Chapter Six

The Social Meaning of Land

STATE, SHAIKH, AND PEASANT

> Ought we to aim at a "bureaucratic" form of administration, such as that in force in Turkey and in Egypt, involving direct control by a central government, and the replacement of the powerful tribal confederation by the smaller tribal or sub-tribal unit, as a prelude to individual in place of communal ownership of land, or should our aim be to retain, and subject to official safeguards, to strengthen, the authority of tribal chiefs, and to make them the agents and official representatives of Government, within their respective areas? The latter policy had been already adopted, in default of a better one, in Basra wilayat, and especially in the Muntafiq division: was it wise to apply it to the Baghdad wilayat? Both policies had their advocates.[1]

No policy debate was more important for the making of the Iraqi state than that over the system of land tenure and revenue. No other issue revealed so starkly the ways British conceptions of Iraqi society influenced the shape the state and society assumed at the moment of Iraq's entrance onto the world stage. There was a broad consensus about the goals of any prospective land policy. It had to maximize the revenue extracted from agricultural production in the form of taxation while posing no threat to the state's ability to guarantee order. But the use of land policy to achieve these goals brought the differing social conceptions among British colonial officials in Iraq into stark relief. The intense and often angry debate revolved around the role and appropriate strength of the newly formed state in relation to the society it was designed to order and administer. Were the institutions of the evolving state strong enough to penetrate society and transform it? The competing social visions understood rural society as being constructed around shaikhs and peasants; the debate focused on the nature of state interaction with each. Was the peasant an individual, rational maximizer constrained by the despotic rule of his shaikh? Or were peasants members of a collective economic and social unit best represented by the shaikh? This debate defined and ultimately decided the way Iraq's modernity evolved.

As the British consolidated their position in Iraq, it became widely acknowledged that the Turkish system of land tenure had been badly conceived and haphazardly applied.[2] In the aftermath of the 1920 revolt, the remnants of the Turkish system were in a state of collapse, and disputes over land ownership and revenue were the major cause of social unrest. The proposals for reform highlighted the two conflicting visions of Iraqi society: the collectivist and the individualist. As these two approaches became polarized, lesser officials found themselves caught between them and under increasing pressure to choose one or the other. The divisions within British approaches to land policy can be examined by comparing the different categories deployed to understand rural society. The three main units of analysis, shaikh, *sarkal*, and *mallak*, had distinct meanings, and their use carried ideological as well as practical consequences. By examining how these three categories were used in different areas of central and southern Iraq, the Muntafiq, Amarah, and the Dulaim, the fault lines within the British social conceptions informing the making of Iraq can be better understood.

The three main protagonists in the debate surrounding the land issue, Steven Longrigg, Ernest Dowson, and Henry Dobbs, deployed different understandings of state and social structures and the effects of modernity upon both. Longrigg had risen through the ranks of the Mandate administration to become the Revenue Secretary to the Ministry of Finance. Sir Ernest Dowson had become the preeminent colonial land expert. Having occupied the posts of Surveyor General, Under Secretary of State for Finance, and Financial Adviser to the Egyptian government, he went on to write a major report on the land problem in Palestine. Finally, the figure of Henry Dobbs dominates the issue of land and revenue in Iraq from 1915 to at least 1929, when he retired as High Commissioner. In 1914 he had been transferred from the Government of India to become a Political Officer with British forces in the Middle East. From January 1915 until 31 July 1916 he was the First Revenue Officer for the British Expeditionary Force in Iraq. It was Dobbs who carried out the most thorough investigation into the basis of the Ottoman land system in Iraq and formulated British regulations designed to reform and replace the Turkish system.[3] How these three British experts on land deployed social categories to understand Iraqi society reveals the different social assumptions and conceptions behind the British attempt to create a modern and liberal Iraqi state.

Land, Colonialism, and the Consequences of Modernity

No administrative system is capable of representing any existing social community except through a heroic and greatly schematized process of abstraction and simplification.[4]

The British sought to make society socially comprehensible and hence controllable by regulating and reforming land tenure and revenue. These reforms were designed to impose a modern homogeneous order. Policy making involved the application of a universal unit of analysis to the understanding of landowning. The British aimed to provide a reliable and quantifiable answer to the question of land entitlement. Although this application of modern method strove by its very nature to impose a unitary standard upon landholding, arguments immediately arose over what the precise units of ownership were to be. These debates, although centered on three specific individuals, represented much wider divisions in the social imagination of modernity. The dispute between Dobbs, Dowson, and Longrigg was expressed in terms of personal preference and professional experience. But the conceptual structures that shaped the terms in which these arguments unfolded had their roots in the evolution of European land-tenure regimes and the divided discourse of modernity that underlay them.

The process of centralization and governmental reform had begun during the later period of Ottoman rule in Iraq. But it was the British army's seizure of territory after November 1914 and then the British-administered mandated state that instigated the far-reaching transformation of Iraqi society—with the country's full involvement in the dynamics of global markets—and, hence, its modernity.[5]

The enframing rationalism of a "high modernist ideology" peaked in confidence, coherence, and reach on the eve of World War I. It was seen by its advocates as granting the state the power to dominate and transform society.[6] This ability to understand and therefore transform society was ensured by the state's capacity to make society intelligible and hence accessible to its functionaries and institutions. The basis of this power was the creation and imposition of social units of analysis that were at once simple and unambiguous. Driven by a limited number of objectives,

> officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices, such as land tenure customs or naming customs, and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored. . . . They did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to; they represented only that slice of it that interested the official observer.[7]

The effect of this transformation was to impose solidity upon the units of social analysis the state was using to understand the society it sought to dominate. Communities and social groupings that were, under premodern conditions, "fuzzy," or socially overdetermined became enumerated, simple, and precise. The state's rationalist demands for precision transformed in its own image the society it sought to understand.[8]

This modernizing process had begun to transform property rights in the aftermath of the Enlightenment. "Facts" were standardized so that they could be enumerated, collated, and compared without ambiguity.[9] The creation of a neutral and enumerated space was imposed by and then mediated through the institutions of the state. In Europe, the rediscovery of Roman law had made the unqualified possession of land a commonsensical article of faith. John Locke legitimized this notion by claiming private ownership as a law of nature.[10]

The state, in order to efficiently extract wealth from agricultural production, set about attaching all taxable land to an individual or institution it had identified as responsible for the land's taxable value. The result was the imposition of a land-tenure system that was conceptually coherent for the state. Units of land had to be delineated and their possession legally enforceable. This process, by its very nature, imposed homogeneity within the state's boundaries, forcing local landholding practices to conform to the universal norm that suited the state's fiscal and administrative concerns:

> categories that may have begun as the artificial inventions of cadastral surveyors, census takers, or police officers can end by becoming categories that organize people's daily experience precisely because they are embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience.[11]

This model of state-driven modernization that would transform property rights was exported along with everything else that colonial modernization entailed.[12] In effect the "heroic simplification" inherent in modern state institutions was so hegemonic that the alien societies encountered by colonial administrators could not be viewed in any other fashion.[13] The precision of analysis and the imposition of enumerated units of understanding was certainly transformative. Yet both society and land were ordered in this way not because this template fitted Iraq's state and society but because it was the only one available.

For British colonial administrators across the Empire, property rights were seen as universal and applicable to all territories they controlled no matter what the superficial differences between them appeared to be.[14] The imposition of European notions of land tenure brought order to rural societies but also an ideological coherence to the colonizing mission.[15] This order was imposed in two stages. First, all land had to be owned, and it was the administrator's job to find out who that owner was—to formalize and then protect his rights of possession. Then the proprietor was encouraged to farm the land as efficiently as possible.[16]

Although the imposition of European notions of land tenure was interpreted by its colonial administrators as merely codifying what was already in existence, it had profoundly transformative effects. By its very nature, this system of solidification and homogenization could not countenance or even recognize local differences in approach to social organization.[17] The far-reaching effects of this can be gauged when it is realized that although all capitalist societies share a similar structural logic, all precapitalist societies are "traditional" in their own very specific ways.[18] So the imposition of unambiguous European notions of unqualified possession ignored other more complex and flexible attitudes to land use. Across the precolonial world, individual ownership was often an alien concept. Instead, the produce of a given section of land was shared out on the basis of mutual obligation and input to the production process.[19]

Social-scientific study of the imposition of modern forms of land tenure in Europe and their globalization through colonialism rightly stresses the instrumental rationality at the heart of their conception and implementation. The rationalism of high modernism led to the imposition of a sim-

plified social map of unambiguous units of analysis and comparison. But for many scholars studying this shift, the hegemonic unit of analysis imposed on societies was that of the rational individual. This is especially true in the case of land tenure. In tracing the rise of the European concept of the rational, unencumbered individual from the Enlightenment onward, we find that this argument places the individual property owner at the center of modern land tenure in Europe and later in the colonized world.[20] Although many (and perhaps most) land-tenure regimes came to be based on this model of economic man, to concentrate upon this to the exclusion of all else is itself a reductive simplification. A closer examination of the development of European social thought in the aftermath of the Enlightenment identifies a hard-fought struggle between two competing conceptions of society and the units that composed it. The discourse of modernity is more accurately theorized not as the hegemonic dominance of one system of thought over all others but as a series of competing systems struggling to gain ascendance. The ideals of the Enlightenment were forcefully challenged as rational individualism competed for dominance with more collective visions of society. [21]

The arguments around land tenure in Iraq were representative of this division within the discourse of modernity. The conceptions and approaches of Dobbs and Dowson most starkly represented this dichotomy. Rational instrumentalism as a method of grasping and ordering society was certainly deployed by both of them. Their disagreement focused on whether the vehicle of instrumentalism would be the individual or the tribe. In each case, once the unit had been selected, its "nature" was then "heroically simplified." It was universalized across the territory of the state, and then, by channeling the power of the state through it, it was imposed on the whole of society.

Land Policy in Iraq

The problem of land and its control was central for the Mandate, but the lack of a coherent British approach led to an inconsistent and piecemeal policy. Throughout the period of the Mandate, British officials acknowledged that "the land problem" was the most important issue to be dealt with once the state's nascent institutions had been put in place.

The reasons for this urgency were twofold: revenue and order. In Westminster, most prominent amongst the British government's concerns was the expenditure devoted to underwriting the administration in Iraq.[22] As the vast majority of Iraq's population lived on the land and earned its livelihood from it, the only feasible route to financial self-sufficiency for the emerging state was to dramatically raise the tax extracted from the rural population.[23] Also, it was quickly realized that the disorganized and unstable condition of land tenure was the single greatest cause of social instability. There was a strong concern running through official documents from 1914 until 1932 that the continuous conflict caused by disputed land ownership undermined the imposition of law and order.[24] Despite its acknowledged importance, British land policy from 1914 until 1932 was confused and contradictory, lacking any overall coherence or direction.[25] The predisposition of land-department officials to impose common law led them to undertake a sustained investigation into existing tenurial procedures on which to base their own approach.[26] This resulted in the one and only overall directive issued on land policy, which was to maintain, as far as possible, the existing Ottoman procedures.[27] This edict was issued despite the writing off of Ottoman land policy by British administrators as hopelessly idealistic, ambitious, and, in practice, thoroughly corrupt. This confusion was compounded by the government's failure to carry out a successful cadastral survey or a census.[28]

The result of applying the Ottoman land code to the whole of Iraq was that the state continued theoretically to be the landlord of two-thirds of the cultivatable land. So, with the increased efficiency and power of government, a degree of homogeneity was imposed upon a set of previously diverse approaches to land. However, because "survey and registration are so incomplete," the appearance of a powerful arbitrator increased the disputation surrounding land tenure.[29] By 1926, government officials from the Interior Ministry were

> compelled to spend a great portion of their time in dealing with disputes and cases arising from rights of tenancy. In view of the fact that these rights are not based on clear principles or laws, a just and satisfactory solution of the dispute and differences arising therefrom becomes almost impossible. This state of affairs places the

> Government officials in an awkward position on the one hand and increases the number of discontented people on the other.[30]

Yet although British attitudes to the problem of Iraqi land were confused and contradictory throughout the period of the Mandate, from 1926 onwards a concerted but ultimately unsuccessful attempt was made to develop a consistent and effective land policy.[31] The causes of this new concern with land tenure can be found both in the Iraqi economy and in the international environment. Internally, the possible impact of large-scale commercial exploitation of Iraqi oil fields was beginning to be understood. Although agriculture was still seen as the main source of the country's future prosperity, those in the High Commission and the Revenue and Interior Ministries began to think about the effect cheap oil would have on irrigation. By bringing down the price of pumps used to water the land, the availability of cheap oil would rapidly increase the profitability of farming. Internationally, the settling of the Mosul dispute with Turkey and the signing of the twenty-five year Anglo-Iraqi treaty appeared to provide for a new era of economic stability and therefore increased opportunity for investment.[32] The areas most suited for the boom in agricultural production and the commercial scramble for land were on the Tigris and Euphrates below Baghdad, governed mainly by the *miri* system of tenure. The land had not been alienated to any officially recognized private owner and was therefore legally controlled by the Iraqi government. It was also farmed by what the government understood to be settled tribal communities.[33]

Attempts by Henry Dobbs and Steven Longrigg (then Director of State Domains) to construct a policy to regularize land tenure across the whole of Iraq brought to the surface their differing conceptions of the nature and evolution of Iraqi society and its relationship to the state. These disputes were exacerbated when Ernest Dowson arrived in Iraq in 1929 to write a report on land tenure. An individualist framework that celebrated rational action and the positive role of the state confronted a more collectivist one. The opposing conception doubted the market's ability to transform social structures and the power of the state to bypass traditional social arrangements and influence the individual directly—as well as the desirability of its doing so.

The Ordering of Rural Society: Shaikh and Tribe or Mallak and Sarkal

The maximization of revenue and the preservation of order became the dual obsessions of the Mandate's land policy. Amongst Mandate staff there was a clear division about how these twin goals were to be realized, which centered on two broad sets of social categories deployed to understand Iraqi society: one group focused on the role of the shaikh; the other on the role of the *sarkal*. The tensions between the holders of these two categories structured the debate surrounding land policy. The two broad sets of categories through which Iraqi society was perceived can be separated into an economic-rational approach, on the one hand, and one viewed by its adherents as traditional, on the other. Those categories understood to be traditional came to dominate conceptions of Iraqi society and so came to dominate policy toward land. The relationship between shaikhs and tribesmen was viewed by those who promoted this position as being bound by custom and the mutual bonds of community. These bonds had evolved over many hundreds of years and acted as a powerful constraint on all those subjected to them.

The competing category perceived Iraqi society in rational-economic terms. Although more recent in origin, those who promoted this view felt it to be the product of the inexorable rise of market forces. These categories, the direct result of market relations, would come to dominate all aspects of rural life. They represented not only the future but ultimately the only logical way that a modern society could be organized. From this viewpoint, the figures of the *mallak* and *sarkal* were seen as being primarily involved in organizing the agricultural production of the peasantry. The *mallak* was the landlord, with legal possession of the land and a right to demand *mallakiyah*, or rent. The *sarkal* was comparable to a tenant or foreman and was responsible for organizing the planting and harvesting of the crop. Below both categories was a rational peasantry continually trying to maximize output.

Both sets of categories, one broadly communal, the other based on the individual, were in part underpinned and reinforced by differing perceptions of the capabilities and nature of the state. When the main institutions of government were being built, and state-society relations being

institutionalized, the "communal" perception, as represented by Henry Dobbs, was that the state would be too weak to deal directly with individuals in rural Iraq.[34] Instead, its relations with the mass of the population had to be mediated through a series of tribal shaikhs. Dobbs's perceptions of state and society were mutually reinforcing. A society collectively organized in tribal groupings was easy to administer but also too strong to be broken or reshaped by state intervention. Added to this, Dobbs was haunted by the fear of a new, neo-Ottoman despotic regime. For Dobbs, the state was weak for financial and social reasons but also because of belief in the desirable configuration of state-society relations.[35] Traditional societal bonds between shaikh and tribe would be a better guarantee of personal liberty than a relationship between the individual and the state only theoretically and tenuously safeguarded by civil society. Yet in this understanding, the coldly instrumental relations between *mallak*, *sarkal*, and peasant were shifting, unreliable, and hence unable to deliver order or guarantee equity.

The second broad understanding of Iraqi society was that used by Ernest Dowson. The categories he deployed to order Iraqi society were rational and economic. From Dowson's perspective, the objective of a state's agrarian policy was to form direct links with the individual cultivator. Societies universally consisted of little more than individual members of a population. They had no inherent strength beyond the actions of individuals. This conception saw the forging of direct links between the state and the individual in practical terms as a task of efficient administration. This had been possible in Egypt and was certainly so in Iraq. The categories of *mallak* and *sarkal* had been created by the workings of the agricultural market and the needs of production in Iraq. They were both logical and desirable. Any other approach, such as one based on an alternative understanding of community and trust, was idealistic, wasteful, and ultimately anachronistic.

Of Shaikh, Tribe, and Land

The understanding of the harmony between the shaikh and his tribe formed the basis of land policy from the occupation onwards. It was in the Amarah *liwa* that the policy had its most unfettered application.

British revenue officers with the expeditionary forces attempted to order land settlement in Amarah by placing large estates on two-year rolling leases "in the hands of a strong and capable shaikh." The shaikhs were felt to possess leadership and influence over a large constituency and were the ideal interlocutor for government-society relations. The First Revenue Officer of the Expeditionary Force, C. C. Garbett, described how in 1918, in Abu Hallana, he had reallocated the land of a "non-tribal 'farmer,' " giving it instead to a man whom he had identified as a tribal shaikh.[36]

The British made a conscious decision once shaikhs had been either established on the land or had had their position recognized to deal only with them, refusing to "go behind" their backs and deal with the *sarkals* directly involved with production. The *sarkals* were then left to make their own terms with the shaikhs: "If we interfere between the Shaikh-farmer and his Sarkals-sub-farmers, the result to my mind will be bad."[37] As leader of his community, the shaikh created order. From within this conception, the *sarkal* was a minor and ultimately unimportant figure. Recognition, power, and resources would be devolved through the shaikh and no one else.

It was freely admitted from 1919 onward that this approach had its basis in political rather than revenue objectives. The shaikhs, through their relationship with the wider agricultural community, were seen as being able to enforce law and order. By 1922, after the authority of government had increased in Amarah, there was an attempt to improve revenue extraction by a fresh redistribution of land on the large estates of Chahalah. It was proposed that the lands of Shaikh Muhammad al Araibi be reduced because it had become apparent that he did not possess the skills to administer all of them efficiently. But the strength of the collective framework was such that the category of the shaikh (to the exclusion of other possibilities) was still used to administer this redistribution. A percentage of Shaikh Muhammad's lands was reallocated to another shaikh of the Albu Muhammad, Falih al Saihud.[38]

Although it could be argued that Amarah represented an extreme case of British policy favoring shaikhs above all other groups in society,[39] the same social conceptions underlying land and revenue policies can be found in more turbulent and heterogeneous areas. In Dulaim, for example, the perceived impossibility and undesirability of the state's forging direct links with the "inchoate mass of cultivators" led to the government's reliance on

the authority and "tribal status" of the shaikhs to carry out "manifold administrative duties." By depending on these figures of authority, the British administrators believed they were merely recognizing social practices that had been in existence since the tribes of the Dulaim had moved from nomadic pasturalism to settled agricultural production.[40]

For those enforcing policy, the shaikh had kept order before the British arrival and continued to do so. Hence the *mashaikha* of between 10 to 12.5 percent of the crop that the shaikh took from "his" cultivators was a practice structured by social relations and independent of the state's actions. In harnessing the shaikh's power, the state simply added on the collection of its own taxation to the *mashaikha*, thereby creating a three-tiered revenue system. So, along with *mashaikha*, the *fallah* paid tax due to government to the *sarkal*, who in turn handed the revenue to the paramount shaikh, who finally delivered it to the government after extracting a percentage for himself.[41]

In the wake of the chaos caused by the 1920 uprising, the state went a step further and sought to institutionalize the influence of the Dulaim shaikhs by demanding that several minor and previously rebellious shaikhs sign pledges of allegiance to Ali Sulaiman, officially agreeing to pay him *mashaikha*, that is, shaikhly dues.[42] At the time this did not appear to be a change in policy. Ali Sulaiman, because of his perceived social position at the head of a collectively structured society, was seen as the only man capable of delivering revenue and order.

As paramount shaikh of the Dulaim, Sulaiman came to personify the positive role such a figure could play in agricultural life. In early 1921 he organized the digging of a canal at the Saqlawiyah, a tributary of the Euphrates below Ramadi.[43] When completed, the canal would bring an extra 100,000 acres of land between the Tigris and Euphrates under cultivation.[44] By deploying his prestige and influence amongst his own tribe, he secured extensive free labor to dig the canal, and the new land brought into cultivation allowed him to settle hitherto landless members of his tribe. It was then a logical step to grant his request for the *tapu sanads* on the newly fertile land to be given to him personally. He represented the pinnacle of the tribe. It was his social position that got the canal dug in the first place, and it was he who was best placed to serve the interests of the Dulaim newly settled on the land.[45]

Ali Sulaiman became a central figure in the debates surrounding the

nature and utility of the shaikh in rural Iraq. His strengths or weaknesses became a pivot around which the wider policy was either championed or attacked. His collection of tax, his digging of what became known as the Ali Sulaiman Canal, and his role at the head of a tribal federation that guaranteed the stability of the Dulaim area all appeared to support the argument for a collective understanding of Iraqi society. He was an ally of the British army but also a figure of influence in his own right. As the personification of a strong society, he was part of the reason why the state was weak—but he was also the solution to its weakness.

There is clear evidence to suggest that in Muntafiq, one of the most turbulent areas in the country, the categories of shaikh and tribe were deployed not only to order society but also to explain the persistence of social turmoil and violence. For the British, Muntafiq had a reputation for agrarian turmoil that had long predated their involvement in Iraq. Once British forces had secured control over the Muntafiq area, their perception of society became the key to how they imposed order on it.[46] The shaikhs and their tribes were a force for good, representing social stability and equality. The cause of British problems were Sa'dun landlords. Within this understanding, the landlords by their very nature could not be authentic; they could not have originated organically from within traditional Iraqi society. Instead, their imposition by the Ottoman government and their origin in the urban areas of Iraq meant that they were a corrupting influence, bringing with them all the woes of the cities, including extremism and self-interested violence. In contrast the tribes—and by sponsoring and validating them, the British—were authentic, moral, and noble.

As they had in Amarah with its shaikhs, British forces during the Mesopotamian campaign used the influence of the Muntafiq shaikhs to keep the area quiet during the war. Responsibility for the land, its tax, and its produce were concentrated in the hands of those who were identified as tribal shaikhs.[47] This resulted in the marginalization of other categories and social actors who were seen as superfluous to Muntafiq society.

The dominant collective social imagination of the British administrators ordering Muntafiq came to the fore when they sought to understand the battles over land that had continued to destabilize the area long after their arrival. They assumed that because the tribes of the Muntafiq had

exercised rights over the land they had farmed "from time immemorial,"[48] the cause of conflict had to be located elsewhere, outside Muntafiq society.

The conflict that had been destabilizing the region since the 1880s was understood to be between the Sa'dun, classified as landlords, and their tenants, classified as tribespeople. British policy, structured by this collective understanding of Muntafiq society, took the side of the tribespeople over that of the Sa'dun. However, the British were ideologically committed to the rule of law and the defense of property rights, so this apparent negation of a landlord's rights had to be justified. Accordingly, in this case the landlord's "right" of possession was not what it seemed. The corrupting presence of landlords in Muntafiq was the result of devious Ottoman practices.[49] Hence, this ownership of property was conceived of as illegitimate and indefensible. These landlords had not purchased the land from the tribes; it had been given to them by Ottoman dictate. Therefore, for the British, the Sa'dun had no legal right to this land; they could not even substantiate their ownership by physical possession.[50]

For the British, the landlords' legitimacy had been undermined by the very act of their creation by the Ottoman government. Their actions under the Mandate had confirmed the corrupting influence of their presence in the Muntafiq. The landlords, reflecting their urban lineage, "allied themselves with the extremists and with the merchants of the town known for their talent for intrigue."[51] They came to be seen as fifth columnists, a conduit for all that made Baghdad the epitome of what was wrong with Iraq.

The Sa'dun, as the conduit for urban influence into the countryside, were seen by the British as natural allies of the Iraqi politicians in Baghdad. Indeed, at times, "the landlord class" and the political elite were merged into one category to explain the causes and effects of the Muntafiq violence. As Faisal grew in power and began to appoint civil servants, it was assumed by the British that their urban origins would lead them to favor the landlords' interests.[52] There was "little sympathy with tribal grievances in the highest official circles in Baghdad." This resulted in local government officers being forced to collect rent on behalf of the Sa'dun, thus focusing tribal resentment on state institutions.[53]

The innate bias of urban politicians allowed British staff to discount all criticism of British land policy in Muntafiq. In April 1921, at Percy Cox's request, the Iraqi cabinet formed a committee to look into the

unrest and advise on possible solutions. The report produced by the Mallakiyah Committee was condemned as "jejune" and its recommendation that the government should protect landlords' rights and return land taken from them by force was written off as the observations of "the landlord class."[54] The same applied to the interventions of the Iraqi Chamber of Deputies. In September 1925 and January 1927, debates were held in Parliament and bills were drafted in an attempt to shape policy toward Muntafiq land reform. These were dismissed by British commentators as biased to "the Sa'dun point of view."[55] For British officials defending their policy on land in the Muntafiq, the personification of a self-interested politician was Abdul al Mushin Beg al Sa'dun himself. As Prime Minister from November 1922 to November 1923, he was constantly accused in reports and telegrams of favoring the Sa'dun cause for personal or family reasons.[56]

Ultimately, then, the long-running problem of disorder in the Muntafiq, which was to plague the Iraqi state for the whole of the Mandate, was blamed upon the introduction of a foreign body, the landlord, into Muntafiq society.

Of Sarkals, Mallaks, and Markets

Both the logic and success of the policy of ruling through tribal shaikhs and the collectivist vision that underpinned it were challenged by a minority of the British staff working in Iraq, as well as by Iraqi politicians in cabinet and Parliament. Their critique of allowing the rule of shaikhs was based on the efficacy, morality, and legality of channeling state power through the person of the shaikh. In Amarah, Major S. E. Hedgcock, the Political Officer in 1920, wrote a damning indictment, challenging the whole policy of supporting the shaikhs to the exclusion of all other sections of society. The shaikh, he argued, stripped of government support, "is more or less a figurehead, with very little power." He continued:

> We have fallen into the error of over-rating his value and consulting him too much, to the exclusion of educated and far-seeing men of other classes. . . . We have somewhat lost sight of the fact that the shaikh does not represent agricultural interests from the point of

> view of either the sarkal or the fallah; on the contrary, he is usually ignorant, narrow-minded, and unprogressive, extremely selfish and possessed of an inordinate greed for money.[57]

Hedgcock challenged the very basis of the policy and the social perception it rested upon. The shaikh, far from being tied to a collectively organized rural society by bonds of mutual trust, was in fact a throwback, hindering progress and restraining individual productivity. Hedgcock therefore recommended elevating the *sarkal* to the position of owner-occupier. By removing his insecurity of tenure, the British would encourage the *sarkal* to act as a rational economic being who would undertake expensive improvements, thereby hoping "to gain from his own industry and forethought."[58]

In Dulaim, greater weight was being added to this argument by the increasing difficulties that Ali Sulaiman had in collecting his *mashaikha* from 1923 onward. In 1924, the *Mutasarrif* of Ramadi imprisoned ten "sub-shaikhs" of the Albu Fahad section of the Dulaim for allegedly refusing to pay their *mashaikha* and tax to Ali Sulaiman. In their defense, the men claimed that they were obeying government orders to recognize Ali Sulaiman as paramount shaikh. Yet Sulaiman was using his authority to extort three times the amount of money that he and the government were due.[59] From 1923 on, an increasing number of such reports began to portray Sulaiman not as a paragon of his community but as a resented exploiter of the *fallah* he ruled over in the name of the government.

By 1924 Sulaiman's ability to collect his own *mashaikha*, let alone the government's tax, was being questioned. In November 1924, the Dulaim Administrative Inspector described the four paramount shaikhs of the division—Sulaiman, Mushin al Harsan, Shoukah al Mutluq, and Aftan al Sherji—as "a real hindrance to Government from the point of view of revenue collection." From the perspective of Baghdad, Sulaiman might have been seen as a paramount, but to the *liwa* authorities it was "painfully obvious he relies more and more on Government support to keep up his position." The inspector clearly saw the *sarkal* as being the most efficient and hence most useful figure in organizing agricultural production. There was simply not enough room for both the shaikh and the *sarkal*, and the inspector saw the *sarkal*'s eventual triumph as inevitable.[60]

Sulaiman's inability to collect revenue without government assistance became a political issue when Mahmud Ramiz drew attention to it in the Chamber of Deputies. Was it true, he asked the Minister of Finance, that the *Mutasarrif* of Dulaim was collecting *mashaikha* from cultivators? Such collection would, he argued, be illegal under Iraqi law.[61] Here we see that some Iraqi politicians were actively challenging the theory and practice arising from the collective ontology that underpinned British land and revenue policy. In this case, Ramiz was highlighting the contradictory position of the Dulaim shaikhs under the law. In theory it was their social standing that allowed them to collect taxes; in practice it was the state's power.

The mounting problems surrounding Ali Sulaiman led the adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, Kinahan Cornwallis, to review his position. From October 1925 until February 1926, Cornwallis consulted a range of British officials in Dulaim and Baghdad. It became apparent that Sulaiman could not fulfil his tax-collecting duties; Cornwallis sought to discover the reason. He considered himself "a strong supporter of Shaikh Ali and all other Shaikhs of the Dulaim,"[62] but even from this vantage point it was apparent that Sulaiman's influence was in decline. Cornwallis identified problems within the shaikh's tribal constituency. He discovered that in the aftermath of the 1920 rebellion some of the shaikhs who swore allegiance to Sulaiman, at the bidding of the British, were not even members of his own tribe.[63] This had clearly made it difficult for him to sustain his influence. Ultimately, however, the extreme weakness of Sulaiman's position forced Cornwallis to speculate that changing economic and political circumstances had reduced the shaikh's influence and role in the everyday lives of his tribe.[64]

The ideological challenge to British policy in the Muntafiq came primarily from Iraqi politicians in the Chamber of Deputies. In September 1925, a member of the chamber, Ahmad Daud, introduced a resolution that challenged the theory and practice of the Mandate officials' approach to the Muntafiq. Daud argued that "military necessity" had forced certain measures on the Government of Occupation. But now, in times of peace and stability, government actions were depriving the landlords of the Muntafiq of revenues from their property. Daud went on to argue that this policy directly contravened the British-drafted constitu-

tion (the Organic Law). Daud cited Article 6, which guaranteed equal rights for all Iraqis, and Article 10, which protected the right to property. In his speech Daud defended the "sacred rights of property and ownership," declaring that policy in the Muntafiq violated the very basis of Iraqi democracy.[65] In appealing to constitutional law and democratic principle, Ahmad Daud was attacking the ideological legitimacy of Britain's involvement in Iraq. If the state created under the Mandate did not defend property rights and democracy, then on what basis did the British claim to be in Iraq and what type of state were they building? In response, the colonial staff tried to deflect the logic of his attack. First, as with all parliamentary assaults on British policy, the selfless approach of the Mandate staff was contrasted with Daud's self-interested parliamentary support, allegedly made up of those with land in the area. Secondly, Daud was portrayed as an eccentric fool who declaimed at length but whose "limited knowledge of modern economic doctrines" meant that he had no real understanding of the greater issues at stake.[66]

Not so easily dismissed, and hence the most damning critique of the use of the shaikh as the key organizing category in land policy, was Steven Longrigg's assessment of the unrest in Muntafiq. Although his critical remarks consisted of only one line in a wide-ranging thirty-one page report on land reform in Iraq, they were a direct attack on British land policy in general and especially as applied to the specific problems of the Muntafiq. The context in which Longrigg mentioned Muntafiq was the much broader issue of how the government should use the large amount of *tapu* land that it owned. Longrigg accepted the existing view of shaikhs as being figures of influence within their tribes and wider Iraqi society, but he disagreed with the policy of "the artificial reinforcement of the tribal influence of the Shaikh . . . by the conferment upon him of the function of landlord or capitalist."[67] To do so would not only be "unjust to the individual tribesmen" but would also be "fatal to security and progress and yet not destructive to tribalism—as seen in the Muntafiq."[68] Thus, Longrigg, in 1926, was placing the blame for the continuing violence in Muntafiq not on the legacy of the Ottoman Empire but on the British policy of bolstering the power of the shaikhs with personal grants of land. He considered that this policy denied individual tribesmen the responsibility of owning land and was therefore unfair. More importantly, because it gave "artificial reinforcement" to a shaikh's position, it

was the cause of instability in the Muntafiq. In effect, then, Longrigg was attacking the collectivist mentality underpinning the dominant British view of rural society. A tribal shaikh "must find his level upon purely tribal lines." The tribal system itself was slowly but inexorably degenerating and releasing tribesmen to become individual cultivators in their own right. Government policy to date had hindered this process and as a result was driving the unrest in the Muntafiq.

Such a damning (if brief) indictment of the effects of government policy in the Muntafiq could not go unchallenged. This one-line reference to Muntafiq resulted in two letters from Henry Dobbs, who tried over six pages to refute Longrigg's argument. The High Commissioner's aggressive and pedantic rebuttal only serves to highlight the challenge to government policy encapsulated in Longrigg's explanation of Muntafiq's instability.[69]

Those British officials arguing against collective and "traditional" notions of social organization looked beyond the shaikh into the wider agricultural society of Iraq and tended to use economic and instrumental language to describe what they found. It was the economically defined figure of the *sarkal* who was held up as a rational replacement for the anachronistic figure of the shaikh. It was recognized that to encourage the *sarkal* to form direct links with government would place the role of the paramount shaikh under direct threat. But under this perception of Iraqi society, the *sarkal* was seen as the more rational figure. As his role and position were primarily economic, by his very nature he would be open to the influence of the market. The language of voluntarism was deployed to describe the role of the *sarkal* and his relationship with the *fallah*. The *fallah* as a rational producer was concerned with little else but crop production. He would choose the *sarkal* over the shaikh because the *sarkal* was active, organized, and was forced by the economics of his position to minister to the *fallah*'s needs. The *sarkal* kept open house, organized loans for seed, and generally supplied what the *fallah* needed to produce his crops.[70] The *sarkal*'s own "industry and forethought" could be deployed to increase the productivity of the land.[71] Under this understanding of Iraqi society, order would be secured by ministering to people's individual needs, aiding their prosperity, and convincing them of the benefit of direct government.

Unlike that of the shaikh, the more recently formed and malleable nature of the *sarkal*'s position was seen as having a distinct advantage. The government could recognize and encourage useful *sarkals*, transfer-

ring them to different sections of land or undermining their position depending on policy requirements.[72] The *sarkal*'s attachment to different tribal groupings would also be instrumental, based as it was on the economic needs of production.[73]

Ultimately, the strength of the *sarkal* as a figure of rural control also proved to be its weakness. When compared with the figure of the paramount shaikh, the perceived economic basis of the *sarkal*'s position was felt to be too weak to provide a stable footing from which to order rural Iraq. Unlike the supposed bonds of community and solidarity binding the shaikh to his tribespeople, with the *sarkal*, relations of production and self-interest were seen as more problematic and unreliable.[74] This opinion was summed up by an Air Service Intelligence report of 1931. Neither on the "grounds of equity nor expediency," the author felt, should the *sarkal*'s authority and role be encouraged as a replacement for the shaikh. To do so would encourage the "obsession for breaking the power of the bigger shaikhs" held by the urban politicians in Baghdad. These politicians, cut off by education and demeanor, could not understand "the difficulties and danger of removing all the intermediaries between the Government and the inchoate mass of cultivators." To do so might lead to "a complete social revolution."[75]

This debate amongst British officials about the utility of the shaikh as opposed to the *sarkal* was ultimately resolved in favor of the shaikh. The effect of this decision profoundly transformed the social system as it was being ordered. The channeling of state power and resources through the shaikhs meant that their relationship with society had to change. The state's "heroic simplification" of the rural population could not tolerate ambiguity. The units it used to order society were solidified, enumerated, and universalized simply by their deployment. In favoring the shaikh, the British modernized his interaction with society based on revenue collection and land ownership, so imposing a new utilitarian dynamic between state and shaikh and between shaikh and *fallah*.

Dobbs, Dowson, and Longrigg: State, Tenure, and Tribe

Sir Henry Dobbs was heavily influenced by policy developed on the North-West Frontier of colonial India at the end of the nineteenth cen-

tury. It was here that Sir Robert Sandeman had developed his policy of "humane imperialism," which recognized the dominion of tribal shaikhs and ruled through them. Dowson, on the other hand, spent much of his working life in Egypt and clearly had a different experience and approach. Dowson's main influence was Lord Cromer, with the individual self-interest of small cultivators being the main organizing concept. The general influence of colonial India on those serving in Iraq is hard to overestimate.[76] On a personal level, throughout the files, reports, memoirs, and letters home concerning Iraq, concrete examples from India were given to explain the writer's new experiences.[77] But the Indian examples being deployed were far from homogeneous, riven as they were with the very conceptual tensions and ambiguities that would come to structure perceptions of Iraqi society. Indian policy was split between

> two divergent or even contradictory theories of rule: one which sought to maintain India as a feudal order, and the other looking towards changes which would inevitably lead to the destruction of this feudal order. Each of these theories about British rule incorporated ideas about the sociology of India, and the relationship of the rulers to individuals and groups in Indian society. If India were to be ruled in a feudal mode, then an Indian aristocracy had to be recognized and/or created, which could play the part of "loyal feudatories" to their British queen. If India were to be ruled by the British in a "modernist" mode, then principles which looked to a new kind of civic or public order had to be developed.[78]

It was the influence of a geographically peripheral area of British India, "whose inhabitants were the most recalcitrant of all the Empire's ungrateful subjects,"[79] that proved to be the greatest influence on Dobbs and, after him, Sir Francis Humphrys. Both were India Frontier officers in the early part of their careers before becoming High Commissioners for Iraq.[80] Dobbs's experience on the North-West Frontier and in Baluchistan provided the model for his general policy towards tribes and for his attitudes to land tenure. Dobbs's approach was dominated specifically by the policy of Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman, improvised from 1868 onwards, when the latter was appointed Deputy Commissioner of the

Dara Ghazi Khan district in Baluchistan, and increasingly formalized after 1875.[81] Sandeman's model of "humane imperialism" became the touchstone of Iraqi tribal policy.[82] More directly, Henry Dobbs's experience of working under one of Sandeman's successors, Sir H. McMahon, Chief Agent-General for Baluchistan, was cited on numerous occasions in the formation of policy.[83]

The unit that dominated Sandeman's approach was the tribe. For him it was the primary way in which Pathan and Baluch society could be understood. Sandeman's conception of tribal structure was one of vertical transmission of authority: "in every Pathan or Baluch tribe, however democratic, there does exist headmen of more or less influence and a system of tribal authority."[84] Subsidies were allocated to these headmen and they were encouraged to offer men for service in the tribal levies that Sandeman raised.[85] British use of their office to impose law and order further strengthened the authority of these tribal heads.

Dowson's experience in Egypt stood in stark contrast to Dobbs's in India. In his recommendations on land reform in both Palestine and Iraq, Dowson was to reproduce Lord Cromer's model. Cromer had come to personify the imperial mission during his twenty-five year tenure as British representative in Egypt. Through his strength of personality and copious writings, he codified an influential philosophy of rule. Cromer's successful application of this approach allowed him to "emerge as the paramount consul-general in England's empire."[86] Both T. E. Lawrence and A. T. Wilson, when discussing Iraq, cited Cromer's example as the basis on which Iraq should be run.[87]

For Cromer (in contrast to Sandeman and Dobbs), society was not collectively structured: the individual was the defining category. Therefore, individual self-interest was at the center of his attempt to keep the peace while he arranged the restructuring of the state. Cromer argued that imperial administrators forgot this factor at their peril. "If we are not to adopt a policy based on securing the contentment of the subject race by ministering to their material interests, we must of necessity make a distinct approach to the counter policy of governing by the sword alone."[88] So the central plank of Cromer's approach was low taxation; government departments saw their budgets cut as fiscal relief became policy. Subject peoples should financially benefit from European rule. Through providing tangible help, both by

tax relief and improvements in the country's infrastructure, Cromer hoped to build an indigenous class of small landowners. This group, which would form the basis of social stability, was to be protected from losing its holdings to large landowners, whether Egyptian or foreign. They would not love British rule but would at least see its benefits and so provide a stable base for it. Thus, Cromer argued, the nationalists' natural constituency would be placated: "In spite of outward appearances to the contrary, the whole nationalist movement in Egypt has been a mere splutter on the surface. It never extended deep down in the social ranks."[89]

In his advice on land tenure in Iraq, Dowson also deployed this individualist social vision. Giving the example of Egypt between 1905 and 1912, he argued that the state should strive to establish and maintain direct links with individual cultivators.[90] As with Egypt, individual legal title should be guaranteed so that the cultivator would be driven to invest in his land and improve its productivity.[91]

The other issue that defined the stance that Dobbs, Dowson, and Longrigg took on land tenure was their understanding of the state. For Dobbs the issue was divided into two related arguments: how much power the state should have and also what its correct role in society should be. Dobbs had a very pessimistic view of state capabilities under the British, even more so once the timetable for independence was set. For Dobbs, "The country is too vast and unmanageable and the population too scattered for the Government to attempt direct arrangements with cultivators." The machinery of government was too "hopelessly inadequate" even to contemplate such a policy.[92]

The relative weakness of the state meant that tax collection could be enforced only through "the terror of the Air Force." But even this appearance of power was deceptive; it encouraged government officials to extract unrealistic levels of tax, which caused resentment and anger. As Dobbs noted,

> I have little doubt that attempts to enforce such claims [enormously enhanced taxation] in the Euphrates areas, where larger amounts were collected during 1919 and the beginning of 1920 than have ever been collected before or since, was one of the main causes of the great rebellion of 1920.[93]

This understanding of the potential disadvantages of enforcing state power was underpinned by an ideological rejection of its excessive use. When Dobbs criticized Longrigg's detailed plans for a government land policy in 1926, he began by alleging that it was based on the presupposition of government omnipotence and societal subservience. Longrigg's note was flawed, he argued, because it took the side of government without paying attention to the rights of the *fallah*. For Dobbs, the rights of the cultivators should have been given at least equal standing. He developed this theme when assessing what should be done to deal with the growth in land prices. The "theory" inherited from Ottoman rule, that the government was landlord of the vast majority of land in Iraq, was doubtful and should not be encouraged. In reviewing the draft form of leases to be signed between cultivators and government, Dobbs went out of his way to reduce the state's rights vis-à-vis those who farmed the land.

> From the point of view which I am taking up, agreements should now be executed, not with the object of establishing the rights of Government as landlord (the main object suggested by Mr. Longrigg), but with the object of assuring the present occupiers of security of tenure sufficient to enable them to invest in pumps and develop their lands, without depriving them of any rights of permanent occupancy on tapu tenure which may have accrued to them under the Law and which they will be at liberty at any time to seek to establish.[94]

The reason for this antipathy towards the state and the dangers of its sinking into despotism lay within Dobbs's conception of Iraqi rural society as primarily tribal and collectively organized:

> the tribal landlord with tribal cultivators below him is much more effectively restrained by tribal custom from oppression and exactions than can ordinarily be managed by regular laws . . . he [the shaikh] . . . cannot afford to oppress or rack rent them beyond a certain limit.[95]

For Dobbs the bonds of community between the shaikh and his tribespeople were more effective than any law that the state could enact. The shaikh, owing his position to tribal support, had to listen and take

account of his tribe's opinions. The state, on the other hand, armed with terror-inducing airplanes, could enforce its will on a cowed and subservient population. Dobbs, then, set out to reduce the state's intervention in society and to minimize potential misuse of power.

Longrigg and Dowson, though, had much less ambivalent and broadly similar attitudes toward what the state could and should do. For Longrigg, the state's rights as landlord had long been accepted by society. Even "the wildest tribesman," when involved in a land dispute would admit that the government owned the property concerned: "he claims nothing but the superior right to occupy [it] . . . the 'academic' claim that all unalienated land belongs to Government is a claim conceded by every tribal litigant."[96] Suddenly dropping the idea of the state as landlord would have been revolutionary; it would have upset the established order and ignored the precedent of centuries. Instead, Longrigg saw the state's role as that of an honest arbiter, one who would oversee the fair distribution of land, gradually "breaking up privilege" and "substituting economic or logically calculated demands for traditional demands."[97]

Dowson saw the ideal goal of any state-driven land reform as being the establishment of a direct link between the state and the individual cultivator. With this in mind, the object of land reform for Dowson was to break down old procedures and use the power of the state to "establish land tenure progressively throughout the country . . . on a firm foundation of legal right determined in a judicial manner on the spot with reference to actual parcels of land that are precisely defined at the same time."[98] The difference of approach caused by the opposing social visions of Dobbs, Longrigg, and Dowson became most apparent when the question of who should be granted the right of tenure arose. Dobbs's fear of state domination led him to fight against recognition of the state's ownership of land. Both Longrigg and Dowson, on the other hand, saw the potential economic benefits of having a powerful role for the state as the freeholder of *miri* land. All three claimed as their ultimate goal the protection of indigenous cultivators across Iraq. However, their different understandings of who these cultivators were and their place within rural society opened up the crucial space of policy debate.

For Dobbs the tribe's centrality meant that little in the way of social organization existed outside its bounds. His main concern was to protect what he termed the "prescriptive tribal right" to remain in possession of

the land its members farmed. Dobbs had identified the greatest threat to the land rights of the tribes as being "the greedy grasp of the city-men."[99] As a Revenue Commissioner in 1916 and as High Commissioner in 1925, he strove to restrict the commercial market for land. He did this by recommending that foreign ownership of land be banned and then by striving to protect tribal property rights.[100]

In a 1928 letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Dobbs listed the defense of these prescriptive rights as one of his fundamental policy aims.[101] When the Government of Iraq moved to draft a law of land possession in 1926, Dobbs argued that this should be based not on an inquiry into titles but on "actual possession."[102] The extent of the landholdings of a particular tribe should be assessed on the basis of the area that the tribe had been in the habit of cultivating, irrespective of their ability at any specific time to farm it all.[103]

Dobbs hoped that the result of this policy would be the establishment of 4,000-acre units of land. These would be held by a specific tribe on semipermanent tenure.[104] As he saw the tribe as being personified by the shaikh, Dobbs considered that the shaikh's role of protecting and organizing the tribe should be recognized by the government's granting him large sections of land, along with the task of collecting government revenue.[105] This would be recognition of the shaikh's efforts towards tribal management and mediation.

Dowson's understanding of rural society and his advice on land reform stood in contrast to that of Dobbs. Dowson saw rural Iraq as being composed of rational individual cultivators. Having followed the debate on land tenure from 1926, he took exception to both Dobbs's and Longrigg's ideas: "I do not myself think that either simplification, or public peace or economic advance are to be realized by a deliberate policy of establishing a series of large holders as intermediaries in dealing with the mass of smaller holders." [106]

Dowson saw a direct and instrumental link between a growth in tribal strength and a weak government. Under a feeble Ottoman Empire, the tribe, as a corporate entity, had imposed its will on the individual cultivator, allotting land to them but also taking it away when it wanted to.[107] But with the end of the First World War and the rise of a stronger state, the individual cultivators had managed to assert their rights to the land they farmed:[108]

> In many liwas I was afforded evidence of the numbers of smaller men paying their land revenue directly to provincial officials and occupying the position of smallholders, either as heads (sirakil) of minor tribal or other farming groups, or even on a more individual footing. And everywhere I was advised tribal disintegration was accelerating, everywhere the tribesman was becoming an individualist and wanting his individual holding.[109]

His conclusion on land-tenure reform was, interestingly, that the British administration should avoid the imposition of any stereotyped uniformity. Large landholders should be recognized when found to be protecting the smaller cultivators' rights. Where "genuine" tribal tenure still survived and was favored by the tribe, it should be acknowledged. But his impression was that such cases were rare. The society he encountered in Iraq was one increasingly made up of individual cultivators whose rights should be protected above all else and who would eventually form direct links with the government.

In a more ambiguous position—between that of Dowson and Dobbs—was Longrigg, whose approach was heavily criticized by both men. In trying to understand and reform the land registration system Longrigg did not want to totally abandon the Turkish approach. Instead, his aim was to inject a degree of precision and uniformity. For Longrigg, the population of rural Iraq and the land it farmed could be divided into two categories, tribal and nontribal. For those cultivators who were nontribal, Longrigg's prescription was similar to Dowson's: incremental measures should be imposed to establish rights, with title deeds being granted to individuals who were already in possession of the land.[110]

Of the tribal system itself, Longrigg thought, "it would be foolish to take unheeded steps to support or perpetuate it." But he understood its power to be such that "the formulation of a Land Policy . . . will, nevertheless, realize the actual potency and probable persistence of the tribal and social system in Iraq, and will endeavor to cooperate with or utilize it rather than clash with or prematurely . . . suppress it."[111] To this end, Longrigg thought it essential to recognize long-standing tribal occupation of land and use it as a reason for granting such tribes the legal right to cultivate this land.

Longrigg's main dispute with Dobbs centered on the internal structure of the tribe. Unlike the High Commissioner, Longrigg had no faith in tribal custom restraining shaikhs.

> The conferment of a Tapu sanad upon the Shaikh of the occupying tribe or even upon the various sarkals of sections, would be unjust to the individual tribesmen and contrary also to the general tribal policy of Government. . . . When this has been attempted, it has resulted either in the excessive and abused power of the Shaikhs, or in such conditions fatal to security and progress and yet not destructive to tribalism as are seen in the Muntafiq.[112]

Longrigg concluded that neither the shaikh nor the *sarkal* was responsible enough to own land. However, bringing in outside landowners could have potentially disastrous effects. His conclusion, though similar to Dowson's, was arrived at quite differently: the state was to remain as landlord of the majority of agricultural land, while the tribal system moved slowly towards disintegration.[113]

From 1914 until 1932 there was little or no difference between the goals set out for land policy by the British government in London and those of the British staff working in Iraq. Land policy sought to maximize revenue and support order. But until at least 1926 British attempts to achieve those goals were confused and dislocated. Having begun by agreeing to rule through Ottoman structures, they held to this improvised policy until a scramble for land subverted it. Yet, even after 1926, no dominant state-sanctioned policy was resolutely applied throughout Iraq.

The opposing sides of the land-tenure debate placed different explanatory weight on three different categories: the shaikh, the *sarkal*, and the *fallah*. The nature of the modern state that all the Mandate officials were actively involved in building meant that the units they deployed to understand Iraqi society had a profoundly homogenizing effect despite their important differences. By arguing for the place of the shaikh at the heart of Iraqi society, officials like Dobbs were transforming the relationship between the shaikh and members of the tribe. The act of quantifying what had previously been a nebulous relationship between shaikh and tribe institutionalized it, and large amounts of power were given to the

shaikh. If the conception of society promoted by Dowson had in fact won out, similar homogenizing processes would have occurred. The social unit of the rational individual would have been imposed across Iraq in order to embody and enforce the state's understanding of society.

The uncompromising imposition of either category, the shaikh or the individual, did ontological violence to Iraqi society. This society had previously been made up of diverse social practices dependent on geographic, economic, and historical differences across the territory of what was to become Iraq.[114] Hence, the various interpretations of "shaikh" or "*sarkal*" were dependent on local specificities. The terms would therefore have had large variations in social and economic meaning across Iraq. The imposition of a modern state, with its modern method of social organization, meant that the terms shaikh, *sarkal*, or *fallah* would have to carry the same meaning across the whole country. The state could countenance no variations in category or land-tenure system however much administrators might disagree among themselves about the most desirable model of political and social development.