

the Arab world, while *Ambiguous Adventures* powerfully depicts the ‘evils’ of the East–West encounter.

Amir H. Zekrgoo’s “Trans-Cultural Nature of Islamic Art” defines Islamic art, recounts its genesis, distinguishes Persian from Byzantine art, and delves into Islamic art in Southeast Asia, referring also to works of art in other cultures such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. His essay prolifically provides actual examples found throughout the world’s sacred, religious and non-religious domains. He ultimately sees Islamic art as a form of traditional art where beauty and use go hand in hand, being two “inseparable aspects of perfection”, as he has it.

Finally, in “Minorities in Muslim Societies: The Civilizational Context of Malaysian Pluralism” Muddathir Abdel-Rahim lays the religious and philosophical foundations of pluralism in the Islamic worldview, considers the legal status of non-Muslims in traditional Islamic states and societies, and relates the life of *dhimmīs* (non-Muslims, essentially ‘People of the Book’ but later broadened to include Zoroastrians and Hindus as well) in traditional Muslim societies; citing Malaysia as an outstanding example of tolerance and positive acceptance rooted in faith.

In conclusion, the book is an overview of *Islamic Hadhari*, explaining its relevance to modernity through various narratives of scholars within and without Malaysia. It touches the principles of faith in God and piety, rigorous pursuit and mastery of knowledge, a balanced and comprehensive economic development, cultural and moral integrity and safeguarding natural resources and the environment; allowing inferences to a just and trustworthy government, a free and independent people and a good quality of life. Admittedly, more could be said in this volume – particularly on the protection of the rights of women and minorities and strong defence capabilities – but as a ‘primer’ on *Islam Hadhari* and backed by links between the old and the new, the book is a useful reference and worthwhile read.

Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 3rd ed.), xxviii+357 pp.
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Christoph Marcinkowski *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia*

Charles Tripp’s *A History of Iraq* is now in its third edition. Since 2000, when the first edition appeared, it has become a classic in Middle Eastern studies. The current edition has been updated to include the 2003 Anglo-American invasion, the fall and capture of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, and the subsequent insurgency. Its author

is Professor of Politics at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in the University of London.

To date, several classic studies on contemporary Iraqi history are available, among them Majid Khadduri's *Independent Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics Since 1932* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), Hanna Battatu's *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movement in Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), Abbas Kelidar's *The Integration of Modern Iraq* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1979), Phebe Marr's *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1985), CARDI's (Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq; ed.) *Iraq: Revolution or Reaction* (London: Zed Books, 1989), Marion Farouk-Sluglett's *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London and New York: KPI, 1990), Yithak Nakash's *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), Faleh Abd al-Jabar's *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq* (London: Saqi, 2003), and Ali A. Allawi's *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* (London: Yale University Press, 2007), to name only a few, and the current reviewer, too has contributed to this list with his *Religion and Politics in Iraq: Shi'ite Clerics between Quietism and Resistance* (Singapore: PN, 2004), which includes a foreword by Professor Algar of the University of California at Berkeley. Tripp's book, however, has established itself as *the* one-stop reference work on the history of Iraq from the end of Ottoman rule to the present.

The current third edition of Tripp's work is divided into seven chapters:

Chapter 1 deals with the three Ottoman provinces (*wilāyāt*) of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, which made up what is now Iraq toward the end of Ottoman rule. Tripp's account of that period focuses in particular on the multicultural character of Iraqi society. In the mainly Kurdish-speaking areas of the north and north-east of the Mosul and Baghdad provinces Sunnites – among them the Sufis of the Qādirī and Naqshbandī traditions – and strongly shaped by Kurdish *shaykhs* and *sayyids*, were joined by Kurdish-speaking adherents of the syncretistic religion of Yezidism, as well as Christian and Shi'ites (of the latter, some Kurdish, some Turkmen). These characteristics, in addition to the general linguistic differences and geographic isolation in mostly mountainous territory, led to the emergence of several semi-independent local lordships and petty principalities. The Arabic-speaking areas of the *wilāyah* of Mosul and its rural population featured sedentary as well as nomadic tribal groups. The city of Mosul was somewhat more directly integrated into the Ottoman administrative system, as was Baghdad.

The *wilāyah* of Baghdad featured as a peculiarity the *'atabāt* (lit. 'thresholds'), the tombs of most of the Twelver Shi'ite Imāms – 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in Najaf, ah-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī in Karbalā', and two more Imāms in al-Kāzimiyyah, a suburb of Baghdad. Like Qom in neighbouring Iran, those places had over centuries developed into

eminent centres of Shi'ite scholarship and major pilgrimage destinations. They were also home to the leading Shi'ite *marāji* ' (pl. of *marja* ', in English usually referred to as 'Grand Ayatollahs'). The *'atabāt* had also a key influence over the surrounding Arab tribal areas which became their major bases of support.

Finally, there was the *wilāyah* of Basra in the south, which was largely Shi'ite and Arab and traditionally and for centuries involved in the overseas trade with India.

Tripp's first chapter is crucial in order to understand modern Iraq's history and the involvement of the armed forces in politics since the late Ottoman period, as in the nineteenth century the sultan's Arab-speaking units that were stationed in Iraq became the nucleus of subsequent Arab and Iraq nationalism *vis-à-vis* as a response to parallel developments among the Young Turks.

Chapter 2 deals with the British 'Mandate' – Iraq's first occupation by a Western power in the aftermath of the First World War which led to the dissolution and partition of the Ottoman Empire. The most significant event of that period was the Great Uprising of 1920 (referred to by Tripp as 'revolt') against the British – perhaps the earliest manifestation of Iraqi national feeling, which brought together almost *all* strata and religious sects of Iraqi society for a single cause.

Chapters 3 and 4 tell us about the various internal developments under the British-installed and -sponsored Hashemite monarchy in Iraq after the country had gained nominal 'independence' from Britain in 1932. Britain remained, however, deeply involved in Iraqi politics and even re-occupied the country in the course of the Second World War to keep control over its oil reserves. The dominant figure during the post-war period was the pro-Western Prime Minister Nūrī al-Sa'īd, whose highly controversial rule and political schemes were marked by total disregard for the aspirations of the Iraqi people, the economic hardships faced by them, the rampant corruption of the political leadership, the anger of 'Arab street' – Arab public opinion – about the disastrous outcome of the 1948 war between Arabs and Jews in Palestine, and lastly the emergence of a revolutionary Arab nationalist regime under Nasser (Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir) in Egypt in 1952. All this together led to the Iraqi revolution of 1958 and the bloody overthrow of the monarchy.

Chapter 5 offers an account of Iraq between 1958 and 1968, a period which featured several rather unstable military regimes (led by 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim, 'Abd al-Salām 'Ārif, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Ārif, respectively) and a first (unsuccessful) Ba'ṯist coup (in 1963).

Chapter 6 – the longest chapter of Tripp's book (pp. 186–276) – gives an overview of the Ba'ṯist regime (1968–2003) and the dictatorial rule of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, its most brutal exponent. It starts with the consolidation of power, Ṣaddām's takeover, the Kurdish and internal Shi'ite challenges (especially after the fall of the Shah in neighbouring Iran in 1979), the Iraq–Iran war (1980–88) – started by Ṣaddām on behalf of the West – and the horrific methodical extermination of any kind of

opposition. This is followed by the invasion of Kuwait, the first show-down with the coalition forces led by the United States (his former ally), which were also supported by fellow Arab nations Egypt and Syria, and the fall of the Ba‘thist regime as one of the results of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Chapter 7 ends this book with an account of the US-led occupation of the country and the first years of the new democratic republic which were marred by bloody sectarian strife and an insurgency that brought Iraq to the brink of a civil war.

A History of Iraq is a well-researched, highly readable, unemotional and balanced study – which is quite remarkable in light of the circumstance that its author happens to come from a country (Britain) which like no other (the late Ottomans included) has shaped the fate of Iraq in the course of the twentieth century before being replaced by the United States in the twenty-first. To the taste of this reviewer, who for the last two decades or so has studied major developments in the world of Middle Eastern Shi‘ism, Tripp could have put somewhat stronger emphasis on that crucial feature – in particular within the Iraqi setting. Aside from this, however, his work is a major achievement. It will certainly see further updated editions in times to come as Iraq’s future is far from being settled.

Nicholas Pelham, *A New Muslim Order: The Shia and the Middle East Sectarian Crisis*

(Cambridge: I.B. Tauris, 2008), xvi+272 pp. ISBN: 978-1845111397. £11.70

Christoph Marcinkowski *International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia*

Nicholas Pelham’s *A New Muslim Order*, written by a senior journalist of international standing, tries to make sense of the current phenomenon of a multi-faceted Shi‘ite ‘revival’ in the Arab world, a phenomenon which has been termed by others – *wrongly*, to the mind of this reviewer – as the emergence of a ‘Shi‘ite Crescent’ (apparently in analogy to the ‘Fertile Crescent’ of Antiquity, spanning from Mesopotamia/Iraq over Syria to what is now Lebanon).

Pelham has spent two decades writing and broadcasting in the Middle East and North Africa. In 2003, he covered the Anglo-American invasion and occupation of Iraq as a correspondent for the *Economist* and the *Financial Times*. He is currently a Senior Analyst for the Brussels-based think-tank, International Crisis Group.

While focussing on Iraq, in his book Pelham tries to show how the centre of Shi‘ite political power has (supposedly) moved from Iranian Qom to Najaf in Iraq. He argues (correctly, in this writer’s view) throughout his account that Sunnite anxieties in this respect have been exploited by several of their contemporary political leaders