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Transformations of Middle Eastern Natural Environments: Legacies and Lessons

JANE COPPOCK AND JOSEPH A. MILLER, BULLETIN SERIES EDITORS

JEFF ALBERT, MAGNUS BERNHARDSSON, AND ROGER KENNA, VOLUME EDITORS



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Preface

Abbas Amanat
Yale University

This volume of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies *Bulletin Series*, entitled *Transformations of Middle Eastern Natural Environments: Legacies and Lessons*, is based on an international interdisciplinary conference by the same name organized by Yale's Council on Middle East Studies. The conference, which was held October 30–November 1, 1997 at the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, brought together an array of scholars, practitioners, and journalists interested in and concerned with the natural environments of the Middle East.

The interdisciplinary nature of the conference and this volume are significant. It is our belief that just as environmental problems transcend national boundaries and present widespread concerns throughout society, issues of the environment should not be discussed solely by people of the same discipline or profession. Given the complexity and diversity of environmental degradation in the Middle East, a comprehensive approach which takes into account historical and societal, as well as ecological and technical aspects, is the most congenial approach to a broad understanding of the problems in question. This present undertaking is but one step toward such an understanding. It is our hope that the following essays will represent the state of today's scholarship, illuminate what we can learn about the past, and suggest what the future may entail. We hope furthermore that this volume may not only be useful for those scholars and practitioners currently working in the field, but also to students and others who wish to know more about the Middle East and its environments.

The conference and this publication would not have been possible without generous financial support from Yale's Kempf Memorial Fund at the Provost's Office, the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, and Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. My thanks are due to Arline McCord, Associate Provost, Professor Gustav Ranis, Director of the Yale Center for International and Area Studies, and Jared Cohon, the former Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. My special gratitude is also due to three Ph.D candidates, Jeff Albert, Magnus Bernhardsson and Roger Kenna, whose contributions were crucial to the organization of the conference and the editing of this stimulating volume. The quality of the papers presented and the overall format of the conference and of this volume testify to their

dedication and diligence. Professors Frank Hole, J. A. Allan, and Harvey Weiss provided sound advice and helped with identifying which key areas should be covered. They also helped organize three significant panels in their area of interest. Furthermore, Jane Coppock, *Bulletin Series* Co-editor and Assistant Dean at Yale's School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, was critical in the publication process. Without her energy and enthusiasm this volume would never have reached its present shape. I would also like to express my appreciation for the work *Bulletin Series* Co-editor Joseph Miller was able to contribute to this project before his death in July of this year after a long illness.

I would also like to thank all the participants in the conference, many of whom traveled great distances to come to New Haven. A conference is only as good as the quality of its participants. And in our case, we were especially fortunate, as the conference was characterized by high academic and professional standards, reflected both in the following essays and in presentations, observations, and conversations which enriched the conference but by their ephemeral nature cannot be incorporated into a written volume.

I hope that the dialogue initiated at our conference and continued in this volume will bring the issue of Middle Eastern environments the attention it deserves.

ABBAS AMANAT is Professor of History at Yale University and the Chair of Yale's Council on Middle East Studies. A graduate of Oxford University, he specializes in modern Middle Eastern history, in particular the modern history of Iran. He is the author of numerous publications including *Pivot of the universe: Nasir al-din Shah and the Iranian monarchy* (1997) and *Resurrection and renewal: the making of the Babi movement* (1989).

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Jeff Albert, Magnus Bernhardsson, and Roger Kenna
Volume Editors

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Similarly, our utmost thanks are due to Jane Coppock, Assistant Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (F&ES) and Co-editor of the F&ES *Bulletin Series*. This book owes its quality in large part to her attention to detail, ambitious vision, and invigorating determination. We are thankful for her congeniality and her faith in us and this project.

J. A. Allan offered invaluable guidance during the planning of the conference which led to this volume. The photographer Luke Powell was generous with his powerful work in the support of both this book and the conference which inspired it.

Design and production were handled in the most professional manner by Peggy Sullivan of Sullivan Graphic Design, and Joseph Cinquino, Russell Shaddox, Karen Aiken, and Patricia Smith of Yale's Reprographic and Imaging Services (RIS). We also thank Barbara Papacoda of CMES and Peter Cook of F&ES for their assistance.

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