*Amy Singer*

# SPECIAL ISSUE INTRODUCTION

Almost two decades ago, Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, and I organized the first in a series of MESA panels on the general theme of poverty and charity in Middle Eastern contexts.[1] We came to the topic using different chronologies, sources, and approaches but identified a common field of interest in shared questions about how attitudes toward benevolence and poverty affected state and society formation: in early Islamic thought, in the Ottoman Empire of the 15th and 16th centuries, and in khedival Egypt. At that time, we could confidently state that there was very little work in the broad field of Middle East and Islamic studies that focused explicitly on the study of charity and poverty.

Before the 1990s, a survey of the topic within the various disciplines of this field finds scholarship that was primarily descriptive of ideas and practices (zakat, *ṣadaqa*) in a normative and often ahistorical fashion.[2] Early research concentrated extensively on definitions of basic Muslim terminology and these definitions tended to be based in texts of Islamic theology and law. For the most part, the discussions were doctrinally and legally defined, and not sufficiently problematized; charitable giving was portrayed as neutral and devoid of politics and there was little sense that giving practices were culturally specific and historically contingent within the scope of Islamic societies. There was no grounded attempt to think in either sociological or economic terms about how the prevalence of philanthropic practice might affect states or societies in the aggregate. No real attempts were made to quantify charitable giving as a field of fiscal activity, to explore the impact of the basic notion that it is recommended and laudable to give away money, or to ask what the economic impact of this outlook might be on government policy or a given set of social realities. At the most basic level, there was little interest, it seemed, in learning whether Muslims paid their zakat (obligatory alms) regularly, how they actually calculated it, and where the money went. On the other hand, a huge share of the relevant research from this period was about the establishment of waqfs (Muslim endowments), and their diverse and presumed impacts in specific historical situations received particular attention. Waqf research that was not preoccupied with the details of waqf law mostly looked at individual institutions and was largely based on endowment deeds that were to some extent formulaic and certainly reflected the donor's aspirations far more than the trajectory of a foundation's routine workings.[3]

In 2000, following the MESA panels, we convened a National Endowment for the Humanities-sponsored workshop conference titled "Poverty and Charity in Middle

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Eastern Contexts." One of the basic conclusions to emerge from the presentations and discussions there was that: "Charity . . . can never be removed from political, social, or economic contexts. The relationship between the ideals and acts of beneficence and the condition and definitions of poverty is subtle and complex."[4] Although perhaps obvious to historians of Europe and the United States, among whom more extensive research existed on these topics, it was significant to be able to ground this conclusion in the empirical research presented at the workshop. These articles also presented a variety of sources and methodologies for working on issues related to poverty and charity in Middle Eastern and Islamic contexts.[5]

The volume that came out of the conference was published in 2003 and subsequent publications have together demonstrated, among other things, that the language of poverty and charity is anything but transparent. More and more now, scholars working in the field ask about the complexity of the meanings contained in specific terms or signified by particular actions, and repeatedly demonstrate the elasticity of use and connotation that occurs. Thus even familiar terms like zakat, *ṣadaqa,* waqf, *birr,* and *iḥsān* should always be considered contextually according to their usage before assigning them meaning, and certainly should not be assumed to reflect a literal definition or single practice based on the Qurʾan or another normative text.

The work of the late Mine Ener, particularly her book *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952,* is a landmark contribution in this field of research.[6] A decade after its publication, a long list of monographs, articles, and edited volumes has continued research in Middle East and Islamic studies for which she helped lay the foundations, specifically on poor relief, the tensions between state and private charity, the politics of philanthropy, and the project of writing charity and poverty into other aspects addressed by "history from below." The mainstreaming of these subjects is reflected in articles published in *IJMES,* which now regularly touch on these themes, whether directly or indirectly.[7]

Moreover, as this special issue of *IJMES* illustrates, the scope of topics addressed by scholars under the general rubric of charity and poverty has continued to expand. Research now investigates, for example, the social or financial implications of zakat payment, the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the contested terrain of welfare services, middle-class activism, critical assessments of humanitarianism and development, and much more. These studies also explore a range of activities that finds both donors and recipients among stronger and weaker social and economic classes, a discovery that disrupts stereotypes about the directions in which benevolent giving flows. Assistance is organized not only by and for individuals, but also by means of organizations ranging from small and informal neighborhood groups to city, state, transnational, and international associations with tens, hundreds, and thousands of members. In many cases, governments or the agents sponsored by them are incubators, collaborators, or competitors of the private and civil society organizations and their activities.[8]

These preliminary pages consider what was happening when our ongoing academic conversation about charity and poverty began to gather momentum at the end of the 20th century and to posit what has driven it forward since then. The focus of study has evolved, obviously responding to our own achievements but also continually affected by broader trends in the study of Middle Eastern and Islamic societies and within the various disciplines that contribute to this field. No less important, the study of charity

and poverty in Middle Eastern societies has developed as a result of significant changes in the practices of charity and the nature of poverty worldwide.

No literature review seems necessary at the moment, since useful surveys appear regularly and in updated form in the monographs published on topics related to the study of charity and poverty, both within the field of Middle East and Islamic studies and more broadly in numerous disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies focused on other regions of the globe.[9] Indeed, because existing publications now address basic questions of the vocabulary, methodology, and historiography of studying charity and poverty in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies, one might well ask about the need for yet another "special issue." Yet the present collection of articles offers a unique occasion for reflecting on the scholarship that has appeared since the 1990s and in particular since Ener's book was published in 2003. Of no less importance, it is an occasion to pause in appreciation of the contribution left by a gifted young scholar whose life ended far before it should have and to recognize that her work has remained to inspire many of her contemporaries and their students.

## A FEW COMMENTS ON TERMS

### Benevolence

In this special issue and in the present text, "benevolence" stands in for a range of practices that originate in individuals, private organizations, and national and transnational associations, as well as in governments and state-sponsored organizations. The word "charity" often serves the same purpose, although it can be confusing because of its religious connotations or misleading due to its association with direct donations to the indigent poor. Benevolence, following Ener's choice, is probably a more neutral term than charity and certainly of broader scope, allowing the discussion to include a spectrum ranging from traditional religious tithes to contemporary humanitarian agencies. The word is used as a shorthand to describe what people do (make donations to individuals, groups, causes, or grant-making foundations) to address what they define as the basic needs and rights of people and groups whom they define as deserving of assistance or benefit, in whatever form it is delivered. The number of variables in the preceding sentence suggests the range and flexibility of specific interpretations. What makes it possible to unite them under a single rubric is the common element of giving (goods, services, or money) *gratis* with the conscious intention to fulfill a need. Motivations for such gifts encompass a wide array of initiatives, from an idealistic and spiritually inspired altruism to a more secular notion of gift exchange. However, Mauss' explication of the power relations embedded in gift-giving reminds us that even when no money changes hands and no overt recompense or recognition is demanded in return for what is given, a hierarchy of power is invoked and emphasized in every such transaction. Thus it is difficult to conceive of a "pure" or entirely "free gift."[10]

### Poverty

"Poverty" also serves as a shorthand, in this case for the perceived need or absence of some good or service. "Goods and services" are intentionally mentioned here to recall

that all discussions of charitable giving involve decisions about the use of human and material resources, a choice to use resources that is not necessarily based on capitalist market considerations of their real or potential value. Poverty, however, should be understood in broader terms, usefully articulated by French historian Michel Mollat:

> a pauper was a person who permanently or temporarily found himself in a situation of weakness, dependence, or humiliation, characterized by privation of the means to power and social esteem (which means varied with period and place) . . . Living from hand to mouth, he had no chance of rising without assistance.[11]

In her introduction, Ener highlighted the subjective labeling of people as poor in describing the aim of her book:

> I set out to find missing people, individuals who until recently had fallen through the cracks of Egyptian historiography. . . . In looking at those individuals [or groups] whom others have identified in this fashion [i.e. as "poor"], I endeavor to understand the very criteria of need that the state and private individuals and organizations introduced as a means of measuring whether a poor person deserved assistance. As I show, the charitable actions of the government and of associations were kept in check by emergent notions of who constituted the deserving poor and who merited assistance.[12]

The articles in the present issue give varied answers to the question "what is need?" Historically, the most basic response focused on food, clothing, shelter, and perhaps spiritual guidance. By the early 21st century, government constitutions and charitable endeavors in many countries had articulated longer lists of basic rights, the absence of which may be defined as a form of poverty. Indeed, the list continues to expand. Food, clothing, and shelter still reign as the most basic needs for which emergency relief interventions often exist. Meanwhile, literacy, education, health care, and protection from enslavement and violence have all become, to varying degrees, part of the basic package of human needs whose presence is considered a human right and whose absence constitutes a form of poverty. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals drawn up in 2002 aimed to improve conditions for the world's poorest people and defined poverty in terms of hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion, as well as the absence of gender equality, health, education, and environmental sustainability.[13] A very recent example attests to the impact of global women's activism, which has succeeded in pushing to have the needs of wartime survivors of sexual violence and its traumas recognized as demanding assistance in emergency situations, itself one of the most common forms of benevolence.[14]

*Politics of Benevolence*

That all of charitable giving has a political component is hardly arguable. As a human activity, giving is inherently involved in constructing, demonstrating, and reinforcing power relationships. Individual donors may have conflicted responses to the hierarchies implied by giving, sometimes going to great lengths to deny or neutralize this aspect of donations, yet the power gradients exist nonetheless. Ultimately, the texts we read and those we write are almost all composed from a position of power. Whether about donors or recipients, most of the sources we read are composed either by donors or by their

agents; at their most "neutral" these sources may have been composed by third-party observers. Finally, texts about giving are usually written for the benefit of donors or scholars, all of whom sit in positions of control or power.

Yet philanthropic activity has also been a vehicle enabling the political participation and influence of disempowered groups across the spectrum. Women appear persistently as philanthropic actors for whom their business of giving is the means to become public social actors and to claim power and authority in specific historical circumstances where legal or social restrictions limit their rights or freedom of action.[15] The article by Yaniv Voller in this issue explores a contemporary incarnation of this phenomenon: Kurdish women exploiting benevolence in its current transnational form to advocate for institutionalizing stronger safeguards for women's safety and rights in Iraqi Kurdistan. This kind of activism and its use of the international language of human rights are made possible by the unique political configuration in northern Iraq and by the aims of the movement's leaders. Two further perspectives on philanthropy as a tool of the disempowered are offered in this issue. In her article, Stacy Fahrenthold studies how Syrian migrants in the Brazilian diaspora patronized schools in the city of Homs, seeking to educate the boys back home to become cultured and capable citizens who could one day lead Syria after the departure of the French Mandate governors. The second perspective is offered in the articles by Lisa Pollard, Dietrich Jung and Marie Juul Petersen, Damla Işık, and Laura Ruiz de Elvira and Tina Zintl. Together, they demonstrate how self-consciously Muslim organizations have used benevolent activity as the means to promote religious ideals and identities within a state or community where Islamist political goals could not be openly advocated.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING THE STUDY OF BENEVOLENCE

Several factors and trends have affected the attraction to and the visibility of charitable giving, poverty, and the politics of benevolence as subjects of academic research in Middle East and Islamic studies since the late 20th century. These are not entirely separate from the political, social, economic, and cultural changes that have shifted the needs and goals that benevolence could and did address in these societies, as well as the way in which giving is organized and practiced. Although some of this research is historical, an important part of it considers benevolence in recent or present contexts as part of contemporary ethnographic, anthropological, political, or economic research; public policy analysis; feasibility studies; or evaluations of the operation and results of ongoing or recently completed projects. This is clearly demonstrated by the titles cited in the notes in this introduction.

First, there has been an expansion of wealth on a global scale, including new forms of wealth, newly wealthy people, and increasing gaps between the wealthy and those who are not. In the Middle East, new oil wealth, especially since the 1970s, has increased the fortunes of governments and of the individuals who control oil production, processing, distribution, and sales. Among them are countries not previously counted among the world's wealthy. This wealth made it possible for governments to pay for or subsidize substantial improvements in the basic living conditions of their populations as well as to extend assistance abroad. Individuals as well undertook charitable and philanthropic endeavors in support of education, health, welfare, and cultural initiatives. Some

individuals and governments also chose to extend support to specifically Muslim religious and cultural projects, including the construction of mosques and madrasas and special distributions on Muslim holidays. In addition to oil wealth, the profits from heavy industry, manufacturing, and the high tech, digital, and finance industries have created many new millionaires and billionaires worldwide. Finally, industries and manufacturing in the so-called BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and more recently MINT (Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey) countries are indications that the phenomenon of great new individual wealth is global in scope. One widespread concern of wealthy individuals and prominent corporations worldwide is to ensure that they are well received in their home countries and wherever else they operate. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the public commitment of a portion of corporate resources and profits to sustaining and even boosting the economic, social, and cultural condition of local populations in these countries. It is an overt recognition that the responsibilities that accompany wealth, whether these are welcomed or merely tolerated, are one of the costs of doing business today.

Second, in this same period, many governments have reduced their commitments to act as universal welfare agents for their citizens. Generous welfare policies were important instruments after the world wars, during the 1929 depression, and through much of the 20th century. Yet a major shift in the fiscal policies of the United States and Great Britain under President Ronald Reagan (1981–89) and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979–90) signaled the retreat of those countries, and that of others who followed their neoliberal economic leadership, from extensive state-funded welfare provisions. Greater emphasis was placed on the role of private philanthropy and other private initiatives as states re-evaluated what kinds of welfare services they would (or could) provide and how much. The collapse of communist regimes has been another political factor undermining state-sponsored welfare provisions. Postcommunist nations shifting their economies toward capitalist market models and promoting neoliberal policies have reduced or eliminated some of the extensive economic, social, and cultural support to their populations.

Third, an ongoing discussion inside and outside charitable and aid agencies, NGOs, and philanthropic initiatives of various types continues to review, critique, and build on ideas about what to accomplish and how to do it most effectively and justly. While most agreed on the need for emergency relief in cataclysmic situations, in the 1970s and 1980s discussions increasingly turned toward the need to invest aid monies in more long-term development projects that aimed at creating sustainable increases in capacities of various kinds. Aid organizations recognized that local people from recipient communities and countries had to be involved in the design and running of projects to give them a greater possibility of success. Since the turn of the 21st century, the goals have become more markedly articulated in terms that come from the world of business and management: measurable returns, transparency of organization and decision making, financial accountability, and profitability. In this globalizing and corporate atmosphere, CSR has to some extent been a repackaging of older corporate giving practices that incorporates new strategies and thinking about benevolent donations.

The emergence worldwide of Islamist activism—seeking "to shape the state, economy and society along Islamic lines"—is a fourth factor influencing the study of benevolence.[16] This is a phenomenon with many variants among the world's Muslims,

although it is not universal nor has it necessarily engaged a majority of the Muslim population in any specific place. For example, the growth of Islamic banking reflects both the increase in wealth among the world's Muslims and a demand for financial instruments and institutions that can function nationally and globally to enable the seamless participation of devout Muslims in global business and finance activities without compromising the precepts and guidelines laid down in the Qur'an concerning the proper way to treat money and capital. In addition, banking practices have to be able to accommodate annual calculations and payment of zakat as well as other forms of benevolent giving. Social and cultural activist movements are another example of how Islamist groups have found charitable activities to be a constructive instrument for pushing forward agendas connected to health, education, religious missions, and even political organizing.

A fifth aspect of the larger changes was the expansion and diversification of Islamic benevolent giving practices by the mid-1990s. Domestic changes within Muslim communities worldwide—whether in Muslim-minority or -majority countries—together with global changes in charitable giving and activity all affected the forms, though not the underlying basis, for charitable giving in Islamic societies. The dynamics of globalization continued a process initiated with the formation of Islam whereby traditional Islamic societies confronted, engaged, adapted, adopted, or rejected benevolent practices they encountered in non-Muslim societies. The proliferation of endowments as waqfs is one example; another was the more limited incorporation of Indian weighing ceremonies by the Mughals.[17] Ener's book traced Egyptian encounters with 19th-century European ideas and practices of social reform and with 20th-century welfare-state models. Increasingly during the late 20th and the 21st centuries, Islamic societies generated NGOs, civil society organizations, private foundations, corporate giving initiatives, and locally based (as compared with foreign) aid and development organizations working at the local, national, regional, and transnational levels. However, all these agencies have vastly differing agendas and capacities, and state laws governing associations are a significant factor in shaping their individual structures and effectiveness.

The aftermath of the tragic attacks of September 11, 2001, can be considered on its own as a sixth factor to compel scholars in a range of fields to focus on the study of benevolent giving in Islamic societies. The attacks had an abrupt and far-reaching impact on Islamic charity, most obviously as a result of U.S. government measures implemented through the Department of the Treasury, but also through government actions and popular discussions around the world. A claim was frequently heard that monies to fund what was labeled "Islamic or Islamist terror" originated in Muslim charitable giving, allegedly a popular conduit for channeling and laundering funds around the globe. This idea nurtured popular fear and affected government policymaking in non-Muslim-majority states, both toward their own Muslim communities and toward Muslim-majority countries. As a global phenomenon, the reaction highlighted a widespread lack of understanding or appreciation for the achievements of Muslim benevolence either historically or in its contemporary forms. Instead, a spotlight was turned on all organizations that described themselves as Muslim charities (various local Zakat funds, for example), making individuals and organizations alike visible, vulnerable, and suspect.[18] It linked Islamic charity and terror financing in an organic way in the minds of many people worldwide. The book title *Alms for Jihad* was a perfect shorthand

description of this new climate of suspicion around Islamic charitable practices.[19] The claim was that radical and violent political activism regularly tapped charity funds to support its operations. It has been hard to move people away from understanding this misuse of funds as an exception to the general norms that organize charitable practices among Muslims. In fact, the variety of Muslim activities funded through charitable giving makes clear the centrality of the work of Muslim jurists and other thinkers when they interpret certain broad statements of the Qur'an into specific dictates or recommendations to people about how to live as good Muslims. With respect to charitable giving and attitudes toward the poor, conservatives, liberals, moderates, and radicals all draw inspiration from the same text.

Together, the factors reviewed above have made Muslim benevolent giving a more prevalent and prominent topic for critical reporting and public discussion than had earlier been the case. This shift has also been reflected in academic research in the social sciences and humanities. It has inspired more people to engage with the topic, reshaping questions asked of every period and place under study. Now, more than a decade after the attacks of September 11, there is an increasing appreciation among non-Muslims for charitable giving in Islam as an integral aspect of doctrine, belief, institutions, and practice, as a cultural endeavor and a basic human value. This is a result of the intense public scrutiny, including some high-profile but not uniformly successful challenges to the legality of Islamic charities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Israel, among others, and the variety of responses these challenges elicited. Some of this response has come from scholars of Islamic and Middle East studies. As the articles by Jung and Petersen and by Ruiz de Elvira and Zintl suggest, Islamic charities may be viewed with suspicion if not outright hostility by Muslims and non-Muslims, private individuals and governments alike. The long and often fraught relationship between the Egyptian government and Muslim Brotherhood organizations and their benevolent affiliates is another example.

THE ARTICLES

The articles in this issue appear in chronological order because they illustrate certain time-dependent shifts in the practice of benevolence since the mid-19th century in general, and specifically in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies. The shifting and expanding parameters of charitable giving can be grouped into three general categories: 1) the "operative fields of philanthropy action," which grew from communal to national to international and transnational and from individual to organizational in scope; 2) the "operative goals of philanthropy," expanding from emergency or stop-gap aid to include assistance with long-term development goals to advocacy and human rights campaigns; and 3) the "operative forms of philanthropy," which had always been rooted in individual giving, but expanded to include funding from governments; local, national, transnational or international organizations of all types; private foundations; and corporations.

The articles make evident the multiplication of agents for delivering social and welfare services as well as the role of charity in the competition for power between governments and other groups in the national context. In turn, these sites of competition help to locate and define challenges to incumbent political powers or entire regimes. Each article can

be read as an aspect of the history of charity and also as a demonstration of how reading history through the prism of charity opens new perspectives onto processes of historical change.

Lisa Pollard's article, "Egyptian by Association: Charitable States and Service Societies, Circa 1850–1945," focuses on the emergence of two of the most prominent sets of new benevolent actors in the 19th century: voluntary charitable groups and government agencies. The shifting locus of assistance defines one continuum along which the competition between state and society is played out. Pollard anchors her discussion around the Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs, which was created in 1939 to foster citizen loyalty to the state. Imperial charity had long been one among many ways in which Ottoman sultans and other rulers sought to maintain the loyalty of their subjects. This loyalty was both personal and dynastic, and in the 20th century extended to include the nation-state as well. What Pollard is aiming to tease out of her study, however, is a more complicated appreciation of "the state" as "both a collection of institutions and a set of practices, engaged in by official and voluntary actors alike." By focusing on associations, Pollard retraces the same chronological ground as Ener did, but she takes the perspective of the associations rather than that of the poor. Her study thus broadens our understanding of the dynamics that created shifts in Egyptian welfare structures in 1939 and 1952 and clarifies the dynamic that brought the associations into existence in the first place.

In "Sound Minds in Sound Bodies: Transnational Philanthropy and Patriotic Masculinity in al-Nadi al-Homsi and Syrian Brazil, 1920–32," Stacy Fahrenthold offers a richly textured perspective on the Syrian migrant diaspora in Brazil in the 1920s. She locates the philanthropic impetus that sent donations from Brazil back to home communities in the city of Homs in two intersecting projects of education. The first was that of shaping the proper behavior of the young men of the Syrian middle class in São Paolo through their membership and activity in the al-Nadi al-Homsi fraternity, itself established through donations from the community. Its activities included philanthropic projects, among them the establishment of schools and other cultural and welfare institutions in Homs to educate a new generation of Syrian patriots and modern citizens. It is notable that charitable giving had become a marker of class and status identity for the professional and commercial middle class, similar to the role such giving had once played among the Ottoman princes and pashas. Fahrenthold argues that the transnational diaspora-originated project is an example of how the political culture of the *mahjar* must be considered a part of Syria's interwar history. Her study emphasizes charitable giving as a tool to create and sustain nation-building, providing a thought-provoking contrast to the state-building context of Pollard's article.

Like the other authors in this issue, Dietrich Jung and Marie Juul Petersen use an investigation of one aspect of charity, in "'We Think That This Job Pleases Allah': Islamic Charity, Social Order, and the Construction of Modern Muslim Selfhoods in Jordan," to shed light on a much larger question. In Jung and Petersen's case, they read individual involvement in several quite different contemporary Jordanian charities and social welfare organizations as a means to understand alternative modern Muslim Jordanian identities or conceptions of "modern selfhood." These, they posit, are conditioned by the embedding of Islamic traditions of charity and social welfare in religious belief and practice, on the one hand, and by "historically specific contexts and social imaginaries

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of a nonreligious character," on the other hand. The contemporary social imaginaries that inform the ideas and activities of these Jordanian organizations make them also global and not entirely specific to Jordan or to Islam in Jordan. JOHUD, a royal NGO which is nonreligious in its identity, the government-affiliated Zakat Fund, the ICSS with close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and the independent AHIS organization each exemplify a distinct articulation of the rationale and nature of its benevolent activities, and its connections to Islam.

Damla Işık takes up another aspect of the contemporary Muslim engagement with charity, as it is used to define the practitioner and the recipient as "good Muslims." In her study, entitled "*Vakıf* as Intent and Practice: Charity and Poor Relief in Turkey," Işık demonstrates how the donation of time, expertise, and money has distracted donors and volunteers from the inadequacies of the welfare practices of Turkey's neoliberal economic policies, beginning from the time of Turgut Özal in the 1980s and continuing today. At the same time, the assistance delivered through the organizations that Işık discusses mitigates the frustrations of the people served, who might otherwise be prompted to speak or act more forcefully to protest the same inadequacies. Organizations aimed at helping economically or socially impoverished people are only one aspect of the vibrant civil society that emerged in this period together with a continually growing public presence for consciously identified and practicing Muslim citizens. The Turkish context, therefore, intersects with a broader trend to create self-identified Muslim social, cultural, and charitable organizations worldwide while retaining parameters specified by the Turkish experience.

Laura Ruiz de Elvira and Tina Zintl's article, "The End of the Baʿthist Social Contract in Bashar al-Asad's Syria: Reading Sociopolitical Transformations through Charities and Broader Benevolent Activism," offers an interesting comparison to that of Damla Işık. In both the Syrian and Turkish cases, civil society organizations were allowed to flourish (more in Turkey, less in Syria) after a period of extreme repression (the 1980 coup in Turkey, the long era of Hafiz al-Asad's rule in Syria). Civil society organizations in Turkey were meant to focus citizens' energies away from the vicious left-right political divisions of the later 1970s. In Syria, the organizations were permitted in the context of the "Damascus Spring" of 2000–01 but were closely monitored. Even when the "spring" ended, the organizations were allowed to continue because they filled needs that the government did not. Yet, whereas Işık suggests that in Turkey these organizations have a depoliticizing effect, Ruiz de Elvira and Zintl conclude that the opposite is true in Syria.

Yaniv Voller's article, "Countering Violence against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan: State-Building and Transnational Advocacy," explores the impact of transnational women's advocacy in Iraqi Kurdistan. In this case, instead of a fully constituted state, a regionally autonomous government faces the activism of a transnational network of groups advocating for women's rights and safety. This transnational network is the most recent addition to the array of benevolent organizations and initiatives discussed in this issue. In some ways, the Kurdish diaspora active here recalls that of al-Nadi al-Homsi in Brazil, though the latter had a primarily bilateral relationship with Homs whereas the initiative to define and secure Kurdish women's rights is based in a much more scattered diaspora. Moreover, this initiative has succeeded, according to Voller, because it could articulate its agenda as compatible with, indeed fully supportive of, the agenda pursued by the

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The KRG sought to legitimize its sovereignty over northern Iraq by proving that it was a force for democratization and modernization. In order to win international support, it was willing to respond positively to the activists' pressure to secure women's rights as a sign that the KRG adhered to international norms of good governance. The fact that women's rights, including protection from gender-based violence, are articulated as a norm of good governance in turn reflects the extent to which this right has become part of the expanded 21st-century list of needs that deserve to be met.

In sum, the articles in this issue are an appropriate testament to the challenging conversation that Mine Ener helped set in motion with her work on 19th- and 20th-century Egypt. The politics of benevolence are a constant factor in the social and economic relations between individuals and the groups and institutions into which they organize themselves as societies. As a result of the enduring salience of benevolence as a social practice and an economic variable, these politics extend to the level of state-society relations and are a fundamental force in shaping cultures.

NOTES

[1] "Poverty and Social Welfare in Islamic Contexts," panel at Middle East Studies Association Annual Meeting 1996, Providence.

[2] For detailed reviews of the literature up to that point, see Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800–1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 1–25; Amy Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 17–26; and the articles in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition*, most of which were completed by the mid-1990s and the last in 2005.

[3] The lengthy and mutiple-authored article "*waḳf*" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition* gives an excellent introduction to this scholarship. Earlier works that are more engaged with endowments as functioning institutions in specific historical contexts include, for example, Suraiya Faroqhi, "The Tekke of Haci Bektaş: Social Position and Economic Activities," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 183–208; idem, "Vakıf Administration in Sixteenth Century Konya: The *Zaviye* of Sadreddin-i Konevî," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17 (1974): 145–72; A. Raymond and A. Abdul Tawab, "Les Grand Waqfs et l'Organisation de l'Espace Urbain à Alep et Au Caire à l'Époque Ottomane (XVIe-XVIIe Siècles)," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 31 (1979–80): 113–28; and H. Gerber, "The Waqf Institution in Early Ottoman Edirne," *Asian and African Studies* 17 (1983): 29–45.

[4] "Introduction," in Michael Bonner, Mine Ener, and Amy Singer, eds., *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2003), 2.

[5] Attending the workshop as discussants were a number of Europeanists and Americanists who had published significant works on charity and beneficence. For their contribution, see Bonner et al., *Poverty and Charity*, 7–8.

[6] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*.

[7] Examples from the past decade include Jennifer Johnson Onyedum, "'Humanize the Conflict': Algerian Health Care Organizations and Propaganda Campaigns, 1954–62," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 713–31; Darcie Fontaine, "Treason or Charity? Christian Missions On Trial and the Decolonization of Algeria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44 (2012): 733–53; Nazan Maksudyan, "Orphans, Cities, and the State: Vocational Orphanages (*Islahhanes*) and Reform in the Late Ottoman Urban Space," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 493–511; Thomas Pierret and Kjetil Selvik, "Limits of 'Authoritarian Upgrading' in Syria: Private Welfare, Islamic Charities, and the Rise of the Zayd Movement," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41 (2009): 595–614; Benoît Challand, "A *Nahḍa* of Charitable Organizations? Health Service Provision and the Politics of Aid in Palestine," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008): 227–47; Ayşe Buğra, "Poverty and Citizenship: An Overview of the Social-Policy Environment in Republican Turkey," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 33–52; Anne Marie Baylouny, "Creating Kin: New Family Associations as Welfare Providers in Liberalizing

Jordan," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006); 349–68; and Nadir Özbek, "Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876–1909," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 37 (2005): 59–81.

[8] Among the representative works published during the past decade are Janine A. Clark, *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2003); Jean-Paul Pascual, ed., *Pauvreté et Richesse dans le Monde Musulman Méditerranéen/Poverty and Wealth in the Muslim Mediterranean World* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003); Timur Kuran, "Islamic Redistribution through Zakat: Medieval Roots of Contemporary Problems," in Bonner et al., *Poverty and Charity*, 275–94; Jonathan Benthall and Jérôme Bellion-Jourdan, *The Charitable Crescent: Politics of Aid in the Muslim World* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); J. Alterman and K. van Hippel, eds., *Islamic Charities* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007); Miriam Frenkel and Yaacov Lev, eds., *Charity and Giving in Monotheistic Religions* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009); Amelia Fauzia, *Faith and the State: A History of Islamic Philanthropy in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Mona Atia, *Building a House in Heaven: Pious Neoliberalism and Islamic Charity in Egypt* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

[9] In addition to the other works cited in this introduction, among the many examples of recent monographs are Erica Bornstein, *Disquieting Gifts: Humanitarianism in New Delhi* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2012); Michael Barnett, *The Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011); Barbara Lethem Ibrahim and Dina H. Sherif, eds., *From Charity to Social Change: Trends in Arab Philanthropy* (Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2008); and Joanna Handlin Smith, *The Art of Doing Good: Charity in Late Ming China* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2009).

[10] The most important original discussion of gifts is that of Marcel Mauss, published almost a century ago in French and then in various English translations. See Marcel Mauss, *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas (London: Routledge, 1990). Extensive discussions take up and critique Mauss' claims. One recent example of this rich literature is Bornstein, *Disquieting Gifts*.

[11] Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), 5.

[12] Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor*, x, xii.

[13] See http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml (accessed 2 January 2014).

[14] See http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgsexualviolence.shtml (accessed 14 December 2013).

[15] Within Middle East studies, one can point to the following: Carl F. Petry, "Class Solidarity vs. Gender Gain: Women as Custodians of Property in Later Medieval Egypt," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991), 122–42; and Beth Baron, "Islam, Philanthropy, and Political Culture in Interwar Egypt: The Activism of Labiba Ahmad," in Bonner et al., *Poverty and Charity*, 239–54. Other foundational works include Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990); and Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, "Womanly Duties: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States in Germany Great Britain, France and the United States, 1880–1920," *American Historical Review* 95 (1990): 1076–1108. More recent works include Jean Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Kathleen McCarthy, ed., *Women, Philanthropy, and Civil Society* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001); and Donna J. Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009).

[16] This definition is taken from Cihan Tuğal, *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 267.

[17] On these, see Singer, *Charity in Islamic Societies*, 90–100, 114–17.

[18] On the impact of initiatives within the United States, for example, see the 2009 report by the American Civil Liberties Union at https://www.aclu.org/human-rights/report-blocking-faith-freezing-charity (accessed 15 December 2013).

[19] J. Millard Burr and Robert O Collins, *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Another book, more limited in scope but equally tendentious in its claims, is Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Poverty, Charity and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006).