

## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

The image featured on this issue's cover depicts a 19th-century Greek Orthodox church in the Anatolian town of Derinkuyu. Decades after the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey that forcibly deported the town's Christian residents, the church would be converted into a mosque. This process is examined in the article by Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Robert Hayden, and Aykan Erdemir, discussed below, but the photograph also resonates with the themes of diaspora and minorities that run through most of the articles and essays in this issue.

The first article in the issue, John Tofik Karam's "Philip Hitti, Brazil, and the Diasporic Histories of Area Studies," looks at transnational formations of area studies in the interwar and early postwar periods. It focuses on attempts starting in the 1920s to establish an Arab studies program at what became the Universidade de São Paulo, and especially on the role of Philip Hitti, a graduate of the American University of Beirut (AUB) and founder of the program in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University in the 1940s. Drawing on sources in Portuguese, Arabic, and English, the article reconstructs the "shared vision" for the study of the Arab world in Brazil that was developed by Hitti and members of the Syrian *mahjar* or diaspora in São Paulo, especially his fellow AUB alumni. This vision was marked by a "Luso-centric" nostalgia for the Portuguese imperial past, and in particular by an interest in "how the imperial power that ruled [Brazil] for more than three centuries was itself shaped by Islam and Arabs." Karam's analysis challenges scholarly assumptions that the recent turn toward diaspora studies is "a disruption or alternative" to area studies or that the former can place the scholar "at safe remove from the politics" of the latter. He finds not only that area studies may be "more diasporic than heretofore thought" but also that "the imperial interests underlying" area studies are as mobile and plural as the field itself.

The second article, Suncem Koçer's "Kurdish Cinema as a Transnational Discourse Genre: Cinematic Visibility, Cultural Resilience, and Political Agency," also deals with transnational and diasporic formations. In an analysis that resonates with Karam's approach to the relationship between diaspora and area studies, Koçer argues that transnational imaginations cannot be assessed independently of the entities to which they are often opposed—in this case, "nations, nation-states, and nationalisms." The article traces the emergence over the past few years of a new discursive genre, "Kurdish cinema," at the intersection of "the productive irregularities that have impelled imaginations of a Kurdish nation in transnational space." It focuses on new institutional and discursive sites in Turkey and the Kurdish diaspora in Europe—films, film festivals, and discourse on cinema produced at conferences and in the press—in which the norms and boundaries of "Kurdish films" are debated, thereby constructing Kurdish cinema as a "distinct genre" and producing "a sense of symbolic sovereignty." In making this argument, Koçer employs Arjun Appadurai's concepts of "ethnoscape"—a "landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals"—and of "mediascapes," or cultures of circulation enabled by the new "transnational mobility of images."

The notion of ethnoscape reappears in the article by Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir, Robert Hayden, and Aykan Erdemir, “The Iconostasis in the Republican Mosque: Transformed Religious Sites as Artifacts of Intersecting Religioscapes.” Extending Appadurai’s concept through their own definition of “religioscape”—the “distribution in spaces through time of the physical manifestations of specific religious traditions”—the authors analyze the structural transformation of an Ottoman-era Greek Orthodox Church into a republican-era mosque in the central Anatolian town of Derinkuyu. This transformation, which occurred several decades after the 1923 compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey that depopulated the town of its Christian inhabitants, produced a “hybrid religious site” through minimal alterations to the original church. Unlike “most such converted churches,” the building still features an iconostasis (the screen delineating the sanctuary in Orthodox churches), a pulpit, and wall paintings of Christ and the archangels, which in the 1980s were half-heartedly covered with a sheet of plastic from which the wings of the archangels protrude. The article concludes that “what is important about shared sites is *not* their condition at any specific moment in time” but rather the “diachronic nature of the interaction” between the two communities that have shared them across time. In this case, “syncretism without sharing correlates with a lack of need to show dominance symbolically, since the community that had lost the sacred building . . . was no longer present to be impressed or intimidated.”

Avner Wishnitzer’s “Into the Dark: Power, Light, and Nocturnal Life in 18th-Century Istanbul” also attends to questions of space and especially time. The article focuses on “traditions of nocturnal conviviality in 18th-century Istanbul” that emerged “as the tide of daily life receded around sunset, exposing distinctive forms of socialization that were unique to the dark hours.” It draws on chronicles, biographies, and archival documents, but pays particular attention to poetry, especially the vast body of poetic works describing and celebrating that most fundamental form of elite “Ottoman nocturnal conviviality,” the *meclis*. The ideal version of this gathering took place “within the walls of a secluded garden on a spring evening, in the company of close friends,” and in the 18th century it developed into extravagant *çırağan* or lantern parties attended by the sultan and his retinue. The poems quoted in the article describe dazzling displays of light achieved through the abundant placement of lanterns and candles and the use of fireworks. “Far from being a transparent entity that allows social interaction to take place,” Wishnitzer writes, “light was the main theme of the party . . . Staged against the surrounding darkness, the unique configuration of light was anchored in a multilayered universe of meaning,” from celebrating the power of the sultan to promising “a divine gift . . . to those worthy of it.” The article also explores nonelite forms of Ottoman nocturnal sociality that had similarities to and differences from this elite tradition, as well as instances in which nighttime opened up spaces for political subversion.

The last two articles in the issue both deal with histories of labor in the first half of the 20th century, perhaps reflecting a larger (re)turn to questions of labor and of political economy more generally in Middle East studies. Can Nacar’s “Labor Activism and the State in the Ottoman Tobacco Industry” explores multiethnic and multireligious protests against tobacco warehouses and merchants that broke out in 1904 and 1905 in the Ottoman Balkan towns of İskeçe and Kavala, as part of a larger wave of labor unrest in the rapidly expanding Ottoman tobacco industry from the late 19th century up to World War I. Nacar focuses on the specific strike and other tactics used by the protesters,

arguing that these tactics were effective in forcing tobacco producers and merchants to concede to some of the strikers' demands. He also explores the successful mediatory role of the Ottoman government in resolving the disputes, which gained Sultan Abdülhamit II a degree of popularity among local tobacco workers. Yet, especially as they wore on, the uprisings were marked by fragmentation as well as unity, due to "gendered power relations, intercommunal rivalries, and other social tensions among the workers."

Barbara Curli, in "*Dames employées* at the Suez Canal Company: The 'Egyptianization' of Female Office Workers, 1941–56," turns to the history of female clerical labor at the Suez Canal Company, in the context of the political upheavals and labor disruptions caused by World War II, global patterns of business reorganization, the dynamics of a semicolonial economy, and new legislation promoting economic nationalism in Egypt. The article traces the interrelated processes of feminization and Egyptianization of clerical labor in a multinational and multicultural workplace, one that had long been regulated through multiple ethnic and national divisions of labor within a larger and more primary distinction between *européens* and *indigènes*, in the company's official terminology. Curli shows how the institutionalization of a "separate staff" of female workers at the close of World War II paralleled global capitalist trends, including the feminization of labor, while serving the company's interests in the specific Egyptian context, namely by creating a cheaper and more disposable category of workers (women) that could simultaneously be used to fulfill the new quotas of "Egyptian" hires mandated by the government. A "combination of 'racial' and 'gender' criteria thus became the basis of an organizational strategy meant to restructure the enterprise after the upheavals of war, and to face the new political dimension of relations with the Egyptian government."

This issue's roundtable explores shifts in understandings of Middle Eastern Jewish identities as scholars challenge the categories, narratives, and assumptions within the field. We thank board member Orit Bashkin for helping to organize the roundtable, which brings together historians, a political scientist, and an anthropologist, and for leading off with her own essay.

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