

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

We are thrilled to present this special issue of *IJMES* on “Maghribi Histories in the Modern Era” with guest editor Julia Clancy-Smith. The issue was conceived as an effort to bring scholarship on the Maghrib and Mashriq into closer dialogue. We issued the call for papers in December 2010, weeks before the self-immolation of Muhammad al-Buʿazizi in Tunisia triggered the string of upheavals often referred to as the Arab Spring. That North Africa took the lead in upending authoritarian regimes makes this issue especially timely. Although none of the pieces deals directly with contemporary events, they provide innovative ways for thinking about historical transformations and genealogies.

The editorial office received twenty-eight submissions for the special issue, eight of which made it through our regular peer review process and seven of which we present here (one was included in the August issue in a cluster of articles on Morocco). We did not aim for equal coverage of countries (of the eight accepted pieces, four focus on Algeria, two on Tunisia, one on Morocco, and one on Algeria and Morocco) or historical periods (most focus on either the turn of the 20th century or the 1950s and 1960s). Rather, we hoped a rigorous peer review process would produce a sampling of some of the most exciting contemporary scholarship on the Maghrib. The result is a collection of pieces that are not only exciting but also resonate with one another in some surprising ways. Recurring methodological and topical themes include the use of biography and microhistory to uncover aspects of larger sociopolitical processes, a focus on Jewish histories, attention to border crossings and questions of hybridity, and an interest in transnational activism and humanitarianism. Four of the seven articles in this issue focus on a single individual, and the first three of those trace the story of a Jewish life in particular, showing how close attention to the travels, encounters, and practices of a person in a minority community can open up new questions and insights into Maghribi histories in the modern era. This research points to a larger trend toward a “de-ghettoization” of Middle Eastern Jewish history.

The articles by Joshua Schreier and Jessica Marglin both show, in different ways, the extent to which 19th-century French colonial officials adapted preexisting North African commercial networks, travel patterns, and legal and religious statuses in the process of building an empire—and how they were equally willing to deploy European discourses of anti-Semitism when their local allies and protected subjects expertly turned these adaptations to their own advantage, often undermining rather than undergirding French authority. Jonathan Glasser’s article on a well-known Jewish musician in early 20th-century Algeria similarly illustrates that attention to the sometimes liminal and ambiguous status of his protagonist does not uncover a story of Jewishness as difference but rather opens onto the broader social context and historical transformations of the

time, such as the ways in which the concept of musical “revival” became “a gloss for a partial but far-reaching shift in the social basis of Andalusí music making.” The fourth biographical article, by Kimberly Katz, takes us to French colonial Tunisia and a different instance of early 20th-century revival, in which (as in Glasser’s piece) anticolonial discourses were beginning to reshape intellectual spheres, practices, and modes of production.

The last three articles shift our attention to the second half of the 20th century, and all deal with transnational and trans-religious practices of activism and humanitarianism in anticolonial or postcolonial political movements. Jennifer Johnson Onyedum looks at how the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria increasingly engaged with global discourses and networks of health and humanitarianism in order to “make political claims at the end of empire.” Darcie Fontaine examines the torture and trial of twelve Christian activists and social workers in Algeria who were charged with assisting the FLN and places this event in the context of global efforts during the Cold War to “decolonize Christianity.” Finally, Burleigh Hendrickson explores the student uprisings in Tunis in March 1968 and in particular how colonial and postcolonial transnational networks of activists and information spanning Tunisia and France both contributed to the protests and helped sustain (and transform) the political movements that came out of them.

The occasion of the special issue on the Maghrib, which includes the first article devoted to music published by this editorial office and one of the first in the journal’s history (Glasser’s piece on the Andalusí musical revival), inspired us to invite Jonathan Shannon to curate an *IJMES* roundtable on the state of the field in North African music studies.¹ The resulting seven contributions touch upon current trends in the scholarship; the agency of music in relation to society and politics; connections between music, ethics, and aesthetics; female performers and the interplay between music and gender; the effects of modern technologies on performing and listening practices; and the role of music in the 2011 Arab uprisings. “Aside from the potential pleasures involved in listening to the musical cultures of the Middle East and North Africa,” writes Shannon, “there are many reasons why scholars in the traditional disciplines should open their ears to music and other sonic phenomena and confront the silence that characterizes the majority of works on the region.” If Algeria dominates the research articles in this issue, Morocco has pride of place in the roundtable.

The issue also includes a review article on “Medicine and Modernity in the Middle East and North Africa,” by Nancy Gallagher, which surveys recent writings on the social history of medicine in the early modern and modern periods. Echoing the concern for public health that Onyedum explores in her examination of medical practice and propaganda in Algeria during the war of independence, Gallagher notes: “During the imperialist era of direct colonization, medicine became a tool of empire that facilitated the penetration of local societies. Over time, Western-trained medical practitioners, indigenous or foreign, gained moral authority over indigenous bodies, which now were controlled and regulated by state public health policy.” Two of the books Gallagher reviews focus on colonial medicine, including Richard Keller’s *Colonial Madness*, a study of psychiatry in French-occupied North Africa.

One of the motivations for this special issue was to improve lines of communication between scholars of the Mashriq and the Maghrib. We did not anticipate that before

the issue even went to press a lively dialogue would begin in the *IJMES* editorial office, and in our many emails with authors and the guest editor, over the issue of Arabic transliteration. We found that the technical questions raised in this discussion opened up larger (and, at least for noneditors, perhaps more interesting) questions: how historical differences, such as variant colonial trajectories, shape the practices of scholars; what the most useful or productive source bases are for exploring the histories of different countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; whether there are basic regional differences between “the Mashriq” and “the Maghrib”; and how the increasing digitization of information in our time might be changing research needs and methodologies. Indeed, our discussions with article authors over this last question caused us to think anew about the *IJMES* transliteration system and what some of its own weaknesses might be in the information age. Because our system is the standard for English-language MENA scholarship, we thought we would share some of the issues and concerns that have come out of these dialogues.

The most intractable point of difference between transliteration standards for scholarship on the Mashriq and the Maghrib was over the question of whether Arabic personal names can be spelled as they are found in French (or English) archival sources. Of course, there is a familiar and long-standing debate in all MENA scholarship over how to spell the names of very prominent political or cultural figures with “widely accepted” English or French spellings. But this was a different issue; a number of authors noted that it is common practice in Maghrib scholarship to use the spellings of Arabic names (well known or otherwise) as they appear in French archival sources, a scholarly work on Egypt, Iraq, or Syria would usually be expected to convert the spellings of most Arabic names found in English or French sources to a known transliteration system (such as the *IJMES* one). The most persuasive argument advanced for this practice was that the French language and state institutions left a much deeper mark on the Maghrib than either English or French ever did in most countries of the Mashriq; it is thus not only “the colonial archives” that are in a European language but also a large portion of “indigenous” sources, such as postindependence state archives and the records of nationalist movements. Because our readers might have trouble finding a name in French catalogs or search engines if they know only the *IJMES* spelling, enforcing our system could place limits on future research in relation to a very large source base.

Mashriq scholars who conduct research in English or French sources face this problem as well. The difference is one of scale, and even that difference is only significant in particular research contexts. In some ways, framing the difference as one between the Mashriq and the Maghrib might reflect the degree to which scholarship on “the Maghrib” is often implicitly conflated with scholarship on Algeria and, to a lesser extent, Tunisia. There has been little scholarly research on post-Ottoman Libya, but if and when that changes much of it will need to be done in Arabic sources, albeit with attention to the increasingly accessible and utilized Italian colonial records. Morocco’s history of European colonialism is shorter than that of Egypt, and the challenges posed by its diversity and hybridity of local languages—Arabic and different Berber dialects—are arguably no greater than those for Iraq—Arabic, Kurdish, Persian, and Turkish, often in various dialects.² Lebanon can rival even Tunisia and Algeria in the extent to which French (and English) has transformed the country’s linguistic landscape. We would thus argue against the notion of essential regional differences while conceding that

the transliteration challenges faced by all MENA scholars are exacerbated for some scholarship on the Maghrib, especially that on modern Algeria and Tunisia.

From our perspective, there are two main arguments for using the *IJMES* system in most cases even within this area of scholarship. First, as anyone who has done research in either French or English archives knows all too well, there is no “standard” French or English spelling for most Arabic names, especially when archival collections span decades, if not more than a century. The French spellings used in the different articles accepted for this special issue often varied even for the names of very well-known figures. This creates obvious problems of consistency (for journal editors, say) and weakens, at least to some degree, the argument that reproducing the French spelling from one source or archive will necessarily enable future research in another. Second, the question of limiting or facilitating future research cuts both ways: displaying an Arabic name in Latin letters without following a clearly defined transliteration system (any system will do; we just happen to use our own) hinders future research on that individual in Arabic sources. We could not easily decipher the original Arabic spelling of names such as Houcine Slaoui and M’hamed Bouguerre.³ If any of our readers had the same trouble, then they would have a hard time typing the correct Arabic letters into an Arabic-language library catalog or search engine (starting with Google, the Arabic version of which launched in 2006) or converting the name into the Latin letters of a different transliteration system (such as that used on WorldCat). As an area-studies journal, one of the missions of *IJMES* is to promote research in the local languages of the region; we are therefore reluctant to contribute to a separation of future English-language Maghrib scholarship from Arabic-language scholarship and primary sources.

Our compromise for this special issue on the Maghrib was to give authors the option of using the spellings of names as they found them in French sources (or variations thereof to ensure consistency across the issue) while asking them to include, when possible, the *IJMES* transliteration of those names in parentheses on first mention. This solution, though perhaps not ideal, will make it relatively easy for our readers to find more information on the individual in question in either French or Arabic sources.

The challenges we faced in trying to track down the original Arabic names for some of the more obscure French spellings also encouraged us to think about whether the current *IJMES* transliteration rules themselves are appropriate for an increasingly digitized world of research. *IJMES* requires full diacritics on Arabic and Persian only on “technical terms”—that is, words and phrases that are not proper nouns and that are not found in an English dictionary. This means that personal names are not spelled with diacritics, a practice that can make finding sources in Arabic- and Persian-language search engines more difficult. We would be happy to hear thoughts from MENA scholars on this question.

In editing this issue, the easy slippage between the terms Maghrib and North Africa and the possible confusion this creates became obvious. Maghrib usually refers to four specific countries—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya—but occasionally includes Mauritania and Western Sahara. “North Africa” is often used interchangeably with “Maghrib,” but it is hard to argue that Egypt is not part of North Africa, and sometimes the Sudan is included as well. Perhaps the terms Maghrib and North Africa can be useful as well as problematic for their imprecision in regular use. Because of this ambiguity, Egypt is included in the roundtable on music in North Africa. At the same time, North

Africa can mean more than its parts, pointing to geographical networks and movements that transcend political boundaries. After all, we have been concerned here with crossing borders, not pinning them down.

We thank Julia Clancy-Smith for partnering with us on this special issue—sharing her expertise and spending countless hours going over articles as well as attempting to resolve the transliteration dilemma; Jonathan Shannon for curating the roundtable and for good-natured assistance with many of our Maghribi transliteration puzzles; and our anonymous peer reviewers, some of whom were called upon to read more than the usual quota. We hope that “Maghribi Histories” stimulates a productive exchange among scholars of the Maghrib, Mashriq, and beyond.

Beth Baron and Sara Pursley

NOTE

¹A search for the word “music” in back issues of the journal on the Cambridge University Press website returns one article with the term in the title, Joel Gordon’s “The Slaps Felt around the Arab World: Family and National Melodrama in Two Nasser-Era Musicals,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39 (2007): 209–28. An article published by this office that deals with *zajal* (in addition to theater and other colloquial art forms) and with new music-recording technologies in early 20th-century Egypt is Ziad Fahmy, “Media-Capitalism: Colloquial Mass Culture and Nationalism in Egypt, 1908–18,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42 (2010): 83–193. Several *IJMES* articles have addressed Sufi rituals or performances that involve music, but we did not find any that were devoted specifically to their musical dimensions.

²We frequently encounter a misunderstanding about our transliteration system, in the form of an argument that it does not account for differences of pronunciation and dialect and is thus less relevant to regions with a diversity of spoken dialects/languages. The *IJMES* system is concerned strictly with converting Arabic letters—not sounds—to Latin letters. Colloquial Arabic or Berber dialects in oral sources may be transliterated (more precisely, transcribed) in *IJMES* according to the author’s discretion; the editors do not intervene in colloquial spellings in any language. However, most Arabic personal names (unlike English ones) follow highly standardized spellings across the Arabic-speaking world, and the variations that do exist are more likely to occur on a region-wide level than an individual one; thus, our system usually governs the spelling of an Arabic name on our pages regardless of the source in which the name was found (Arabic or English, written or oral, Iraqi or Moroccan). The transliteration challenge with countries such as Morocco and Iraq is not so much that there are multiple spoken languages but rather that a single personal name might have several linguistic origins, Arabic and otherwise.

³Ḥuṣayn al-Salāwī and Muḥammad Būkūr. In theory, differences between English and French are irrelevant to the transliteration question; the purpose of following the *IJMES* system in articles published in *IJMES* is not to impose a fixed “English” spelling onto an individual’s name but rather to enable our readers to convert the Latin letters back to the original Arabic spelling by using our published transliteration map. On a practical level, however, one difference is pertinent: French colonial spellings of Arabic names are often less decipherable to English-language readers than are British colonial spellings, which we see as an argument for, not against, following our system on the journal’s English-language pages. If there were a consistent French–Arabic scholarly transliteration system in use (which unfortunately there is not), we would simply convert it to the *IJMES* system for publication in *IJMES*, much as we often have to convert Persian transliterations from the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* system to our system, and which is a straightforward exercise of replacing certain letters.