade in the Tafilalet of South-Eastern Morocco', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2002, pp. 97–121.

Behrooz, Maziar. *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

Ben-Bassat, Yuval. *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Biancani, Francesca. *Sex Work in Colonial Egypt* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

Biglari, Mattin. '"A State of Tribal Lawlessness"? Rural and Urban Crime in Fars Province (c.1910–1915)', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2020).

Birol, Nil. 'Managing Time of the Ottoman Bureaucrat: Time Schedules for the New Tanzimat Institutions', *Archivum Ottomanum*, vol. 30, 2013, pp. 217–46.

Blackburn, Robin. *The American Crucible: Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights* (London: Verso, 2011).

Blackburn, Robin. *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1998).

Blackwood, Alice. 'Criminal or Nationalist? The Social Purposes and Results of the Creation of a "Social Bandit" Mythos in the Balkans'. *Balkan Folklore*, pp. 1–11. Available at www.academia.edu/4457176/Criminal_or_Nationalist_The_Social_Purposes_and_Results_of_the_Creation_of_a_Social_Bandit_Mythos_in_the_Balkans.

Blaut, James M. *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993).

Blok, Anton. *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860–1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974).

Blok, Anton. 'The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1972, pp. 494–503.

Bonakdarian, Mansour. *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism and Dissent* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006).

Bonakdarian, Mansour. 'Iranian Nationalism and Global Solidarity Networks 1906–1918: Internationalism, Transnationalism, Globalization, and Nationalist Cosmopolitanism', in Houchang E. Chehabi, Peyman Jafari and Maral Jefroudi (eds.), *Iran in the Middle East: Transnational Encounters and Social History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), pp. 77–119.

Bonello, Giovanni. 'Pirates in the Early British Era – The Malta Connections', in *Histories of Malta, Confusions and Conclusions* (Valletta: Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti, 2013), vol. 12, pp. 69–98.

Bosworth, Clifford E. *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld: The Banu Sasan in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

Bosworth, Clifford E. 'Begging', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. IV, Fasc. 1, 1989, pp. 80–4.

Bosworth, Clifford E. 'Banū Sāsān', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. III, fasc. 7, 1988, pp. 721–2.

Brace, Loring Charles. *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work among Them* (New York: Wynkoop and Hallenbeck, 1872).

Bracewell, Catherine Wendy. *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Breyley, Gay Jennifer and Sasan Fatemi. *Iranian Music and Popular Entertainment: From Motrebi to Losanjelesi and Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

Brittlebank, William. *Persia During the Famine* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1873).

Brower, Benjamin Claude. 'Rethinking Abolition in Algeria. Slavery and the "Indigenous Question"', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, vol. 195, no. 3, 2009, pp. 805–28.

Brown, Christopher Leslie and Philip D. Morgan. *Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

Brown, Nathan. 'Brigands and State Building: The Invention of Banditry in Modern Egypt', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 32, no. 2, 1990, pp. 258–81.

Brown, Nathan. *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt: The Struggle Against the State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

Brugsch, Heinrich. *Reiser der K. Preussischen Gesandtschaft nach Persien 1860 und 1861* (Leipzig: J. C Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1862–3), 2 vols.

Brummett, Palmira. 'Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1995, pp. 433–60.

Buckley, Ronald P. 'The Muhtasib', *Arabica*, vol. 39, 1992, pp. 59–117.

Burrell, Robert M. and Robert L. Jarman (eds.). *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965* (Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1997).

Busse, Heribert. *History of Persia under Qajar Rule* (translated from Hasan Fasa'i, Farsnamah-yi Nasiri, 1821 or 22) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

Cahen, C., M. Talibi, R. Mantran, A. K. S. Lambton, A. S. Bazmee Ansari, 'Hisba' and A. K. S. Lambton. 'III Persia', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Brill Online. Available at https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2.

Çakıcı, Aytu. 'Immoral Earnings: Portraying Prostitutes in Ottoman Turkey', in Andrea Ruthven and Gabriela Mádlo (eds.), *Illuminating the Dark Side: Evil, Women and the Feminine* (Witney: Interdisciplinary Press, 2010), pp. 275–82.

Carswell, Fuad Matthew. *The Slave Girls of Baghdad: The Qiyān in the Early Abbasid Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

Castiglioni, Claudia. '"Anti-Imperialism of Fools"? The European Intellectual Left and the Iranian Revolution', in Roham Alvandi (ed.), *The Age of Aryamehr: Late Pahlavi Iran and Its Global Entanglements* (London: Gingko Library, 2018), pp. 220–59.

Cayli, Baris. 'Crime, Bandits, and Community: How Public Panic Shaped the Social Control of Territory in the Ottoman Empire,' *Territory, Politics, Governance*, published online 15 December 2018, DOI: 10.1080/21622671.2018.1557074.

Cejpek, Jiři. 'Iranian Folk Literature', in Jan Rypka (ed.), *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), pp. 654–5.

Çelik, Faika. '"Civilizing Mission" in the Late Ottoman Discourse: The Case of Gypsies', *Oriento Moderno*, vol. 93, 2013, pp. 577–97.

Çelik, Faika. 'Living at the Margins of Poverty: The Begging Poor in the Ottoman Empire (1550–1750)', *PESA*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2017, pp. 214–19.

Chalcraft, John. *Popular Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Chaqueri, Cosroe. 'Did the Soviets Play a Role in Founding the Tudeh Party in Iran?', *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1999, pp. 497–528.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'Staging the Emperor's New Clothes: Dress Codes and Nation-Building under Reza Shah', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 26, no 3/4, 1993, pp. 209–29.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'Sport and Politics in Iran: The Legend of Gholamreza Takhti', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1995, pp. 48–60.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'Voices Unveiled: Women Singers in Iran', in Rudi Matthee, Beth Baron and Nikki R. Keddie (eds.), *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000), pp. 151–66.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'The Banning of the Veil and Its Consequences', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 203–21.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'The Westernization of Iranian Culinary Culture', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2003, pp. 43–61.

Chehabi, Houchang E., 'The Anti-Shah Opposition and Lebanon', in Houchang E. Chehabi (ed.), *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, in association with I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 180–98.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'Zur-Kāna', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2006). Available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zur-kana.

Chehabi, Houchang E. 'Mir Mehdi Varzandeh and the Introduction of Modern Physical Education in Iran', in Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 55–72.

Chehabi, Houchang E., Peyman Jafari, and Maral Jefroudi (eds.). *Iran in the Middle East: Transnational Encounters and Social History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

Chevalier, Louis. *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (trans. Frank Jellinek) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Christiaens, Kim and Idesbald Goddeeris. 'Beyond Western European Idealism: A Comparative Perspective on the Transnational Scope of Belgian Solidarity Movements with Nicaragua, Poland and South Africa in the 1980s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 50, no. 3, 2015, pp. 632–55.

Clancy-Smith, Julia. *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migrations, c. 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Clarence Smith, William Gervase. *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Claudin, Fernando. *The Communist Movement: From Comintern to Cominform* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975).

Clayer, Nathalie. 'Behind the Veil: The Reform of Islam in Interwar Albania or the Search for a "Modern" and "European" Islam', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 231–51.

Cohen, Stanley. 'Bandits, Rebels or Criminals: African History and Western Criminology', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 56, no. 4, 1986, pp. 468–83.

Colley, Linda. *Captives* (New York: Anchor, 2002).

Colley, Linda. *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh* (London: Pantheon Books, 2007).

Colonna, Fanny. *Le Meunier, les moines et le bandit: Des vies quotidiennes dans l'Aurès (Algerie) du xxe siècle* (Paris: Sindbad, 2010).

Cordell, Dennis D. 'No Liberty, Not Much Equality, and Very Little Fraternity: The Mirage of Manumission in the Algerian Sahara in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1998, pp. 38–56.

Cronin, Stephanie. *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910–1926* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997).

Cronin, Stephanie. 'The Left in Iran: Illusion and Disillusion,' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2000, pp. 231–43.

Cronin, Stephanie. 'Popular Protest, Disorder and Riot in Iran: The Tehran Crowd and the Rise of Riza Khan 1921–1925', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2005, pp. 167–201.

Cronin, Stephanie. 'Resisting the New State: Peasants and Pastoralists in Iran, 1921–41', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–47.

Cronin, Stephanie. *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

Cronin, Stephanie. *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008).

Cronin, Stephanie. 'Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class: The 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 5, 2010, pp. 699–732.

Cronin, Stephanie. *Soldiers, Shahs and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition, Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Cronin, Stephanie. 'Introduction: Edward Said, Russian Orientalism and Soviet Iranology,' in Stephanie Cronin and Edmund Herzig (eds.), *Russian Orientalism to Soviet Iranology: The Persian-Speaking World and Its History through Russian Eyes*, Special Issue: *Iranian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2015, pp. 647–62.

Cronin, Stephanie. *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014).

Cronin, Stephanie. '"Noble Robbers, Avengers and Entrepreneurs", Eric Hobsbawm and Banditry in Iran, the Middle East and North Africa', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 52, no. 5, 2016, pp. 845–70, pp. 861–2.

Crummey, Donald. 'African Banditry Revisited', undated. Available at www.brunel.ac.uk/creative-writing/research/entertext/documents/entertext042/Donald-Crummey-African-Banditry-Revisited-an-essay.pdf.

Crummey, Donald. 'Introduction: "The Great Beast"', in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: Currey, 1986), pp. 1–32.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008).

Darling, Linda T. *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001).

Davis, Robert C. *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Déjeux, Jean. 'Un Bandit d'Honneur dans l'Aurès, de 1917 a 1921', *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée*, no. 26, 1978, pp. 35–54.

De Planhol, Xavier. 'Famines in Persia', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. ix, fasc. 2, 1999, pp. 203–6.

Derengil, Selim. '"They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery": The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2003, pp. 311–42.

Desan, Suzanne, Lynn Hunt and William Max Nelson (eds.). *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

De Souza, Wendy. *Unveiling Men: Modern Masculinities in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2019).

De Souza, Wendy. 'Race, Slavery and Domesticity in Late Qajar Chronicles', *Iranian Studies*, published online 3 February 2020. DOI: 10.1080/00210862.2019.1709050.

Devi, Phoolan, Marie-Therese Cuny and Paul Rambali. *I, Phoolan Devi: The Autobiography of India's Bandit Queen* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

Devlin, Bernadette. *The Price of My Soul* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

Devos, Bianca. *Kleidungspolitik in Iran: Die Durchsetzung der Kleidungsvorschriften für Männer unter Riżā Šāh* (Wurtzburg: Ergon, 2006).

Dieste, Josep Lluís Mateo. 'Remembering the Tatas: An Oral History of the Tetouan Elite about Their Female Domestic Slaves', *Middle Eastern Studies*, published online: 3 January 2020, available at DOI: 10.1080/00263206.2019.1692823.

Dikici, A. Ezgi. 'The Making of Ottoman Court Eunuchs: Origins, Recruitment Paths, Family Ties, and "Domestic Production"', *Archivum Ottomanicum*, vol. 30, 2013, pp. 105–36.

Dikötter, Frank. 'Introduction', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 1–13.

Dols, M. *The Madman in Medieval Islamic Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

Donia, Robert J. *Sarajevo – A Biography* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2006).

Drescher, Seymour and Pieter C. Emmer (eds.). *Who Abolished Slavery? Slave Revolts and the Abolition of Slavery: A Debate with João Pedro Marquesh* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

Dumas, Tancrède R. 'Marchant d'Orange á Jaffa', Library of Congress website. Available at: www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004666799/.

Dunne, Bruce W. 'French Regulation of Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Colonial Algeria', *The Arab Studies Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1994, pp. 24–30.

Dunne, Bruce W. 'Sexuality and the "Civilizing Process" in Modern Egypt', unpublished PhD thesis, Georgetown University (1996).

Durugönül, Esma. 'The Invisibility of Turks of African Origin and the Construction of Turkish Cultural Identity: The Need for a New Historiography', *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2003, pp. 281–94.

Eden, Jeff. *Slavery and Empire in Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. 'Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet "Emancipation" of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective', *Slavic Review*, vol. 65, no. 2, Summer, 2006, pp. 252–72.

Edgerton-Tarpley, Kathryn. 'The "Feminization of Famine", the Feminization of Nationalism: Famine and Social Activism in Treaty-Port Shanghai, 1876–9', *Social History*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2005, pp. 421–43.

Ehlers, Eckart, and Willem Floor. 'Urban Change in Iran, 1920–1941', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 26, nos. 3–4, 1993, pp. 251–75.

Elbendary, Amina. *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: The America University in Cairo Press, 2017).

El Guindi, Fadwa. *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance* (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

El Hamel, Chouki, '"Race", Slavery and Islam in Maghribi Mediterranean Thought: The Question of the *Haratin* in Morocco', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2002, pp. 29–52.

El Hamel, Chouki. *Black Morocco: A History of Slavery, Race and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Elling, Rasmus Christian. 'Urbanizing the Iranian Public: Text, Tehran and 1922', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2019, pp. 301–18.

Emami, Karim. 'English v. Translation of English Literature into Persian', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. viii, fasc. V, 1998, pp. 450–2.

Enayat, Hadi. *Law, State and Society in Modern Iran* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Ener, Mine. 'Prohibitions on Begging and Loitering in Nineteenth-Century Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1999, pp. 319–39.

Ener, Mine. 'Getting into the Shelter of Takiyat Tulun', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 53–76

Ener, Mine. *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1953* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Ennaji, Mohammed. *Serving the Master: Slavery and Society in Nineteenth-Century Morocco* (trans. Seth Graebner) (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

Ennaji, Mohammed. *Slavery, the State and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (ed. Angelo Constanzo) (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001).

Erami, Narges and Arang Keshavarzian. 'When Ties Don't Bind: Smuggling Effects, Bazaars and Regulatory Regimes in Postrevolutionary Iran', *Economy and Society*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2015, pp. 110–39.

Erdem, Y. Hakan. *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise, 1800–1909* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1996).

Erdem, Y. Hakan. 'Magic, Theft and Arson: The Life and Death of an Enslaved African Woman in Ottoman İzmit', in Terence Walz and Kenneth M.

Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 125–46.

Ergin, Murat. '"Is the Turk a White Man?" Towards Theoretical Framework for Race in the Making of Turkishness', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 6, 2008, pp. 827–50.

Ergut, Ferdan. 'Policing the Poor in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2000, pp. 149–64.

Ettehadieh, Mansoureh. 'The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century Iranian Social History', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 22, 1989, pp. 51–61.

Ettehadieh, Mansoureh. 'The Origins and Development of the Women's Movement in Iran, 1906–1941', in Lois Beck and Guity Nashat (eds.), *Women in Iran from 1800 to the Islamic Republic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 85–106.

Ettehadieh (Nezam Mafie), Mansoureh. 'Crime, Security and Insecurity: Socio-Political Conditions of Iran, 1875–1924', in Roxane Farmanfarmaian (ed.), *War and Peace in Qajar Persia: Implications Past and Present* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 174–82.

Ezzeldin, Mohammed Saaid. 'History and Memory of Bandits in Modern Egypt: The Controversy of Adham al-Sharqawi', MA thesis, Georgetown University (2013). Available at: https://repository.library.georgetown.edu/bitstream/handle/10822/709716/Ezzeldin_georgetown_0076M_12481.pdf;sequence=1.

Fahmy, Khaled. 'The Police and the People in Nineteenth-Century Egypt', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1999, pp. 340–77.

Fahmy, Khaled. 'Prostitution in nineteenth-century Egypt', Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris 2002), pp. 77–103.

Fahmy, Khaled. 'Modernizing Cairo: A Revisionist Narrative', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 173–99.

Farhūdi, Hoseyn. 'City Councils (anjoman-e šahr) in Persia', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 5, fasc. 6, pp. 646–8.

Farman Farmaian, Sattareh. *Daughter of Persia: A Woman's Journey from her Father's Harem through the Islamic Revolution* (London: Corgi, 1992).

Faroqhi, Suraiya. 'Trying to Avoid Enslavement: The Adventures of an Iranian Subject in Eighteenth-Century Anatolia', in Suraiya Faroqhi (ed.), *Another Mirror for Princes: The Public Image of the Ottoman Sultans and Its Reception* (Istanbul: Isis, 2008), pp. 219–32.

Fathi, Asghar. 'The Role of the "Rebels" in the Constitutional Movement in Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1979, pp. 55–66.

Felci, Vittorio. '"A Latter-Day Hitler": Anti-Shah Activism and British Policy towards Iran, 1974–6', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2009, pp. 515–35.

Finley, Moses I. *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Penguin, 1980).

Fleischman, Ellen L. 'The Other "Awakening": The Emergence of Women's Movements in the Modern Middle East, 1900–1940', in Margaret L.

Meriwether and Judith E. Tucker (eds.), *A Social History of Women and Gender in the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Perseus, 1999).

Floor, Willem. 'The Lutis: A Social Phenomenon in Qajar Persia: A Reappraisal', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 13, no. 1–2, 1971, pp. 103–20.

Floor, Willem. 'The Market Police in Qajar Persia: The Office of Darugha-yi Bazar and Muhtasib', *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 13, 1971, pp. 212–29.

Floor, Willem. 'The Police in Qajar Persia', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morganländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. 123, 1973, pp. 294–315.

Floor, Willem. 'The Office of Muhtasib in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1985, pp. 53–74.

Floor, Willem. *A Fiscal History of Iran in the Safavid and Qajar Periods* (New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 1998).

Floor, Willem. *A Social History of Sexual Relations in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2008).

Floor, Willem. 'Luti', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2010). Available at: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/luti.

Floor, Willem. *History of Bread in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2015).

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

Frégier, Honoré Antoine. *Des Classes Dangereuses de la Population Dans Les Grandes Villes, Et Des Moyens De Les Rendre Meilleures …* (Paris, 1840).

Friedman, Ellen G. *Spanish Captives in North Africa in the Early Modern Age* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

Friedman, Jeremy, 'The Enemy of My Enemy: The Soviet Union, East Germany, and the Iranian Tudeh Party's Support for Ayatollah Khomeini', *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2018, pp. 3–37.

Fuhrmann, Malte. 'Down and Out on the Quays of İzmir: "European" Musicians, Innkeepers, and Prostitutes in the Ottoman Port Cities', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2009, pp. 169–85.

Fuhrmann, Malte. '"Western Perversions" at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870–1915)', *History and Anthropology*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2010, pp. 159–72.

Gabaccia, Donna R. 'Worker Internationalism and Italian Labour Migration, 1870–1914', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 45, 1994, pp. 63–79.

Gahan, Jairan. 'Governing Prostitutes with Fear and Compassion: The Red-Light District of Tehran, 1922–1970', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 39–50.

Ghiabi, Maziyar. *Drugs Politics: Managing Disorder in the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

Ghiabi, Maziyar. 'The "Virtual Poor" in Iran: Dangerous Classes and Homeless Life in Capitalist Times', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 190–208.

Gilbar, Gad G. 'Trends in the Development of Prices in Late Qajar Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 16, nos. 3–4, 1983, pp. 177–98.

Gilfoyle, Timothy J. 'Prostitutes in History: From Parables of Pornography to Metaphors of Modernity', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 1, 1999, pp. 117–41.

Gingeras, Ryan. 'Beyond Istanbul's "Laz Underworld": Ottoman Paramilitarism and the Rise of Turkish Organised Crime', *Contemporary European History*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2010, pp. 215–30.

Ginio, Eyal. 'Piracy and Redemption in the Aegean Sea during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Turcica*, vol. 33, 2001, pp. 135–47.

Ginio, Eyal. 'Living on the Margins of Charity: Coping with Poverty in an Ottoman Provincial City', in Michael Bonner, Mine Ener and Amy Singer (eds.), *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), pp. 165–84.

Gocheleishvili, Iago. 'Georgian Sources on the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1905–1911', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Iranian-Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 207–30.

Goldberg, Ellis. 'Peasants in Revolt – Egypt 1919', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1992, pp. 261–80.

Göle, Nilüfer. *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

Gölz, Olmo. 'The Dangerous Classes and the 1953 Coup in Iran: On the Decline of *lutigari* Masculinities', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 177–90.

Gorman, Anthony. 'In Her Aunt's House: Women in Prison in the Middle East', *International Institute for Asian Studies Newsletter*, vol. 39, 2005, p. 7.

Gorman, Anthony. 'Regulation, Reform and Resistance in the Middle Eastern Prison', in Frank Dikötter and Ian Brown (eds.), *Cultures of Confinement: A History of the Prison in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 95–146

Gorman, Anthony. 'Foreign Workers in Egypt 1882–1914: Subaltern or Labour Elite?', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 237–59.

Gould, Andrew G. 'Lords or Bandits? The Derebeys of Cilicia', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4, 1976, pp. 485–506.

Grallert, Till. 'Urban Food Riots in Late Ottoman Bilad al-Sham as a "Repertoire of Contention"', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 157–76.

Grant, Bruce. *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

Gratien, Chris. 'Race, Slavery, and Islamic Law in the Early Modern Atlantic: Ahmad Baba al-Tinbukti's Treatise on Enslavement', *The Journal of North African Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2013, pp. 454–68.

Greason, David. 'Embracing Death: The Western Left and the Iranian Revolution, 1978–83', *Economy and Society*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2005, pp. 105–40.

Green, Nile, 'Breaking the Begging Bowl: Morals, Drugs, and Madness in the Fate of the Muslim Faqīr', *South Asian History and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, pp. 226–45.

Grehan, James P. 'Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 35, 2007, pp. 215–36.

Grehan, James P. *Everyday Life and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-Century Damascus* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

Grigor, Talinn. 'The King's White Walls: Modernism and Bourgeois Architecture', in Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (eds.), *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 95–118.

Gronewold, Sue. *Beautiful Merchandise: Prostitution in China, 1860–1936* (New York: Institute for Research in History and Haworth Press, 1982).

Guha, Ranajit. *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

Gurney, John, and Safatgul, Mansur. *Qum dar Qahti-yi Buzurg, 1288 qamari* (Qum: Kitabkhanah-i Buzurg-i Hazrat-i Ayatullah 'Azmi Marashi Najafi, 1387).

Hadjiheidari, Abolhassan. *Nāyeb Ḥoseyn Kāšī, Strassenräuber oder Revolutionär?: eine Untersuchung zur neueren iranischen Geschichte (1850–1920)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2011).

Haeri, Shahla. *Law of Desire: Temporary Marriage in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989).

Hafez, Melis. 'The Lazy, the Idle, and the Industrious: Discourse of Work and Productivity in Late Ottoman Society', PhD thesis, UCLA (2012). Available at: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3pj7009t.

Hakimian, Hassan. 'Wage Labor and Migration: Persian Workers in Southern Russia, 1880–1914', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1985, pp. 443–62.

Halliday, Fred. *Arabia Without Sultans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

Halliday, Fred. *Iran: Dictatorship and Development* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979).

Halliday, Fred. *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

Hamadeh, Shirine. 'Mean Streets: Space and Moral Order in Early Modern Istanbul', *Turcica*, vol. 44, 2012–2013, pp. 249–77.

Hambly, Gavin R. G. 'The Traditional Iranian City in the Qajar Period', in Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and C. P. Melville (eds.), *Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vol. 7, pp. 542–89.

Hammad, Hanan. 'Between Egyptian National Purity and Local Flexibility: Prostitution in al-Mahalla al-Kubra in the First Half of the 20th Century', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2011, pp. 751–83.

Hammad, Hanan. 'Regulating Sexuality: The Colonial-National Struggle over Prostitution after the British Invasion of Egypt', in Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (eds.), *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 195–221.

Hammad, Hanan. *Industrial Sexuality: Gender, Urbanization, and Social Transformation in Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016).

Hammad, Hanan. 'Disreputable by Definition: Respectability and Theft by Poor Women in Urban Interwar Egypt', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 65–77.

Hampikian, Nairy. 'Medievalization of the Old City as an Ingredient of Cairo's Modernization: Case Study of Bab Zuwayla', in Nezar Al Sayyad, Irene A. Bierman and Nasser Rabat (eds.), *Making Cairo Medieval* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 201–34.

Hanımefendi, Leyla (Saz). *The Imperial Harem of the Sultans: Daily Life at the Çirağan Palace during the 19th Century* (trans. Landon Thomas) (Istanbul: Peva Publications, 1994).

Hanssen, Jens. 'Public Morality and Marginality in Fin-de-siècle Beirut', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 183–210.

Haqsenas, Torab. 'Communism iii. In Persia after 1953', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. vi, fasc. 1, pp. 105–12.

Hart, David M. *Banditry in Islam: Case Studies from Morocco, Algeria and the Pakistan North West Frontier* (Wisbech: Menas Press, 1987).

Hashem Talhami, Ghada. 'The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, pp. 443–61.

Hathaway, Jane. 'The Wealth and Influence of an Exiled Ottoman Eunuch in Egypt The Waqf Inventory of "Abbas Agha"', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1994, pp. 293–317.

Hathaway, Jane. *Beshir Agha: Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Imperial Harem* (London: Oneworld, 2005).

Hathaway, Jane. *The Chief Eunuch of the Ottoman Harem: From African Slave to Power-Broker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Hatzky, Christine and Jessica Stites Mor. 'Latin American Transnational Solidarities: Contexts and Critical Research Paradigms', *Journal of Latin American and Iberian Research*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, pp. 127–40.

Hellema, Duco, *The Global 1970s: Radicalism, Reform and Crisis* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

Helm, Christian. 'Booming Solidarity: Sandinista Nicaragua and the West German Solidarity Movement in the 1980s', *European Revue of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2014, pp. 597–615.

Helm, Christian. ''The Sons of Marx Greet the Sons of Sandino': West German Solidarity Visitors to Nicaragua Sandinista', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, pp. 153–70.

Hershatter, Gail. *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

Herzog, Tamar. 'How Did Early-Modern Slaves in Spain Disappear? The Antecedents', *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, 1–7. Available at: https://arcade.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/ROFL_v03i01_Herzog_091512_1.pdf.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *Bandits* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, 2000).

Hopper, Matthew S. *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015).

Hunwick, John and Eve Trout Powell (eds.). *The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002).

İleri, Nurçin. 'Between the Real and the Imaginary: Late Ottoman Istanbul as a Crime Scene', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 95–116.

Iriye, Akira and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.). *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

Isaacman, Allen. 'Social Banditry in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and Mozambique, 1894–1907: An Expression of Early Peasant Protest,' *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1977, pp. 1–30.

Ismail, Salwa. *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters: Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Issawi, Charles Phillip. *The Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

I'timad al-Saltanah, Muhammad Hasan Khan. *Ruznamah-i Khatirat-i I'timad al-Saltanah* (ed. Iaj Afshar) (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1371).

Jahangiri Qa'im Maqam, Sarhang-i Muhandis-i. 'Qahti-yi Sal 1273 qamari dar Tabriz', *Adabiyat va Zabanha*, no. 194, 1343, pp. 266–9.

James, C. L. R. *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin, 2001).

Jamieson, Alan G. *Lords of the Sea: A History of the Barbary Corsairs* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012).

Jankowsky, Richard C. *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Jaynes Chandler, Billy. *The Bandit King: Lampiao of Brazil* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1978).

John-Alder, Kathleen. 'Paradise Reconsidered: The Early Design History of Pardisan Park in Tehran', in Mohammad Gharipour (ed.), *Contemporary Urban Landscapes of the Middle East* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 120–48.

Joseph, Gilbert M. 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 25, no. 3, 1990, pp. 7–53.

Joubin, Rebecca. 'The Politics of the Qabaday (Tough Man) and the Changing Father Figure in Syrian Television Drama', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2016, pp. 50–6.

Junne, George H. *The Black Eunuchs of the Ottoman Empire: Networks of Power in the Court of the Sultan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

Kamp, Marianne. *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

Kamp, Marianne. 'Women-Initiated Unveiling: State-Led Campaigns in Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 205–28.

Karamursel, Ceyda. 'The Uncertainties of Freedom: The Second Constitutional Era and the End of Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2016, pp. 138–61.

Karimi, Z. Pamela. *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 'Hallmarks of Humanism: Hygiene and Love of Homeland in Qajar Iran', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 105, no. 4, 2000, pp. 1171–203.

Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 'The Politics of Reproduction: Maternalism and Women's Hygiene in Iran, 1896–1951', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1–29.

Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 'The Haves and Have Nots: A Historical Study of Disability in Modern Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2010, pp. 167–95.

Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh. 'Dressing Up (or Down): Veils, Hats, and Consumer Fashions in Interwar Iran', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 149–62.

Katouzian, Homa. *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval and Modern Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Kazemi, Farhad. 'The Nonrevolutionary Peasantry of Modern Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1978, pp. 259–304.

Kazemi, Ranin. 'Neither Indians nor Egyptians: Social Protest and Islamic Populism in the Making of the Tobacco Movement in Iran, 1850–1891', PhD dissertation, Yale University (2012).

Kazemi, Ranin. 'Of Diet and Profit: On the Question of Subsistence Crises in Nineteenth Century Iran', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2016, pp. 335–58.

Kazemi, Ranin and Evand Abrahamian. 'The Black Winter of 1860–61: War, Famine, and the Political Ecology of Disasters in Qajar Iran', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2017, pp. 24–48.

Keller, Richard C. *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in French North Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Kelly, Laurence. *Diplomacy and Murder in Tehran: Alexander Griboyedov and Imperial Russia's Mission to the Shah of Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).

Kelly, J. B., C. H. Imber and C. Pellat. 'Ḳurṣān', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004), https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2.

Kemal, Yashar. *Memed, My Hawk* (trans. Edouard Roditi) (London: Harvill Press, 1990).

Khaldun, Ibn. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (eds. N. J. Dawood and Franz Rosenthal) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul in association with Secker and Warburg, 1967).

Khalid, Adeeb. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

Khalili, Laleh and Jillian Schwedler (eds.). *Police and Prisons in the Middle East: Formations of Coercion* (London: Hurst, 2010).

Kheng Cheah, Boon. *The Peasant Robbers of Kedah, 1900–1919: Historical and Folk Perceptions* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Khosrenejad, Pedram. 'The Face of African Slavery in Qajar Iran – in Pictures', *The Guardian*, 14 January 2016. Available at www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2016/jan/14/african-slavery-in-qajar-iran-in-photos?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-2.

Khoury, Phillip S. 'Abu Ali al-Kilawi: A Damascus Qabaday', in Edmund Burke III and David N. Yaghoubian (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), pp. 152–63.

Khudadad, Muhsin and Manzuralajdad Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. 'Payamadha-yi Ijtima'i-yi Qahtiha-yi 'Asr-i Nasiri', *Tarikh-i Islam va Iran*, no. 7, 1389, pp. 21–44.

Khuri-Makdisi, Ilham. *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

Koliopoulos, John S. *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

Kotkin, Stephen. 'Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2001, pp. 111–64.

Kozma, Liat. 'Black, Kinless, and Hungry: Manumitted Female Slaves in Khedivial Egypt', in Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 197–216.

Kozma, Liat. 'Wandering about as She Pleases: Prostitutes, Adolescent Girls, and Female Slaves in Cairo's Public Space, 1850–1882', *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, vol. 10, 2012, pp. 18–36.

Kozma, Liat. *Global Women, Colonial Ports: Prostitution in the Interwar Middle East* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2017).

Kuhistani Nazhad, Mas'ud. 'Sal-i Dampukht (Qahti-yi Sal 1296 shamsi),' *Ganjinah-i Asnad*, no. 45–6, 1381, pp. 40–85.

Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

Kurzman, Charles. *Democracy Denied, 1905–1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

Kusha, Hamid R. 'Impediments to Police Modernisation in Iran, 1878–1979', *Policing and Society*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2013, pp. 164–82.

Lafi, Nora. 'Policing the Medina: Public Order in Tunis at the Time of the Tanzimat', *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 55–71.

Lambton, A. K. S. 'III Persia', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill). Available at: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2.

Lee, Anthony A. 'Enslaved African Women in Nineteenth-Century Iran: The Life of Fezzeh Khanom of Shiraz', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2012, pp. 417–37.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Arabs in History* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1960).

Lewis, Bernard. *Race and Slavery in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Lewis, Reina. *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

Libal, Kathryn. 'From Face-Veil to Cloche Hat: The Backward Ottoman versus New Turkish Woman in Urban Public Discourse', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 39–58.

Lindisfarne-Tapper, Nancy and Bruce Ingham (eds.). *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon, 1997).

Lopashich, Alexander. 'A Negro Community in Yugoslavia', *Man*, vol. 58, 1958, pp. 169–73.

Lopez, Shaun. 'Madams, Murders, and the Media: Akbar al-Hawadith and the Emergence of a Mass Culture in Egypt', in Arthur Goldschmidt and Amy J. Johnson (eds.), *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919–1952* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), pp. 371–97.

Lovell, Julia. *Maoism: A Global History* (London: The Bodley Head, 2019).

Mackie, Gerry. 'Ending Footbinding and Infibulation: A Convention Account', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 61, no. 6, 1996, pp. 999–1,017.

Mahdavi, Shireen. 'Reza Shah Pahlavi and Women: A Re-Evaluation', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 190–202.

Majd, Mohammad Goli. *The Great Famine and Genocide in Iran, 1917–1919* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2013).

Majd, Mohammad Goli. *Iran under Allied Occupation in World War II* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2016).

Majd, Mohammad Goli. *A Victorian Holocaust: Iran in the Great Famine of 1869–1873* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2017).

Maksudyan, Nazan. 'Orphans, Cities, and the State: Vocational Orphanages ("Islahhanes"') and Reform in the Late Ottoman Urban Space', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2011, pp. 493–511.

Maksudyan, Nazan (ed.). *Women and the City, Women in the City: A Gendered Perspective of Ottoman Urban History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), pp. 36–68.

Marefat, Mina. 'Building to Power: Architecture of Tehran 1921–1941', PhD thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1988),. Available at: https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/14535.

Martin, Vanessa. *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in 19th-Century Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

Martin, Vanessa. *Iran between Islamic Nationalism and Secularism: The Constitutional Revolution of 1906* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Marx, Karl. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon', in *Surveys from Exile* (trans. and introduced by David Fernbach) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973).

Massignon, L. 'Zandj', in M. Th. Houtsma, T. W. Arnold, R. Basset, R. Hartmann (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1987),

https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-1/zandj-SIM_6075.

Mather, Yassamine. 'Iran's Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals', *Critique*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2011, pp. 611–27.

Matin-asgari, Afshin. *Iranian Student Opposition to the Shah* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2002).

Matin-asgari, Afshin. 'Rāhi digar: Ravāyat-hā-i dar bud-o-bāsh-e Cherik-hā-ye fadaʾi-e khalq-e Irān, eds. Touraj Atabaki and Naser Mohajer, 2 vols (Berkeley, CA: Noghteh Publishers/Paris: International Institute of Social History, 2017),' *Iranian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 5, 2018, pp. 805–9.

Matthee, Rudi. 'Prostitutes, Courtesans, and Dancing Girls: Women Entertainers in Safavid Iran', in Rudi Matthee, Beth Baron and Nikki R. Keddie (eds.), *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Middle Eastern History in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000), pp. 121–50.

Matthee, Rudi. 'Blinded by Power: The Rise and Fall of Fath ʿAli Khan Daghestani, Grand Vizier under Shah Soltan Hoseyn Safavi (1127/1715-1133/1720)', *Studia Iranica*, vol. 33, 2004, pp. 179–220.

Matthee, Rudi, Willem Floor and Patrick L. Clawson. *The Monetary History of Iran: From the Safavids to the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

Matthiesen, Toby. 'Red Arabia: Anti-Colonialism. The Cold War, and the Long Sixties in the Gulf States', in Chen Jian et al. (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 94–105.

McFarland, Stephen L. 'Anatomy of an Iranian Political Crowd: The Tehran Bread Riot of December 1942', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1985, pp. 51–65.

McKeown, Adam. 'Global Migration, 1856–1940', *Journal of World History*, vol. 15, 2004, pp. 155–89.

Meftahi, Ida. *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016).

Melville, Charles. 'The Persian Famine of 1870–1872: Prices and Politics', *Disasters*, vol. 1, 1988, pp. 309–25.

Menashri, David. *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Metinsoy, Murat. 'Everyday Resistance to Unveiling and Flexible Secularism in Early Republican Turkey', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 86–117.

Metinsoy, Murat. 'Rural Crimes as Everyday Peasant Politics: Tax Delinquency, Smuggling, Theft and Banditry in Modern Turkey', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival In the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' Since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 135–54.

Meyers, Allan R. 'Class, Ethnicity, and Slavery: The Origins of the Moroccan "Abid"', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, pp. 427–42.

Micklewright, Nancy. 'Women's Dress in 19th Century Istanbul: Mirror of a Changing Society', PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania (1986).

Miers, Suzanne. 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in Saudi Arabia and the Arab States on the Persian Gulf, 1921–1963', in Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *Abolition*

and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia (Milton Park: Routledge, 2005), pp. 120–36.

Miers, Suzanne. 'Slave Rebellion and Resistance in the Aden Protectorate in the Mid-Twentieth Century', in Edward Alpers, Gwyn Campbell and Michael Salman (eds.), *Slavery and Resistance in Africa and Asia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 99–108.

Milani, Farzaneh. 'Hijab va Kashf-i Chini,' *Iran Nameh*, vol. 2, 1990, pp. 246–60.

Minamizuka, Shingo. *A Social Bandit in Nineteenth Century Hungary: Rósza Sándor* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2008).

Mir 'Ābedini, Hasan. 'Moshfeq-e Kazemi, Sayyed Mortaza,' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2011). Available at: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/moshfeq-kazemi.

Mir Kiyayi, Mahdi. *Nan va Siyasat: Ta'sir-i Buhranha-yi Nan bar Siyasat va Iqtisad-i 'Asr-i Nasiri* (Tehran: Nashr-i 'Ilm, 1394).

Mir Panjah, Isma'il. *Khatirat-i Asarat, Ruznama-yi Safar-i Khvarazm va Khiva 1280-1862* (ed. Safa' al-Din Tabarra'iyan) (Tehran: Mu'assasah-yi Pajhuhish va Mutala'at-i Farhangi, 1370).

Mirsepassi, Ali. 'The Tragedy of the Iranian Left', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 229–49.

Mirzai, Behnaz A. 'African Presence in Iran: Identity and Its Reconstruction in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Revue Française D'Histoire d'Outre-Mer*, vol. 89, no. 336–7, 2002, pp. 229–46.

Mirzai, Behnaz A. 'The 1848 Abolitionist Farmān: A Step towards Ending the Slave Trade in Iran', in Gwyn Campbell (ed.), *Abolition and Its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2005), pp. 94–102.

Mirzai, Behnaz A. *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800–1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Moghissi, Haideh. 'Troubled Relationships: Women, Nationalism and the Left Movement in Iran', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 209–28.

Montana, Ismael Musah. *The Abolition of Slavery in Ottoman Tunisia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013).

Muhammadi, RizaJahan. 'Mushkil-i Nan va Kambud-i An dar Qazvin pish az Mashrutah', *Tarikh-i Mu'asir-i Iran*, no. 41, 1386, pp. 41–54.

Nabavi, Negin. *Modern Iran: A History in Documents* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2017).

Naficy, Hamid. *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: Volume 2, The Industrializing Years, 1941–1978* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. 'Veiled Discourse-Unveiled Bodies', *Feminist Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, 1993, pp. 487–518.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *The Story of the Daughters of Quchan: Gender and National Memory in Iranian History* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

Napier, Malcolm. *Five Years in a Persian Town* (London: John Murray, 1905).

Nasrabadi, Manijeh and Afshin Matin-asgari. 'The Iranian Student Movement and the Making of Global 1968', in Chen Jian, Martin Klimke, Masha Kirasirova, Mary Nolan, Marilyn-Blatt Young and Jonna Choen-Waley (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of the Global Sixties: Between Protest and Nation-Building* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 443–56.

Neuburger, Mary. *The Orient Within*: *Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Neuburger, Mary. 'Difference Unveiled: Bulgarian National Imperatives and the Re-Dressing of Muslim Women, 1878–1989', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 252–66.

Nikpour, Golnar. 'Prison Days: The History of Prisons and Punishment in Modern Iran', PhD thesis, Columbia University (2015). Available at: https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8154GF6.

Northrop, Douglas. *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Norton, John. 'Faith and Fashion in Turkey', in Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham (eds.), *Languages of Dress in the Middle East* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997), pp. 149–77.

Okazaki, Shoko. 'The Great Persian Famine of 1870–71', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 49, no. 1, 1986, pp. 183–92.

Olson, Emilie A. 'Muslim Identity and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey: "The Headscarf Dispute"', *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, 1985, pp. 161–71.

O'Malley, Pat. 'Class Conflict, Land and Social Banditry: Bushranging in Nineteenth Century Australia', *Social Problems*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1979, pp. 271–83.

Ouatmani, Settar. 'Arezki L'Bachir Un "bandit d'honneur" en Kabylie au xixe siècle', *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 136, 2014.

Özbek, Müge. 'The Regulation of Prostitution in Istanbul, 1875–1915', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2010, pp. 555–68.

Özbek, Müge. '"Disorderly Women" and the Politics of Urban Space in Early 20th Century Istanbul (1900–1914)', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and Survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' Since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 51–63.

Özkan, Fulya. 'Gravediggers of the Modern State: Highway Robbers on the Trabzon-Bayezid Road, 1850s-1910s', *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2014, pp. 219–50.

Özkan, Esra. *Mainstreaming the Headscarf: Islamist Politics and Women in the Turkish Media* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019).

Papas, Alexandre, *Thus Spake the Dervish: Sufism, Language, and the Religious Margins in Central Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

Peirce, Leslie. 'Abduction with (Dis)honor: Sovereigns, Brigands, and Heroes in the Ottoman World', *Journal of Early Modern History*, vol. 15, 2001, pp. 311–29.

Perry, Elizabeth J. 'Social Banditry Revisited: The Case of Bai Lang, a Chinese Brigand', *Modern China*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1983, pp. 355–82.

Peters, Rudolph. 'Egypt and the Age of the Triumphant Prison: Legal Punishments in Nineteenth Century Egypt', *Annales Islamologiques*, vol. 36, 2002, pp. 253–85.

Peters, Rudolph. 'Prisons and Marginalization in Nineteenth Century Egypt', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 31–52.

Peters, Rudolph. 'Controlled Suffering: Mortality and Living Conditions in 19th-Century Egyptian Prisons', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2004, pp. 387–407.

Petrov, Milen V. 'Everyday Forms of Compliance: Subaltern Commentaries on Ottoman Reform, 1864–1868', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2004, pp. 730–59.

Pipes, Daniel. *Slave Soldiers and Islam: The Genesis of a Military System* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1980).

Pistor-Hatem, Anja. 'Sattar Khan', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 20 July 2009. Available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/sattar-khan-one-of-the-most-popular-heroes-from-tabriz-who-defended-the-town-during-the-lesser-autocracy-in-1908-09.

Pistor-Hatem, Anja. 'The Iranian Constitutional Revolution as lieu(x) de mémoire: Sattar Khan', in Houchang E. Chehabi and Vanessa Martin (eds.), *Iran's Constitutional Revolution: Popular Politics, Cultural Transformation and Transnational Connections* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

Plarier, Antonin. 'Rural Banditry in Colonial Algeria (1871–1914)', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Crime, Poverty and survival in the Middle East and North Africa: The 'Dangerous Classes' since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), pp. 105–16.

Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1944).

Popovic, Alexandre. *The Revolt of African Slaves in Iraq in the 3rd/9th Century* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999).

Popovic, Alexandre. 'The Zandj Revolts in "Irāk"', in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W. P. Heinrichs (eds)., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

Prestholdt, Jeremy. 'Resurrecting Che: Radicalism, the Transnational Imagination, and the Politics of Heroes,' *Journal of Global History*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2012, pp. 506–26.

Prochaska, David. 'Fire on the Mountain: Resisting Colonialism in Algeria', in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Banditry, Rebellion and Social Protest in Africa* (London: James Currey and Heinemann, 1986), pp. 229–52.

Proenza-Coles, Christina. 'Las Siete Partidas,' in Leslie Alexander and Walter Rucker (eds.), *Encyclopedia of African American History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008). http://christinaproenza.org/SietePartidas.html.

Quataert, Donald. 'The Régie, Smugglers and the Government', in Donald Quataert (ed.), *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908, Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).

Quataert, Donald. *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908, Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).

Quataert, Donald. 'Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, 1997, pp. 403–25.

Rahmanian, Dariush, and Mahdi Mir Kiyayi. 'Ta'sir-i Balvaha-yi Nan bar Ravabit-i Hukumat va Mardom dar 'Asr-Nasiri',' *Tahqiqat-i Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, no. 6, 1392, pp. 65–98.

Rahmanian, Dariush, and Mahdi Mir Kiyayi. 'Ta'sir-i Khushksali va Qahti bar Vaz'iyat-i Malikiyyat-i Zamin dar Iran-i 'Asr-i Nasiri',' *Mutala'at-i Tarikh-i Islam*, no. 23, 1393, pp. 219–54.

Rahnema, Ali. *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Sharia'ti* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998).

Rahnema, Saeed. 'The Left and the Struggle for Democracy in Iran', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 250–67.

Randall, Adrian and Andrew Charlesworth (eds.). *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflict, and Authority* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

Ravandi-Fadai, Lana. 'Reconstructions of a Native in Exile: Cossack Brigade Fighter and Architect of Tehran – Nikolai L'vovich Markov (1882–1957)', in Rudi Matthee and Elena Andreeva (eds.), *Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), pp. 217–39.

Rediker, Marcus. *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (London: Verso, 2004).

Rediker, Marcus. *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail* (London: Verso, 2014).

Regavim, Ram Baruch. 'The Most Sovereign of Masters: The History of Opium in Modern Iran, 1850–1955', PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (2012). Available at https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/687.

Rejali, Darius M. *Torture and Modernity: Self, Society and State in Modern Iran* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994).

Rezvani-Naraghi, Ashkan. 'Middle Class Urbanism: The Socio-Spatial Transformation of Tehran, 1921–41', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 51, no. 1, pp. 97–126.

Rinke, Stefan and Michael Wildt (eds.). *Revolutions and Counter-Revolutions: 1917 and Its Aftermath from a Global Perspective* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2017).

Rogan, Eugene. 'Madness and Marginality: The Advent of the Psychiatric Asylum in Egypt and Lebanon', in Eugene Rogan (ed.), *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris 2002), pp. 104–25.

Rostam-Kolayi, Jasamin. 'Expanding Agendas for the "New" Iranian Woman: Family Law, Work and Unveiling', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 164–89.

Rostam-Kolayi, Jasamin and Afshin Matin-asgari. 'Unveiling Ambiguities: Revisiting 1930s Iran's kashf-i hijab Campaign', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 121–39.

Ruiz, Mario M. 'Criminal Statistics in the Long 1890s', in Marilyn Booth and Anthony Gorman (eds.), *The Long 1890s in Egypt: Colonial Quiescence Subterranean Resistance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 141–66.

Sabra, Adam. *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Sadeghi-Boroujerdi, Eskandar. 'The Origins of Communist Unity: Anti-Colonialism and Revolution in Iran's Tri-Continental Moment', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 5, 2017, pp. 796–822.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Said, Edward W. *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

Salouā Studer, Nina. *The Hidden Patients: North African Women in French Colonial Psychiatry* (Köln/Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2015).

Sariyannis, Marinos. '"Mob", "Scamps" and Rebels in Seventeenth Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary', *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1–2, 2005, pp. 1–15.

Sariyannis, Marinos. '"Neglected Trades": Glimpses into the 17th Century Istanbul Underworld', *Turcica*, vol. 38, 2006, pp. 155–79.

Sarriyannis, Marinos. 'Prostitution in Ottoman Istanbul, late Sixteenth-Early Eighteenth Century', *Turcica*, vol. 40, 2008, pp. 37–65.

Sariyannis, Marinos. 'Images of the Mediterranean in an Ottoman Pirate Novel from the Late Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, vol. 39, 2012, pp. 189–204.

Saunders, A. C. de C. M. *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal, 1441–1555* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Saunier, Pierre-Yves. *Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Schayegh, Cyrus. 'Sport, Health and the Iranian Middle Class in the 1920s and 1930s', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2002, pp. 341–69.

Schayegh, Cyrus. 'Serial Murder in Tehran: Crime, Science and the Formation of Modern State and Society in Interwar Iran', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2005, pp. 836–62.

Schayegh, Cyrus. '"A Sound Mind Lives in a Healthy Body": Texts and Contexts in the Iranian Modernists' Scientific Discourse of Health, 1910s–1940s', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, pp. 167–88.

Schayegh, Cyrus. 'Criminal-Women and Mother-Women: Socio-Cultural Transformations and the Critique of Criminality in Early Post-World War II Iran', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2006, pp. 1–21.

Schayegh, Cyrus. *Who Is Knowledgeable Is Strong: Science, Class and the Formation of Modern Iranian Society, 1900–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

Scheele, Judith. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Schneider, Irene. *The Petitioning System in Iran: State, Society and Power Relations in the Late 19th Century* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006).

Schull, Kent F. *Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

Seal, Graham. 'The Robin Hood Principle: Folklore, History and the Social Bandit', *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2009, pp. 67–89.

Semerdjian, Elyse. *'Off the Straight Path': Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

Seng, Yvonne. 'A Liminal State: Slavery in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul', in Shaun E. Marmon (ed.), *Slavery in the Islamic Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), pp. 25–42.

Seyf, Ahmed. 'Iran and the Great Famine, 1870–1872', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2010, pp. 289–306.

Shakya, Tsering. 'Ga rgya 'gram nag: A Bandit or Proto-rebel? The Question of Banditry as Social Protest in Nag chu', in Roberto Vitali (ed.), *Trails of the Tibetan Tradition: Papers for Elliot Sperling* (Dharamshala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2014).

Shan, Patrick Fuliang. 'Insecurity, Outlawry and Social Order: Banditry in China's Heilongjiang Frontier Region, 1900–1931', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2006, pp. 25–54.

Shannon, Matthew K. *Losing Hearts and Minds: America-Iranian Relations and International Education during the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

Sha'rawi, Huda. *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist, 1879–1924* (trans., ed., intr. Margot Badran) (London: Virago, 1986).

Sharpe, James. *A Fiery and Furious People: A History of Violence in England* (London: Random House Books, 2016).

Shissler, A. Holly. 'Beauty is Nothing to be Ashamed of: Beauty Contests as Tools of Women's Liberation in Early Republican Turkey', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2004, pp. 109–26.

Shoshan, Boaz. 'Grain Riots and the "Moral Economy": Cairo, 1350–1517', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1980, pp. 459–78.

Sikainga, Ahmad Alawad. *Slaves into Workers: Emancipation and Labor in Colonial Sudan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

Sikainga, Ahmad Alawad. 'Slavery and Muslim Jurisprudence in Morocco', *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1998, pp. 57–72.

Sikainga, Ahmad Alawad. 'Slavery and Social Life in Nineteenth-Century Turco-Egyptian Khartoum', in Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.), *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), pp. 147–70.

Singer, Amy. *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Şiviloğlu, Murat R. *The Emergence of Public Opinion: State and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Slatta, Richard W. (ed.). *Bandidos: The Varieties of Latin American Banditry* (New York: Greenwood, 1987).

Slavs and Tatars. *Molla Nasreddin: The Magazine that Would've, Could've, Should've* (Zürich: JRP-Ringier, 2011).

Smith, Stephen. 'A Long Look at the Russian Revolution. Steve Smith Talks to the British Academy Review about his New Book, "Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890–1928"', *British Academy Review*, no. 29, 2017, 21–3. Available at www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/long-look-russian-revolution.

Snader, Joe. *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000).

Sohrabi, Nader. 'Revolution and State Culture: The Circle of Justice and Constitutionalism in 1906 Iran', in G. Steinmetz (ed.), *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn* (Ithaca, CT: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 253–88.

Sohrabi, Nader. *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Sohrabi, Naghmeh. 'Remembering the Palestine Group: Global Activism, Friendship, and the Iranian Revolution', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 51, no. 2, 2019, pp. 281–300.

Stilt, Kristen. *Islamic Law in Action: Authority, Discretion, and Everyday Experiences in Mamluk Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Swedenburg, Ted. *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Takla, Mary Nefertiti. 'Murder in Alexandria: The Gender, Sexual and Class Politics of Criminality in Egypt, 1914–1921', PhD thesis, University of California (2016). Available at: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4r35401hm.

Takriti, Abdel Razzaq. *Monsoon Revolution: Republicans, Sultans, and Empires in Oman, 1965–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Talatoff, Kamran. *Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran: The Life and Legacy of a Popular Female Artist* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

Talhami, Ghada Hashem. 'The Zanj Rebellion Reconsidered', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, p. 445.

Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. 'Women of the West Imagined: The *Farangi* Other and the Emergence of the Woman Question in Iran', in Valentine M. Moghadam (ed.), *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Routledge, 1993).

Tavakoli-Targhi, Mohamad. *Women of the West Imagined: Occidentalism and Exotic Europeans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

Thompson, Edward Palmer. *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (London: Merlin Press, 1991).

Thompson, Edward Palmer. *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1968).

Thompson, Edward Palmer. 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1971, pp. 76–136.

Thompson, Elizabeth. *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

Thurston, Thomas. 'Annual Bibliographical Supplement (2013)', *Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2014, pp. 681–781.

Tilly, Charles. 'Food Supply and Public Order in Modern Europe', in Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 380–455.

Todorova, Maria (ed.). *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (New York: New York University Press, 2004).

Toledano, Ehud R. 'The Imperial Eunuchs of Istanbul: From Africa to the Heart of Islam', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 1984, pp. 379–90.

Toledano, Ehud R. *Slavery and Abolition in the Ottoman Middle East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

Toledano, Ehud R. 'Shemsigül: A Circassian Slave in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Cairo', in Edmund Burke III and David N. Yacoubian (eds.), *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Toledano, Ehud R. *As if Silent and Absent: Bonds of Enslavement in the Islamic Middle East* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

Toledano, Ehud R. *African Communities in Asia and the Mediterranean: Identities between Integration and Conflict* (London: Africa World Press, 2011).

Troutt Powell, Eve M. 'Will That Subaltern Ever Speak? Finding African Slaves in the Historiography of the Middle East', in Israel Gershoni, Amy Singer and Y. Hakan Erdem (eds.), *Middle East Historiographies: Narrating the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. 242–61.

Troutt Powell, Eve M. *Tell This in My Memory: Stories of Enslavement from Egypt, Sudan and the Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

Tucker, Judith. *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Turna, Nalan. 'Ottoman Apprentices and Their Experiences', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 55, no. 5, 2019, pp. 683–700.

Vahabzadeh, Peyman. *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy, and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran, 1971–1979* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

Vahabzadeh, Peyman. *A Rebel's Journey: Mostafa Sho'aiyan and Revolutionary Theory in Iran* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2019).

Vakulenko, Anastasia. *Islamic Veiling in Legal Discourse* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

Vali, Abbas. *Pre-Capitalist Iran: A Theoretical History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993).

Vejdani, Farzin. 'Illicit Acts and Sacred Space: Everyday Crime in the Shrine City of Mashhad, 1913–1914,' *Journal of Persianate Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2014, pp. 22–54.

Vejdani, Farzin. 'Urban Violence and Space: *Lutis*, Seminarians, and Sayyids in Late Qajar Iran', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2019, pp. 1,185–211.

Violard, Emile. *Le Banditisme en Kabylie* (Paris: A. Savine, 1895).

Vitkus, Daniel J. *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

Wagner, Kim A. 'Thuggee and Social Banditry Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2007, pp. 353–76.

Walcher, Heidi. *In the Shadow of the King: Zill al-Sultan and Isfahan under the Qajars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

Walton, John. *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), p. 171.

Walton, John, and David Seddon. *Free Markets and Food Riots: The Politics of Global Adjustment* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

Walvin, James. *A Short History of Slavery* (London: Penguin, 2007).

Walz, Terence and Kenneth M. Cuno (eds.). *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010).

Weber, Charlotte. 'Between Nationalism and Feminism: The Eastern Women's Congresses of 1930 and 1932', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2008, pp. 83–106.

White, Luise. *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Wide, Thomas. 'Astrakhan, Borqa', Chadari, Dreshi: The Economy of Dress in Early-Twentieth-Century Afghanistan', in Stephanie Cronin (ed.), *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 163–201.

Wild, S. 'Jugglers and Fraudulent Sufis', in Frithiof Rundgren (ed.), *Proceedings of the VIth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, Visby 13–16 August, Stockholm 17–19 August 1972 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1975), pp. 58–62.

Wilks, Judith M. 'The Persianization of Köroğlu: Banditry and Royalty in Three Versions of the Köruğlu "Destan"', *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2001, pp. 305–18.

Williams, Eric. *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

Wishnitzer, Avner. *Reading Clocks, Alla Turca: Time and Society in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Wright, John. *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

Wyers, Mark David. *Wicked Istanbul: The Regulation of Prostitution in the Early Turkish Republic* (Istanbul: Libra Kitapçılık ve Yayıncılık, 2012).

Yavari, Houra. 'Fiction, ii(b)', *Encycopaedia Iranica*, vol. ix, fasc. 6, 1999, pp. 580–92.

Zabih, Sepehr. 'Communism ii. In Persia from 1941 to 1953', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. vi, fasc. 1, pp. 102–5.

Zakeri, Mohsen. 'Javanmardi', *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2008). Available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/javanmardi.

Zarinbaf, Fariba. *Crime and Punishment in Istanbul, 1700–1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 86–111.

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza. 'Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of the "Aryan" Discourse in Iran', *Iranian Studies*, vol. 44, no. 4, 2011, pp. 445–72.

Zilfi, Madeline C. *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 153–88.

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza. *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).

Index