After invading Tunisia in 1881, the French installed a protectorate in which they shared power with the Tunisian ruling dynasty and, due to the dynasty’s treaties with other European powers, with some of their imperial rivals. This “indirect” form of colonization was intended to prevent the violent clashes marking France’s outright annexation of neighboring Algeria. But as Mary Dewhurst Lewis argues, France’s method of governance in Tunisia actually created a whole new set of conflicts. In one of the most dynamic crossroads of the Mediterranean world, residents of Tunisia—whether Muslim, Jewish, or Christian—navigated through the competing power structures to further their civil rights and individual interests and often thwarted the aims of the French state in the process.

This event is co-sponsored by the MIT Foreign Languages & Literatures, MIT History Faculty, and the Borders Research Initiative in Women’s & Gender Studies. For more information fll-events@mit.edu.