

Letter from the Editors



We are pleased to be publishing our fifth issue of *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* in its current online and peer-reviewed format. Please be aware that the journal is now housed at the new website of Middle East Medievalists. This is the current URL: <https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/>.

The issue contains yet another set of fine contributions, including five full-length studies, a substantial review essay, ten book reviews, and a report of a conference, “Mysticism and Ethics,” held at the American University of Beirut. Special thanks are due to Professor Donald Whitcomb for providing his remarks as last year’s recipient of MEM’s Lifetime Achievement Award. We would add that the production of this issue proved to be bittersweet as we are publishing Michael Bonner’s final article, which he was revising at the moment of his passing.

The journal, which appears once annually and has averaged well over two hundred pages per issue, involves no small amount of effort. We would first like to

express our gratitude to Dr. Christiane-Marie Abu Sarah. Marie began her work with us as a graduate student but, in October of this year, defended her brilliant PhD dissertation, “To Drink a Cup of Fire: Morality Tales and Moral Emotions in Egyptian, Algerian, and French Anti-Colonial Activism, 1945–1960” (University of Maryland, under the supervision of Professor Peter Wien). To Marie, many congratulations! We are very grateful indeed for her consistent and excellent work as our Managing Editor. We would also be remiss in not extending deep thanks to Hanna Siurua for her outstanding editorial support, and to Drs. Malika Dekkiche (University of Antwerp) and Luke Yarbrough (UCLA), our book review editors, for bringing together a superlative set of reviews on a range of new publications in our fields. Finally, we would like to thank the History Department at the University of Maryland; it is their continued institutional support that has helped keep *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* an open-access journal.

(Photo of Antoine Borrut by Juliette Fradin Photography)

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This issue of *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* contains remembrances by colleagues and former students of three much-lamented teachers and scholars: Professors Michael Bonner (University of Michigan), Kenneth Holum (University of Maryland), and Speros Vryonis Jr. (UCLA). We publish these remembrances with sadness but also gratitude for the lasting contributions of each. As the testimonies published here make clear, these scholars’ devotion to scholarship and teaching endured over years: they not only contributed vital work in their respective fields but also modeled such dedication to the next generation. We share the anxiety of many of our colleagues in the humanities that a decrease in public funding for higher education, a decline in modern language study, and the relentless assault on science and empirical knowledge, and indeed on reading and critical thinking, are eroding the ability of our students to carry on where these three cherished colleagues left off.

The contents of this issue bespeak, however, the considerable intellectual energy and sheer hard work that continue to inform the best scholarship in our many overlapping disciplines. A very grateful thanks to our contributors. To restate our central guiding principle from previous letters, we remain committed to using *Al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* as a platform from which to bring out significant new scholarship. We seek, with each issue, to produce the journal as expeditiously as possible, thus providing our contributors the opportunity to bring their ongoing work to a broad audience in timely manner. We are no less committed to the publication of longer and more substantial research articles and book reviews. The present roster

of articles, the review essay, the book reviews, and the one conference report illustrate, we believe, these aims. It is our hope and expectation to be publishing, in our future issues, new dossiers of research articles devoted to specific themes (and under the aegis of guest editors), as we did in last year’s issue with the dossier coordinated by Maribel Fierro and Patrice Cressier, “Formulating the Caliphate in the Islamic West: Umayyads, Ḥammūdids, and Almohads.”

As we announced in the previous issue, the journal will continue to appear online but will also become available in print, through a print-on-demand option, in the foreseeable future. Issues of the newly formatted journal (2015 to the present) will be obtainable through our website.

We close on two familiar notes. First, we continue to rely on your financial support. Our journal is online, open access, and peer-reviewed, but it is certainly not free. To cover 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 the MEM home page at <https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/> and click on “MEMbership.” Second, as we noted in a previous issue (*UW* 24 [2016]), the full run of the journal is available online. Our thanks to Professor Fred Donner (University of Chicago) for his assistance in this regard. The full archive can be accessed on our website: <https://www.middleeastmedievalists.com/volume-index/>.

Sincerely,
Antoine Borrut and Matthew Gordon