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International Workshop

“Early Modern Iran: The Safavids, Qajars and Waqf”

Date and time: 21 February, 2015, 13:00–18:00

Venue: Large Conference Room (303), ILCAA

Sponsored by

Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa (ILCAA)

Kakenhi Project: “International Comparative Study of Waqf (Islamic Endowment)”

Presentation 1:

“Arming the frontier: Proliferation of modern firearms in Ottoman-Iranian borderlands in the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878)”

Ichiro Ozawa, Sophia University, Tokyo

This presentation is an attempt to clarify the impact which the “modern age” of the history of firearms had on Ottoman-Iranian borderlands in the latter half of the 19th century, from the viewpoint of the expansion of unofficial arms transfer and the arming of the region.

The Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) gave rise to the spread of Martini-Peabody rifle, an example of modern arms, on an unprecedented scale. It was brought about by conditions peculiar to the frontier region, namely, the participation of Kurdish tribes on both sides of the border in battles and border-crossing activities of Iranian merchants during and after the War. This spread of modern arms and the consequent arming of the borderlands became one of the factors bringing about a revolt of Kurdish tribes led by Sheikh ‘Obeyd allāh and their subsequent invasion into the Qajar territory in 1880. In this event, which signifies the destabilization of the borderlands caused by the spread of modern rifles, not only the invading force but also some parts of the Qajar army, chiefly local irregular forces, were armed with those rifles, and the latter played an important role in suppressing the former. In other words, the Qajar dynasty utilized modern arms thus spread in the form of the mobilization of irregulars. The importance which the Qajar dynasty attached to its irregular forces is discerned from its purchase of

Martini-Peabody cartridges from Britain through the diplomatic channel in 1889, which is termed as a case of official arms transfer caused by unofficial one.

The influence of the spread of Martini-Peabody rifles can be observed in the Siege of Tabriz in the Constitutional Revolution, in which both the besiegers and the besieged seem to have been armed with these rifles. In addition, from the activities of the former, which mainly consisted of local irregulars, the growing importance of local military forces is evident.

Presentation2:

“An Enigmatic Dispute over Ownership of a Village:

Landlords, Villagers, and the Local Community in 19th Century Iran”

Naofumi Abe, ILCAA joint researcher,

University of Tokyo

This study examines a dispute over ownership of the village of Amīrzakariyā in Azerbaijan of Iran in the 19th century. A sale of the village to a new owner triggered the occupation of that village by the villagers who then claimed ownership. Interestingly, the former owner of the village attended the court trial that settled the ownership dispute as a litigant. We need to know why this happened. Based on the analysis of Persian archival sources, such as *sharī‘a* documents and correspondence, I figure out the development and resolution of the legal dispute and the changing understanding of the case. In this paper, after a brief description of the village, I outline the background of this dispute. I then read a *mahḍar* or minutes to provide a general overview of the trial that settled the dispute, and I will demonstrate that the witnesses had only a vague and hazy understanding of who the actual owner was. Subsequently, I examine the claims of the villagers and the putative owner of the village at the trial. Finally, I identify a change in the understanding of the dispute that points to the ambivalent position of the legal owner. We will see how the villagers and landlords of Amīrzakariyā, people residing in neighborhood, the ‘*ulamā*’, and local officials, interacted with each other on this issue. The sources provide an example of “ambivalent ownership,” i.e., a discrepancy between the legal facts of the case and competing ways of understanding land ownership. This example demonstrates that legal transactions were not always well understood by third parties and that the effects of a legal transaction were not always absolute in 19th century Iran. It also highlights attempts by local ‘*ulamā*’ and villagers to restrict the landlord’s rights over landed property in order to preserve the established local order.

Presentation 3:

“Structure and uses of Shia *waqfs* during the Safavid period”

Mohammadreza Neyestani, Aix Marseille Université

Iran during the 16th to the 18th century, when the Persian Empire was ruled by the Safavid dynasty, offers an excellent opportunity for studying the evolution of Shia *waqfs*. Under the Safavids, the *waqf* underwent a major evolution, due to experiments by the Shia in extending this practice to a wider range of social uses. For the first time, an independent Shia government came to power in Persia and introduced new methods and systems for exercising power. Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) became one of the key elements in government policies and political and administrative positions were given to Shia jurists (*faqih*s), such as "*sadr*, *shaykh al-islam* and *cadi* etc."

Under the Safavid dynasty, the body (*dîwân*) responsible for managing *waqfs* was the *Daftari mawqûfât* and the *şadr*, the highest ranking religious person in the country, was placed at its head.

This was the Golden Age of the *waqf* in terms of its integration in social affairs. Certain Safavid kings, including Shah ‘Abbâs I (1588-1629), placed their entire wealth into a *waqf* and, by their example, encouraged many members of their courts to establish *waqfs* for their assets.

The Safavids used the *waqf* as a political instrument, and it proved to be a very effective tool for developing new structures for the people, on the one hand, and for extending Shia doctrines in a mainly Sunni society, on the other. The Safavids used the Shia *waqf* as a political instrument.

There was a mutual and reciprocal interaction between Shia *waqf* and Shia *fiqh*. The conditions and specifications proposed by the Shia *fiqh* gave the *waqf* a structure and developed new forms of purely Shia *waqfs*, such as *waqfs* for the tombs of imams or funeral ceremonies for *‘âshûrâ*, which did not exist in earlier Sunni communities. The *waqf* was also useful for strengthening Shia doctrine and customs and allowed its expansion throughout Safavid society.

Presentation 4:

“Illumination Waqfs: A new type of endowment in Safavid and Qajar Iran”

Christoph Werner, Philipps-Universität Marburg

Lighting or illumination (*rowshana’i*), that is the provision of lamps, chandeliers, candles and torches, has been a substantial part of most endowments made in favour of

mosques, madrasas, shrines or Sufi convents. Beyond its obvious practical purpose, illumination is related to religious symbolism in mystical Islam on the one hand and to ritual performance on the other.

In most large scale endowment deeds from the pre-Safavid period the question of lighting is addressed in connection with other pragmatic needs of the endowed institution or building complex. Expenditures for lamps, oil and candles are listed together with other necessary provisions such as carpets, floor mats, cooking utensils, clothing, coal etc. Quite often they are not specified in detail, but only referred to in general terms and with a certain percentage or amount of the total budget.

From the Safavid period onward, the importance of “illumination” (*rowshana’i*) appears to gain in importance, to the point that *rowshana’i* becomes the single most important item in the list of expenditures given in *vaqf* deeds. Perhaps even more important is the fact that we increasingly encounter endowments that are exclusively devoted to illumination. These might be small individual *waqfs* of a candlestick together with fixed expenses for a shrine – or royal endowments that cater to illuminations in several Holy Places.

The availability of a more diverse corpus of source material from the Safavid period onward might further enhance the perception of *rowshana’i* as the dominating purpose in Safavid and Qajar *owqaf*. The present talk, however, raises the question whether this phenomenon reflects shifts in religious practice and ritual, the spread of pilgrimage sites and the extension of Shiite shrine complexes, as well as a new flexibility in the wording of *vaqf* deeds and the application of *waqf* law. Could it be justified to consider “illumination *waqfs*” a new type of endowment?