Int. J. Middle East Stud. **44** (2012), 1–3
doi:10.1017/S0020743811001218

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The first five articles in this issue all deal with aspects of Islamic practice and discourse in the 20th and 21st centuries. Three of them, grouped under the subtitle "Islamic Practices in New Media," examine how different media forms have shaped, and been shaped by, particular Islamic practices. Charles Hirschkind's article examines how some of the existing norms of ethical comportment associated with the Islamic Friday sermon or *khuṭba* have carried over into Internet space through the posting of *khuṭba* video clips on YouTube, at the same time that such postings have engendered "novel forms of pious interaction, argument, and listening." Paying attention to how religious experiences might be altered through the particular qualities of the medium in question, Hirschkind argues that the "phenomenology" of the Internet—its "juxtaposing and interweaving [of] a limitless variety of content"—contributes to a "homogenization and de-differentiation" of the affects that move the pious *khuṭba* listener toward God.

With a similar focus on affect and on how the qualities of specific media work to shape what is transmitted, Dorothea Schulz's article explores uses of radio and audiotape recordings by leaders of female Muslim groups in Mali, concluding that scholars of Islam and modern media have not paid sufficient attention to voice "as a sensuous medium of expression or as a culturally constructed locus of individual autonomy, agency, and authorship." In particular, she argues that the criticism faced by many Muslim women radio speakers in Mali "reveals the ambivalence generated by the disembodiment of voice effected through audio recording technologies, an ambivalence that translates into deep feelings of insecurity about the dissemination of the disembodied female voice."

Leor Halevi, in his article, examines the 21st-century online production and dissemination of "boycott fatwas" against American, Israeli, and Danish commodities, arguing that these fatwas have reinterpreted the legal doctrine of jihad as something that can be accomplished through "nonviolent consumer boycotts." This concept does not fit within either of the usual categories of jihad as a "military" or a "spiritual" struggle. While Halevi does not focus to the same degree as Hirschkind or Schulz on the particular qualities of the medium in question, he does propose that the boycotting movement has been fueled by the Internet's capacity for disseminating "emotive information and shocking images." He also makes an important argument that the Internet has "made it easier for laypersons to drive the juridical discourse," and demonstrates that, in many cases, boycott fatwas emerged "from below"—that is, through the demands of fatwa questioners and consumers.

The next two articles, under the subtitle "Islamic Discourses on the Arabian Peninsula," look at modern Salafi and Wahhabi currents in Aden and Saudi Arabia, respectively, and both conceive of Islamic discourses as sets of flexible and evolving arguments. Scott Reese, drawing on Samira Haj's analysis of Salafi reform within the framework of Islam as a "discursive tradition," argues that Salafism in interwar Aden was not so much a movement with a "single, linear origin" as it was "a dynamic intellectual milieu continually shaped by local contexts." Examining early conflicts between Salafi reformers and their local Sufi opponents, Reese shows how the former were forced to respond to the resistance of the latter by shifting their approaches and priorities "in order to become meaningful social actors." He thus rejects historical narratives of Salafism that posit "the strong-arm victory of reformist ideology over local practice," concluding instead that reform was situated within an evolving Islamic discursive tradition at the same time that it was "shaped by local and historically contingent institutions, social practices, and power structures."

The article by Joas Wagemakers traces transformations in Wahhabi conceptions of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ* ("loyalty to Islam, Muslims, and God and disavowal of everything else") since the 19th century. He argues that interpretations of the concept among Wahhabi scholars have developed into two basic trends: a quietist version that emphasizes social and interpersonal dimensions of the injunction and a radical version that applies it to Saudi government policy. The two trends are linked to ongoing contestations over the concept that can be traced back to the second Saudi state in the 19th century, when, according to Wagemakers, the political interpretation of the concept first emerged, in debates over whether asking the "polytheistic" Ottomans for military assistance constituted a violation of *al-walāʾ wa-l-barāʾ*. This interpretation has reemerged and been further developed in recent years by Wahhabi scholars critical of Saudi–U.S. relations.

The last two articles examine aspects of Ottoman reform in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Beginning with reforms at the state center, Avi Rubin explores the consolidation of the Nizamiye ("regular") court system in the 19th century and particularly its connection to the emergence of an "Ottoman legal profession." The new formalist legal culture advanced by the state "limited the legibility of court proceedings to professional lawyers, thus alienating lay court users and rendering legal advocacy indispensable." At the same time, it "considerably expanded the field of judicial tactics available to litigants, who could contest court decisions on procedural grounds." Rubin traces this dual effect of the new legal culture on regular court users through several specific courtroom battles, and he argues that the dynamism and syncretism of the legal reforms cannot be captured through "modernization" or "secularization" narratives.

The final article, by Robert Zens, examines Sultan Selim III's efforts at centralization and the reform of provincial governance in the Balkans during the late 18th century, focusing on the administration of Hacı Mustafa Pasha, the Ottoman military governor of Belgrade from 1793 to 1801. Zens argues that a close look at Hacı Mustafa's "tumultuous and ultimately tragic administration" reveals much about the trajectory of Selim's attempted reforms and about the reasons for their failure. Along the way, the article paints a dynamic sociopolitical portrait of Belgrade during the 18th century, elucidating, for example, the causes and fateful consequences (for Ottoman governance) of the strategic alliance between the *ayan* (provincial notables) and the janissaries.

The *IJMES* Roundtable for this issue marks the one-year anniversary of the Arab Spring of 2011. Given the comparisons that have been made between it and the Iranian

Revolution of 1979 in the media, with many warning that Islamists would become empowered in states where dictators had been toppled, we asked Iranian scholars how they thought the movements matched up. Specifically, we asked them how events of the past year in the Arab world appear through the prism of Iran's experiences in 1979. We include here responses from a half-dozen specialists, including historians, a political scientist, and a sociologist. They more or less refuted direct possible influences of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, or even of the Green Movement of 2009, on the Arab revolutionaries. Most saw more differences than similarities, though they noted some interesting parallels. While they remained wary of predicting outcomes, a few suggested issues that were likely to be significant.

Beth Baron and Sara Pursley