

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The first three articles in this issue, grouped under the heading “Politics and Cultures of Capitalism,” address various ways that Middle Eastern actors dealt with European capitalist expansion in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They all focus on cultural and political aspects of economic change and maintain a global perspective while constructing an intensely local analysis. Gad Gilbar and Jens Hanssen trace specific institutions and networks in Qajar Iran and the late Ottoman Empire, respectively, that operated within what Hanssen calls the “interstices” of state bureaucracy, local business concerns, and European expansion. The interstitial nature of the arguments made by both authors is underlined by the impressive range of sources they draw on: Persian, British, Russian, German, and French in the case of Gilbar and Turkish, Arabic, German, British, and French in the case of Hanssen. The third article, by Nancy Reynolds, takes us from late Qajar and Ottoman societies to Egypt during the first half of the 20th century and from general commerce to the marketing and consumption of particular commodities.

Gilbar asks why the model of mixed courts based on the French commercial code, which was implemented in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt during the 19th century, was not established in Qajar Iran in spite of persistent complaints by European capitalists and diplomats on the ground. The article traces the workings of the *kārguzār*'s court, a Qajar-specific institution that fulfilled the basic function of the mixed court while avoiding the latter's violations of state sovereignty and local economic interests. Resistance to mixed courts succeeded, according to Gilbar, because of both internal and external factors. Among the former was cooperation among the three elite groups of Qajar Iran—government bureaucrats, merchants, and the ‘ulama’—who shared an interest in preventing European economic domination.

Although the late Ottoman Empire was far more economically intertwined with European capitalism than was Qajar Iran, Hanssen's article refutes the notion that the Ottoman bureaucracy or business class was simply subservient to foreign interests. He traces the dramatic rise and ignominious fall of the six Malhamé brothers—Maronite Christians who ascended through the ranks of Ottoman bureaucracy and elite Levantine society to become “transimperial power brokers” involved in everything from tobacco, cotton, and silk to the Mosul oilfields and the Ottoman public debt. Hanssen shows how a close examination of the Malhamé phenomenon reveals much about the transimperial space between Levantine business and Hamidian politics that helped sustain the late Ottoman state.

The article by Reynolds looks at how textiles emerged in 20th-century Egypt as commodities and symbols through which to “contest the relations of colonialism and

establish national community.” Refusing to treat “textiles” as an undifferentiated commodity type or economic sector, she shows how the materiality of different kinds of cloth, from cotton to nylon, not only affected economic outcomes in Egypt but also shaped, and was shaped by, cultural (especially nationalist) conceptions and experience. Like Gilbar and Hanssen, Reynolds constructs a global economic analysis, in her case of Egypt as a “semicolonial” society, without losing her focus on the local, and even sensual, particularities of her subject matter.

The next two articles, grouped under the title “Kurds and the Turkish State,” explore state power and its limits in the Kurdish regions of Turkey since the foundation of the republic. Senem Aslan and Ceren Belge both argue that state efforts to subdue and assimilate the Kurds were not as coherent or effective as is often assumed and show how paying attention to everyday state–society interactions on the ground can lead to very different analytical conclusions from those based on studies of state policy at the center.

The two articles complement each other in striking ways. Aslan focuses on state programs in the 1920s and 1930s after the early Kurdish uprisings, while Belge carries her analysis to the Kurdish nationalist movement of the 1980s and 1990s; Aslan examines everyday forms of state power on the ground, while Belge looks at everyday forms of Kurdish resistance to that power. Aslan’s close reading of reports sent to the state center from officials working in or visiting what she calls the Kurdish “areas of dissidence” shows how state programs faltered in practice or were transformed into something quite different from what policymakers intended. Belge picks up the story by showing how state practices bumped into “alternative imaginations of space and peoplehood” in the form of Kurdish kinship networks and morality.

The third theme in this issue focuses on how scholars study early and modern Islam. Jonathan Brockopp’s article asks some unusual questions about discrepancies in the source material on “exemplary figures” in Islamic history. Using contradictory accounts of the life of early Maliki scholar Sahnun b. Sa’id, Brockopp argues that such discrepancies need not be viewed as problems to be solved through more rigorous scholarship. Rather, they may be an indispensable aspect of the exemplary nature of such figures.

In the *IJMES* Roundtable for this issue, contributors reflect on how scholars in both the Arab world and the West have approached the study of modern Islamist movements and share their thoughts on possible future directions for the scholarship. Since organizer Nathan Brown has already discussed recurring themes of the contributions in his Roundtable introduction, we will refrain from doing so here.

Attentive readers might begin to note some subtle changes in our book review section. The Internet has thankfully relieved academic journals of the responsibility to provide the kind of chapter-by-chapter summaries that were once important for scholars to determine whether a book was worth ordering or adding to a syllabus. The art of writing an academic book review is accordingly changing, and the *IJMES* editorial office and book review editors have been working to move our book reviews away from summarization and toward more developed analysis. So if you are commissioned by *IJMES* to review a book, do not feel constrained to provide information our readers can easily find online. We want your expert assessment of the rigor of the book’s arguments and research and your analysis of how it fits into the wider literature.

One field of scholarship that has been woefully underrepresented in *IJMES* is that on North Africa. We have put out a call for papers for an *IJMES* special issue provisionally

titled “Maghribi Histories in the Modern Era,” which will be guest edited by Julia Clancy-Smith. The call invites submissions from scholars whose primary focus is the peoples, societies, and states in what we now know as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya from the late 18th century on. The deadline for submissions is March 15. For details, see our editorial office website (<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/ijmes>).

Finally, we thank Muhammad Hozien of Scholarly Type for having sympathy for the many users of our transliteration system and creating, on his own initiative, the new *IJMES* transliteration chart, which is elegantly typeset, clarifies a few issues, and, best of all, can be read by those not blessed with 20/20 vision. We print it for the first time herein; a PDF version may be downloaded from our website.

Beth Baron and Sara Pursley