



Middle East – Topics & Arguments

Call for Papers #13 – Contacts

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The peer-reviewed online journal “Middle East – Topics & Arguments” (META) is calling for submissions for its thirteenth issue, which will be entitled **Contacts**.

Contacts between different cultures and ethnic groups are an important issue that should be approached and discussed from different points of view, because it affects various facets of human civilization. The interaction between linguistic systems may be the easiest one to identify, but contacts imply both verbal communication and non-verbal actions. Intercultural transfers occur at different levels: attributes of material culture, ideas, religious beliefs, literary topoi, etc. Within this volume we suggest conceptualizing contacts in the form of cross-cultural exchange and its instruments in the context of different disciplines. By adopting a wide understanding of “contacts” we intend to elaborate new approaches and scopes at the intersections of several disciplines. Contacts may be described from the point of view of the cultural, political, and social conditions in which they occur, as well as their consequences.

Language contacts represent one of the most important factors of language change. They can trigger language shift, language death, or the creation of a new creole or mixed languages. In the case of the Middle East, languages that had already died at some point but were kept used in literary or religious traditions usually had an impact on spoken languages, cf. Classical vs. dialectal Arabic, Syriac vs modern Aramaic, Classical vs. contemporary Persian. This situation concerns not only the classical situation of diglossia: Arabic, for example, had a huge impact on other languages of the area. Thus, Ottoman Turkish had about 80% borrowed lexicon from Arabic and Persian, and while Persian words came into the language as a result of direct contact, the Arabic ones were learned in the process of education or through Persian. The

question arises: how can the classification of language contacts be applied to such situations or to the contacts between various languages of tradition? The following perspectives can be also taken into account: the impact of linguistic borrowings on cultural, religious, and historical changes; the role that secondary communication facilities, such as writing and mass media, play in language contacts; or the shifting dynamics of transfers.

On the structural level one can distinguish between atomic borrowings and pervasive phenomena of interference. Sometimes contacts in various domains display similar patterns and intensity, but more interesting for comparison are those cases where they show non-trivial mismatches. As an example, one can cite the destinies of three peoples within the Medieval Arab Caliphate: the Arameans and Egyptians largely shifted to Arabic but partly kept their religion, while the Iranians largely converted to Islam but maintained their own language. The case of the multicultural Ottoman Empire and the ways of communication and cultural transfer within this state, which involved diverse ethnic and religious groups, represents another interesting topic. Shifts in language and communication are often examined through social networks analysis, which today is a growing methodological approach in various disciplines to study contacts between individuals and/or organizations. By analyzing the properties between units of contact and within them, phenomena may be described as relational. Recent manifestations of social media give ample opportunities for empirical linguistic observations.

The transfer of ideas and ideology can be studied within the context of relations between the Middle East and North Africa and other world regions (Europe, other areas of Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Americas) in the 19th–21st centuries. It implies not only the way of adopting and developing different political or social ideas (republicanism, socialism, modernity, etc.) but also the reflection of these ideas in special terminology of both local and borrowed origin. Colonial and postcolonial interactions, which included institutionalized violence as a language of perceived cultural superiority, as well as intercultural exchange and its rejection, represent important issues to discuss. Postcolonial theory and research on the colonial relationships in the region open a diversity of contact forms: assimilation, hybridization, economic integration, clash of different systems of values, etc. The significant issue of cultural identity in the colonial and postcolonial eras involves the concept of orientalism and its reconsideration.

We are seeking articles from different disciplines that involve the Near and Middle East and North Africa, including linguistics, history, comparative literature, sociology, political science, and others. Papers challenging specific hypotheses or frameworks are particularly welcome. Summarizing, we accept papers that address the following issues within the geographical area under discussion:

- language contacts
- interaction of living and classical languages
- impact of language contacts on different aspects of culture
- forms of colonial and post-colonial interaction
- instruments of cross-cultural exchange
- transfer of the ideas and ideologies
- social network analysis

Papers presenting new, original research findings on the issue's topic will be published in the journal's *FOCUS section*. Articles in this section should be between 2,800 and 4,600 words.

In addition to papers for the main section, we call for contributions for META Journal's special sections:

The *META section* also relates to the issue's focus topic, with the papers discussing Contacts from a theory-centered perspective. Regional scope is not limited to the Middle East and North Africa, but may also consider theoretical approaches involving other world regions. Article length is 2,800 to 4,600 words.

The *CLOSE UP section* features a short written portrait of a person or institution that has a special relation to the issue's main topic, e.g. a researcher who has constitutively contributed to the language contacts in the MENA region. It links that person's biography with their contribution to the field. Article length is 1,500 to 3,000 words.

The *ANTI/THESIS section* juxtaposes two rivaling positions that highlight different lines of argument, pros and cons, and/or competing narratives. These can be presented either by one author together, or by two authors in two different articles. One topic that may be discussed in this section is whether we need to involve local Middle Eastern language theories into academic studies, in order to change "orientalist" view (in the sense of E. Said). Article length for each paper is 1,500-3,000 words.

All articles that fall into the general framework of the journal, but do not relate to the special topic "Contacts," will be taken into consideration for the *OFF TOPIC section*: offtopic@meta-journal.net.

Prior to developing a complete manuscript, authors are asked to submit an abstract (300 words max.), a short CV (150 words max.), and 3-5 key bibliographic sources. Please clearly indicate the research question, the method to be used, and the empirical material your research will be based on. Papers are accepted in English and French.

The editors will make a preliminary decision regarding the topic's relevance to the journal's aim and scope and may provide suggestions for developing the manuscript, at the latest four weeks after the proposal submission deadline.

All manuscripts must adhere to our [stylesheet](#) and will not be taken into consideration when exceeding the word count. All manuscripts published with META journal are reviewed through an [open peer review process](#), according to a [review guideline](#) on which the reviews should be based. The process is open by choice; author(s) and reviewers choose whether to reveal their own names.

The deadline for abstract submissions is December 15th 2018

The deadline for article submissions is April 15th 2019

Proposals, manuscripts, and other editorial correspondence should be sent to:
submissions13@meta-journal.net