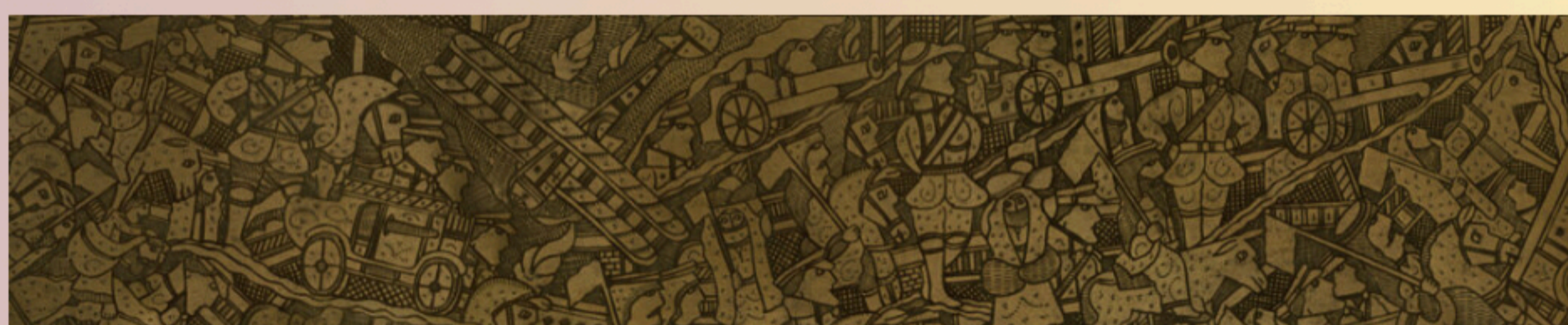
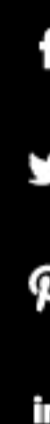


S/he Said

Jananne Al-Ani

August 10, 2022



She Said

There was this beautiful, beautiful river
A very dangerous river
With swift currents
A very dangerous place
Very deep water

They were very politically aware
They felt they were living under a repressive regime
They were all part of an underground movement
They were very optimistic
It was wonderful
The hope and the promise
And then what happened afterwards was so bad

Everywhere there were guards
Secret police on the streets watching
They did not want to be seen
Some of his relatives had been shot by the British
Him and the other rebels were armed
They chased this policeman
And he got caught between these rebels and was shot
They were hung
Some men had been hung
They were hung under this bridge

When the aeroplanes came
It made me realise that the situation was very volatile
There was a lot more tension everywhere
People were really worried
All those places have been devastated
That was very sad
It was just for everybody, utterly horrendous
They've seen such dreadful things
They've been through things that we haven't
Such sadness

Extracts from a series of interviews conducted in 2021 with my mother. She lived in Iraq from 1964 to 1980.

He Said

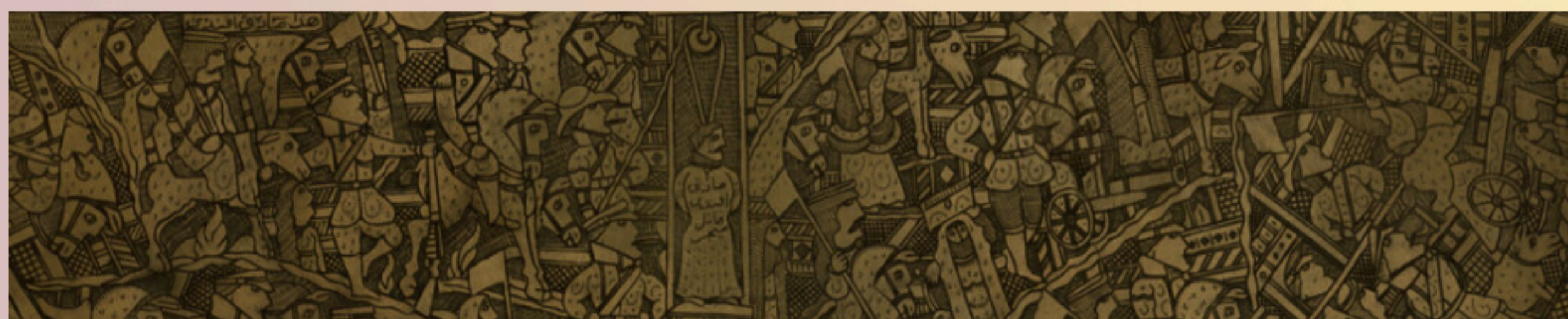
We are on the Tigris
We reached the river bank
And found the bridge burning
A party of machine guns and sappers came up
We killed not less than 200

I have absolutely no qualifications for political work
I am a stranger in a strange land
The people hate us and hope that the tribes will mop us up
The whole country is falling on evil days
I saw armed tribesmen and emptied my revolver into them
They are the sort of people
Who would sooner part with their eyes than their rifles

There is fighting all over the place
I have made an example of two people
I had one of them flogged in the market place
And sentenced an old man to a year's imprisonment
I had him tied up and beaten
And sent to Baghdad in heavy chains
We got fired on
Another officer murdered
By God this man must be hanged
He well deserves what he has got

I saw two airmen. Wonderful fellows!
The town has surrendered the persons we wanted
Planes went over to bomb it this morning
We managed to stop four of them
But I'm afraid one went on...
The people were really frightened, poor things
The people know me and I know them and I've got to like the place
It is a very dangerous policy in the East to rely on the goodwill of the people
I have grown to be a pessimist with regard to the future of Mesopotamia
Please keep all I say to yourself

Extracts from letters written by a British Political Officer to his wife. He was stationed in Iraq from 1917 to 1925.



Artworks: Jananne Al-Ani, stills from *Timelines*, film, 2022.

Timelines focuses on a highly decorated brass tray that originated in Iraq and is now in the Victoria & Albert Museum Collection, London. The tray is said to mark Armistice Day, 1918, but the depiction of biplanes and the execution of an Arab man by British forces, points to events surrounding the Arab Revolt of 1920, an overlooked and little-known chapter in the history of British intervention in Iraq. The uprising posed a serious threat to plans to create the modern state of Iraq under a British mandate in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Had it not been for the use of airpower to crush the rebellion and attack civilian targets – a form of modern warfare 'pioneered' by the British in the 1920s – the revolt may have succeeded, and the history of the modern Middle East would look very different today.