

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The first two articles in this issue, reflecting growing scholarly interest in the global era of decolonization in the two decades after World War II, track multilayered local, regional, and global forces that shaped particular historical shifts during these pivotal years. Cyrus Schayegh, in “1958 Reconsidered: State Formation and the Cold War in the Early Postcolonial Arab Middle East,” revisits the political crises that tore rapidly through the central Arab states in 1958, focusing on Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, all of which were “sandwiched between the unstable poles of the Arab state system, Iraq and Egypt.” While Schayegh concurs with previous scholarship that the convulsions of that year did not lead to the deep sociopolitical and ideological transformations in the region that many contemporaries either hoped or feared, he argues that they can now be read as marking a historical milestone of a different sort. In all three countries, the events of 1958 sparked immediate, dramatic, and persistent “state-formation surges,” particularly through the rapid implementation of development plans aimed at defusing both socioeconomic discontent and the political aspirations fueled by Nasirist Arab nationalism on one side and Arab communist movements on the other. Schayegh suggests that these state-formation surges in turn shaped similarities in the three countries’ subsequent historical development in spite of stark differences in their political systems of governance.

The article by Todd Shepard, “Algerian Nationalism, Zionism, and French *Laïcité*: A History of Ethnoreligious Nationalisms and Decolonization,” shifts the focus on global decolonization from the early postcolonial Arab states to one of the two major European colonial powers in the Arab Middle East, France. Exploring the “crucial roles of North African and Mediterranean developments in the making of contemporary France,” Shepard argues that the Algerian war of independence “resituated the meaning of ‘Muslims’ and ‘Jews’ in France,” and thus “reshaped French secular nationhood.” The article traces shifts and ruptures in how the category “ethnoreligious nationalism” was understood by French intellectuals and policymakers in the mid-20th century, showing how these shifts were responses to the contestations between three nationalisms—French, Algerian, and Israeli—and their competing claims to represent inhabitants of Algeria. One outcome was that after the victory of the Algerian revolutionaries and the loss of French Algeria in 1962, “Islam” in dominant French discourse was an “ethnoreligious” category, while Christianity and Judaism were not. This new certainty affected not only secular-republican sensibilities but also French law and policy in subsequent years.

The next two articles look at interwar Palestine and 1950s Israel. Resonating with some of the themes in Shepard’s piece, the article by Hizky Shoham, “‘Buy Local’ or ‘Buy Jewish’? Separatist Consumption in Interwar Palestine,” explores “ethnonational” and “territorial” conceptions of belonging in Zionist discourses in Mandate Palestine, as these were expressed in campaigns for the boycott of “foreign” products and the

consumption of “local” or “Jewish” commodities. Framed in the language of “buy local” economic-nationalist movements that had emerged around the globe after World War I, these campaigns differed from those of both sovereign nation-states and anti-colonial nationalist movements in this period. Often cautious about antagonizing the colonial power—Britain—that Zionists in many ways depended upon, the “buy local” campaigns of the interwar Yishuv focused primarily on persuading Jewish consumers not to purchase commodities designated as having been produced by local Palestinian Arabs. These efforts, as Shoham shows, ran up against conceptual difficulties and socio-economic conflicts, both between Jews and Arabs and within the Jewish community in Mandate Palestine—for example, over whether a commodity’s ethnonational identity was embedded in the labor or in the capital that produced it and in which of the nodes along increasingly extensive commodity chains the essence of that identity had originated.

Danny Orbach, in “Black Flag at a Crossroads: The Kafr Qasim Political Trial (1957–58),” looks at the court-martial trial of Israeli military officers and border police accused of murdering forty-nine Arab Israeli citizens in the village of Kafr Qasim the day of the tripartite invasion of Egypt that launched the 1956 Suez War. The trial is widely recognized as having played a major role in establishing the doctrine of a “manifestly unlawful order,” or an order that is illegal for a soldier to obey, in Israeli law. Arguing that the doctrine was shaped by the interactions and arguments of the actors in the courtroom, Orbach engages in a close reading of the actual trial proceedings in order to explore how witnesses, defendants, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges understood the notion of an “unlawful order” from the perspective of commanders and subordinates along the chain of military command. The article also analyzes how these actors conceived of the relations between civil and military authority and of the (non-)belonging of Arab citizens almost a decade after the 1948 war and the foundation of the State of Israel.

The final two research articles in this issue engage with the visual arts in different contemporary contexts and with different analytical interests. In “Emerging Christian Media in Egypt: Clerical Authority and the Visualization of Women in Coptic Video Films,” Febe Armanios and Andrew Amstutz look at the production of Coptic hagiopics, or video films about the lives of saints, in Egypt over the past few decades. Engaging with scholarship on new media in the context of Islamic revival movements in the Middle East and of Protestant evangelical and Catholic revival movements around the world, the authors show how the church hierarchy and lay filmmakers have collaborated on the production of hagiopics in their efforts to form “a modern Coptic piety” in Egypt. The article focuses especially on visual representations of gender in these films, which draw their inspiration from “inherently polysemic and layered” liturgical texts on the lives of saints and martyrs. But the recent productions also intervene in these earlier narratives, such as by making previously secondary female characters primary in order to draw in female viewers and inculcate modern Coptic ideals of sexual difference and morality among both women and men. Armanios and Amstutz link these representations and narratives to the broader project of the church under Pope Shenouda (1971–2012) to reestablish its authority and legitimacy among lay Copts as the protector of their “communal interests.”

Sonja Mejcher-Atassi’s article, “Art and Political Dissent in Postwar Lebanon: Walid Sadek’s *fi annani akbar min bikasu* [bigger than picasso],” starts with a close reading

of a small paperback produced by Lebanese artist Walid Sadek in 1999 and opens onto an exploration of the “relations of art and politics in post-civil war Lebanon.” The book consists of sixteen stories of vandalism against art in different historical contexts, each one juxtaposed on the verso page of the text with the photo of a well-known monument in Beirut dedicated to the late Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad. This juxtaposition “seems to suggest a new act of vandalism, this time directed against the monument.” Situating Sadek’s intervention within the context of the “postwar generation” of Lebanese artists and political activists, including debates over how the civil war has been remembered and forgotten and over ongoing Syrian intervention in Lebanon, the article shows how the work “opens unlikely perspectives on the recent history of Lebanon, Syria, and Syrian-Lebanese relations.”

Taking a broader look at some of the frameworks employed and the types of sources used in the last two articles, the *IJMES* roundtable in this issue explores current directions in the study of visual culture in Middle Eastern and Islamic societies from medieval to contemporary times. The image analyzed in the short essay by Finbarr Barry Flood is featured on this issue’s cover. Taken from an 18th-century Ottoman copy of a 16th-century illustrated manuscript, the image differs strikingly from the original in replacing the heads of the Ottoman sultans it depicts with large pink roses. Flood shows how attention to such efforts to “floralize or vegetalize” the human figure in “Islamic” art can open onto complex “relationships between prescription, proscription, and artistic practice” that are occluded by “scholarship assuming a neat dichotomy within which theological norms were either determining or irrelevant.” We thank our board member Zeynep Çelik for curating and introducing the roundtable essays and our liaisons at Cambridge University Press, Laura Etheredge and Nancy Briggs Shearer, for facilitating the printing of the color images. It is our hope that the articles and essays on visual culture presented in this issue both reflect and will inspire a trend of increasing submissions to *IJMES* in this area.

Echoing themes that appear in several of the research articles, this issue’s review article, by Susan Slyomovics, examines the use of “memory studies” approaches in five recent monographs on Lebanon and Israel/Palestine. These publications are part of what Slyomovics identifies as a broader turn in the social sciences, especially history and anthropology, toward the study of memory, employing “cross-disciplinary methodologies and approaches [that] have emerged to study the ways in which humanity remembers and forgets.”

We hope that you find the articles and special features in this issue memorable.

Beth Baron and Sara Pursley