



NEWSLETTER

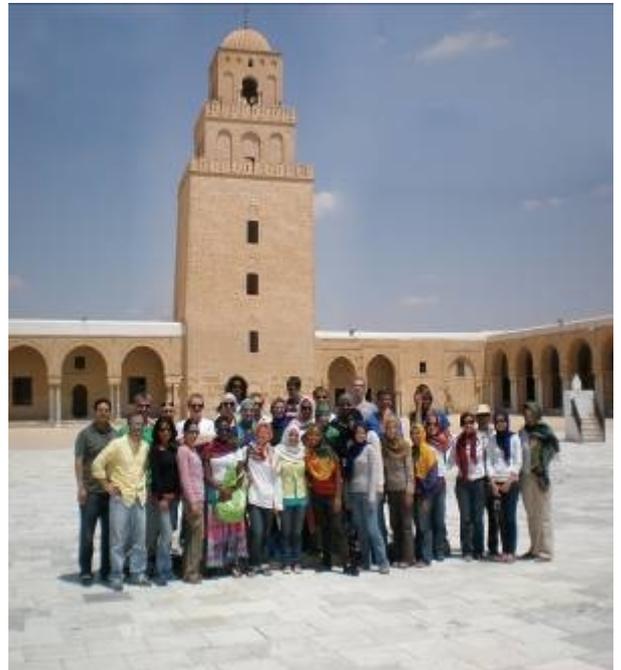
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A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER ARABIC PROGRAM IN TUNIS

In June and July, CEMAT conducted training in Elementary Modern Standard Arabic for thirty American students. We called it “TAP3,” since it was the third consecutive Tunisia Arabic Program. The classes were funded by the State Department’s Critical Languages Program through CAORC. The study of ten languages is funded at sites throughout the world, but over half the students are in Arabic, with Arabic training in Rabat, Amman, Cairo, Muscat and Tunis.

The selection process was rigorous. In 2007, there were 3,398 applicants in Arabic (for all three levels) and only 6% were chosen; in 2008, the acceptance rate was only slightly higher. Besides academic qualifications, applicants were screened on the basis of essays they wrote regarding their intended uses of Arabic. The contingent sent to Tunis was an eclectic group, ranging in age from young college sophomores to people in their early thirties. It included prospective linguists, diplomats, teachers, development workers and businesspeople...

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TAP students in a field trip to Kairouan (Okba Ibn Nafaa Mosque)



American Civilization Grantees:

(rt to left: Leila Ameur, Leila Hjaiej and Rym Draoui)

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION GRANTS

CEMAT’s American Civilization Grant Program gives small grants for Tunisian students to go to the U.S. for short term dissertation research—for about a month—on topics relating to American society. Tunisian university professors who teach about American Civilization but have never had the opportunity to visit the U.S. are also eligible to apply, to do research for curriculum development for their classes. Funding for the grants comes from three sources: (1) the U.S. Embassy gives the largest share of the funding ...

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A Word from the Director

WHAT DOES THE CEMAT DIRECTOR DO?



Our last Newsletter began with an article about what CEMAT does. A related question is, what does the CEMAT Director do? This came up recently when I

was asked to edit a description of my duties to help recruit a new director for next year. A new director? Yes, it seems as if I just arrived, but this is the beginning of my third and last year. So, what does the CEMAT Director do? The job description is the long answer, but, in a nutshell, the job of the director here is to meet interesting people.

The principal category of interesting people I meet—our main customers, so to speak—is CEMAT Scholars. At the moment there are 19 of them doing research in Tunisia. They include people with Fulbrights and other grants, students just out of college, graduate students doing thesis research, faculty working on books and articles, and independent scholars. Most are American, but not all; some are South Korean, Canadian, English and German, and others have dual nationalities—American and, for example, Tunisian, Belgian, Ukrainian, or French. Their research topics are diverse—from the sources of the lead used in Roman curse tablets to the comparative study of Muslim and Christian holy men. Other CEMAT scholars include American students of Arabic and undergraduates in study abroad programs here.

The CEMAT Director also meets many Tunisians—mostly scholars. Recently I've met sociologists, historians, scholars of religion, experts on tobacco and AIDS, and a geologist whose specialties are lead and copper. Other Tunisians include government ministers, journalists, lawyers, heads of NGOs, film makers, hotel

managers, tour operators, restaurant proprietors, grain importers, and building repairmen. Among the 1,443 people who signed our Library guestbook last year, the largest category was Tunisians, and I enjoy dropping in at the Library across the hall, introducing myself and chatting with our Tunisian clients about their studies.

Another category of interesting people I meet is diplomats. The list begins with U.S. Ambassador Robert Godec, who often welcomes our student groups. Other officers of the U.S. Embassy include Public Affairs Officer Patricia Kabra, who has a Ph.D. in Middle Eastern History from UCLA and whose doctoral thesis on Early Hafsids Ifriqiyya is in our CEMAT Library. The U.S. Embassy generously provides the main funding for CEMAT's American Civilization Grant Program. I also meet people from other embassies—Malta, Holland, France, Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, and the UK. The British Ambassador's wife, Lillian Craig Harris, recently gave a talk at CEMAT about her book on World War II cemeteries in Tunisia.

In dealing with these various interesting people, I learn new things about Tunisia. For example, in July a student from our Arabic program had terrible stomach pains and had to be rushed to the hospital. Her pancreas was badly inflamed and she had to have an emergency operation, so I got a crash course about Tunisian hospitals. I learned that Tunisia's hospitals are modern and well-equipped, with highly trained doctors, and that they charge bargain rates. For example, the pancreas operation at a private hospital cost a fraction of what it would have cost in the US. Tunisia's skilled and inexpensive hospitals have fostered a flourishing medical tourism sector, including many who come for cosmetic surgery.

Of course, the staff and I don't just *meet* people at CEMAT. We perform services for them. We offer advice to scholars on their proposals, we help them obtain research permits, we put them in touch with Tunisian scholars and organizations who share their interests, we steer them to useful books and theses. We also give grants for the study of American civilization, for comparative research in the countries of the Maghrib (though AIMS) and for Mediterranean studies (through CAORC). That's why CEMAT is here—to provide services to scholars of North Africa.

In short, the CEMAT Director has a great job that involves mainly meeting and helping interesting people. You will hear about—and hear from—many of these interesting people in the following pages of this Newsletter. The disadvantage of the director's job is that it keeps me very busy. I came with a research project, but so far I haven't done much research. Also, I thought that I would get to spend lots of time reading in the CEMAT Library, but that rarely happens. However, I do get to meet interesting people—and I still have nine months to go in the job.

Larry Michalak, CEMAT Director

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A SUCCESSFUL SUMMER ARABIC PROGRAM IN TUNIS



AIMS President James Miller awards a diploma to Hanna Von Schlegell as Larry Michalak looks on

...For summer 2008 we extended the program to eight weeks (in 2007 it was seven and in 2006 it was six). Thus the students now get at least 150 classroom hours of instruction, which is what they need to continue on to second year Arabic programs. There were two classes, and each received four hours of instruction per day from our four excellent

Tunisian teachers (Besma, Imed, Houda and Moufidha); the two tutors (Adel and Sirine) lived with the students at the Carlton

Hotel and helped them outside of class.

An innovation this year's was "Wednesday clubs"—the idea of Head Teacher Besma Soudani. One group did music and learned Tunisian songs; another learned Tunisian cooking; another did theater; and a fourth group did calligraphy, learning to cut reed pens, mix ink, and do different styles of Arabic lettering. All the clubs were conducted in Arabic.



Basma Soudani teaches the cooking class (rt to left: Carolee Estelle, Jessika Barnes, Besma Soudani, Marguerite Hoyler, Desiree Villarroel, Philip Capone).

The philosophy of our Arabic program in Tunis is that the students should learn good Elementary Arabic, but that the cultural component is of equal importance. We want the students to learn to appreciate and respect both the Arabic language and Arabo-Islamic culture. This is because it will take the students several years to become proficient in Arabic, and if they don't love the language they won't continue to study it. Thus we also included cultural lectures, Tunisian films, a week-end family stay, and three week-end excursions around Tunisia—to Mahdia, Tabarka, and Kairouan.

The evaluation by the students at the end of the program was very good (8.12 on a scale of 10). For the 2009 program we are making major innovations to aim higher still. We plan to move from downtown Tunis, where the earlier programs have been held, to the pleasant northern coastal suburb of Sidi Bou Said. We will be renting a large office suite with three air-conditioned classrooms, which will allow us to reduce the class size to ten students each, and we plan to house the students with families and in apartments.

As part of the cultural studies program, the students wrote weekly essays about their personal experiences and insights into Tunisia. Their essays had many perceptive observations. We have selected a sampling of them and placed them at the end of this Newsletter.



Jenika Beck shows off her calligraphy project at the banquet

AMERICAN CIVILIZATION GRANTS

... (2) CEMAT gives part; and this year we also received a \$500 contribution from (3) the American Tunisian Association in Washington, D.C.

The American Studies Grant program began as an initiative of previous CEMAT Director, Jim Miller, and the first grants went to Narjes Ben Yedder (2005) and Olfa Baklouti (2006). In 2007 we increased the amount of the grant and sent Farid Amri to California for research on controversies about Islam in America.

This year, in 2008, we made a big step forward to award three grants of \$4,000 each. They went to Ms. Leila Hejaiej for research in Berkeley on Black novelists, Ms. Leila Ameer for research in New Orleans on the politics of disaster relief, and Ms. Rym Draoui for research in Los Angeles on Hispanic ethnicity. On October 31, these three scholars presented and discussed their research in a seminar at CEMAT.

The U.S. Embassy has just renewed its support for the program, so we have announced the 2009 American Studies Grants; we will again offer three \$4,000 American Studies grants for 2009.

We have been successful in arranging for former Peace Corps Volunteers and other American friends of Tunisia to host the visiting Tunisian scholars or help them find housing. This is crucial, since the grants are not very large when one considers the high cost of visiting the U.S.

Roger Riske, a former Peace Corps English teacher in Moknine, hosted grantees in the Los Angeles area both this year and last. Karen Trocki and Karen Jacobs in Berkeley, and Mackie Blanton and Jennifer Golden in New Orleans also hosted and helped Tunisian scholars. To these Friends of Tunisia and to the U.S. Embassy, CERES and the American Tunisian Association, we offer our sincere thanks.

THE AIMS CINEMA CONFERENCE



CEMAT Director Michalak (lower left) welcomes Mohamad Ben Salah and the Algerian Delegation to the AIMS Conference

The 2008 AIMS Conference, hosted by CEMAT from May 23 to 26, was on “Cinema and the Maghrib.” The program dealt with the history and dynamics of film in and about the Maghrib, and the organizers were Professors Joelle Vitiello of Macalester College and Michael Toler of Middlebury.

The conference opened with a reception at the CEMAT villa and a welcome banquet at the nearby Pacha Restaurant, followed by the historic film *Sejnane* (1973), presented and discussed by Tunisian filmmaker Abdellatif Ben Ammar. The tone was set for a conference that was remarkable for the quality of the presentations and discussions and the warmth of the ambiance of artists and scholars.

Events on Saturday and Sunday, May 24 and 25 were held at the Belvedere Hotel. There were eight panel sessions with 29 papers, two roundtable discussions with 11 discussants, and two more evening films, both presented by their directors—*L'envers du miroir* (2007) by Algerian film-maker Nadia Cherabi-Labidi, and *La Beauté Eparpillée* (2008) by Moroccan film-maker Lahcen Zinoune.

Many famous films have been made in Tunisia—including *Star Wars* and *The English Patient*—so on Monday, May 26, the conference participants were treated to an excursion to Cape Bon to visit the Ben Ammar Film Studios. We wandered through a huge expanse of fake Roman buildings—triumphal arches, baths and sumptuous Roman villas, decorated with statues, bas-reliefs and paintings of Roman gods and goddesses—all made of plaster, plywood and chicken wire. The excursion continued to Hammamet for a luncheon and a visit to the walled medina, Spanish fortress and beach.

This was perhaps the largest conference AIMS has ever held, with 15 Americans, 8 Moroccans, 8 Algerians, and 11 Tunisians, including the panel chairs. The panels, round tables and films were well attended, filling most of the meeting space, with peak attendance of about 65 people at any given time. A conference volume, edited by Profs. Vitiello and Toler, is anticipated.



Hedi Abdel-Jaoued with an issue of CELAAN at the AIMS Conference (rt to left: Florence Martin, Laura Thompson, Hedi Abdel-Jaoued, Nefissa El Ayachi).

The 2009 AIMS Conference, “Saharan Crossroads: Views from the North,” deals with trans-Saharan contacts—the many ways in which the Sahara has been more of a bridge

The American Institute for Maghrib Studies Le Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis

AIMS **CEMAT**

organisent un colloque international sur

Le Cinéma et le Maghreb

Tunis

Samedi 24 et Dimanche 25 Mai 2008

à l'Hôtel Belvédère Fourati
10 Avenue des Etats Unis d'Amérique

than a barrier for North-South contacts on the African continent. It is tentatively set for June 6-8, 2009, in Tangier. Contact AIMS for more information.

A SPRING FULBRIGHT SEMINAR

CEMAT organized a seminar for American Fulbright scholars of the Middle East to discuss their research projects. As in the past two years, we met in the pleasant setting of the Hotel Sidi Bou Said in Sidi Dhrif. There were 43 scholars from different disciplines (in 2007 it had been only Islamic Studies); projects are being conducted in Egypt, Israel, Kuwait, Morocco, Syria, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, and Tunisia. The seminar took place from April 26 to 29 and its theme was “Meeting the Needs of the 21st Century.”



Fulbright Scholars at the US Ambassador's Residence

The students presented their research in five panels, heard keynote presentations by three Tunisian scholars, and did a half-day tour of the Bardo Museum and the ruins of Carthage. A highlight at the end of the program was a reception by American Ambassador Robert Godec at his residence in Sidi Bou Said, overlooking the Gulf of Tunis and Mount Boukornine.

The topics and approaches were remarkably diverse, but here are some samples:

- A musicologist discussed dabke dancing in Syria as an element of constructed and performed national identity—a narrative of unity through diversity, since dabke varies from place to place and changes over time; for example, in some places men and women dance together, and in others they dance separately.
- A history student discussed how Western observers tend to present Middle Eastern events in terms of the personalities of leaders—a “Big Man” approach which often leads to oversimplifications, such as seeing Arafat as behind the Second Intifada, which was more of a grassroots movement.
- A dentist discussed the close relationship between diabetes and periodontal disease in the UAE, leading to a discussion about different cultural attitudes about medical and dental services. Are they social necessities to be facilitated by the state, or commodities to be bought and sold?
- An engineer discussed how Morocco is recycling mining refuse into alkali-activated cements; the cement industry is the 3rd largest world source of greenhouse gases and mining is the second largest economic sector in Morocco, after agriculture, so this has important implications for the environment.
- An Islamic Studies scholar discussed how wealth and high in-migration in the U.A.E. created a “threat” of intermarriage with foreigners; so in 1992 the UAE established a public “Marriage fund” which subsidizes Emirati marriages and offers education to teen-agers about marriage, family, and sex.
- A sociologist discussed aging in Egypt, where older people have traditionally been cared for by their children in home settings; but increasing longevity, decreasing family size and changes in women’s roles are making home care more difficult; and finally
- A presentation about the effects of Islamic financing in Jordan on consumer behavior with regard to cars, houses, investment and saving, had some of us wondering, what kind of a car would the Prophet Muhammad drive if he were alive today? And what about Jesus and Moses?

STUDY ABROAD IN TUNISIA



CEMAT’s mission is to help facilitate scholarship of Tunisia and the Maghrib generally, and American undergraduate study abroad programs in Tunisia are part of that mission. The big news on this front is that in December 2007 CEMAT signed an agreement with the School for International Training (SIT), to help them conduct a program in Tunisia. The first group of 13 students came in Spring 2008 (February 14 to May 14), and the second group, 7 students, is here for Fall 2008. The local

*University of Delaware Study Abroad Group,
led by Khalil Masmoudi at lower left*

director of the program is Prof. Mounir Khelifa of the University of La Manouba.

Based in Brattleboro, Vermont, SIT is a division of World Learning and offers over 80 academic programs throughout the world, now including Tunisia. Each program is limited to 15 students and has a theme (the Tunisian theme is “popular culture”). We provide SIT students with membership in CEMAT at a special rate, giving them library and internet services and use of our classroom for lectures (we hosted 13 lectures in Spring 2008). For the last two weeks of each term, each student does an Independent Study Project, using the CEMAT Library and doing original fieldwork. We also do the financial accounting for SIT. In exchange, CEMAT gets a modest fee, which we use mainly for research fellowships in our American Studies Grant Program (described in another article in this Newsletter).

The other substantial study abroad program in Tunisia is that of Oregon State University. It is the oldest American study abroad program in Tunisia, having begun in Fall 2004. Each Fall for the past four years, Professors Karim Hamdy and Laura Rice have brought about a dozen American students to Tunisia for language and area studies. For a modest fee, CEMAT extends membership to the students. We also assist short study visits (of a week or so) by giving orientations to student groups at our villa. So far we have hosted SUNY/Potsdam, the American University in Paris, Yale, the Air Force Academy, Wyoming, Tufts, the University of Delaware, Temple University, George Fox University (in Oregon), George Mason University, and Catholic University.

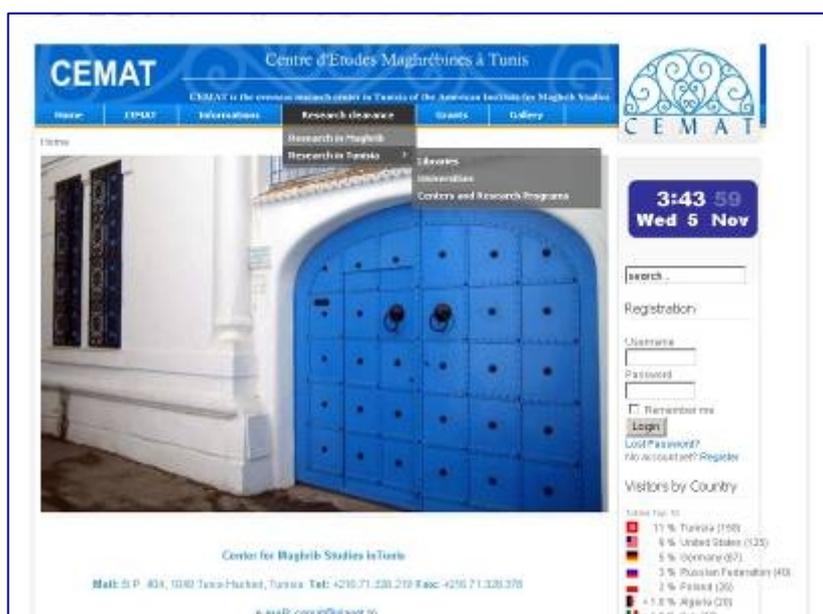
WELCOME TO SAMEH



CEMAT’s Tunisian staff has now increased by 50%—that is, from two to three people. Riadh Saadaoui and Faouzi Mahbouli have been joined by Sameh Bouraoui. At first, Sameh joined us as a temporary employee, just for the busy season in June and July. However, she did an excellent job and, with the blessing of AIMS, we made her a permanent employee as of September. Sameh answers the telephone, receives visitors, maintains office records, does invitations and announcements and mailings, helps maintain the Library, and her training in accounting is quite useful. This is an historic moment for CEMAT, recognizing that our activities have increased over recent years to the point that we require more staff.

CEMAT’S NEW WEBSITE

Until recently the CEMAT Website had been maintained by the University of Texas—an arrangement which was awkward for both CEMAT and Texas because it required CEMAT to send corrections and updates to Texas and then Texas had to make the changes. Now CEMAT has a website which we control directly. Check it out at www.cematmaghrib.org. We realize that some of the material we transferred from the old website is out of date. We are in the process of updating and expanding the new one, so it is a work in progress. New features we are adding include an online catalog of the CEMAT Library books and theses, a list of our Tunisian and Algerian films, an expanded and improved directory of research Libraries in Tunis, and more extensive advice for scholars. Suggestions for the website are welcome.



www.cematmaghrib.org

AN UNUSUAL LIBRARY

CEMAT received a small grant from CAORC for a survey of library resources and for helping libraries to catalogue materials in Tunis. We used part of the grant to fund three interns—Abel Lomax, Dorra Zairi, and Karim Kabra—for cataloguing the Beit al-Bannani.

The Beit al-Bannani is an unusual place—an old courtyard house on the edge of the Medina of Tunis, near the Kasbah. It was once part of a large house that belonged to a Muslim family that fled Andalusian Spain for Tunisia in the early 16th century. Mohamed Bannani's grandfather purchased the building in 1876. Today, under Mohamed, it has become a resource to scholars of all kinds and from all nations.

If you go the Beit al-Bannani on a Wednesday around noon, you will be invited to a vegetarian cous-cous lunch in the courtyard. On a recent Wednesday the luncheon guests included diverse scholars and literary figures, plus a dentist—Mohamed's brother, whose dental practice is next door. One guest was a Tunisian graduate student studying traditional medicines of the middle ages, and she brought some of her family's olive oil from Zaghuan to contribute to the lunch. Another guest was Hachemi Baccouche, a 92-year old Tunisian writer whose fifteenth book—a novel in French—had just been published. A poet at the lunch recited two of her Arabic poems, based on the colors "blue" and "green." As always, the discussion, followed by tea, was lively. One of the topics was the relationship between filial love and materialism ("Would your son love you as much if you eliminated his allowance?").

The East room of Beit el-Bannani is a collection of about a thousand shelved and catalogued books. The West room is a book bindery where Mohamed's sister, who has training in traditional bookbinding techniques, sews pages into leather bindings, stamped with gold lettering.

About two thirds of the books are in French and other Western languages, and the rest are in Arabic. In two other rooms are dozens of boxes of as yet uncatalogued books, many from the 19th and early 20th centuries, and a few even older.

The library also has a collection of over 14,000 old photographs and negatives of Tunisia, which our interns are helping to scan, annotate and catalogue. The library does not yet have a website but Mohamed is working on it. Books are available for use on the premises, and there are photocopying services nearby. Even more valuable than the books is the advice of Mr. Bannani. If you tell him your topic, he can tell you what to read and who to consult.



Abel Lomax working at the Beit Al Bannani Library

MORE USE OF CEMAT

The use of CEMAT facilities by visitors increased by 59% in 2007-8 over the previous year. During Academic Year 2007-2008, CEMAT received 1,443 visitors, including 297 researchers. The researchers were from 12 countries: Tunisia (139); USA (125); Algeria (5); Canada, Morocco, France and the UK (4 each); Germany and Italy (3 each); and Korea, Palestine and South Africa (2 each). These figures are based on the CEMAT guest book, and do not include many of the larger events, such as the AIMS Conference, and study abroad lectures and orientations, when it is not practical for people to sign in.

One reason for the increase in users of CEMAT is no doubt the increasing numbers of American undergraduate study abroad students who have been coming to CEMAT for lectures and to use our Library. Another factor is an increase in Tunisian students who come to use our North Africa collection because of two new Tunisian M.A. programs about the Maghrib—at the Institut Supérieur des Langues de Tunis (ISLT) and the Institut Supérieur des Sciences Humaines (ISSH). More computers, email and internet facilities, and the added attraction of JSTOR also make the Library an attraction. Whatever the reasons, CEMAT is definitely a livelier place these days.

CEMAT EVENTS 2007-2008

- Fall Semester 2007: SIT study abroad, CEMAT hosted 13 lectures (for a group of 14 students)
- 23 October 2007, lecture: Susan Ossman and Nabihia Jrad, *Places We Share: Nomadology and Cosmopolitanism in the Maghrib*.
- 13 November 2007, CEMAT scholars meeting, introductions and research descriptions (13 scholars attended).
- 15 January 2008, study abroad orientation, University of Delaware (19 students)
- 17 January 2008, study abroad orientation, SUNY/Potsdam (9 students and 4 faculty)
- 22 January 2008, CEMAT scholars meeting, library resources, D. Bond and D. Lagueche (21 attended)
- 30 January 2008, lecture: Nadia Mamelouk, *La tunisienne dans la revue Leila (1936-1941)*
- 1 February 2008, study abroad orientation, Temple University, 15 students (at Africa Hotel)
- 20 February 2008, seminar: Sean Yom (Harvard), *Comparative Authoritarianism in the MENA Region*
- 2 April 2008, lecture: Lillian Craig Harris, *Cemeteries and Memories: The Second World War in Tunisia*
- 26-29 April 2008, Fulbright Middle East Scholars Enrichment Seminar (43 students)

- 30 April 2008, panel: Mohamed Kerrou, *La pensée de l'anthropologue Clifford Geertz dans le Maghreb*
- 15 May 2008, study abroad orientation for James Fox University (Oregon), 21 students and faculty
- 15 May 2008, CEMAT scholars end-of-research reports by (1) Douja Mamelouk, *The female gaze upon men in Arabic novels by Tunisian women*; and (2) Kris Goulding, *Anomalies in Tunisian women's status*
- 21 May 2008, lecture, Robert Parks, *Le système politique Algérien: pluralisme politique*
- 23-26 May, AIMS Conference on Cinema in the Maghrib
- 31 May-28 July 2008, TAP3, hosted 8 cultural studies lectures (30 students)
- 6 June 2008, study abroad orientation, George Mason University (20 students)
- 24 June, CEMAT scholars end-of-research reports by (1) Patrick Hazelton, *Women's education in Tunisia in the early 1900s*, and (2) Kimberly Katz, *Identity in Kairouan in the early 1900s*
- 19-23 July 2008, MERC/AIMS Research Design Workshop (in Gammarth), 22 participants
- 24 September 2008, study abroad orientation, Oregon State University (13 students)
- Spring Semester 2008: SIT study abroad, CEMAT hosted 7 lectures (for a group of 7 students)
- 22 October 2008, CEMAT Scholars meeting (15 CEMAT scholars, 12 OSU students and faculty, 9 SIT students and faculty, 3 guests), followed by dinner at Le Pasha Restaurant
- 31 October 2008: research reports by three Tunisian recipients of American Civilizations grants: Leila Ameer, Rym Draoui, and Leila Hejaiej
- 14 November 2008, lecture: Lilia Ben Salem, *La famille Tunisienne: ruptures et continuités*

THE HISTORY OF THE CEMAT VILLA

Late one afternoon in April a French family knocked on the gate at the CEMAT—Mr. Christian Livage, his wife, their daughter, and their daughter's two teen-aged children. Mr. Livage explained that he wanted to show his family this villa, where he lived as a young teenager in the 1940s, during the time when Tunisia was under the French. So I toured the building with Mr. Livage and his family and heard a story which is worth repeating.

Mr. Livage's father had been a colonel in the French army, stationed in Bizerte, accompanied by his family. The colonel was in France when Germany invaded Tunisia, and couldn't get back. Bizerte was heavily bombarded, so Christian, his older brother, mother, and grandmother left Bizerte for Tunis, which was safer.

At that time Tunis was occupied by the German army—although, Mr. Livage said, it was more of a “presence” than an “occupation.” When Tunis was liberated by the allied armies, this was the villa of an Italian family. But the French army evicted them and turned the villa over to the Livage family. Mr. Livage has kept the original document requisitioning the villa (dated 22 May 1943); it notes that the villa had belonged to Dr. Greco Constantino, that it had seven rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom, and there is even an inventory of the furniture.

The Italian doctor and his family were not allowed to take anything with them. Mr. Livage explained that the Italians had all been Fascists, and that Italy had wanted to take Tunisia from France. The Fascists used to hold demonstrations off the Place Barcelone, in front of what is now the Italian Embassy. Mr. Livage showed us the Fascist party membership card of Greco Constantino's brother, Salvatore, which he had found in the villa. On the



card *Tunisian Italian notebook cover with Mussolini* was *Fasci Italiani all'estero* (“Italian Fascists Overseas”), with a photo of a handsome young man with dark hair.

Mr. Livage's family didn't get the villa for free. They had to pay rent to the French authorities—250 francs

per three month period. Among the papers Mr. Livage kept were some Italian school notebooks he had found in the villa. One of them had on the cover an illustration of Benito Mussolini receiving the Fascist salute from little children. The caption reads, “The Fatherland is not an illusion, the Fatherland is the greatest, the most humane, the purest of realities.” A practical fellow, teen-aged Christian used the blank notebook for his Algebra class (see photo).

The villa was different when the Livage family lived here. The courtyard was not paved, but dirt. Chickens wandered around the villa and nested under the stairs; to the family they were pets, but it was wartime and food was scarce, so the neighbors sometimes caught and ate them. Downstairs were the dining room, kitchen, and the Italian doctor’s offices—a waiting room and a consultation room, which remained locked and unused. The small room on the mezzanine by the bathroom had been Christian’s bedroom; the upstairs rooms (now the CEMAT Library and Director’s office) were the bedrooms of the rest of the family.

An Italian Jewish family had lived next door, and the building across the impasse had housed British soldiers who, along with American soldiers, patrolled the streets of Tunis. People tended to stay indoors and Tunis was very quiet—except on some evenings when Mr. Livage recalled hearing Arabs screaming while British soldiers tortured them. He explained that many Tunisians supported the Germans because they wanted independence from the French.

We recently had a visit from someone else, Marie-Helene Sers, who lived in the villa from September 1946 to June 1953. She was the daughter of the French director of the national olive oil office, located on the nearby rue d’Angleterre; her family—she and her parents and her three brothers—rented the villa from the French authorities from September 1946 to June 1953. Marie-

Helene was born in Tunisia, as were both her parents, who are buried in Borgel Cemetery. She had returned once before in 1973 and found the gate open and the villa empty and in disrepair.

The accounts of Mr. Livage and Mme. Sers fit with other details we know about the villa. In the late 19th century this area, just outside the walled Old City, was an esparto grass market. The European city was built here, on the swampy land between the Old City and the Lake of Tunis, beginning with Little Sicily further toward the port. At the beginning of the French Protectorate in 1881 the Italians had been by far the largest foreign population in Tunisia—11,200 Italians to only 708 French (the second largest population, at 7,000, were the Maltese). The Italians outnumbered the French in Tunisia until well into the twentieth century, and were still a substantial part of the population until well after independence.

CEMAT’s villa and the one next door (now the Tunisian Red Crescent) were built in the 1890s by Giuseppe di Vittorio, an Italian architect, in a neo-Orientalist style which mixed Arabic tiles, calligraphy, wrought iron and plasterwork with European motifs such as the shell of St. James. The Impasse is named after an Italian nobleman, the Marquise de Menabrea di vol Dorv. At Tunisian independence in 1956, the villa passed from the French to the Tunisian government. Since the mid-1980s the villa has been on loan to CEMAT, rent-free. On the outside wall just inside the main gate, one can see the words “Villa Maria Carlota.” Who was Maria Carlota? What was the experience of the Italians who lived here? Was the doctor a fascist like his brother? What happened to them after they were kicked out? We don’t know.

At the end of their visits to the villa, I told Mr. Livage and Mme. Sers that they are welcome to return and visit their old home anytime they like. For that matter, the Greco Constantino family is welcome too.

MAINTAINING THE VILLA

The Ministry of Higher Education provides CEMAT with a nice villa, rent-free. We only have to pay the utilities and do the maintenance—and we do. In the past year we have replaced the cast-iron fuel-oil boiler that heats the building in winter with a space- and energy-efficient wall-mounted water heater, repaired the kitchen floor, fixed the cracks in the walls, painted the building inside and out, repaired the crumbling courtyard wall, and pruned the giant tree that rains ripe figs on us each Spring.

We especially wanted to spruce up the building to make it ready for two months of heavy use by the thirty Arabic students who had classes here all day, every day for June and July. By the time the students arrived the building was presentable. The courtyard was a favorite study area, and we also held a reception there for the AIMS conference. The kitchen was the setting for Besma’s Tunisian cooking classes, and students used it (and the new refrigerator we added) to store food, make lunches, and brew tea and coffee.

Now we need to fix the leaking roof, do a study of the load-bearing capacity of the Library floor, and possibly reactivate the fountain in the courtyard.

GOOD READS IN THE CEMAT LIBRARY

Instead of our usual list of acquisitions, this time we offer annotations of favorite books and journals from CEMAT scholars and staff.

Ridha Boukraa, *Hammamet: Etudes d'anthropologie touristique* (2008). A sociologist offers a book on tourism in Tunisia, a fascinating and little explored topic. Boukraa recounts the history of touristic development in Hammamet, his wife's home town, giving examples of some of the best and worst aspects of tourism. (LM)

Hafedh Boujmil (ed.), *Leïla, revue illustrée de la femme, 1936-1941* (2007). Intended for the general public, this well-illustrated book introduces a Tunisian women's periodical in French published during the interwar period and under the Vichy regime. The book consists of a preface and scholarly commentaries introducing a selection of articles, photos, and illustrations reprinted from *Leïla*. Useful for researchers studying women's emancipation and writing, gender issues during the colonial period, cultural production and nationalism. (N. Mamelouk)

Melani Cammett, *Globalization and Business Politics in Arab North Africa* (2007) examines business responses in Morocco and Tunisia, testing why organized business groups in the export-oriented apparel sector respond differently to similar experiences in trade liberalization and integration into global manufacturing chains. The book explores the politics and economics of responses to globalization—two cases with similar colonial experiences, similar economic ambitions yet divergent outcomes. (L. Chomiak)

CELAAN, a journal with articles in English and French about Maghribi aesthetics—novels, cinema, painting, art—overlapping with social science for such topics as identity and memory. The journal began in 2002 and comes out three times a year, often with thematic issues on such topics as Maghribi cinema, the postcolonial Maghrib, Algerian memory, Maghribi languages, the body, Recent Algerian poetry, and Abdel-Kader in British and American Literature. Recent issues are available for purchase at CEMAT. (LM)

The Journal of North Africa Studies is AIMS' own journal—that is, you get it with your membership in AIMS. JNAF has been coming out four times a year since 1996 and, unlike AIMS, takes as its purview the whole of North Africa from Mauritania to Sudan. JNAF is published in England by Routledge/Taylor and Francis and all its material is edited into British English. The articles are written from multiple disciplinary perspectives and the Book Review section is especially good. (LM)

Mediterraneans / Méditerranéennes is a journal just added to the collection. Started in the early 1990s, its articles in English and French are short, eclectic blends of social science, journalism, and literature, often straddling genres. The journal skips around the Mediterranean. Our incomplete set includes special issues on Yugoslavia and the First Gulf War, Israel-Palestine, the Balkans, Istanbul, Morocco, Corsica, Marseille, and a special issue, *Etre journaliste en Méditerranée* (1994). (LM)

C.R. Pennell, *Morocco since 1830* (2000) offers a well-researched and thorough history of the most populous country of the Maghreb. An effort is made to overcome the periodization of rulers that has traditionally governed the historiography of Morocco by using material that relates to other societal groups. The book provides analysis of how the environment has affected Moroccan politics and vice versa, questions of legitimacy and representation, the evolving role of women, as well as issues surrounding diverse linguistic and cultural identities. (C. Harris)

Kenneth J. Perkins, *A History of Modern Tunisia* (2004) concisely and cogently traces Tunisian history from the mid-19th century to the present day. In very readable prose the author elucidates the foundations of the protectorate, the nature of the colonial state, the rise of the nationalist movement, and connects them to post-independence state building and the challenges facing contemporary Tunisia. Of particular utility to researchers is his annotated "Suggestions for further reading." Every student of the country should start with this book. (C. Harris)

John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (2005). Abridging centuries of Algerian history, this book is strong on early Algerian resistance, French colonial land policies, the evolution of the nationalist movement, and the multifarious nature of Algerian society. The 2nd edition revises the account of the crisis and failed liberal reforms of 1979-92 period that led to military takeover and adds a chapter on responses to the Islamist threat and developments through April 2004. The bibliographical essay at the end is excellent. (C. Harris)

Paul Sebag, *Tunis, Histoire d'une ville* (1998). Covers Tunis from its beginning to the 1970s—nearly 3000 years—in 685 pages. After geography, Sebag discusses the Punic and Roman eras, Arab conquest, early dynasties, 17th and 18th centuries, the reform period (1824-1880) and the Protectorate (1881-1956) followed by a short chapter on post-independence Tunis. Sebag paints the evolution of the many groups that make up Tunis society and discusses a wide range of aspects of Tunisian history, with impressive breadth and style. (N. Mamelouk)

Susan Slyomovics, *The Performance of Human Rights in Morocco* (2005) problematizes Morocco's state-led reconciliation effort, after abuses under the late King Hassan II. The author fuses politics, performance studies and anthropology in discussing a contentious dialogue about truth and reconciliation, torture, imprisonment, and disappearance, in a new public space of deliberation that involves public testimony, as well as the performance of the state and competing political visions. (L. Chomiak)

RESEARCHERS AT CEMAT DURING 2007-2008

Below is a list of the main scholars who were associated with CEMAT in 2007-8, along with their projects. Not included are the names of the 14 OSU and 7 SIT study abroad students who are also CEMAT scholars.

- **Adnan Ahmad**, Fulbright, Johns Hopkins, studying Tunisian identity, 11/07 to 7/08
- **Ali Abdullatif Ahmida**, Politics/U New England in Maine, 6/08, refugees from Italian colonial Libya.
- **Zach Bloomfield**, Fulbright, studying Tunisian youth, 12/07 to 09
- **Ken Brown**, Emeritus/Manchester, 6-7/08, AIMS grant for research on Maghribi cities
- **Melissa Chirico**, Eastern Pennsylvania, Fulbright Arabic, 6/07-10/07
- **Sangho Chung**, New School for Social Research, teaching Development at Manouba, 2007-9
- **Julia Clancy-Smith**, History/Arizona, 9-11/07, finishing a book on *Mediterranean Odysseys*
- **Sarah Epstein**, 2005-8, studying law and gender, MA/Arabic Lit, Univ. of Tunis.
- **Jemel Amin Derbeli**, USC, film project on water and society in Sidi Bou Zid, Spring-Summer 2008.
- **Pierre Englebert**, Pomona College, prospective Fulbright teaching in Tunisia, visiting Tunis faculties.
- **Jeremy Farrell**, 2007-8, Tulane, studying holy men in Tunisia and teaching at AMIDEAST
- **Angel Foster**, Ibis Reproductive Health, Cambridge, 10-11/07, studying pharmacies and birth control
- **Richard Fraenkel**, independent scholar, 6/08, Tunisian agriculture
- **Kristine Goulding, Fulbright**, Arabic study and women's studies research 2007-8
- **William Granara**, NELC/Harvard, AIMS grant, 6-7/08, research on Tunisian Nationalism.
- **Karim Hamdy and Laura Rice**, Oregon State U., directing OSU Study Abroad, 10-12/07, 10-12/08
- **Chauncy Harris, Jr.**, Rhodes Scholar/Oxford, studying Italians and Maltese in N.Af., 2007-9
- **Simon Hawkins**, Anthropology/Franklin and Marshall, 8-10/07, merchants and tourists
- **Patrick Hazleton**, 10/07 to 5/08, the role of Islam in the Tunisian educational system
- **Thomas Heffernan**, Religion/U Tennessee, 6-7/08, autobiographies of Augustine and Perpetua.
- **Josie Hendrickson**, Cand. Phil./Religion, Emory U, 9-10/07, Maliki fatwas
- **Alyson Jones**, Cand. Phil./ethnomusicology, U Michigan, 6/07-8/08, women and popular music
- **Kimberly Katz**, History/Towson U, Arab Cultural Heritage, 12/07 to 8/08.
- **Martin Latreille**, Canada, 9/07-08, directing research on changes in marriage and the family in Tunisia.
- **Dale Lightfoot**, Geography/Oklahoma State, CAORC grant to study *qanats*, 5-9/08
- **Abel Lomax**, teaching at AMIDEAST 2007-8, CEMAT cataloguing project at Beit Al-Banani in Tunis.
- **Karla Mallette**, French-Italian/Miami U of Ohio, AIMS grant to study Mediterranean Lingua Franca
- **Douja Mamelouk**, Cand. Phil./ Georgetown, 8/07-08, images of men in post-colonial Tunisia literature.
- **Nadia Mamelouk**, did PhD thesis, U of Virginia, the Tunisian women's journal Leila (1936-41).
- **Mary McCullough**, Samford College, Fulbright teacher, Ibn Sharaf, research on return migration, 07-08.
- **James Miller**, Geography/Clemson, 5-8/08, AIMS Conference and Learn and Serve/AMIDEAST.
- **Naima Omar**, Arabic/U Kansas, 1-7/08, analysis of Bourguiba's speeches and TAP Program consulting.
- **Richard Parks**, Cand. Phil, U Minnesota, 11/2007 to 5/2008, Jewish life during the interwar period.
- **Christiane Schroeder**, student/U of Leipzig, 9-12/07, small businesses in Tunisia.
- **Sonia Shiri**, Arabic/UC Berkeley, Tunisian Northwest and consulting at TAP Arabic program
- **Sheldon Skaggs**, U of Georgia, 12/07-1/08, lead isotopes for Roman curse tablets.
- **Laura Thompson**, Georgetown/anthropology, 2008-9, Fulbright research on professional women.
- **Laura Tohme**, 12/08, Ribats in Tunisia and Islamic history
- **Sarah Vincent**, Anthropology/Cand. Phil., LSE, 2006-9, marriage and divorce in Tunisia.
- **Lauren Wagner**, Cand. Phil., Univ. College/London, 11/07, Maghribi tourism in the Maghrib



CEMAT Researcher Alyson Jones, plays violin in the Beit Al Bannani courtyard

- **Mark Willis**, independent scholar, US-Tunisian relations in the period 1941-1945, 8/2007-continuing
- **Sean Yom**, Cand. Phil./politics/ Harvard, 12/07-2/08, comparing politics in Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia.
- **Dorra Zairi**, recently returned from studies in the US, Beit al-Bannani library cataloguing project.

RECENTLY ARRIVED RESEARCHERS AT CEMAT

Twelve of the above 2007-8 scholars are also here in 2008-9. Several new scholars have arrived for 2008-9, including those below, and more are on the way.

- **Laryssa Chomiak**, Cand. Phil./U Maryland, 9/08-6/09, to study civic politics and public space
- **Thomas Earnest**, BS/IR/Georgia Tech, 9/08-8/09, Fulbright, economic development in Tunisia.
- **Christen Farr**, BA/USC, Fulbright, development issues and women's employment, 10/08-12/09
- **Teal Greyhavens**, BA/Film/Whitman, Watson Fellow, 10-11/08, the role of cinema
- **Matthew Hendren**, wife Rebekah Dillon son Holden, 9/08-12/09, Fulbright, urban agriculture.
- **Claire Oueslati-Porter**, Cand. Phil./anthro/Univ. S Florida, women workers in offshore factories, 2008-9
- **Dorsey Wisotzki**, independent scholar, with family, for Arabic study, 5/08-5/10.

NEWS OF THE CEMAT LIBRARY

In the past year we have added 164 new theses about the Maghrib to the CEMAT collection. This is an important update, since there had been no new theses acquired since 2001. Since our shelf space is running low, we keep these theses stored in read-only format on the computers in the CEMAT Library. The theses are purchased by AIMS and are shared among all three AIMS Center Libraries (Tunis, Oran and Tangier).

We also have been acquiring feature films in DVD format—19 Tunisian films and (thanks to Bobby Parks, the Director of CEMA in Oran) 33 Algerian movies. In addition, we have several Tunisia-related documentaries. Almost all of our feature films and documentaries have French subtitles and some have English subtitles. The film collection comes in handy for the Arabic cultural studies program, and several study abroad students have already used the collection to write papers.

The CEMAT Library now has JSTOR, an online database to which libraries can subscribe for access to articles in nearly a thousand major academic journals in the social sciences and the hard sciences, plus many more thousands of monographs. JSTOR services are funded by CAORC, which is the umbrella organization for twenty overseas research centers, including CEMAT. Our JSTOR expert is Riadh Saadaoui, who attended a special JSTOR training program in Chicago this past spring.

We invite CEMAT Scholars to suggest purchases for our Library. If you know of an important book in English about the Maghrib and we don't have it, we will buy it. It takes around two weeks for us to order a book and receive it via the diplomatic pouch. Our Library specializes in works about the countries of the Maghrib, and almost all the books we purchase are in English. Our reasoning is that works in French and Arabic are readily found in other libraries in Tunisia.

Each year we visit the Book Exhibit at the Annual MESA Meeting and purchase a number of new publications. CEMAT also welcomes contributions of books and book collections from members and friends of CEMAT and AIMS. Since we are a non-profit institution, book donations are eligible for tax-deductions. If you would like to donate books or journals in English about the Maghrib, contact us (cemat@planet.tn or cemat2@planet.tn). We can tell you on how to mail or ship to us at a low domestic rate using the diplomatic pouch.

CLIFFORD GEERTZ IN TUNISIA

On May 2, 2007, CEMAT cosponsored a conference on Clifford Geertz, organized by Prof. Mohamed Kerrou at the Bibliothèque National. The conference volume, with the eight presentations, was published in May 2008 and is available in the CEMAT Library. The publication acknowledges CEMAT and includes a paper by Larry Michalak about Geertz's work on markets in North Africa.

NEWS OF THE MIDDLE EAST RESEARCH COMPETITION (MERC)

The Middle East Research Competition is a project funded by the Ford Foundation to help young social scientists in the Arab world and Turkey. After many years in Egypt and Lebanon, two years ago MERC moved to Tunisia, under the able directorship of Prof. Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh. The MERC program is based in Tunisia's national Center for Social and Economic Research (CERES), just around the corner from CEMAT. CEMAT helps MERC by providing bookkeeping.

We also cosponsor programs with MERC. Most recently, MERC and AIMS worked together to put on a first-of-its-kind workshop on research design and proposal-writing skills, from 20 to 23 July, in Gammarth. The workshop was

organized by Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh and conducted by Azzedine Layachi, Mounira Charrad, Gouda Abdulkhalak, Nukhet Sirman, and Bouthaina Cheriet. The 23 participants included 8 Tunisians, 6 Algerians, 3 Syrians, 3 Moroccans, 2 Egyptians and 1 Lebanese, with simultaneous translators for Arabic to English and Arabic to French.

Mounira Charrad began the program with a keynote lecture on research design and proposal writing. Each participant then presented a research project for 15 minutes, followed by discussion. The workshop was largely the outcome of a suggestion by Azzedine Layachi, who has for many years chaired the AIMS Maghribi grant committee. Both the participants and the workshop leaders concluded that it was a positive experience, well worth repeating on a regular basis.

In the past year, besides the joint workshop, MERC has conducted several seminars and conferences. They have also started a database, called Al manhal, on theses about North Africa and the Middle East www.merc-manhal.org. Finally, MERC has awarded 18 small research grants to Arab and Turkish scholars (averaging about \$7,000) for projects throughout the Middle East. To learn more about MERC's activities, visit the MERC website at www.mercprogram.org.



AIMS MERC Workshop: (rt to left: Bouthaina Cheriet, Mohamad Meziane, Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh, Ezzedine Layachi, Gouda Abdulkhalak, and Nukhet Sirman)

CROSS CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN TUNISIA By the 2008 Arabic Students

Students in the 2008 Tunis Summer Arabic Program did weekly personal narratives of their cultural experience:

THE PLUSSES OF LEARNING ARABIC. One of my favorite parts of travelling abroad is seeing people's reactions when I try to speak the language. In Tunisia, as soon as I start to speak in Arabic, I get a completely different reaction. Servers in restaurants think its great when we try to speak Arabic. Several times, waiters have grabbed pencils and started giving us Arabic grammar lessons. In the market, the shopkeepers will give free food. Everyone is just so much friendlier.

THE STORY OF THE HAZELNUT. There are few things in life that I enjoy as much as food, so I made it a point to learn as many food words as possible in my first few days in Tunis. One day I went to the market and learned *almond*, *pine nut*, and *hazelnut*, the latter of which happens to be one of my favorites. Later that night at the Magasin General, in the candy section, I saw before me a Maestro Extra Fine Dark Chocolate bar with hazelnuts. As I stared at the script on the side of the dark chocolate wrapper, I saw in the flow of Arabic letters the word I had learned earlier in the market – *bufriwa!*



TUNISIAN POLYGLOTS. One of the things that surprises me is that people here speak at least three languages. Tunisian Arabic dialect is learned at home and Modern Standard Arabic at school. French is introduced later, then English in middle school. I encountered many Italian, Spanish, and German speakers as well. I think about all the people in the U.S. that refuse to even attempt to learn Spanish, the second language of the United States, and all those parents that worry about whether it is “the right time” to introduce their children to a foreign language. I’ve come to respect the polyglot aspect of Tunisian culture.

Rt to left: Roopa Gogineni, Molly Wurzer, Patrick Geary, and Carolee Estelle

THE CHALLENGE OF GETTING PLACES. Travelling in Tunisia, it doesn't matter where you're going or how you are trying to get there—it's always an adventure, and even short distance travel is a challenge. Drivers here are so aggressive! There are no apparent laws regarding jaywalking, so you just go when you think you can make it. One-way streets are optional. The traffic guards wear awesome wrist cuffs, but it doesn't seem to inspire much adherence to the traffic laws.

NATIVE SPEAKERS! Last Monday I walked to Monoprix with a fellow student. As I was talking to my companion, while I was literally in mid-sentence, the two Tunisian girls walking in front of us turned around and said excitedly in English: "Native speakers!" They began chatting with us in excellent English and explained that they studied English at a university in Tunis. We shopped together and exchanged cell phone numbers. On Friday a group of us went with them to see their school. They met us at the hotel and greeted each of us with a huge smile and a kiss on both cheeks, and we talked excitedly about our studies and future plans. We've made plans to get together to go swimming and shopping during the coming weeks.

ISLAM IN TUNISIA. One of the things that has been noticeably absent in my experience during this trip has been exposure to Islam. We're usually able to catch the muezzin's undulating call to prayer at least once a day, but most Tunisians don't seem fazed by it, which surprised me. Americans tend to see Arabs as being religiously conservative, and I expected Islam to play a bigger role here. But men drink and stores close on Sundays. Tunisian Muslims seem a lot like most American Christians. They sincerely believe in God and strive to live by strong morals and values, but they're also somewhat uncomfortable with organized religion. One Tunisian girl told me that she considers herself Muslim but doesn't go to the mosque regularly, doesn't know if she is Sunni or Shia, and sees the wearing of hijabs as being "very medieval."

KAIROUAN. The mosque was impressive. The minaret towered over the city and the courtyard seemed large enough to fit hundreds of people. As a non-Muslim I was unable to enter the prayer hall itself, but a glance in the door was sufficient proof that it was equally impressive. The orange water cooler seemed somewhat out of place amidst the shelves of Korans and centuries-old architecture, but it seemed to fit as a metaphor for the position of Islam today—caught between centuries of history and tradition and the challenges and opportunities of the modern age. Gatorade coolers are so practical for picnics or the sidelines, but I had never thought of them as typical mosque furniture. That was something of a revelation for me.

IN SHA ALLAH. I've been struck by how prevalent references to God are in everyday speech. Arabic conversation is filled with religious references, which I find contrasts with references to God in English. English speakers either use God's name as profanity or use it in an awkwardly self-conscious religious context. Religious references in Arabic seem much more natural and integrated into everyday life. Whether or not these words are an expression of actual religiosity surely varies from person to person, but it is nonetheless fascinating how two major world religions took different paths with regard to using God's name.

AT THE BEACH. On Friday, I realized why foreigners get a reputation for having loose morals. After the midterm, several of us went to the beach to celebrate being half way through with the program. There were other groups on the beach, including a group of Tunisian guys. We told them that we were all married, so they moved on to a group of European tourists walking down the beach and flirted with them. Some of the women flirted back and soon one guy was kissing one of the girls underneath a towel. These two continued to make out for a long while the other guys were trying to get the girl's friends into the act as well. The girls were drunk and obviously just looking for a little fun. We have to suffer from harassment since the guys don't know the difference between girls looking for some action and those of us just looking for a tan.

HARASSMENT VS HELPFULNESS. A male Tunisian stranger approached me while I was trying to decide if I wanted a tuna pizza or tuna sandwich for lunch. I couldn't understand his French and I backed away and pretended not to hear what he said. He managed to get the ear of one of my fellow students, and it turned out that he had seen someone try to steal out of one of our bags and was simply warning us to be careful. I immediately felt ashamed for rebuffing him. Here he was trying to help, and here I was preemptively punishing him. I came to Tunisia to dissolve stereotypes, not to create them. Hopefully breaking the language barrier will help me be more aware of the intentions of those around me

A COMIC TAXI DRIVER. Coming back from Sidi Bou Said, three friends and I were treated to a standup comedy routine by our taxi driver. It consisted of a perfectly intonated, fully performed imitation of Americans. The driver told us that he picked the majority of the phrases up from American films and patrons of his cab. Among the phrases were: "Oh my God!" "Crazy!" "Go! Go! Go!" And my personal favorite, "Thirty dinars?! No! Twenty-five!" During this entire ten-minute tour-de-force performance, I laughed hysterically recalling all the times I had witnessed Americans, including myself, repeating these typical American phrases and gestures on the streets of Tunis. It was wonderful to be reminded that I, the tourist, was not the only party making judgments about a foreign culture.

FAMILY GATHERINGS. My home stay was an intensive introduction to Tunisian family life. The biggest difference between the family parties that I am used to and the ones I went to over the weekend is the size of the extended family on both the mother's and the father's sides. At the graduation party for one of my host mother's nieces, I was introduced to about forty uncles, aunts, great aunts and uncles, and cousins in the space of about four minutes. Saturday

evening there was a celebration of a newborn second cousin on my host father's side, and at the new mother's house I was again introduced (each time a double kiss, left cheek first) to still more aunts, great aunts, nieces and grandmothers.

AN UNTRADITIONAL FAMILY STAY.

Throughout my home stay, I kept in mind what the speaker last Friday had said in her lecture about the Tunisian family. However, from the moment I arrived, what struck me was how my family seemed to contradict everything the lecturer had said. Only the mother and her daughter lived in the house (as well as a 35 year old son who occasionally stayed there); I didn't meet any extended family; most meals were eaten separately; bread was thrown away; the family was completely secular. It seemed as if my family was truly challenging the concept of normalcy. However, I appreciated seeing an atypical Tunisian family, seeing that everything isn't as uniform as one may think. This weekend served as a reinforcement to constantly remind myself of the limitations of generalizations.



Jessika Barnes leaves for her family stay

DANCING. When my host sister and I went over to the neighbor's house I sat primly on the couch and tried to listen to the conversations of multiple women. Outside, the sun threw a yellow cast on a skyline punctured by a minaret. I fought back a yawn. Someone turned on music and a few got up and started dancing. At first it was just the younger women, hypnotically swaying their hips and giggling. Then someone produced scarves, which they slung low over their hips and knotted at the side, adding a touch of flair to their undulations. Insistent hands pulled me off the couch and tried to teach me the moves. Then the mothers got up, kicked off their shoes and joined in. Less inhibited than the younger women, they danced everyone else off the floor. They swung their well-endowed hips and put their hands in the air—hands that had prepared a thousand meals, hands that had scrubbed floors, hands that had calmed children's cries—moving rhythmically, not wildly, with astonishingly controlled skill.

Amidst the cacophony, no one noticed that one of the women had slipped out, but she made a grand entrance that made everyone's jaw drop. She was dressed in a man's clothes—pants, suitjacket, traditional hat and all. Eyeliner had been applied to create a beard and moustache which framed her mischievous grin as she joined the dancing. The women shrieked with delight, produced cell phones and began snapping pictures. The newly-bearded woman danced up a storm, tipped her hat askew and stuck out her tongue. Everyone was in stitches; one little two-year-old was so confused she began to cry. Someone picked the little one up and bounced her on her hip as they continued dancing. After awhile they returned to their chairs. The sun had set as food was put on the table and the hostesses resumed their tasks. I smiled at the woman who set a plate of harissa and olives in front of me, knowing that I would never look at Tunisian women the same way again.

GIFT GIVING. Toward the end of my stay with my host family, I gave them some small gifts I had brought from home (key lime candies from Florida, maple syrup from Massachusetts and some chocolate) which they really appreciated. Later that evening, my host mother brought me a nicely wrapped package. Inside I found a small Koran written in beautiful calligraphy. I was moved at their thoughtfulness and thanked them profusely. Then, the mom brought me a can of sweetened condensed milk. My host sister explained that her mom was offering it to me because it's really good and apparently hard to find. It was so bewildering. I had just been given this precious gift of their holiest book which I held in one hand and now I was holding a can of sweetened condensed milk in the other. The world is a funny place.



Arabic student Olga Kovarzina tries the chicha

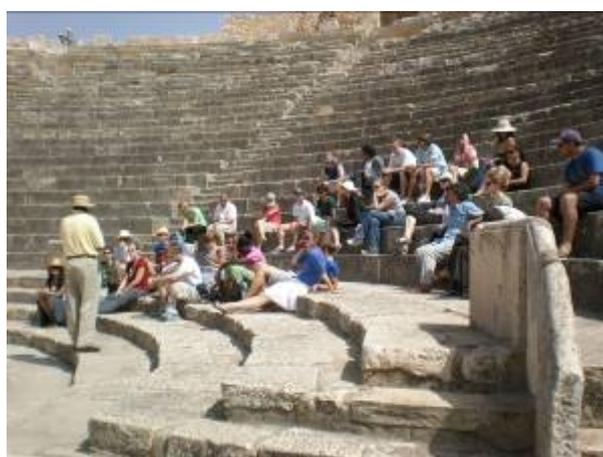
SPLISH SPLASH. By far my favorite experience of the weekend was a trip to the local hammam. In the hammam I tried to maintain an outward calm despite the high ratio of naked to non-naked women circulating the central sauna area. Despite my liberal upbringing and my time at an all-women's college, my experience at the hammam really brought into sharp focus the effects of the American media's often banal representation of the female body. It was

beautiful to be among a group of women of all ages, all so remarkably comfortable in their many shapes. Rarely have I felt such a rich sense of connection to my sex.

RABBIT COUS-COUS. This weekend during my home-stay, food was served at what seemed every other hour. I have never had more to eat over a two day period in my entire life. At one point we took a short walk to a local market where my host and I bought various items for that day's lunch and dinner. We stopped at a shop where I thought we were going to buy chicken. To my surprise and my host's amusement, I was asked to pick out which live rabbit I wanted to eat for dinner. Then the shopkeeper took the chosen Bugs Bunny and nonchalantly killed it, bled it out, skinned it, and gave it to us in a nice little bag. My host explained that the shopkeeper killed the rabbit in a manner appropriate for practicing Muslims. Needless to say, that was the best, and only, rabbit couscous that I have eaten in my life.

ON BEING WELCOMED WITH BAKLAVA. I had wonderful experiences this weekend, including visiting a hammam, washing my hands with dirt (which according to the Koran kills microbes that soap can't get to), and brushing my teeth with some bark that first turns your teeth red before whitening them. I met many family members, friends, and neighbors—all of them warm and welcoming. I was struck by how you just wander in unannounced and two minutes later there is some baklava for you, or a cold glass of Orangina. Friends and neighbors would also just pop in for a chat, or for dinner, and everybody was welcome. The Tunisians, it seems, are ready at any time to receive friends and family with some sweets or a cold drink.

A CONCERT IN AN ANCIENT THEATER. I just took part in a piece of Tunisian history older than Christ—a concert in Carthage's amphitheatre. To be honest, the artist wasn't to my taste, but there is something to be said about sitting outside in a space that's been hewn out of rock and used as a place of entertainment for over two thousand years. I looked up and saw the stars—the same stars people have been gazing at since they had the inkling to turn skyward. We sat in ancient seats and joked and laughed just as people did before watching the newest Greek or Roman comedy. At the end, we slowly filed out of the theatre down the same steps countless generations have tripped and slipped on. There is much to be said about using ancient spaces in contemporary ways. It draws people to their past and their heritage while embracing the newness of today's cultures.



*Archeologist Nejib Ben Lazreg and TAP students
in Dougga Roman Amphitheatre*



Centre d'Etudes Maghrébines à Tunis

مركز الدراسات المغاربية بتونس

CEMAT is the American Research Center in Tunis www.cematmaghrib.org

CEMAT is the overseas Research Center of AIMS, the American Institute of Maghrib Studies www.aimsnorthafrica.org

CEMAT is a member of CAORC, the Council of American Overseas Research Centers, www.caorc.org

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