

Letter from the Editors



It is with great satisfaction, and no small amount of relief, that we present the latest issue of *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (UW). It is our longest issue to date. As ever, we seek to provide a venue for up-to-date scholarship across the fields of early and medieval Islamic, Arabic, and Middle East studies, while remaining a source of news and information on the latest work of our colleagues and students.

Our deepest appreciation goes to four colleagues without whose efforts we could not proceed. Christiane-Marie Abu Sarah, now Assistant Professor of History at Erskine College, has again put in consistent and excellent work as our Managing Editor. We are very grateful for the outstanding editorial contribution of Hanna Siurua; we also thank our book review editors Malika Dekkiche (University of Antwerp) and Luke Yarbrough (UCLA) for bringing together a fine set of ten reviews on topics in a variety of disciplines.

We are delighted to introduce the journal's new masthead as well as MEM's new logo, both designed by artist Joumana Medlej (<https://majnouna.com/>). Although the journal's masthead has been entirely redesigned, it still emulates the Kufic pattern originally developed by Fred M. Donner in the 1990s. Our deepest thanks to Joumana for this wonderful addition to UW.

We would further like to express our gratitude to Manan Ahmed Asif (Columbia University). We are pleased to announce that thanks to his efforts, the journal is now housed at Columbia University Library (<https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/alusur/index>) in the Open Journals Platform as well as in Columbia's Academic Commons. UW is also included in the Directory of Open Access Journals (<https://doaj.org/>), which provides access to a variety of databases and online search engines, such as WorldCat, and thus

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greatly enhances the online visibility of the articles, reviews, and other content of the journal. Our hope is that the move to the new platform makes UW an even more attractive option for colleagues—particularly younger scholars—seeking to publish their research.

The issue begins with an account by Maribel Fierro, recipient of the 2019 Middle East Medievalists Lifetime Achievement Award, of her intellectual formation and the range of scholarly topics that she has pursued over the course of a remarkable career. Six full-length research articles follow, addressing a range of topics: the erotics of identity in *The 1001 Nights* (Zayde Antrim); the provenance of the Mashhad manuscript of Ibn Faḍlān's *Kitāb* and its three companion texts (Luke Treadwell); an edition, translation, and study of a sixth/twelfth-century Arabic travel account to Alexandria (Jelle Bruning); early Arabic/Islamic representations of Umayyad-era caliphal succession (Abed el-Rahman Tayyara); the idea of "Islamic civilization," its genesis, and its institutional ramifications (Kevin van Bladel); and Muslim perceptions of Near Eastern stylites in the early Islamic period (Simon Pierre). The topics bespeak the energy and creativity of current scholarship in our respective disciplines. We are very pleased, in the case of Jelle Bruning's study, to include our first Arabic edition, and, with the selections by Simon Pierre and Sébastien Garnier (see below), our first articles in French.

Garnier's study of gluttony as a narrative device in the Sindbad story cycle is one of six articles in our latest special dossier, "Islamic History Broadly Conceived: A Tribute to Michael Cook and the Holberg Seminar." The other

five pieces are Theodore Beers's study of eleventh/seventeenth-century Persian poetry in Arab-language anthologies; Matthew Keegan's analysis of a sixth/twelfth-century epistle on companionship and hunting; Pamela Klasova's discussion of the widely treated *ḥadīth* on the Intellect (*ʿaql*); Daisy Livingston's treatment of the life cycle of a set of Mamluk-era *iqṭāʿ* documents; and Christian Mauder's study of Persian identity in late Mamluk Egyptian court culture. Led by Michael Cook (Princeton University), Khaled El-Rouayheb (Harvard University), Jack Tannous (Princeton University), and our own Antoine Borrut (University of Maryland) and held at Princeton over four successive summers, the seminar takes its name from the Norwegian government's prestigious Holberg Prize, granted to Professor Cook in 2014. The selections in the dossier, treating topics across medieval Islamic culture, politics, and history, suggest that there is much to look forward to from the up-and-coming generation of scholars in our overlapping fields.

This issue also inaugurates a feature new to *UW*: a section devoted to teaching, which contains a short comment by Jo Van Steenberg (Ghent University) on his new textbook, *A History of the Islamic World, 600–1800* (Routledge, 2021), and a description by Hannah Barker (Arizona State University) of her new and exciting online resource, *Teaching Medieval Slavery and Captivity*. The site can be accessed at: <https://www.medievalslavery.org/>.

The issue closes with the book review section. Our heartfelt thanks not only to our two stellar book review editors, Dekkiche and Yarbrough, but also to all our colleagues who agreed to take on what

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is a necessary yet often underappreciated task. As with the articles cited above, the topical range of the publications treated in the reviews and the expertise on display in the reviews themselves speak volumes of the vitality of the scholarly community to which we belong.

As is our custom, we close with two reminders.

First, we rely on your financial support. *UW* is online, open access, and peer-reviewed, but it is certainly not free. To cover the costs of publication and the work of our staff, among other

expenses, you provide valuable support by keeping your membership in Middle East Medievalists up to date. For information on membership and the fund, please proceed to MEM's website:

<https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/membership-application/>

Second, the full run of the journal, in its several iterations, is available online. The full archive can be accessed at:

<https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/volume-index/>

Sincerely,
Antoine Borrut and Matthew Gordon