Introduction

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When I was invited by Brill in 2018 to consider editing a new journal on material cultures in the Muslim world, Islamic art, architecture, and archaeology, I was somewhat sceptical. Of course, Brill was in a good position to launch this new journal as a leading publisher in Middle East & Islamic Studies, with *Muqarnas* (in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation), the book series Arts & Archaeology of the Islamic World (AAIW), Mediterranean Art Histories (MAH), and many more publications about the art and archeology of the Muslim world in other book series.

There are and have been many specialist journals on Islamic Studies, Arab Studies, Oriental studies, African Studies, Persian Studies, and Turkish & Ottoman Studies. Some journals are dedicated to very specific aspects of Islamic cultures and civilizations, such as the *Shi'i Studies Review*, the *Journal of Abbasid Studies*, the *Mamluk Studies Review*, and the *Journal of Sufi Studies*. Archaeologists and art historians of Muslim cultures publish regularly in journals of Medieval Studies, history, art history, architecture, ethnography, anthropology, and archeology, and in the many specialized journals from the Muslim world, from South-East Asia to North Africa, like the Iranian journal *Islamic Art* and the Egyptian journal of Islamic archaeology *Mishkah*. All these publications offer a platform for articles on Islamic art, archaeology, and architecture. The main journal on Islamic art is probably *Muqarnas*, well-established and recognized as an authority in the field. A few specialist journals were started these recent years. In 2012, Mohammad Gharipour launched *The International Journal of Islamic Architecture* that examines urban design and planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. In 2014, Bethany Walker founded the *Journal of Islamic Archeology* devoted to archaeologists, and archaeological excavations.

So, what could a new journal offer?

Probably the first thing that comes to mind is a new space entirely dedicated to the Muslim world. Our journal will be exclusively dedicated to the study of material cultures: fine arts, arts and crafts, architecture, archaeology, anthropology, and ethnography. The *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* is not specific to a discipline. Our targeted readership represents a new broader definition of material culture that includes not only artefacts, architectural structures, and monuments, but also crafts. Therefore, ethnology and cultural anthropology are essential for us.

This journal aims to be a new reference for curators of art galleries and collections and addresses both historical and contemporary questions and discussions in the fields of material culture. This will include the strong on-going discussions about ethnographic objects and crafts of the Islamic world, and how these should be represented in museum collections.

Crafts, artefacts, and architectural structures are very often secular in nature. Islamization processes took very long in many regions, and they were often complex. In several places, non-Muslim and pre-Islamic material cultural traditions continued long after rulers and populations converted to Islam. The journal will move away from the adjective “Islamic” and from the religious sphere into the secular sphere. The

publication welcomes articles about the material culture and cultural production of non-Muslim communities in the Muslim world.

The journal will also focus on under-explored Muslim regions outside of the Middle East and North Africa: sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Ocean, Central Asia, India, South-East Asia, and Europe. The so-called peripheral regions are in fact essential and central to the history of Muslim cultures. We decided to name this journal the *Journal of the Muslim World*, but this world is, in fact, composed of many interconnected Muslim worlds that stretch from Samarkand to Cordoba.

The journal aims to study material cultures through the prism of international and regional exchanges and transcultural influences: migrations, conquests, and trading routes. For a long time, “Islamic” art was divided into dynasties and regions. The new journal will help deconstruct these old paradigms and focus on the transregional, intercultural, and cross-cultural interrelations between people and cultures.

The journal will be open to practitioners (conservation architects, museologists, and curators), and include (preliminary) reports and presentations of unpublished exhibitions and collections. In the course of my career, I have seen too many good works that remain unpublished, because practitioners, curators, and conservation architects are kept on their sites or in their museums and they have no time to publish, or they write reports, but are unable to write academic articles, mainly because they cannot find the time to visit libraries and collect the required references. These preliminary reports will be extended to the fields of anthropology and archaeology, to include archaeological and ethnographic field surveys. The archaeological process is very long and consists of excavations, post-excavations and field reports. It takes years before any results are published and colleagues and scholars from other academic disciplines may benefit from them much earlier. Preliminary reports will be reviewed by one scholar who will ensure that the field work was conducted in agreement with the local authorities (e.g. excavation permits, consent forms for interviews for ethnographical studies, and permissions from curators for publications on museum collections). There is at present no other equivalent platform for these reports in the fields of Islamic art or Islamic archaeology. For the past twenty years, I have advocated for Islamic archaeology as a discipline detached from linguistics, philology, and history, but I also supported the idea of breaking boundaries between sociology, history, art, and archaeology. It seems to me the only way, first, to understand the complex mechanisms of a culture, and second, to have a healthy debate between disciplines and specialists.

One period will have our special attention: the very neglected nineteenth-to-twenty-first centuries. The nineteenth century, far from being the end of the Islamic art or from being simply the *orientalist* period, should be considered a century of transition and cross-cultural influences. The contemporary period is still understudied, and the launch of this new journal is an opportunity to discuss the present and the future of Islamic art. Our journal will benefit from the latest technologies and digital humanities: in partnership with Archnet, we aim to complement issues that discuss audio visual materials with music, cinema, and the like.

The journal will be published by Brill in full Open Access, with the support of The Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, The Aga Khan University, London, UK and the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, Canada. Our mission is to make our journal accessible and free to anyone, anywhere in the world, regardless of background or budget. Our main language is English, but the journal also accepts French, Spanish and German articles and reports. Open to the Muslim world, we will accept short reports in Arabic, Persian and Turkish with an English abstract. Our interdisciplinary journal welcomes contributions in a variety of languages and intends to promote scholarship across the

FIGURE 1
Front cover of the journal
Archéologie Islamique

Global South and Global North. Starting from December 2020 with a double issue, we aim to publish one volume per year and two issues per volume. All submitted articles will be double blind peer reviewed.

I became interested in journal publishing very early in my career, when I was still an M.Phil. student in Paris and I started RAGE, *Revue d'Archéologie Générale* in 1995. To launch this journal, I had to start a charity and get an ISSN without any assistance or any funding. The journal did not live long, but it was a first experience. In 2003, Christian Velud, the former director of Arab studies at the French Institute of Archeology in Cairo asked me to resuscitate the defunct journal *Archéologie Islamique*, published by Maisonneuve & Larose from 1990 to 2002 (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, we did not manage to migrate the journal from Paris to Cairo. This journal was fully international, with articles in French, English, German, and Spanish, and it stayed in my mind as a model of what we should offer archaeologists. The defunct journal *Objets et Mondes*, a

FIGURE 2
Front cover of the journal *Objets et Mondes*

publication of the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, that ran from 1961 until 1988 (Fig. 2) also serves as an inspiration for the *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World*. This journal about the arts and crafts in the museum collection contained contributions by anthropologists, ethnographers, and archaeologists. The objects were described *in situ* and studied within their social, architectural, and geographical context. From 1996 to 2000, I worked at the Musée de l'Homme, first in the library, later in the Department of Sub-Saharan Africa, and finally for the Society of Africanists. During all this time, I was in contact with the most prestigious French anthropologists, ethnologists, and specialists of Africa, and I developed a deep conviction that art is nothing without its people, traditions, and cultures. This is how we generally approach material culture from sub-Saharan Africa. Objects are linked to culture, from ritual practices to everyday life and secular ways of life. Unfortunately, this context is often absent from many publications, museums, and galleries dealing with Islamic art. Art and archaeology of Muslim cultures are often stuck in-between religion, languages, and linear history. Books and manuals are too often written along the lines of dynasties and directed by geography. The famous prehistorian André Leroi-Gourhan and anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss could have objected that history can be cyclic, and that there are no crafts and objects without traditions and know-how. UNESCO supports the notions of immaterial culture and intangible heritage. The ideas of “material” versus “immaterial” or “tangible” versus “intangible” are as disputable today as the notions of “architecture” versus “minor arts” were before them. This is precisely where the *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* will stand: in-between. Material culture, in its widest definition, includes people,

cultures, and societies. The physical presence of monuments and artefacts are not only materials, they are artistic creativity, memorial expressions, identities, and traditions.

I would like to thank all my dear colleagues and friends, from the prestigious emeritus professors to the PhD candidates and students who have supported the journal since its inception, by submitting articles or by sharing their expertise and joining our international editorial and advisory boards. I would like to warmly thank Brill's team, especially Teddi Dols, Editor for Middle East & Islamic Studies, Alexander Khaleeli, Copy Editor, Peter Groen, Production Editor Journals, and Maurits van den Boogert, Publishing Director for Middle East & Islamic Studies.

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To conclude, I would like to dedicate this first volume to Marianne Barrucand, my late Professor of Islamic art at the Sorbonne. Many scholars, including me, are deeply indebted to her.