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Interactions, Corpus, Apprentissages, Représentations
UMR 5191 - CNRS / Université Lyon 2 / ENS de Lyon / IFÉ

War and Peace: Representations and Symbols in the Arab World

*Al-taşawwur wa-l-ramz li-l-ḥarb wa-l-silm
fī- l-‘ālam al-‘arabī*

التصور والرمز للحرب والسلام في العالم العربي

**14-16 March 2018
Grenoble Alpes University
Saint Martin d'Hères**

This interdisciplinary conference will investigate, in the *longue durée*, verbal and visual practices and representations connected with the concepts of war (*ḥarb*) and peace (*silm*) as perceived from and in the Arab world.

On the assumption that the Humanities and Social Sciences are complementary, insofar as texts such as works of fiction give conscious or unconscious accounts of reality, the conference will provide a forum for scholars of literature, linguistics, history, Islamic studies, sociology, anthropology, political science and media studies to pool their problematisations of the representation and conduct of war and peace, of domestic or regional conflict, the social, political and economic consequences thereof, and of non-conflictual interstate relations.

The conference will have three main themes.

1. Linguistic usages and modes of thought

Issues addressed under this heading will include the past and present uses of the terms *ḥarb* and *silm* in written and oral usage, in texts, written speeches, the press, social media, radio or TV. Whether scripted, extemporised or fixed, all these linguistic productions embody modes of thought and send signals. What different meanings and values do they give to the words *ḥarb* and *silm*? Is war viewed negatively or positively? Is peace regarded as important? What weight is added to discourse by the reuse of older vocabulary, sacred or other?

1.1 Popular epics and proverbs

Popular literature provides material for the study of social and cultural diversity, group contacts and conflicts, ideology and perceptions of the Other. The *sīras* or popular epics, such as *Baybars*, are part of the historical narrative tradition, and, as with Classical Arabic historiography, the poetry embedded in them is largely concerned with war. Proverbs ancient and modern may be viewed as a repository of social memory and folk wisdom, and, like the *sīras*, they reflect a world view.

We invite papers which explore the world view of this corpus. How is peace represented? Is war or peace the more frequent topic? Do positive or negative values attach to one or the other?

1.2 Creative uses of archaism

The events of the past ten years have led social actors in the Arab world to revive archaic words and phrases taken from the Qur'an and Tradition. We invite papers that either address the phenomenon in a broad perspective, e.g. : how have archaisms been used to create a modern vocabulary? or that investigate more specific instances, e.g. whether the example of the Prophet (Sunna) or particular instances of it (traditions) are invoked to justify war.

1.3 Ideology and conditioning or Media Discourse Analysis

We invite proposals that address questions such as:

- Rhetoric and argument in media discourse. How are events presented in the media? What is the role of the editor?
- How differently do media such as photography, film and video, news bulletins and the press present war and peace?
- How are their various discourses received by social actors?

2. Names, meanings and symbols

2.1 Naming as a marker

An example is the popular epic of Baybars, which may be treated as jihad literature, in which personal names act as markers, identifying defenders of Islam, e.g. Sayf al-Dīn, “Sword of the Faith”, and its opponents, e.g. Şalbūn, “Little Cross”. Contemporary Islamist factions employ a similar strategy to legitimise their ideology and promote their goals. We invite papers that investigate the reuse of ancient personal names, place names, calligraphic devices and visual symbols, such as the ISIL flag.

2.2 Symbols

We invite papers that investigate the historical development of the symbolism of:

- objects, e.g. war banners;
- places, e.g. battlefields; the birthplaces of famous military commanders;
- events;
- animals used in martial symbolism, e.g. eagles, horses;
- historical persons such as Saladin and Baybars.

3. War and peace: antithetical concepts?

It is often asserted that the theory of Dār al-Islām and Dār al-Ḥarb as opposites constitutes a uniquely Islamic world view that has lasted from the Middle Ages down to the present. Yet, as recent research shows, social actors on the ground always interacted with their neighbours, and the theory itself, which was mainly developed by religious elites, changed over time so that, for example, Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) considered the city of Mardin in Ilkhanid territory as having “composite” (*murakkab*) status. Nevertheless, the bipolarity has been revived and instrumentalised by contemporary jihadi movements. We invite contributions that discuss the phenomenon in the light of religious symbolism.

Papers may be in French, English or Arabic.

Your proposal should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 500 words and a one-page CV, which should be sent as email attachments to guerreetpaix85@gmail.com The deadline is November 15th 2017.

The Scientific Committee will let you know by email by December 15th 2017 whether your proposal has been accepted.

Organization Committee

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