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# Middle East – Topics & Arguments

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# Iconography

**Edward Said's  
Orientalism from an  
iconographic perspective**

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**Scott Redford and the  
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# EDITORIAL

## Contested Images: Iconographical approaches to the MENA-region

Perrine Lachenal and Georg Leube

This special issue of META: Middle East, Topics and Arguments, engages with the methodology of iconography, an area that was originally developed in the study of art history and material culture. In these traditions, iconography is used to reconstruct the meaning of depictions, buildings and other material artifacts, and it does so by integrating the elements of a given representation into its broader historical and cultural context. Ideally, iconography thereby becomes a means of reconstructing both the original aims of the producer of a message, and the ways in which that message was received by its original audience.

In this volume of META, we argue that this approach can and should be adapted to fields transcending the frame of art history and material culture in order to allow iconography to become relevant to the greater field of Social and Cultural Studies

as a whole. We see iconography, or the synchronistic study of the combination of discrete elements in spatially and temporally bounded areas, as a powerful tool in reconstructing the relationship between the sender and the receiver of a message by focusing on the semiotic context, or Language of Forms (Formensprache), in which communication takes place. By focusing especially on the permeability between different repertoires, the performativity inherent in any act of social communication and the technology underlying the mobilization of semantically charged elements, we aim to explore some of the most promising dimensions in which we believe iconographical approaches can be fruitfully employed in Social and Cultural Studies.

**Keywords:** Iconography, Art History, Poststructuralism, Visual Culture

### Grappling with images I: Iconography as an Art Historical Concept

If one does not enjoy the painter's art, he is unjust to the truth and wisdom, which also inspires poets. For both, poets and painters, contribute equally to the deeds and the renown of heroes. He also does not appreciate proportion, by means of which art touches reason. (Philostratus, *Imagines* I, 1, 2).

From its inception in classical antiquity, the tradition of iconography or a *description of the semantically relevant parts of pictures* operated on two distinct levels. The proper description of pictures was formalized in a rhetorical discipline that established a firm set of rules and techniques. Iconography thereby formed the equivalent of what, nowadays, would most likely be defined as a methodology. Iconography thus is more than the simple attempt to talk about pictures and understand their meaning; it is also a methodological approach and a rhetorical standard that governs the way in which the analysis of pictures is to be verbalized.

This verbalization of the description of pictures, statues or other ensembles of semantically charged signs is categorically dependent on cultural traditions. If Philostratos privileges, in the preface to his collection of descriptions of pictures, interpretation over technical description

by reversing the logical sequence of a description of details and proportions, and then follows this with attempts to decode the truth and wisdom inspiring the artist, he is motivated by rhetorical concerns. His employment of the rhetorical device of *hysteron proteron* or “the later before the first” lays open the dependence of iconographical methods, and other methodologies, on cultural traditions: Where we would probably insist on the “natural order” of description preceding interpretation, Philostratus is part of the rhetorical splendor of the “Second Sophistic”. In his application of the *hysteron proteron* rhetorical device, he also follows the accepted norms of his times by privileging truth and wisdom over mere technicalities such as proportion.

The bipartite structure of the term iconography, combining the verbalization of pictures with a methodological standard, continues to this day. Just as not every verbalization of pictures amounts to an iconography, the methodology of iconography can be applied to ensembles of semantically charged signs other than pictures.

The modern methodology of iconography was, nonetheless, developed mainly on the basis of pictures by Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky. The latter decisively formalized the method of verbalizing pic-

tures in his classic “Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art” (51-82). In keeping with epistemological concerns of his time, Panofsky aimed to establish a standard of methodological rigor by clearly separating description from interpretation. According to him, the description of pictures needs to follow a tripartite structure. The first two steps are the description of the elements, defined as the “pre-iconographical description” by Panofsky, and the identification of subject matter, which Panofsky sees as the iconography proper. The latter transcends the mechanical description in so far as the elements described in the first step are now integrated into their cultural background.

In Panofsky’s famous example, the “male figure with a knife” described in the first step is iconographically revealed to represent St. Bartholomew (Panofsky 54). This is then followed by the third step in Panofsky’s methodology, concerned with intrinsic meaning or content and is “apprehended by ascertaining those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion” qualified by one personality and condensed into one work” (Panofsky 55). Panofsky differentiated this third step from iconography

proper and designated it: iconology (Panofsky 57).

Influential as Panofsky’s methodology remains, his approach has been criticized as too schematic. While his reification of a language of forms, which could be applied almost mechanically to previously described elements of a depiction, appears to problematically simplify the complex reciprocal relationship between artist, viewer and cultural context, it is necessitated by Panofsky’s methodological concern to clearly divide an objective description of the subject matter from subjective interpretation. In his example of “a male figure with a knife”, the identification as St. Bartholomew appears entirely unproblematic notwithstanding the possibility of a complex or even mutually contradictory interplay of different “iconographical” repertoires in any given representation. At the same time, the interpretative third step, that which Panofsky proposes to define as iconology, also needs to be grounded in factual argument and is therefore not as subjective and detached from the “mechanical” study of cultural context as Panofsky suggests.

The most “open” approach to iconography, which also underlies much of this volume’s experimentation with what we see as iconographical approaches, is pre-

sented by Krautheimer in his magisterial "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture'" (first published 1942, post-scripted German translation 1988). In this article, his inquiry into the semantically charged parameters of a pre-modern perception of architecture enables the interpretation of a group of hexagonal, octagonal and round buildings across medieval Europe as architectural copies imitating the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. This demonstration of the decisive role of cultural context in establishing the semantic equivalence of hexagonal, octagonal and round structures in medieval Europe serves to de-objectify Panofsky's second step of iconography and opens iconographical methodology to the interpretation of the interplay of any finite number of semantically charged elements in general.

In a postscript dated 1987 in the German translation of his article, Krautheimer stresses the possibility of accommodating multilayered and even mutually contradictory interpretations within iconographical methodology. Where Panofsky aimed to objectify the relationship between the artist and the culturally charged iconographical repertoire in a one-sided process of artistic appropriation, Krautheimer admits the ultimate impossibility of dividing between the

continuation of tradition unchallenged by artistic intervention, conscious emulation of tradition by the artist, artistic intervention and later interpretation (Krautheimer 194). This methodical skepticism "opens" the iconographical investigation by admitting a great deal of tentative experimentation, which is especially relevant in the study of societies and cultures outside the narrow scope of Western academia. Rather than attempt a "definition" of otherness, iconography thus serves as a method that enables tentative readings of semantically charged ensembles, and describes possible contextualizations without necessarily claiming supra-cultural objectivity for its suggestions.

### **Grappling with images II: A poststructuralist pictorial shift in the Humanities?**

For a long time, the history of art remained the primary discipline for engaging with depictions, and other fields of research were reluctant to seriously involve themselves with art-historical methodologies such as iconography. If images appeared in academic works, they served as illustrations for reinforcing verbalized scientific demonstrations. Academic works used images to strengthen the aesthetic appeal of given research, but the images themselves were not an item of interest in and of themselves. It was only in the course of

a growing weariness of essentialist truths in the sixties and seventies of the last century that pictorial sources, with all their inherent ambiguity, were firmly integrated into the mainstream material being employed in inquiries in the wider field of Social and Cultural Studies.

Roland Barthes is one of the main intellectual actors of this shift. His work constituted a decisive invitation to social and human scientists to explore paths that they had previously avoided, putting images at the forefront of the analysis. In his essay, "Rhétorique de l'image" of 1964, Barthes explains that an image is made up of a complex and meaningful "architecture" or "system" of signs. His stimulating semiotic approach explored the action of "reading" images, taking into consideration the "upstream" and "downstream" processes conditioning any such endeavor.

When someone speaks, not only are the words which are said important, but how they have been chosen and how they are pronounced by the speaker, and what is heard and eventually understood by the interlocutor, are all significant (Barthes "Rhétorique", 48). Similarly, anyone who wants to engage in the analysis of images should pay attention not only to what is visibly in front of them, but also what these images convey and what they were meant to convey (Barthes "Rhétorique",

40). Any one image simultaneously carries multiple messages and Barthes makes a clear distinction between “linguistic” (in case there are words in or around the image), “denotative” and “connotative” messages. Denotation, or the “denotative”, refers to the “literal” message of the image, visible through exhaustive descriptions of figures, materials, shapes, colors, lights, typographies, etc. Connotation, or the “connotative”, refers to the interpretation of the denotation, the contexts and the ways through which image meanings are produced, transmitted and perceived. In a previous essay called „Le message photographique“, published in 1961, Barthes stresses the vain nature of the project that isolates the denotative message. There cannot be any pure form of denotation, he warns: any image is immediately understood through cultural and historical categories and language (Barthes “Message”, 136). Images are polysemous, Barthes argues, and there is something fundamentally uncertain in the messages they carry (Barthes “Rhétorique”, 44). Michel Foucault, who also played an important role in this epistemological shift, investigated this ‘polysemousity’ further. In considering the plurality of messages contained in images, he tried to decipher the nature of the link between the act of

depicting and that which is actually depicted – in other words between “signifiers” and “signifieds”. While looking at the famous painting of René Magritte, Foucault builds on the classical theme of truth and on the issues of imitation and resemblance. His evocation of a “subtle”, “uncertain” and “insistent” link between image and reality remains highly stimulating to academic research to this day (Foucault 30).

From the seventies onward, research in Social and Cultural Studies began vigorously engaging with fields previously considered minor or marginal. The growing interest in iconographical perspectives brought a fresh approach to academic research and new light on classical topics of the humanities (Dezé 13-29). Iconography as a useful tool for various fields of research has been enriched and refined via extensive interdisciplinary exchanges. Works by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, political scientists, and philosophers across the board confirm that images should be considered social practices and “collective actions” (Becker 767). Such iconographical approaches address, as Barthes suggested, not only images but also the ways in which these images are created, materially produced, socially used and symbolically vested.

Images are social performances that take part in the production of individuals, bodies and subjectivities.

A particularly informative example of iconographical approaches fruitfully employed in previously marginalized fields is gender. Gender is largely performed and produced via images, as the 1976 pioneering research of Erving Goffman regarding women's and men's portrayals in advertisements reveals. Magazines' pictures, he argues, provide performative messages about gendered roles and hierarchies, relying on processes of naturalization and “ritualization” of subordination (Goffman 84). Judith Butler goes beyond the idea of “roles”, which might be superficially connoted, to assert that gender is nothing but a performance and that images are part of a social script, constantly producing and actualizing gender differences (Butler 528).

In social and political sciences, the flourishing production of papers regarding social movements and iconographies demonstrates the relevance of iconographical approaches. Many works argue that iconography is not only concerned with pictures or paintings, but that it can integrate a wider scope of material objects including stickers, posters, t-shirts, stamps, placards, and flyers. All these objects are intimately linked to “discourses” of contes-



tation through which reconfigurations of power are formed (Dézé 17). Subtle performances of image art can be seen as forms of contestation and resistance in certain political and historical contexts – consider women's patchworked “arpilleras” during and after Pinochet's repressive rule of Chile (Adams 29-52).

The recent revolutions in North Africa and West Asia provide other examples of the relevance of considering images as social “discourses” and as means to communicate, inform, serve or contest existing or projected social orders. By extension, images can be a performance of identity and collective memory; these images are naturally contested, censured, corrected and sometimes even destroyed. Since the Arab Spring of 2011, fierce battles have been taking place on the murals of major cities across the MENA-region. For instance, the contestation between civilian activist artists and the government over images on the public walls of Cairo reveals the reconfigurations of identity, memory and power (Abaza). The creation and destruction of images has played a major political and historical role throughout human history. In the 8th century, during the rule of the Byzantine Empire, the ban and destruction of religious images and icons was reason enough to start wars. For a modern-day example, con-

sider Denmark in 2005, when the controversial comic representations of the Prophet Muhammad led to violent mobilizations all over the world.

### Presentation of META8 Iconography

The particular aptitude of iconographical approaches in contextualizing and grounding vigorously contested fields of academic inquiry beyond the “mere” interpretation of images is demonstrated by **Tobias Akira Schickhaus** in his contribution to the META section of this volume. By following the strictly defined steps of Panofsky's iconographical method in his analysis of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, this article turns “the gaze of the researcher back onto himself” and seeks to show how Said's image of the Orient as a “fierce lion”, his geographical construction of a coherent “Orient” and his repetition of a discourse of “othering” the Orient are all firmly and exclusively grounded in a Western tradition of scholarship. Paradoxically, Said's *Orientalism*, ostentatiously setting out to emancipate the Orient from external domination, emerges as a work firmly grounded in Western Orientalist tradition, thereby, replicating the biases and structural imbalances of the discourse it critiques.

The work of Islamic archaeologist and art historian Scott Redford, by contrast, does

indeed engage with material remains, including images of eagles, princes and dragons from Medieval Anatolia. His work, however, transcends the frame of strictly iconographical approaches in an integrated discussion of material and written remains of the Seljuks of Rum. When we contacted Professor Redford to ask for the illustration contained in this volume, he accordingly replied that he did not “think of himself as an iconographer” and stated that he was interested in what we would “do” with his scholarship. While we are certain that **Philip Bockholt's** presentation of Professor Redford's work in our CLOSE UP-section is up to any academic standard, we hope to compellingly show how it is precisely Professor Redford's adaptation of art historical methods in combining diverse source materials that prefigures the interest of this issue in iconographical approaches.

Our FOCUS-section features four contributions that demonstrate the adaptability of iconographical approaches by engaging with widely different fields. **Joachim Ben Yakoub** embarks on an iconological analysis of the Tunisian Revolution of 2010 / 2011. By focusing on the contested mobilization, subversion and re-imagination of the Tunisian flag, this contribution follows the controversial negotiation of in- and exclusion among Tunisian society up to

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currently works as a Post-Doc researcher as part of the 'Re-Configurations' research network at the CNMS (Center for Near and Middle-Eastern Studies) at the Philipps-Universität of Marburg, Germany. Her research addresses revolutionary iconographies in Tunisia and Egypt, including gender and social class perspectives. It focuses on emerging memorial places, taken as platforms upon which larger political debate are played out, and deals with the democratization of the production of martyrs images and popular representations of martyrdom. Perrine Lachenal obtained her PhD in Social Anthropology in 2015 from Aix-Marseille University, France. Her thesis is an ethnographic study conducted between 2011 and 2012 in Cairo on self-defense classes for women that have emerged in recent years in Egypt. **email:** plachenal@mmsch.univ-aix.fr

the constitution adopted in January 2014. In shifting from a symbol of an essentially Islamic state to an explicit marker of the exclusion of Islamist and Salafi groups that opposed the "constitutional compromise" of 2014, the Crescent- and Star-symbolism of the Tunisian flag illustrate the fundamental "openness" of any semiotically charged image for reappraisal and subversion.

In her analysis of the iconography of Coptic protests following the so-called "Maspero Massaker" of 2011 in Egypt, **Yosra El Gendi** describes the attempts of Coptic demonstrators to appropriate the visual heritage of Pharaonic Egypt and place it at the heart of the modern Egyptian state. By ostentatiously claiming Pre-Islamic and Pre-Christian symbols as part of their iconography of mourning and flying the Egyptian flag side by side with the Coptic cross, the demonstrators attempted to subvert the dominant narrative of Egypt as an Islamic state. By laying claim to the Pharaonic heritage, their protests instead advocate the notion that modern Egypt still embodies traditions from Pharaonic times, especially through its Christian Coptic minority.

Drawing attention to the strong cultural ties of Islam as practiced in the Balkans to the MENA-region, **Gianfranco Bria** and **Gustavo Mayerà** explore the significance

of an 'Alid iconography in Albanian Bektashi Islam. By focusing on the specific setting of post-communist Albania, recovering from the state-sanctioned atheism of Enver Hoxha, this contribution shows how the existence of an Islamicate visual iconography of venerated icons serves to strengthen the perceived alliance between religious actors spanning confessional divides. At the same time, the specific materiality of iconographical emblems allows for identification and appraisal of different external actors who are attempting to influence this visual revival of Albanian Bektashism. In this way, the authors show how Albanian Bektashis, through their employment of venerated icons, posit their visual sphere both in relation to inner-Albanian discourses of religion in post-atheist society and in relation to the Islamic world at large.

In turning to the contested urban topography of Jerusalem's Old City, **Thomas Richard** demonstrates the particular importance of spatial contextualization in iconographical discussions. Due to the outstanding touristic appeal of Jerusalem, the urban topography of its Old City becomes a contested ground on which both Israeli and Palestinian actors attempt to entangle international visitors in their narrative of the town's heritage. As visitors to Jerusalem expect to find an Oriental

town, both sides iconographically lay claim to an Oriental visual heritage in their attempts to establish a hegemony over the urban topography of Jerusalem, and in doing so, frequently laying claim to the same repertoire of images that the other side bases their contesting claims on.

This essential openness of an iconographical vocabulary for contesting claims and valorizations is explored in **Ömer Fatih Parlak's** ANTI/THESIS-article, which describes the antagonist images of "the Turk" in Early Modern ludic culture. By identifying three mutually contradictory strands of "images" of the Turk in 15th to 18th Century European playing cards and board games, this article demonstrates how competing narratives of the Turk as a biblical enemy, a symbol of stagnation and bad luck, a knightly figure on a par with contemporary Christian rulers and even a guide to the player's personal fortune could exist simultaneously in the iconographic repertoire of games.

This volume of META concludes with two contributions that are not directly connected to the topic of iconography. **Gulizar Hacıyakupoglu's** OFF TOPIC-article engages with the "explosion of meanings" surrounding the idea of martyrdom in contemporary Turkish politics, while **Steffen Wippel** critically appraises two new monographs that engage with

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the town of Tanger, Morocco, for META's REVIEW-section.

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# META

## From postcolonial criticism to critics on postcolonial poetics – Edward Said's *Orientalism* from an iconographic perspective

Tobias Akira Schickhaus

Inside and outside the academy, Edward Said's work is both preeminent and controversial. Combining literary theory, the history of ideas, political analysis and the sociology of intellectuals, his groundbreaking book *Orientalism* has radically transformed the field of Oriental studies, arguably laying the foundation for postcolonial studies. Criticizing the condition of the Palestinian people, Said also has constantly provided a critique of US government policy in the Middle East and has thus proposed a model of intellectual skepticism which deals with political issues. This combination of political and academic interventions is one reason "for Said's special position in contemporary Western intellectual life" (Kennedy 3).

If we look at Said's classic monography as a painting of geographical knowledge-landscapes, an iconographical investiga-

tion into the traditions of knowledge and ideological styles becomes possible. This paper will begin by presenting *Orientalism's* arguments and will then summarize the main critiques aimed at Said. It continues to describe the analytic discourse in *Orientalism* based on the method of iconographic interpretation as described in Panofsky's collection of essays *Meaning in the Visual Arts*.

This interdisciplinary approach intends to demonstrate the argumentative circularity and self-reflexivity inherent in Said's criticism: by drawing exclusively on Western histories of ideas, the concept *Orientalism* itself can become the object of postcolonial criticism.

**Keywords:** Edward Said; *Orientalism*; Iconography; Panofsky; Postcolonial Studies

1 Out of Place: Said and postcolonial studies

As the son of a wealthy Palestinian father and a Lebanese mother, Edward Wadie Said was born on 1 November 1935 in Jerusalem. His parents did not belong to the Muslim majority of Palestine, but were part of the Palestinian Christian community. In 1947, the family emigrated to Egypt, escaping the first Arab-Israeli War from 1948 until 1949. The Said family's temporary stay in Egypt became an enduring exile, in which Edward Said had the opportunity to enjoy an education influenced by Western traditions at schools in Cairo and then in Massachusetts in the United States of America. From the 1970s onwards, Said constantly experienced, as mentioned in his autobiography *Out of Place*, a divided allegiance as both a Palestinian Arab and an American citizen and was thus confronted with the problem of representation in particular of the relationship to one's own and other traditions of knowledge and education at a young age (*Out of Place* 285). Said was promoted to full professor of literature in 1969, and he received his first of several endowed chairs at Columbia University in 1977. Living in New York allowed Said a certain independence and the kind of scientific and political freedom that academics in many countries can only dream of at

present. In addition to his work in the fields of culture and literary theory, Said's oeuvre also stretches from the music theory to politically engaged activism, in which he always adopted a critical position on the political situation in Palestine. During his life, Said published 24 books, among which two in particular, *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, became classics within postcolonial literary studies and continue to make a deep impact throughout academia.

Postcolonial perspective or criticism commonly refers to the criticism of colonialism in a restricted sense. What connects all of Said's work – both in political engagement as in literary theory – is the fundamental idea that all representative cultural manifestations must be seen in their formative, historical context. Among the leading representative intellectuals of postcolonial studies, the conviction was widely accepted that every science should open up new perspectives for political and ideological questions by promoting new, varied political readings of literary texts. Literature and culture are thus seen as fundamentally engaged in social relations and power structures. One consequence of this engaged stance is the rejection of a pure, aesthetic consideration of literature. Said points out that most “humanistic scholars are perfectly happy” with the

notion that texts exist in contexts; however, most are unwilling to admit that “political, institutional and ideological constraints act in the same manner on the individual author” (*Orientalism* 13). According to Said, the fact cannot be denied that literary studies have “avoided the effort of seriously bridging the gap between the superstructural and the base levels in textual, historical scholarship” (*Orientalism* 13).

## 2 *Orientalism*: concept and critics

The main contribution of Edward Said's *Orientalism* lies in the critical relocation of canonized texts and writers in the cultural context of colonization and decolonization. *Orientalism* is composed of an introduction and three chapters. Said's central argument appears in the introduction, where the question about the construction of the Orient and Oriental people by Western scholars opens up. Chapter 1, “The Scope of Orientalism” begins with a discussion of Orientalist discourses in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, using the historical examples of the building of the Suez Canal as well as Napoleon's *Description de l'Egypte* published between 1809 and 1828. By citing these historical key points, Said is reconstructing two incidents in the context of the material and textual European domination, colo-

nialism and imperialism. Chapters 2 and 3 entitled “Orientalist Structures and Restructures” and “Orientalism Now”, discuss what Said has defined as modern *Orientalism* from the last third of the eighteenth century to around the end of twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

*Orientalism* has doubtlessly emerged as one of the key sources of perspectives of political and cultural dimensions in literary works. The postcolonial school – aside from Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak are also outstanding scholars – grew at Anglo-American universities in the 1980s and 90s, and in the meantime, it has also had an impact on German intercultural literary studies.<sup>2</sup>

Within the discussion of literature analysis, Said's postcolonial perspective currently seems to be indispensable, even though his argument was broadly criticized and rejected by many.<sup>3</sup> The critics were particularly concerned with Said's disregard of the aesthetic nature of literary objects. This critique was voiced by a number of authors and academics, especially from the ‘peripheral’ countries in Africa (Gymnich 380-382). The criticism generally runs along the following lines: Said as a postcolonial theorist, working at elite American universities, has become a part of the discourse that is producing Orientalistic thinking. Both his works and



educational background are exclusively grounded in Western culture and thus lack the cultural traditions of his country of origin.

The difficulty with Said's approach is the "methodological assumption it makes about the relation between the genesis of ideas and their validity, namely that because ideas are produced in a context of domination, or directly in the service of domination, they are thereby presumed to be invalid" (Haliday 159). Said's *Orientalism* also faced the reproach that his analysis focuses only on the Western canon of literary classics instead of opening the scientific perspectives on the marginalized, postcolonial literature, so that the imperialistic relation of hierarchy, which Said was ostensibly criticizing, was reproduced by his work (Haliday 159).

I will now attempt to assess the extent to which Said's work is indeed exclusively dependent on the Western epistemology which he sets out to dismantle. In doing so, I will turn to an iconographic reading of Said's *Orientalism* to methodically describe both the traditions used by Said and his original intervention.

### 3 Iconographic Interpretation

In 1934, Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) published an article in *Logos* entitled "Concerning the Problem of Description

and Interpretation of Meaning in Works of the Fine Arts". The basic content was reprinted with minor changes in 1955 as "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art". The last formulation of iconography and iconology appeared in 1940 in "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline". In all three essays the subject of inquiry was the interpretation of works of art.

Panofsky constructed a new methodological bridge between the social-, cultural- and art-historical sciences that starts from a basic principal similar to Said's empirical data collections have no benefits for sociologists just for themselves. An art object exists in the recipients' perspective (Hänseroth 196), just like the fact that collections of empirical data are not beneficial to sociologists in and of themselves. "When a man looks at a tree from the point of view of a carpenter, he will associate it with the uses to which he might put the wood; when he looks at it from the point of view of an ornithologist, he will associate it with the birds that might nest in it" (Panofsky, "Iconography" 34). One should be aware that the exploration of cultural objects must always be contextualized both in their social and aesthetic diversity of meaning. "Panofsky's most important contribution to art history as a discipline was undoubtedly his concern with incor-

porating a discussion of the content of the work of art within the parameters of art theory" (Moxey 265).<sup>4</sup> Panofsky was convinced that discoveries in art history were to be achieved by recognizing the need for interdisciplinary cooperation between the explanatory characteristics of natural sciences and the understanding, interpretative characteristics of the humanities. "Natural science observes the time-bound processes of nature and tries to apprehend the timeless laws according to which they unfold." (Panofsky, "Iconography" 37). On the other hand, Panofsky argues that humanities "are not faced with the task of arresting what otherwise would slip away, but of enlivening what otherwise would remain dead" ("Iconography" 48). Further, he emphasizes that method of understanding requires a "certain sensitivity" ("Iconography" 52), which in turn is based on one's practical experience. Therefore, all the factual, intentional and interpretative expressions of meanings should be brought together.

Semantically speaking, the concept of an image refers firstly to the material artefacts of an illustration of real or fictive circumstances. Secondly, an image stands for a linguistic figure - for example, a metaphor. Thirdly, it encompasses images in the mind and therefore those concepts whose role in guiding actions have been repeat-

edly shown by commentators (Tschopp 101). If one takes referentiality as the common denominator of all three aspects, a picture brings together a concentrated expression of ideological styles (Fleck 32) and fields of interest within the themes of utopian concepts and competing ideologies, which stand in relation to each other. According to Panofsky, an object of culture and art, whether or not it is useful, good or bad, is not always created for the sole purpose of being observed or enjoyed; "a work of art always has aesthetic significance" ("Iconography" 34). In his essay "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the study of Renaissance Art", Panofsky's analytical framework for the study of art is able to define the "distinction between subject matter or meaning on the one hand, and form on the other" (51). Transferring this aim into a distinguished framework for art analysis, there are three strata of meaning: First, recognizing an object is initiated by identifying pure forms, lines and colors, representations of human beings, animals, plants, or in short the whole "world of pure forms" (54) of a "primary or natural subject matter" (53). The configuration of a person, for example, sitting on the street in ragged clothes, stretching out his arm, will be recognized as both an object (beggar) and an event (asking for compassion).

However, one should take into account the fact that by identifying this constellation of forms, the factual matter of meaning is already translated into a time-space-limited-interpretation of subject matter or meaning – a "pre-iconographical description" of motifs (37).

With "secondary or conventional subject matter", artistic motifs will be associated with topics, names, events or historical periods (39). Of course, it is assumed that all methods of motif identification have to be correct according to historical sources. A female person holding a plume in her hand thus becomes a personification of truth. A group of men sitting around a table in a certain position the Last Supper, and the beggar we saw with the "primary or natural subject matter" becomes Diogenes of Sinope, extending his arm in order to set for his contemporaries a living example of a life of freedom in asceticism (39). The identification of such images, stories and allegories is "the domain of what is normally referred to as iconography" (Panofsky, *Meaning* 55). One should be aware that the suffix *graphy*, in principle, means the pure description of the conditions, topics or ideas that are realized within the object.

But the contextualized meaning of an image is determined by identifying the underlying principles of political, historical

or philosophical views, which are concentrated in a person or an object within the image. Once the beggar is identified as Diogenes of Sinope, the criteria of interpretation are limited to the art object as such; the description is taking place on an iconographic level. With an attempt, however, to interpret the image of Diogenes of Sinope as a document for the ancient Greek culture and, more precisely, a representative reference to the philosophical movement called *Kinism*, which argued for an alternative civilization based on familial or tribal relationships, this interpretation becomes the object of iconology. On this level, iconology collates and classifies all the material that is involved in the intellectual-historical dimension of that image. The three dimensions of interpretation are summarized in the following table (see table 1).

At first glance, Panofsky's concept on iconographic interpretation might seem to be apolitical and devoid of any ideological criticism, unlike Said's arguments. On the contrary, Panofsky's description is derived from a skeptic approach against the arbitrariness of arguments and interpretation. Panofsky underlines the need for an interpretational framework that takes into account the historical context of one work's creation: The source of inter-



OBJECT OF INTERPRETATION	ACT OF INTERPRETATION	EQUIPMENT FOR INTERPRETATION	CORRECTIVE PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION (History of Tradition)
I <i>Primary or natural</i> subject matter – (A) factual, (B) expressional – constituting the world of artistic motifs.	<i>Pre-iconographical description</i> (and pseudo-formal analysis).	<i>Practical experience</i> (familiarity with <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i> ).	History of <i>style</i> (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i> were expressed by forms).
II <i>Secondary or conventional</i> subject matter, constituting the world of <i>images, stories</i> and <i>allegories</i> .	<i>Iconographical analysis</i> .	<i>Knowledge of literary sources</i> (familiarity with specific <i>themes</i> and <i>concepts</i> ).	History of <i>types</i> (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, specific <i>themes</i> or <i>concepts</i> were expressed by <i>objects</i> and <i>events</i> ).
III <i>Intrinsic meaning or content</i> , constituting the world of <i>symbolical values</i> .	<i>Iconological interpretation</i> .	<i>Synthetic intuition</i> (familiarity with the <i>essential tendencies of the human mind</i> ), conditioned by personal psychology and <i>Weltanschauung</i> .	History of <i>cultural symptoms or symbols</i> in general (insight into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, <i>essential tendencies of the human mind</i> were expressed by specific <i>themes</i> and <i>concepts</i> ).

Table 1: Tripartite structure of iconographical meaning. Panofsky *Meaning in the Visual Arts* 66.

pretation becomes an ownership of the interpreting subject and does “violence to the historical horizons” (Panofsky, *Problem der Beschreibung* 1072) no matter whether these anticipated components are called generation, sex, race, ethnicity, religion or compass directions. In contrast to this, Panofsky’s approach incorporates the work of art, and thus its aesthetic implications, within the parameters of the history of reception. The problem of interpretation lies “in confronting the ‘otherness’ of a different historical moment” (Moxey 271). The system of *checks and balances* that

characterizes Panofsky’s iconological method “has proven to be the door through which it has become possible to essay an interpretation of works of art that does justice to their complex historical particularity” (Moxey 271). Following Panofsky’s structure, the argumentative line in Said’s *Orientalism* shall be retraced in the next chapter with the criticism of *Orientalism*, namely its analysis and notable absence of the ideas and ideologies of the Middle East itself. Though Said himself has been a trenchant critic of the Western myths of the Oriental

body, the absence of intellectual life of the Arab world in *Orientalism* leads to a more incautious silence of the East, so that the relation between East and West becomes a one-sided representation by the dominating Western ideas in Said’s *Orientalism* as well.

4 From postcolonial criticism to critics on postcolonial poetics: Tripartite structure in Said’s argumentation

4.1 How to deal with a fierce lion (primary or natural subject matter)

Said's critics on *Orientalism* are running together in the metaphor of the eternally "fierce lion" (94). "If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion [...], the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them." (Said 94). Said calls this effect a rather "complex dialectic of reinforcement" (94) by which readers are determined by what they have read. This in turn makes writers take up subjects to fulfill the readers' expectations and experiences in advance. A single book on how to handle a fierce lion might then introduce a series of books on this subject "as the fierceness of lions, the origins of fierceness, and so forth" (Said 94). The concrete object *lion* fades into the background of interest. It no longer exists, but the *fierceness* instead will increase to a status of essence readers can only know about lions. In order to maximize its coherence and its visibility to the public, a text does not only contain knowledge about *fierce lions*. Expertise from the authorities of academics, institutions and governments is surrounding the text claiming to be complete and up to date. "Most important, such texts can *create* [sic] not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe" (Said 94).

4.2 Imaginative geography and its representations (secondary or conventional matter)

Said mentions Napoleon as an example. Everything he knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism. "For [Napoleon] the Orient, like the fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent because the texts made that Orient possible" (Said, *Orientalism* 94-95). This image of an Orient was available to Europe insofar as its native inhabitants are unable to resist the projects and descriptions devised for it. Said calls such a relation between "Western writing and Oriental silence" (94-95) the result of the West's great cultural domination over the Orient.

Geographical categories of East and West are by no means natural; they are, in fact, cultural and imaginatively made by way of talking, painting and writing on the Orient throughout Western history.<sup>5</sup> The two geographical entities of East and West are not merely there, they represent "an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (Said, *Orientalism* 5).

It might be of particular interest that Said offers a double definition of Orientalism at the beginning of the third section of

Chapter 1. Orientalism is "the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice", but also "that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line" (73). In advance this definition is shaped as follows: Orientalism "is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts" (12).

Said's conviction lies in the persistence of the concept of an Orient "as a part of the academic metanarrative of history" (Gran 21); Orientalism is seen as a set of academic disciplines concerned with studying the Orient, "but also as a style of thought based on the existential difference between the Orient and the Occident" (Kennedy 2). According to Said, "the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (*Orientalism* 1). Moreover, Orientalism "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution dealing with the Orient [...] in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3).

Said stresses a tripartite typology of Orientalist works in three different types of writers.

One: the writer who intends to use his residence for the specific task of providing professional Orientalism with scientific material, who considers his residence a form of scientific observation. Two: the writer who intends the same purpose but is less willing to sacrifice the eccentricity and style of his individual consciousness to impersonal Orientalist definitions. These latter do appear in his work, but they are disentangled from the personal vagaries of style only with difficulty. Three: the writer for whom a real or metaphorical trip to the Orient is the fulfillment of some deeply felt and urgent project. His text therefore is built on a personal aesthetic, fed and informed by the project. (Said, *Orientalism* 158)

Following this quote Said identifies three different types of writer: the scientific writer, the creator of a personal writer, and the writer who combines the two. Despite their differences, these three types do not contain three pure representatives of writing styles, though certain motifs recur in all three types. In all cases the Orient is constructed by a European observer, as in Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836),

Richard Francis Burton's *Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah* (1858) and Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1851). Moreover, the Orient as a place of pilgrimage becomes a vision of "spectacle" or "tableau vivant" (Said, *Orientalism* 158). In many works the Orient is characterized to an extent in which the work's internal structure "is in some measure synonymous with a comprehensive interpretation [...] of the Orient. [...] This interpretation is a form of Romantic restructuring of the Orient" (Said 158). Romantic restructuring under three aspects of writers emphasizes the artificial and aesthetic moment of Orientalist works, especially when keeping in mind that the terminus of Orientalism derives from an European art movement in the 18th century, describing the Orient by imitating Near and Far Eastern motifs.<sup>6</sup> The inquiry into Orientalism, with its exotic and sensual connotations, is thus sustained by a "network of interests" (1), with the asymmetries of power manifesting themselves in the privilege of language: Only "an Occidental could speak of Orientals" and behind each statement "there resonated the tradition of experience, learning and education" (*Orientalism* 228). The Eurocentric point of view on the Orient is not only a sense of superiority, but also an act of Othering, establishing a

dichotomy between a civilized Occident and a threatening Orient. However, the act of Othering is not interrupted by Said. On the contrary, he maintains the structure of dichotomy by combining the two types of personal and scientific writers himself by citing European concepts of culture theories. The first methodological trace in *Orientalism* shall be illustrated by introducing Giambattista Vico, whose conviction of *verum ipsum factum* came to be known as social-constructivism in current research. The second is perhaps the most important theoretical source for Said, Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and his discussions of the relationship between power and knowledge.

#### 4.3 Repetition of Othering (intrinsic meaning or content)

In Said's introduction the assumption of a cultural construction of what we call the Orient is connected with Giambattista Vico's historically valuable observation that "men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography" (Said, *Orientalism* 4-5.). Therefore, Said pinpoints that as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea "that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence

in and for the West" (4-5.). The thesis that reality is constructed by re-defining the constructive nature of our world is stressed as follows: "Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgement" (Said, *Orientalism* 67). In Vico's posthumously published work – originally entitled *Scienza Nuova* – a fundamental distinction between natural sciences and the humanities became an explicit subject of discussion for the first time in the history of science. Vico was one of the first scholars to separate the course of universal history from a Bible-based point of view. Although his considerations of history are set within a frame of religious revelation, one should note that his theory is not oriented toward an apocalyptic end of history. That is why one might call it a rational theology created by divine providence (Vico, *neue Wissenschaft* 55-62).

Vico's central argument is that since history is a man-made construction, neither the humanities nor the natural sciences are able to subsume the truth in its entirety. His pioneering model of a philosophy of history deals with Descartes and Hobbes by means of the epistemological consideration of how knowledge of history is possible. Only God's knowledge covers the whole of physical nature, but the way in which the process of civilization continues has to be discovered

within the boundaries of the human spirit (Vico 51f.).

A second echo in Said's spectrum of methods (94) can be found in Michel Foucault's notions of discourse analysis, described by him in *L'Ordre du discours*. According to Said, the construction of the Orient depends on various Western techniques of representation "that make the Orient visible, clear, 'there' in discourse about it" (*Orientalism* 22). These representations again rely upon institutions, conventions and "agreed-upon codes" (Said 22). It was a group of European writers – Said explicitly names William Beckford, Lord Byron, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Victor Hugo – who restructured the Orient through their own images, rhythms, and motifs. Said calls this the birth of a powerful new "linguistic Orient" (*Orientalism* 119).

One of the reasons for Foucault's prominence is probably his inaugural speech at the Collège de France on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1970. In this speech as well as in his originally entitled work *L'Ordre du discours* Foucault argued that in every society, the production of discourse is at the same time organized, controlled and channeled (Foucault, *Ordnung* 10). *L'Archéologie du savoir* occupies a special position among his works, insofar as it seeks to describe a method that is dis-

sociated from the traditional, hermeneutical history of ideas. As a key term, discourse has tripartite meaning: firstly it refers to a general area of all statements, secondly to an individual group of statements, and finally to the regulated practice, selecting and combining a certain group of statements (Foucault, *Archäologie* 116). Around the terms of discourse, statement, archive and knowledge, a new concept is drawn up according to one central problem: knowledge and awareness are not the same categories (Foucault, *Archäologie* 258). Analyzing knowledge requires illustration, less in an adding-up procedure of scientific data than in an exposure of discursive rules, under which conditions the objects of knowledge and statements as well as theoretical options of what one might call truth are constructed. By metaphorizing the history of ideas into a quarry of all effective statements, Foucault's archaeology investigates the question of how the general system of the formation and transformation of statements takes place (159, 258).

## 5 Conclusion

Can there be any thinking beyond ideological thinking? While representatives of postcolonial criticism are debating for the prerogative of interpretation, the question

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arises of how far the position of postcolonial intellectuals allows them to make an effective oppositional contribution. When considering the ideas of a political theorist, particularly with regard to the relationship between theory and practice, it might be Said's historical reward – despite what critics said in the past – to subvert the formation of Oriental images. And it goes without saying that a contextualized reconstruction of Said's postcolonial criticism with regard to Foucault's and Vico's approaches is insufficient for an all-encompassing interpretation of the theoretical framework in Said's *Orientalism*. However, by applying Panofsky's method of iconographical interpretation and turning the gaze of the researcher back onto himself, one can see that Said's theoretical content of knowledge is based on its relation to various European worldviews and concepts of knowledge. The argumentative paradox appears in the fact that Said analyzes the world's periphery from the center located in the Western canon of scholarship. Within the constellation of Vico's central argument of a man-made history and Foucault's discourse analysis, Edward Said's *Orientalism* itself can be read as an historically specific formulation by a member of an historically and geographically grounded Western academic movement as well. Just as when looking at

a landscape of an image, there is only one aspect visible of the whole, the awareness of cultural and political circumstances and phenomena – no matter what kind – depend on a time-space-bound perspective, not so much on the question of what truth is, but more in the interest of the human praxis, how truth is created by institutions, societies and intellectual groups.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Even though Orientalism is focused on a certain region, Said's ideas about the Western representative force between the self and the other have been transferred to the discourse on imperialism in general. Said's *Culture and Imperialism* continues this line of critical analysis by questioning dominant epistemologies, their genesis and expansion during the era of imperialism in Africa, India, the Far East, Australia, the Caribbean and Ireland. Its final chapter looks at the geopolitics of the postcolonial world and pays critical attention to America's role in it.

<sup>2</sup> For additional reading on the impact of postcolonialism on intercultural literary studies see Attia, "Die 'westliche Kultur'"; Bachmann-Medick *Kultur als Text*; Gymnich, "Edward Said (1935-2003)"; Lescovec, *die interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft*; and Schößler, *Literaturwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft*.

<sup>3</sup> Abraham provides a summary on this topic in "Introduction. Edward Said and After: Toward a New Humanism".

<sup>4</sup> For further reading on Panofsky see Levi, "Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte" and Białostocki, "Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968)".

<sup>5</sup> For further reading see Jazeel, "Postcolonialism: Orientalism and the geographical imagination".

<sup>6</sup> For more information about the impact of the concept *Orientalism* on art history see Lemaire, *Orientalismus. Das Bild des Morgenlandes in der Malerei*.

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## CLOSE UP



## Scott Redford: A New Approach to the Permeability of Political Symbolism in Rum Seljuk Turkey

Philip Bockholt

As his work transcends what is seen as iconography, from a strictly art history perspective, the choice of Scott Redford for portrayal in this rubric may seem surprising. However, regarding the applicability of iconographical approaches to the wider domain of cultural studies, precisely his adaptation of art history methods, which integrate disparate source material in a quest for meaning, sparked the interest of this issue of META.

For most scholars in the field of Islamic history, researching premodern times normally involves reading narrative sources, that is, chronicles. Despite the so-called “documentary turn” taking place in Mamluk and Ottoman Syria,

scholars of the Middle East lack the vast array of archival material that is available to their colleagues working on Medieval Europe. Thus, taking into account other types of material generally neglected by historians might be useful (more in the tradition of archaeologists and art historians who do include material culture in general). This article discusses Scott Redford's approach to combining written sources, epigraphy, and archaeological findings of the Seljuks of Rum in 13th century Anatolia in order to gain more insight into the iconography of power in a remote Islamic past.

### Key Words

Seljuks of Rum, 13th century, Symbolism

### Multiple Symbolism in Islamic Times

If a traveller comes to Konya in Central Anatolia, Turkey, he will most probably take his time to see some of the historical buildings located in the city center that date back to the Seljuks of Rum in the 13th century. Apart from the tomb of the famous dervish poet, Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (d. 1273), especially the İnce Minareli Medrese with its double-head eagle stone reliefs (Illustration 1) and the Karatay Medresesi showing tiles with different mythical beings (Illustration 2) might attract the visitor's attention (the stone reliefs and tiles on display there are not part of the buildings themselves which function as museums). Most of the depicted elements, which are apparently not part of an Islamic set of symbols, go back to the reign of sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I (r. 1220-37), under whom the Seljuks of Rum reached their peak of power and cultural prosperity. The dynasty, the Anatolian branch of the premodern Turkish Seljuk rulers and closely related to the Great Seljuks of Iran, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia, held power in Anatolia from roughly 1081-1308. After a period of consolidating their power in the 12th century, ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I managed to conquer several cities held by the Byzantines, crusaders, Turkish petty kings, and emirs. For historians today, one of the



Fig. 1: Professor Redford in Sinop. Courtesy of Scott Redford.

most important historical sources for gaining insights into his reign is Ibn Bibi's chronicle *al-Avāmīr al-'alā'iyya fī-l-umūr al-'alā'iyya*, a dynastical history written in Persian. It roughly covers a period of one hundred years (ca. 1190-1290) and primarily covers the political events that occurred during that time (Yazıcı). By this, we know that 'Ala' al-Din Kayqubad I seized cities

like Sinop or the fortress of Kalonoros, today Alanya, a city which he named after himself ('Alā'iyya, which later became Alanya). In keeping with that tradition, he began a massive construction program to build or strengthen the city walls of Konya, Sivas, and other places. At the end of his reign, the Seljuks of Rum had become one of the major powers throughout the Middle East. A fact that remained largely unknown before Scott Redford's studies is that by pursuing his building program, 'Ala' al-Din Kayqubad I wanted to express his political claim as supreme ruler by linking himself to the ancient Roman and Iranian past. In this regard, following Scott Redford's approach of combining the archaeological evidence of the time with contemporary epigraphical and written sources, might give us invaluable insights into the worldview of a premodern Islamic dynasty.

### What Walls Can Tell Us

Since the early 1990s, Scott Redford, Nasser D. Khalili Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology at SOAS, London since 2013, has been working extensively on findings from various archaeological sites in Central Anatolia that date back to the period of 'Ala' al-Din Kayqubad I.<sup>1</sup> The methodological approach he applies is that both textual and epigraphical evi-

dence is useful and necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of the political legitimization under the Seljuks of Rum in the 13th century. This concept is, although not totally uncommon, still only used by a limited number of historians. Notable exceptions for the Rum Seljuk period are current scholars like Richard McClary and Patricia Blessing (both Islamic art historians), and the historian Andrew Peacock, who incorporate material culture and building inscriptions in addition to research based on historical texts.<sup>2</sup> Instead of neglecting one side, taking both fields of research together might be the key to making sense of the sultan's symbolic program in Central Anatolia around 1220-30. Thus, in addition to the analysis of written historical sources, Redford has done extensive research on the construction program undertaken by 'Ala' al-Din Kayqubad I at places like Alanya, Sinop, and Konya. In all of these towns, the sultan ordered a reinforcement of the city walls that originated in Roman times. These walls were not simply considered strongholds against enemies due to their shape and height, but also because of the supernatural power ascribed to them. As Ibn Bibi says in his chronicle, at the time of the siege of Kalonoros (Alanya), the sultan ordered his men to exclusively use marble projectiles as he considered marble the



Fig. 2: Stone relief in the Ince Minareli Medrese, Konya. Courtesy of the author.

only stone that could fly as high as the walls and break their talismanic power (Ibn Bibi, *Mukhtasar* 99). After the siege, when the city was his, ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I had his stone masons make marble plaques bearing the sultan’s name and title. Due to the combined power of the talismanic quality attributed to the antique marble walls and the sultan’s name, “the walls would have been doubly protected and ennobled” (Redford, “Seljuks” 150). Similar plaques were found in the city of Sinop, conquered by ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I’s father ‘Izz al-Din Kaykavus I (r. 1211-20), and subsequently reinforced by both father and son, who drew on their emirs to finance the fortification of the city walls. According to Redford, marble was used for sultanic inscriptions solely, whereas emirs and architects used

other sorts of stone. On the section of the wall they were in charge of, each emir placed his own plaque with his name and title (in Arabic and Greek), this time not for apotropaic reasons, but “as a specific mark of authority and its purveyor, ceremony” (Redford, “Seljuks” 153). Furthermore, near the citadel entrance, there is another plaque which belongs to the reign of the sultan’s father. It bears a text – not in Arabic, as one might have supposed as it was the official language of inscriptions under the Seljuks, but rather in Persian –, praising ‘Izz al-Din Kaykavus I as the conqueror who took Sinop “with the sword of Khusraw, victor over the enemies of Kaykavus”. Both of these are famous figures from the *Shāhnāma*, the Persian *Book of Kings* of Firdawsi (d. ca. 1020) based on pre-Islamic Iranian traditions. Walls, not just at that time, had more importance than mere defense, but were also full of symbolic meaning.

### Political Symbolism in Seljuk Times

Allusions to the Iranian tradition of heroism and kingship played a crucial role in the self-understanding of the Seljuk dynasty. This is clearly shown by the names of the sultans: ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I had, like his father ‘Izz al-Din Kaykavus I, his son Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw II and his grandson ‘Izz al-Din Kaykavus II both an

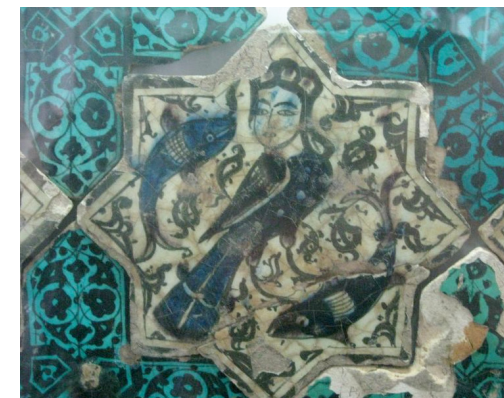


Fig. 3: Glazed tile in the Karatay Medresesi, Konya. Courtesy of the author.

Arabic *laqab* or regnal name and a pre-Islamic Iranian name that was derived from the *Book of Kings*. Ibn Bibi states that the sultans took pleasure in reading the *Siyāsatnāma* or *Book of Government*, a mirror for princes by Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), the Persian vizier of the Great Seljuks (Ibn Bibi, *al-Avāmir* 228). The British historian of Seljuk times Andrew Peacock concludes that “the reign of ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I saw the growth of the taste for Persianate culture that had been gradually developing in Anatolia since the late 12th century”. This appreciation of the Persian culture particularly found expression on the walls of Konya where, according to Ibn Bibi, inscriptions existed that contained citations from the *Book of Kings* and wisdom literature, the Koran, and the

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Prophetic tradition (Ibn Bibi, *Mukhtasar* 104-105). This brings us back to the historical sites of Konya today.

#### A Comprehensive Approach

Apart from the account on the reconstructed walls of Konya under sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I given by the Seljuk historian Ibn Bibi, more details are revealed by travelers’ accounts from the 18th and 19th centuries. Their travelogues tell us that apart from spolia, there had been “many original thirteenth-century Seljuq figural reliefs, including angels, lions, a sphinx, a double-headed eagle, a dragon, fish, and a relief showing two chain-mail-clad footsoldiers grasping broadswords” (Redford, “Seljuks” 153). Compared to other city wall structures of that time, Redford comes to the conclusion that “no other city walls match those of Konya for their literary and iconographic complexity” (Redford, “Century” 221). In addition to the literary sources, parts of the former city wall of Konya are still in existence today, bearing the royal imagery of double-headed angels already mentioned, and the inscriptions *al-sultān* and *al-sultānī*, meaning that the building or wall belonged to the sultanic domain. Another site built under the same sultan is the Kubadabad palace at the Beyşehir Lake which contained many tiles with

eagles as well as the *al-sultān* inscriptions. Most of these are on display in the Karatay Medresesi in the centre of Konya. In combining textual sources like contemporary chronicles, and later descriptions found in travelogues, as well as epigraphical and existing archaeological evidence, Redford aims to gain a better understanding of the political representation used by the sultan and his self-understanding. In regard to the imagery program of symbolic power applied by sultan ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I, Redford supposes the aspect of *istiqbāl* (official welcoming) of guests (besides ceremonies of triumph and largess) as a reason for the special decoration of the walls (Redford, “Seljuks” 154). The depiction of a world of myth and legend found on these walls – eagles, lions, dragons, the direct allusion to figures from the *Book of Kings*, the usage of spolia with talismanic quality – all these elements may lead to the assumption that the Seljuk sultans (at least ‘Ala’ al-Din Kayqubad I and his father ‘Izz al-Din Kaykavus I) placed themselves in a mythic context in order to make sense of traditions as different as the pre-Islamic antiquity of Anatolia, elements from the Persian past (e.g. the *Book of Kings*), and the Islamic tradition of the Prophet and the Koran. Many elements coming from these traditions were carved into stone and thereby inserted into “a visual universe”

(Redford, “Seljuks” 154), which heavily expanded the field of symbolic reference of the Seljuk rulers. This process came to an end when the Seljuks were replaced by other Turkish dynasties, who drew less on Iranian myths than on Anatolian Turkish epics. When taking into account Redford’s approach of applying different fields of research to shed light on the permeability of the Rum Seljuk political iconography, standing in front of the double-headed eagles and mythical creatures found on Seljuk tiles in the Karatay Medresesi, and the stone reliefs in the İnce Minareli Medrese in Konya reveals fascinating new gateways for understanding the past.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> His newest book on Seljuk inscriptions in Sinop is *Legends of Authority* (2015). See the list of publications on the SOAS university website <https://www.soas.ac.uk/staff/staff92807.php>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Andrew C.S. Peacock's book *The Great Seljuk Empire*, Edinburgh UP, 2015.

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# FOCUS

## Coloring Outside the Lines of the Nation. An Iconological Analysis of the Tunisian Revolution

Joachim Ben Yakoub

The Tunisian revolution not only liberated the country of its tenacious autocratic ruler, it also impacted, in a profound way, the imagination of prevailing political subjectivities. After Ben Ali fled the country, unsettled post-colonial tensions over the delineation of these changing subjectivities re-emerged, coloring outside the lines of the nation. The present paper analyzes this contentious process of becoming through an iconological analysis of the entangled dynamics of re-imagination that the national flag underwent during the Tunisian revolution, starting from the liberation phase in December 2010, through the constitutional phase and the promulgation of the new constitution in 2014, until the inauguration of the

National Flag Square in March 2017. The present iconological analysis is not only paradoxically witness to the very limitation of the power of icons to engender dignified relationalities within a given nation, but is also witness to the slow closure of the revolutionary space and the gradual blockage of revolutionary processes of subject formation. This blockage was productive for the precarious restoration of national unity and state prestige necessary for the completion of the new constitution, but less for the demands for liberty, social justice and dignity so central to the revolution.

**Keywords:** Tunisia, Revolution, Flag, Iconology, Subjectivity, Nationalism

### The colors and forms of subjectivity

Reflected in the glass case of a popcorn machine during the tumultuous occupation of the Kasbah square in February 2011, the image of a fluttering national banner poetically suggests the irreversibility of subject formation, popping like corn during the revolution. The layered video, shot by visual artist Halim Karabibene, reminds us of how the unified Tunisian masses regained a sense of collective agency through the creative reappropriation of the quintessential icon of the nation, the Tunisian flag (see fig.1).

For decades the Tunisian population was depicted, not only externally by an Orientalist gaze, but also by an internalized inferiority complex, as a homogeneous, passive and apolitical mass under the control of a resilient autocratic regime. Not only through the enunciation of *the people* (Marzouki "People to Citizens"; De Smet "Dialectical Pedagogy"; Zemni "Revolution"), but also through the creative reappropriation and diversion of the rallying image of the nation, the local revolt in the marginalized interior and south of the country gradually shifted into a national insurrection. Consequently, the masses, unified under the reclaimed national banner, not only succeeded in their spontaneous effort to expel their



Figure 1: "The Popcorn Revolution". Karabibene, Tunisia 2011.

tyrant, but also provoked an irreversible disruption to how the Tunisian population was globally conceived and how it conceived itself. New political subjectivities emerged and existing ones fundamentally changed.

After the ousting of president Zine el-'Abidine Ben 'Ali, however, the singular revolutionary body fragmented as quickly as it was formed in the first place. Generational, regional and cultural divisions came to the surface (Marzouki "People to Citizens"), gendered, ideological and class tensions materialized (Hasso and Salime *Freedom without Permission*), and – as I will point out – unsettled post-colonial tensions over the delineation of these changing subjectivities re-emerged.

The process of subversion and re-imagination of the colors and forms of the national flag intensified. Not only artists and (Islamist) activists, but the population in all its diversity, in the informal as well as in the more formal parts of civil society, engaged in a – sometimes violent – iconological battlefield over the symbolic delineation of the new polis that they were all respectively striving for. Though the white crescent and five pointed star of the flag pictorially refer to the nation's Islamic history, when Tunis was an administrative division of the Ottoman Caliphate, and mark its pan-Islamic adherence (Wills *Complete Flags*), the flag was most fundamentally questioned by the re-emergence of strongly affirmed Islamist subjectivities. As most movements, parties and civil society organizations shared a certain patriotism (Zemni, "Revolution" 141), the reinstatement of the officially defined proportions and colors of the national symbol facilitated a historical compromise between different – sometimes conflicting – political demands. Certainly after the proclamation of a new constitution in 2014, the flag ceased to be re-imagined. The unaddressed historical tensions that resurfaced after the expulsion of the autocratic ruler were swept under the rug.

The Tunisian revolution was leaderless. It was not led by a highly politicized and organized group nor by a party with a clear-cut ideology (Allal "Trajectoires 'Révolutionnaires'"; LeVine "Theorizing Revolutionary"). In the light of what Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* extensively conceptualized as the spontaneity of liberation struggle, it is understandable that most scholars regarded political categories such as *leftist*, *secularist* or *Islamist* obsolete (Levine, "Theorizing Revolutionary"). However, directly after "the Tunisian people raised their star" (Dakhli "Tunisie"), academics delineated a new political subjectivity characterized by a certain reflexivity that goes beyond expected neoliberal individualism or Islamist collectivism (Hanafi "The Arab Revolutions"): a democratic subjectivity (Sadiki "Search for Citizenship") marked by a new sense of pragmatic, leaderless patriotism (Bayhem "Arab Revolutions") that leaves any Islamic or Islamist imaginary behind (Challand "The Counter-Power"). Nonetheless, a lack of stable reference to designate new emerging subjectivities during the initial phase of the revolution (LeVine "Theorizing Revolutionary"), make these interpretations look too precipitous. De Smet sharply argued that "there was no protagonist simply waiting behind the curtains of his-



tory only to make his scripted appearance at the scene of revolution" (26). Subjectivities are indeed spontaneously re-imagined and re-invented during the revolutionary struggle itself. The process of re-imagination the national flag underwent during the Tunisian Revolution is evidence of these changing subjectivities. Moreover, the revolution did not stop after Ben 'Ali and his government were overthrown. Nor did the post-revolutionary phase start after his ousting. Following Hannah Arendt's analysis *On Revolution* (Zemni "The Extraordinary Politics"; "Revolution"), the overthrow of the government can be regarded as merely the first phase of liberation. After this first phase a new political order had to be created. The constitutive phase then discloses the struggle of all the fragmented, pluralistic and conflicting forces that made up the unified people in the phase of liberation. It is in the light of this constitutive phase that some academics openly accused Islamist parties and groups of attempting to *hijack* and *steal* the revolution (Omri "Perils of Identity"). Others saw it as a continuation of unresolved historical questions over identity and symbolic meanings related to how the nation understands itself, that not only included Islamists, but society as a whole (Zemni "The Extraordinary Politics"; McCarthy

"Tunisian Uprising"). If the post-revolutionary phase thus only started with the promulgation of the new constitution, we will indeed have to include in our analysis the struggle by all the different political actors engaged in a battle for a new collective political subjectivity, through the contestation of the historic delineation of the national flag.

From a grounded iconological analysis of the Tunisian flag, emerging subjectivities will be spelled out through the entangled process of re-imagination of the national flag, starting from the liberation phase in 2010, through the constitutional phase and the promulgation of the new constitution in 2014, until the inauguration of the National Flag Square in March 2017. The dynamics of difference or alterity at the core of every iconological struggle makes it the perfect site to scrutinize the processes of subject formation and go beyond prevailing divisions and mutual exclusivities in the building of this new polis that the revolution is striving for (Kathib *Image Politics*). The Tunisian Revolution and the subjectivities emerging out of the revolution have hitherto too often been read teleologically instead of genealogically, missing not only the histories but also the presents these histories produce (LeVine "Theorizing

Revolutionary"). To better grasp the power mechanisms behind these emergences, a post-colonial perspective can provide proper insights (Mullin "Tunisian Uprising"). Present in the revolutionary dynamics, often described as a second independence, postcolonial fault-lines are too often overlooked when considering how new political subjects emerge or existing ones fundamentally change throughout revolutionary dynamics (De Smet "Dialectical Pedagogy").

The intricate connection between the re-imagination of the national flag and the formation of new subjectivities during the Tunisian revolution are analyzed taking into account possible pitfalls of national consciousness as elaborated by Frantz Fanon. Processes of liberation fundamentally transform prevailing subjectivities, as they forcefully pierce interiorized forms of depreciated self-understanding. Subject (trans-)formations are not the product of supernatural powers, but born out of revolutionary processes directed to liberated forms of self-understanding. As "men [sic] change at the same time that they change the world", struggle "remodels the consciousness that man [sic] has of himself, and of his former dominators or of the world, at last within his reach" (Fanon, *Dying Colonialism* 30). It is in this national

process of *becoming* that the seeds of new dignified subjectivities are located. This process is essential for our analysis, as it “renews the symbols, the myths, the beliefs, the emotional responsiveness of the people” (Fanon 30). We will thus analyze this process of becoming through an iconological analysis of the dynamics of re-imagination that the national flag underwent during the Tunisian revolution.

However, Fanon extensively warns of possible pitfalls for national consciousness. “Instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people”, it can become nothing more than an “empty shell” confined in a mimetical sterile formalism, doomed to become a caricature of itself (*Wretched of the Earth* 148). Consequently, “the masses [...] do not manage, in spite of public holidays and flags, new and brightly colored though they may be, to convince themselves that anything has really changed” (169). If it does not want to become a caricature of itself, mystified by mere formalism, nationalism, understood as the consciousness of the spontaneity of liberation struggle, has to be explicitly dissolved into a dignifying project that, through a conscious and sovereign subjectivity, answers concrete economic and social needs. When this transformation

happens, nationalist symbols would become superfluous as “the nation deserts these brightly lit, empty shells and takes shelter in the country, where it is given life and dynamic power” (204). In such a dignified humanist regime, “the living expression of the nation is the moving consciousness of the whole of the people” as “it is the coherent, enlightened action of men and women” (204). In Tunisia, the liberation was indeed imbued with a unifying national consciousness facilitated by the flag. However, the nationalist colors have not yet dissolved into a dignifying societal project that tackles the concrete economic and social needs that motivated the initial movement. On the contrary, youth unemployment seems even to increase.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, the official national flag was massively reproduced, and the bigger the better, instigating a caricatural national pride as an answer to the spontaneous proliferation of the Black Standard and different symbolic actions of flag desecration.

The pervading reproduction and ubiquity of the gradually reinstated banner in its official pictorial structure since the summer of 2013, and certainly since the promulgation of the new constitution in 2014, are – as we will argue – not only paradoxically witness to the very limitation of the

power of icons to engender dignified relationalities within a given nation, but are also witness to the slow closure of the revolutionary space and the gradual blockage of revolutionary processes of subject formation. This blockage was productive for the precarious restoration of national unity and state prestige necessary for the completion of the new constitution, but less for the demands for liberty, social justice and dignity so central to the revolution.

### **An iconological analysis of the national flag**

Building upon the nation’s colors and forms, the Ben ‘Ali regime kept up an exceptional image of itself, creating a “Tunisian fiction” (*Hibou Force de l’Obéissance*). This constructed fiction, constituted by an entangled web of interconnected mythologies, obfuscated a reality of severe economic inequality, excessive state violence and alienation of traditional morals and religious references (Cavatorta and Haugbølle “End of Authoritarian”). The revolution, however, fiercely punctured the official image of the Tunisian exception and fundamentally transformed the prevailing image of Tunisia and its underlying subjectivities, as through the reclamation of the right to look at these – until recently hidden – eco-

economic and political problems, new subjectivities are formed (Mirzoeff "Right to Look"). Visibility was the strength of the revolutionary movement, as it turned the structure of the surveillance state against itself (Tripp "Art, Power"). In the storm of images that accompanied the revolution, an "iconography of anonymity" could indeed be ascertained, as the ubiquitous portrait of the autocratic leader was massively destroyed, as observed by W.J.T. Mitchell ("Image, Space" 9). However, "the image that promised to become a monument" was not the image of empty space, but the lively processes of reversal, appropriation and rejection of the national flag, at least in the Tunisian context. For Eriksen and Jenkins in *Flag, Nation and Symbolism in Europe and America*, a flag is a condensed symbol that imagines cohesion and solidarity in a given nation-state. Through its multi-vocality it can efficiently imagine the unity of complex and heterogeneous societies, as it encompasses a diversity of possible interpretations. At the same time it is always historically rooted in a certain cultural and political past and associated with specific interests, and thus it categorically excludes certain minorities. However, the flag can undergo processes of pictorial transformation over time. The more multi-vocal a flag, the lower its reductionist, essentialist, conflictual or

even murderous potentialities in concrete political situations. Hence, it is the simultaneous unifying and dividing character of the flag that makes it an iconological site and thus a barometer of (potential) conflicts. Even though it is broadly assumed to be "the most revered among symbols, icons and markers associated with nation and nationalism in [the] twentieth-century" (Jha, *Reverence, Resistance* 2), conflicts over the delineation of a given nation can be scrutinized by analyzing the way the flag is received in a given society.

The spontaneity of the revolutionary process demands empirically grounded methodologies to capture the dissemination and contention of power and agency to thoroughly understand the struggle over the formation of political subjectivities (LeVine "Theorizing Revolutionary"). As suggested by Lina Khatib in *Image Politics*, the iconological struggle over presence and visibility through competing images took center stage during the revolution. The image, as a "construct infused with meanings, attributes and projected perceptions", was invested by different actors as a key site of political struggle, not only for the construction of social and political realities, but also for the legitimization of emerging subjectivities (Khatib 2-3). Following the pictorial turn intro-

duced by W.J.T. Mitchell in his book *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, this analysis proposes to contribute to a fundamental and critical understanding of images in their own right, beyond their presupposed semiotic and linguistic structure. By delving into the dynamic pictorial structure of the national flag and the proliferation of its diversion and subversion through different online and offline media by different revolutionary protagonists, I hope to contribute to the ongoing analytical-methodological inquiry of the political productivity of mass-mediated icons (Haugbølle and Kuzmanovic "New Sociology").

### Unresolved historical questions

Struck by an image of the national flag bending over a revolting city with a bleeding eye in its red center in the front-page of a journal, Hela Béji's dream of a new humanism collapsed. This image of profound discontent was not related to the latest revolution, but to the historical *Black Thursday* of 1978, when the government killed about 200 protesters during the first general strike since independence. Tunisia fell into what Béji calls in her work *Désenchantement National: Essai sur la Décolonisation* "national disenchantment". Following independence, the

government reinforced a process of *Tunisification*, to radiate a strong national subjectivity that, unlike during colonial times, gained the support of the totality of the population, beyond pre-nationalist pluralistic clan and tribal collectivities (Anderson *Social Transformation*; Sadiki "Search for Citizenship"). *Tunisian-ness* had to be invented to oppose colonial rule (Sadiki "Search for Citizenship"). Since 1922, the then still-subversive image of the flag was proudly reclaimed and brandished by the liberation movement formed around the new militant nationalist *Destour* movement (Lewis *Divided Rule*), pictorially relating to an oppositional subjectivity grounded in Islamic terms. With the successful rise of the *Neo-Destour*, however, these terms were slowly renegotiated in the direction of more territorially oriented and national rather than religious belongings (Sadiki "Search for Citizenship"). Illustrative in this light is the mythical story of actress Habiba Msika causing a scandal in 1928 during the première of *The Martyrs of Liberty*, as she got arrested by the colonial authorities who prohibited the play after she wrapped herself in the Tunisian flag and chanted slogans of liberation. With independence, the French flag, which was officially hoisted during the proclamation of the occupation in 1881 at the Kasbah in Tunis,

was replaced (Cattedra "Où est la Kasbah?"). The Tunisian flag initially visualized the national process of subject formation, from an interiorized inferiority as colonial object, to the Tunisian people as subject of its own history. After independence, however, divisions within the *Neo-Destour* came to the surface. Its Arab Nationalist stream was violently marginalized, together with the elimination of its leader Salah Ben Youssef in 1961. The Bourguibist stream reinforced its nationalist ideology but took a secular turn in the imagination of the nation, mimicking Western modernization (Sadiki ). As the regime moved towards authoritarianism and the socialist experiment of the 1960s was abandoned, the masses were confronted with the alienating and oppressive nature of the ideals of the nation-state turned authoritarian (Béji *Désenchantement National*). Moreover, efforts of national unification and homogenization hegemonized and singularized in an exclusive way the political landscape, precluding political dissidence in general, but especially Islamist subjectivities (Sadiki "The Search for Citizenship"). Behind the façade of the homogeneous nation, the regional marginalization of the interior and south of the country that originated in the colonial era, and the class division this entailed, remained unaddressed and

were consolidated by the post-colonial regime (Mullin "Tunisian Uprising"). The national flag was hollowed and reduced to the background of the portrait of a long expired authoritarian and patrimonial leader. Nonetheless, the crescent and star survived the Bourguiba era. It even underwent a short revival, as it was embraced by the newly instated Ben 'Ali regime. The flag, however, was quickly seized by the regime and soon no longer reflected national belonging, but association with the ruling party (Bouzouita "Coulisses de la Revolution"). As the coercive character of the state was further legitimized through a sustained Islamist threat (Sadiki "The Search for Citizenship"), the colors of the nation were further hollowed-out as an essential and non-negotiable element in the repertoire of performance of regime adherence. In 1999 the national flag's pictorial structure was officially defined at the level of the law, further elaborating the 4<sup>th</sup> article of the Republican Constitution of 1959. To breathe life into the captured flag, the Ministry of National Defense published a collective book entirely dedicated to the national flag in June 2006, attempting to infuse the national symbol with pre-Islamic historical legitimacy. The process of national disenchantment rapidly intensified under Ben 'Ali, leaving only a "façade of national uniformity" (Dakhli "Tunisian

National Interest" 90), an empty shell hiding state corruption and the continued marginalization of Tunisia's peripheries.

### Re-appropriating the national colors

Despite its extensive use as an exclusive symbol of power during the successive authoritarian regimes, the revolutionary masses in 2011 reappropriated the national flag together with its moral and political legitimacy, facilitating a unification and nationalization of the protest (Bouzouita "Coulisses de la Révolution"; Hawkins "Teargas, Flags"). The national symbol still floated in the streets as a symbol of power during the initial locally dispersed clashes between the mobilized youth and security forces in the interior and south of the country. The massive diversion of the flag used as profile pictures on social media, constructed a virtual representation of a united people that preceded its physical unification. It was only when the masses felt that together they could topple the president that the flag was also physically reappropriated and waved offline. During the initial liberation, virtually subverted flags formally mourned the sacrifice of the martyrs. Once Ben 'Ali fled, however, a celebratory and embodied aesthetic emphasized the pride and hope of a successful revolution on- and offline. The reappropriation of the rallying image of the national flag by the struggling population not only facilitated their unification, but also punctured the idealized image of the Tunisian exception, rendering visible the state of corruption and intensified marginalization outside the capital and coastal regions.

After Ben 'Ali was toppled, revolutionary demands to overthrow the government still in place were pushed by disenfranchised youth who had traveled from the interior and the south to the capital and occupied the Kasbah square, where the Prime Minister and his government hold office. Through the Freedom Caravan and the occupation of the Kasbah, the masses rediscovered an oppressed part of the national self (Saidi "Traveling"). The reappropriated national banner was quintessential in the performed occupation of the square, not only as a cape in the struggle against a persisting government, but also as a blanket covering historical regional, class and political divisions. The flag altogether incorporated the subjectivities previously overshadowed in what Fanon calls a "zone of nonbeing" (*Black Skin* 2). Diverse subjectivities underlying the feelings of injustice related to the access to land in the interior-south, the extraction of natural resources in the min-

ing regions, the repression of informal local economies at the border with Libya, and the corruption in the urban coastal centers and the capital were unified at the Kasbah (Zemni "Revolution"). Under the national banner, those inhabiting this zone of non-being reclaimed their sovereign right to be.

However, not everyone cheered the arrival of the Freedom Caravan. A call for a return to *normality* was voiced during manifestations at the Kobbah in Al Menzah, echoing the will of the interim government of National Unity, gathering against what they considered a radical minority that would destabilize the country's economy and security. They demanded clear leadership in the name of a *silent majority*, also identifying in patriotic terms, for the good of the Tunisian nation (Chennaoui "Kasbah"; Zemni "Extraordinary Politics"). Though both the Kasbah and Kobbah protesters acted under the same national banner, conflicting subjectivities were at stake (Zemni "Revolution"). After the fall of the interim government of National Unity, the occupation of the Kasbah made way for a collective but bumpy journey to the country's first free elections. From the moment street politics were translated to new official political structures and institutions, the revolutionary space closed



down and the formation of revolutionary subjectivities was challenged and – as we will see – sometimes even blocked from the political game (LeVine “Theorizing Revolutionary”).

### National Re-imagination

The debates in the elected National Constitutional Assembly and the newly appointed transition government were pushed forth by three contentious phases of national re-imagination. In a first phase, the national flag underwent a wave of desecration and the Black Standard gained more and more visibility. In a second phase, the national flag was revitalized as the country mourned its first political killings. Finally, the flag was massively waved in front of the Bardo square to demand, in vain, the dissolution of the constitutional assembly.

It all started at Manouba University when, during protests, an activist climbed up the roof of the janitor's building and, thanks to another student, in vain tried to replace the Tunisian flag with the Black Standard.<sup>2</sup> The incident rapidly grew from a local student opposition to a nationwide political question (Le Pape “Peut-on Convertir”), and was but the first in a series of actions questioning the outline of the nation and out-loud “recalling the caliphate” (Sayyid,

*Recalling the Caliphate* 186). More Salafi-oriented Islamist groups settled in different places in Tunisia's peripheries and hoisted the black flag. Under the impulse of the later-outlawed Salafi-jihadist movement *Anṣār al-Sharī'a*, Islamist symbols were adopted and ostensibly waved during different actions and mobilizations (Merone “Social Contention”). When, after the diffusion of the film *Innocence of Muslims* in September 2012, the American Embassy was attacked by Salafi activists, they replaced the American flag with the Black Standard. The pinnacle of this phase of flag desecration was the mobilization during the Holy Koran Day, proclaimed by the Minister of Religious Affairs Nouredine El Khademi of the *an-Nahḍa* party to protest against ongoing profanations of the Koran. Thousands of Islamist activists gathered on the newly renamed *January 14 Square* demanding the implementation of the *Sharī'a*, while seven of the best trained protesters waved their black banner on the highest point of the clock tower. The *Al-Amen* party suggested as a compromise in the Constitutive Assembly to add the calligraphic inscription of the Shahada to the national flag, to no avail. To counterbalance the ongoing phase of desecration, the transitional government packed the central clock

tower with the national flag on the second and third anniversary of the revolution.

A second phase of national re-imagination started with the murder of the leading member of the Popular Front, Chokri Belaïd. His funeral provoked a national mobilization, unseen since the days of the Kasbah. The people reused the banner as a blanket to cover national mourning. In response to the French Minister of the Interior, who linked the assassination to the rise of Islamic fascism, the French flag was ostentatiously burned. The pro-*an-Nahḍa* demonstrations following the assassination were not homogenous red and white, but also colored blue, red and white, referring to the colors of the party. The black standards were also present, engendering further suspicion with the opposition. To strengthen the support of the army in the escalating fights with jihadist cells, the government hoisted a giant national flag on top of Mount Chaâmbi. Finally, during the national celebrations for Women's Day and the anniversary of the institution of the progressive personal code, national forms and colors again took center stage, this time as a trending clothing style. Another feminist strategy was used by Femen when burning the Black Standard in front

of the Great Mosque of Paris during International Topless Jihad Day.

The third phase of re-imagination occurred when civil society merged “For a civil and solidary Republic” to denounce the Constitutional Assembly. The private sector also engaged in the dynamics of national unity, when The National Union of Communication and Advertising Agencies set up a national campaign together with billboard owners, using the national forms and colors around the slogan “There is no allegiance, but to Tunisia” (see fig. 2). It didn’t take more than a day before it was diverted to: “There is no allegiance but to Allah” (see fig. 2). This spectacle gained momentum in the summer of 2013 with the *Raḥīl* campaign and sit-in when the national flag was diverted into a red card and pulled in front of the Constituent Assembly at Bardo Square to demand its dissolution. Protesters on both sides of the friction got well-defined orders from the party top which flag (not) to wave. For instance, while the national flag, the party flag and the *Tawḥīd* flag were waved together during mobilization organized by the *an-Nahḍa* party in the slipstream of the first political murders, militants now got a script from the party top only to wave the national flag and the party flag.



Figure 2: “There is no allegiance, but to Tunisia-Allah”. Dakhli, “Tunisian National Interest”, Tunisia, 2013.

As state efforts to instill patriotism intensified, “flag-waving from below” that prevailed during the initial liberation phase made way for a certain form of “flag-waving from above” (Eriksen and Jenkins, *Flag, Nation* 9). The political landscape again became a staged and scripted landscape (Dakhli “Tunisian National Interest”). The imposition of the official pictorial structure of the national flag gradually fixed the delineation of the dynamized subjectivities since the revolution, pacifying and silencing disagreement and opposition into a historical modernist nationalist frame. The maturation of subjectivities confidently relating to Islamist ideologies in various new ways were decelerated and criminalized, as the *Anṣār*

*al-Sharī’a* movement was outlawed. The “black flag hysteria” that accompanied the reception of different provocative Islamist actions overshadowed the nuances and ambiguities in the formation of these new subjectivities, sometimes combining nationalist and political Salafi references (Rogers “Image Politics”). Nevertheless, the three aforementioned phases of national re-imagination made visible the urgent necessity of a federating and stabilizing national compromise. The national flag thus generated from above the symbolic conditions for the rehabilitation of national unity and the prestige of the state, and by doing so facilitated the adoption of a new constitution (Zemni “Revolution”).

### Intensified national pride

“The first democratic constitution in the Arab World” was finally adopted “in the name of the Tunisian people” and “with the help of God” as stated in its preamble (*Constitution*). Despite the clear outcome of the following legislative and presidential elections, the struggle over the outline of the nation is still ongoing, as three different jihadist attacks in the center and coastal region fundamentally challenged the newly proclaimed second republic.

After the first appalling jihadist attack targeting tourists at the Bardo museum, and

surfing on the ongoing wave of “hyperbolization of national pride” (Dakhli “Tunisian National Interest”), the ministry of tourism successfully challenged the world record for the largest flag. In his *Ascent of a Nation*, Tahar Manai proudly planted the Tunisian flag on the top of the Himalayas, conquering the highest peak in the world. With the project *Tounes Alia* the banner even fluttered in the stratosphere. After the attack at the Imperial Marhaba Hotel at Port El Kantaoui, president Béji Caïd Essebsi called on the Prime Minister to revise the license granted to a political party still waving the *black flag*, alluding to *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*, the last Pan-Islamist party still recognized by the government. At the same time, a social media campaign went viral featuring postcards of terror attacks in Western capitals, posing the question of whether you would also stop visiting Paris after the Charlie attacks, New York after 9/11 or London after the 7/7 bombings.

In contrast with the worldwide indignation at attacks in the heart of Europe, after the third jihadist attack targeting the presidential guard on the Mohamed V Boulevard, indignation grew as there was with no security check nor a flag-layer designed on social media for solidarity with Tunisia. As in the aftermath of the second Paris

attacks in November that same year, where international buildings in different world cities effectively colored white red and blue, photoshopped images went viral depicting the Statue of Liberty in New York and The Eiffel Tower, among others, in red and white. The collective wound caused by the three consecutive jihadist assaults were healed with the multiplication of national colors during different manifestations mourning the victims and condemning Islamist politics in general. Finally, in March 2017, on the occasion of the 61st anniversary of independence, the government inaugurated the newly built National Flag Square and raised a giant flag up the flagpole in Belvedere Park, overseeing the whole capital from its height. Whereas the reception of the three consecutive jihadist attacks clearly alluded to the international dimension of the political problems Tunisia is facing today, an already hyperbolic national pride further intensified in a caricatural way. Subjectivities could no longer be imagined outside the constitutional compromise sharply delineated by the imposed pictorial structure of the national flag.

### Conclusion

The creative re-appropriation and diversion of the national flag during the initial liberation phase was an essential mediator

of the unity necessary for pushing forward revolutionary demands. Even a short time after Ben ‘Ali was toppled, the national flag held the people together beyond historical regional, generational, class and political differences, as it lost its rigid form and underwent a process of pictorial transformation. It no longer imagined allegiance to the regime, but revolutionary affiliation, sacrifice, liberty, justice, dignity, inter-regional unity and cross-class solidarity. United under the colors of the nation, excluded subjectivities reclaimed their sovereign right to be. The very symbol of this unity, however, quickly became a subject in a violent battlefield, following three contentious phases of re-imagination, further addressing unresolved historical issues. From the Manouba incident, through the national mourning of political opposition figures such as Chokri Belaïd and the red card pulled in front of the Bardo, to the creation of National Flag Square on the hilltop of Belvedere Park, the youth unemployment, the postcolonial regional marginalization of the interior and south of the country and the related class divisions largely remain unaddressed. Though the national flag is supposed to mark its Islamic adherence once necessary to mobilize against French colonial occupation, it was contested by new emerging Islamist subjectivities and later



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by more Salafist- and jihadist-asserted subjectivities coloring outside the lines of the nation. This contradiction points to a pictorial transformation of the flag throughout history, as it seems to depict religious alienation rather than the Islamic imaginary it is supposed to trigger.

The national flag hence lost its foundation and thus its multi-vocality and capacity to imagine national unity beyond historic divisions, not only categorically excluding nascent ambiguous Salafist- and jihadist-oriented Islamist subjectivities that contest the constitutional compromise of 2014, but also the once-unified subjectivities underlying the feelings of injustice related to access to land, the extraction of natural resources, the repression of informal local economies and prevailing corruption. When street politics was translated into official political structures after the occupation of the Kasbah, the ongoing formation of revolutionary subjectivities was challenged, and after three tragic jihadist attacks even blocked from the political game. The recovery from this last phase of deadly contention assured the consolidation of the historical compromise that underpinned the new constitution. However, the further intensification of the hyberbolization of national pride, from the world record of biggest flag or the need

to send the national colors to the stratosphere, convincingly shows how – unfortunately – the nation became a caricature of itself.

Together with the loss of its multi-vocal capacities, the flag re-activated a certain reductionist, essentialist and even oppressive potentiality. The re-imposition of the official pictorial structure of the national flag, and the blockage of revolutionary forms of becoming it facilitated, were productive for the restoration of national unity and state prestige, but less so for the demands for liberty, social justice and dignity. As argued by Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, if a given state wants to be national, it does not need to over-emphasize the forms of its flag, how beautifully colored it might be. It just has to give “form and body” to the prevailing national consciousness of liberation and find a way to constitute a dignifying state “by the people and for the people, for the outcasts and by the outcasts” (Fanon 205).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The youth unemployment rate is excessively high and almost doubled between 2006 and 2014, increasing from 17% to 31.4% by 2014. Figures regarding access to work also point to gendered inequalities. Women (43.5%) suffer from unemployment more than men (20.9%). Inequalities also affect regions. In the central west [of the country], the unemployment rate stands at 28.6%; 26.9% in the southwest; 24.8% in the southeast; and 11.1% in the central east. The structural imbalances that initially triggered the Tunisian revolution have thus continued to increase (Zammit "Tunisia Groaning")

<sup>2</sup> The flag incident at the Manouba was the first real case of flag desecration. However, the rapper Pscyho-M in December 2010 – that is a month before the start of the revolution – already distanced himself politically from the national flag in favor of what he calls the Tawhid Flag in his popular song 'Manipulation' (Ovshieva "Stomping for Tunisia"; Benyoussef "Gender"). Known for his sharp letter to the president "Rais LeBled", rapper El General followed the Islamist proposition in his song "Allahu Akbar", declaring "The banner of Islam always comes first" (El General "Allahu Akbar"). The enormous popularity of both artists is evidence of the broad popular support for radical Islamist ideologies among youth.

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## Coptic Commemorative Protests and Discourses of Egyptian Nationalism: A Visual Analysis<sup>1,2</sup>

Yosra A. El Gendi

This paper discusses the identity constructions of the Coptic Christian minority of Egypt during conflict and in particular through the theme of commemoration of martyrdom. In the aftermath of the attacks against them on October 9, 2011, (what is known as the “Maspero Massacre”) Coptic social movements resorted to performative protests to celebrate their “martyrs”. This paper analyses the visual representations of two such protests and examines how different themes and symbols from different traditions were used: Coptic Christian, Pharaonic and as well as nationalist Egyptian traditions. This paper

argues that through these performances members of the community aimed to reconstruct and reassert their identity in public space as well produce oppositional nationalist discourses that interplay with social conflicts. Through examining videos and photos of these performances, this paper conducts an intertextual analysis of the visual aspects of the protests in order to reveal their political meaning as well as their contradictions.

**Keywords:** Copts, commemoration, identity, conflict, nationalism, Egypt

### Introduction

In the aftermath of the January 25 Uprising, the security vacuum that ensued led to increased vulnerability of minority groups. While communal attacks against the Coptic Christian community (constituting about 7% of the Egyptian population) can be traced to the 1970s, its increase in the aftermath of the January 25 Uprising led to further strain communal relations (Brownlee 3-5). In the fluid transition period that followed Mubarak's ouster, these attacks led to the rise of various Coptic Christian social movements that started mobilizing against the demolition of churches and for more inclusion of Copts in public life.

The current conflict over the identity of Egypt is rooted in the history of various occupations that the country underwent. Egypt was under Roman rule from 30 BC until it was invaded by the Muslims in 641 AD. Christianity first reached Egypt in the first century with the arrival of Apostle Mark to Alexandria, after which several waves of attacks took place against Christians by the Roman authorities (Hasan 25). These attacks continued even after the Roman Empire became Christian. The rejection of the Coptic Orthodox Church the doctrines of Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD on the dual nature of Christ led to the subsequent schism and

to further persecutions by the Byzantine “Melkite” Church (Hasan 28). With the Islamic occupation in 641 AD, a relative period of tolerance followed which was interrupted by waves of attacks under several Islamic rulers (Hasan 31). A process of Arabization and Islamization ensued and Christians became a minority by the tenth century (Ibrahim et al. 8).

At the heart of the conflict between Copts and Muslims today in Egypt are different social constructions of national territory and national identity. On the one hand, increased Islamization of the public sphere leads to increased public perception of the Egyptian national territory as being a Muslim territory. In this perception, churches are considered anomalies and potential elements of tension (Purcell 433). On the other hand, Copts have perceived this territory as their home for the past 2000 years (Purcell 466). In this sense, different understandings of Egypt's national identity underlie all debates on the right of non-Muslims to build houses of worship and further underlie intercommunal conflict.

The starting point for this paper is October 9, 2011, when a mass rally was organized by several Coptic Christian movements in downtown Cairo to protest the demolition of a church in a village near the Upper Egyptian city of Aswan by Muslim neigh-

bors.<sup>3</sup> The attack spurred a series of protests by Coptic movements against the church's destruction (Androwus 1). The Maspero protest was the largest of these rallies and used the state TV building as its destination. The protesters employed visible Christian symbols, such as makeshift crosses and pictures of Jesus, in order to voice their demands in what was seen as a bold display of religious identity.

As soon as the protesters arrived at their destination, they were attacked. Videos captured the military police's armored car, which were stationed in front of the State TV building, running over protesters. As the protest devolved to a fight, the Egyptian state TV announced that Copts were attacking the national army thus fueling a communal strife (Ibrahim). Twenty-six Copts reportedly lost their lives as a result of the consequent violence (NCHR 1).<sup>4</sup>

These attacks were not only a blow to the victims' families, but the Coptic community at large who needed consolation. It was a particular challenge to the Coptic movements, which were accused by the pro-state media of attempting to violently rupture national unity (Osman 1). As a result, the Coptic movements struggled to prove their patriotism. They responded with protests to commemorate those who had immediately been labelled as *martyrs*.<sup>5</sup> The first ceremony was held approx-

imately a month after the Maspero massacre, and aimed to commemorate the *Arba'in* ceremony, a traditional ceremony forty days after death (Shukry “Celebrating”). A second ceremony was held in order to commemorate the first anniversary. While for the first ceremony SCAF was in power, by the time the second protest took place, SCAF had rendered power to the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated president, Mohammed Morsi (Ahram online 1). Both of these ceremonies used pharaonic artifacts and national symbols, a far cry from the Christian symbols used in the Maspero protest.

This paper questions why Coptic movements resorted to commemorating their martyrs by using ancient Egyptian themes. In the words of one interviewed activist, “it was (...) a message to the audience that the solution lay in fostering an Egyptian identity”<sup>6</sup>. But how can an Egyptian identity be defined? By consulting the visual material of the protests produced by news agencies as well as the movements themselves on their social media channels, various depictions of national identity in the Coptic commemorative protests will be analyzed.<sup>7</sup>

I argue that through the commemoration processes, group identity is continuously reconstructed and negotiated as well as used tactically by social movements in

order to present oppositional discourses that interplay with social conflicts. Coptic social movements attempted to push forth an identity construct – namely a Coptic-Pharaonic identity – which does not relegate Copts to a lower position, but rather balances other variants of national identity in the public space. In this way, commemorations are opportune moments for *performative protests*.

### Theory

Protests are performative if they produce, construct, negotiate or establish new or alternative ideas, identities, ideologies or meanings (Juris 227-8). Against threats on their lives or livelihoods or “precarity” in Judith Butler’s words due to the uneven distribution of power, protesters resist through appearing in public space. Public space is a field that is regulated by exclusionary and hierarchal norms and constituted by differential forms of power (Butler 38). Performances are a way through which subjects push through this power field in order to become eligible for recognition. It is “a way of laying claim to the public sphere” (Butler 41). Through changing the modes of embodiment and reenactment of our social existence the underlying norms can be contested. The bodies of activists become the site of political agency as they embody opposi-

tional discourses and new political visions (Butler 25-9).

Performative protests make use of both the narratives that structure the protests as well as performative artifacts, which are the objects that become the raw material of performances. These are constitutive of new and different meanings when combined (Johnston 6-7). In Coptic commemorative protests, the artifacts combined elements of pharaonic, Coptic Christian and modern nationalist artifacts. Examples include the national flag, the solar-boat, T-shirts with the ankh sign, a hieroglyphic symbol meaning life that has been appropriated by Copts and used as their cross (Hanna 34). Thus, a visual iconological analysis is needed in order to interpret the messages that the protest performance is trying to make.

Iconological analysis combines scrutiny of compositional elements of visual images and understanding those elements within the cultural conventions of symbolic representations (Richard and Negreiros 16-7; Rose 144-5). The analysis eventually allows one to understand the symbols within the context of the performance or image. It examines how different traditions contribute to the images’ meanings (Richard and Negreiros 18-19). Therefore, it is vital to differentiate between the representational methods that are used in

portraying the image within a particular cultural convention and the interlocking textual traditions, which in combination are used in an image (Rose 145). Thus, the most important part of iconological analysis is deciphering how different textual traditions have been used to produce the discourse (Rose 145). In that sense, the complexities and contradictions that are internal to discourse become important. Iconologists such as Panofsky are essentialist in their method, claiming that the image’s “intrinsic meaning” can be understood through analysis (Richard and Negreiros 25; Rose 147). However, as the performative protest establishes new meanings and identities, it is primarily constructive. Thus, it underscores the ways in which discourses are enacted by members of the audience and how they themselves take part in the reproduction of meanings. In other words, our iconological analysis will turn away from inherent claims and provide an interpretation of meanings in the performance.

### Analysis

In a way, these protests presented an increased strength and Coptic visibility, yet this was done through themes of death and negation (Ramzy 665). The main theme of the performative protest was martyrdom, which begs the ambiguous



question: Is one dying for one's nation or for one's faith. The centrality of the *waṭan samāwī* (heavenly homeland) for faith, lends martyrdom a way of depicting both patriotism and faithfulness (Ramzy 650). However, the representations of nationalisms and religious identity constructs made using these artistic traditions hold particular contradictions that are encapsulated in the performance themselves.

In their attempt to commemorate the martyrs of the Maspero attacks, the movements used two nationalist discourses: the 'national-unity' discourse and the Coptic Church's 'patriotic' discourse. The former focuses on the unity of Copts and Muslims but fails to present both groups as equals. Rather, it succumbs the Coptic narrative to a Muslim one. Thus, according to this discourse, the Muslim conquest (641 AD) is perceived as liberating the Copts from the oppression and the persecution of the Roman occupation. The latter discourse agrees with the former in the depiction of suffering of Copts under the Roman rule and highlights the positive relations between the Muslims and Christians based on harmony and justice since the Islamic rule. However, this discourse resorts to a nativist pharaonic discourse to argue the Copts' authenticity in the face of Muslims as well as the Melkite Christians (ElSasser 102-133).

### Visualizing National Identities and Coptic Visibility

The most visible aspect of the first commemorative protest is its focus on Egyptian nationalist imagery through the use of various symbolic artifacts, such as the cross and the flag carried side by side (see fig. 1). While this imagery reminds of the iconography of the 1919 revolution particularly the flag with the cross and crescent depicting national unity<sup>8</sup>, it fails to present harmony. First, rather than depicting a unified Egypt, this representation depicted the social fabric of the nation as being made up of both Muslims and Christians communities, and in doing so, highlighted religious differences as definitive. This is very different from a nationalistic representation, which would perceive such differences as secondary and ultimately non-important. Second, the cross is depicted separately from the flag, which aims to increase the Coptic identity's visibility in public space; thereby, showing both patriotism a parallelism from the mainstream national narrative. Clearly, there is an inherent tension between these artifacts. In the first commemorative protest, pharaonic signs were prominent while crosses that participants attempted to raise personally were banned by the organizers. An oversized Egyptian flag carried by eight young men



Figure 1: Funeral Procession of Maspero Martyrs. Al-Yaum al- Sabi', Cairo, 2011.

followed a smaller flag carried next to a single cross at the beginning of the march. The prominence of the large flag at the beginning of the first ceremony is telling. During the second ceremony in the time of Morsi's rule, the policy of not carrying personal crosses was relaxed. Furthermore, the oversized Egyptian flag was relegated to the end of the ceremony. This tension can be traced to the struggle in imagining national identity, which lead separate groups to have different conceptions of nationalism. The symbolism of the Egyptian flag and its Arab Islamic affiliations explains the continuous tension of the cross and the flag throughout the commemorative protests. As Podeh argues, it follows the pattern of most flags of the Arab states which "does not reflect

connection to a specific territory but rather an attachment to the larger Arab and Islamic communities" (421). Thus, in this sense, the Egyptian flag is a depiction of the Islamist dominated narratives of national history in which the Islamic conquest is perceived as a civilizing mission that liberated the Copts from their persecution and occupation. The Egyptian flag is no exception with its black, white and red, three of the four colors that make up the "Arab flag" (the missing color being green)<sup>9</sup>. These colors are also used by four Islamic dynasties – the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids and Ottomans (421-422). The colors are thus rooted in an Arab and Islamic historical imagination, but the Egyptian flag was constructed to symbolize territorial meaning by the newfound Republican order in 1953. While the red color came to symbolize the revolution, the white color symbolized its peaceful nature and black the corruption of the pre-1952 regime (435-6). The symbolism of the current Egyptian flag is thus rooted in the Islamic narrative.

In this manner, the cross carried with the flag, carries with it meanings of coexistence beyond the apparent tensions. The Coptic cross presented aside the flag represents a parallel narrative of nationalism rooted in a discourse of martyrdom. The Coptic Church has resorted to making

the discourse of martyrdom and persecution a central founding theme in the first two centuries after the Islamic Invasion thus naming itself the *Church of the Martyrs*. This was important as the church was struggling to maintain the cohesion of its community differentiating itself from Melkite Christians and thus presented itself as the national Church (Papaconstantinou 71-72). In this sense, the nationalism that is enacted in Coptic commemorative protests is rooted in a religious historical discourse rather than a secular one.

### Revival of an Authentic Identity?

As previously noted, pharaonism was incorporated as an element of Coptic identity as a way of expressing nativism. While this does not deny that there was indeed some proximity between some doctrines in both religious creeds, there were times in which the Church saw it pertinent to separate itself from the ancient Egyptian traditions, and thus, led the iconoclasm of the fourth century (Kamil 135).<sup>10</sup> Thus, pharaonism was constructed as an element of Coptic Church's identity to establish its legitimacy as a national church particularly against the Melkites, who came to be associated with the Romans (Papaconstantinou 72). In this way, the Coptic- Pharaonic national identity

became rooted in the Church's religious tradition and history and pharaonism became an important element in the Coptic Church's iconography.<sup>11</sup>

As Van der Vliet explains, in the modern period, orientalism and the once 'imperial' science of Egyptology have played an important role in how Copts have begun to perceive themselves as "sons of the pharaohs". It was the French Egyptologist, Champollion, who deciphered the hieroglyphics with the assistance of the Coptic script. (Van der Vliet 294). Thus, connecting the Coptic identity to the Pharaonic legacy is also a modern construct that was utilized in the Coptic community's search to position itself in the modern world.

The commemorative protests made use of ancient Egyptian symbolism in order to refer to Christian beliefs, thereby enacting an important element of Coptic-Pharaonic identity and calling for internal cohesion of the community by maintaining their identity. However, in that manner, the incompatibilities between both traditions are consciously ignored.<sup>12</sup> In order to understand the way the protests were designed, the differences and similarities between the ancient Egyptian myths and Christian beliefs on death and resurrection are explained.

Christianity holds that Jesus, who is considered the sole son of God, has come to the world to save it. Jesus' crucifixion is thus seen as a sacrifice for the salvation of the world from its sins. The crucifixion was followed by Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven, thus conquering death. According to Christian beliefs, eternal life is a gift to the martyrs and saints as they have followed the path of God (Diel and El Bardohani 13).

These beliefs were performed using the artifacts and symbols from ancient Egyptian art and mythology. Ancient Egyptian mythology is centered on the deity Osiris, son of Geb and Nut (god of earth and goddess of sky), who was killed by his brother Seth. His body was found and reconstructed by Isis, his sister and wife, after which the corpse was mummified and resurrected. Thus, Osiris became the God of the realm of the dead. Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris then defeated Seth after which they underwent judgment by the Gods. (Taylor 25). According to the myth of Osiris, death is followed by judgment and resurrection of the righteous. The dead should thus follow the path of Osiris in order to become resurrected.

However, myths of death and rebirth in ancient Egypt are quite different from Christian teachings. Both traditions have

resurrection as a central tenant, yet it is not the same. In Christianity, resurrection is collective rather than individual, as it is understood in ancient Egypt (Madigan 35). Furthermore, eternal life is considered a gift from God for those who believe in him and walk his path, yet in ancient Egypt, it could be expected naturally if the body was preserved and if other specific conditions were met (Jeremiah 24). Furthermore, the doctrine of sacrifice and salvation central to Christianity are unparalleled in ancient Egyptian mythology.

The commemorative protests analyzed here depict an ancient Egyptian funeral procession. In the ancient Egyptian tradition, this was the last step to be taken before the dead person could be resurrected in the manner of Osiris. In ancient Egypt the funeral procession was a grand and dramatic event. It also was a site of mourning and sadness<sup>13</sup>, and professional mourning women would take part in wailing over the dead (Ikram 184).<sup>14</sup> The 2011 commemorative protests presented ladies dressed in white dresses that were similar to those worn by the wailing ladies in ancient Egyptian funerals. The collar and the belt of their white dresses were adorned in blue, which is the color of sadness that was also used to mourn the dead in ancient Egypt (Lurker 114).



**Figure 2: "Ladies in white carrying pictures of martyrs with halos".** Courtesy of Mina Thabet, Egypt, 2011.

However, the two repertoires are not hermetic. Far from wailing, the ladies in the protest were solemnly carrying face-pictures of the *martyrs* that were decorated with golden halos (see fig. 2). On the one hand, halos have been traced by scholars to the ancient Egyptian solar disk on the head of important deities resulting from devout worship of the sun-God (Kamil 160-163). On the other hand, halos of light that are depicted on martyrs and saints symbolize that they are partaking in God's glory (Shenouda 62, 71). In this way, the funeral depicts a pagan ceremony but adapts it for Christian purposes.

This section of the protest was then followed by a ritual artifact that could be understood as the main thematic object

for the protest. In the first protest held in 2011, it was a white coffin box, decorated on its side with face-pictures of the *martyrs* with halos and on its top with the colors of the Egyptian flag. Coffins were considered to be the *master of life* in ancient Egypt, coming from the term *neb ankh* (Ikram 108-109). It protected the deceased corpse, and thus was considered by ancient Egyptians to be vitally important for the afterlife (108).<sup>15</sup> This is not the case in Christianity, which highlights the death of the body yet the survival of the soul. Yet, the pictures of the martyrs on the coffin are reminiscent of mummy portraits, the *Fayūm* portraits<sup>16</sup> which were painted on wooden panels and placed inside the coffin portraying the deceased in their ideal form.<sup>17</sup> As Skalova argues, these portraits are a product of Pharaonic, Roman and Greek traditions, and are not purely *Pharaonic*; yet, they emerged with the banning of the Pharaonic tradition of mummification under Emperor Theodosius (347-395 AD) (48).

In the second protest held in 2012, a sun-boat that held the names of all the *Maspero martyrs* was the central artifact (see fig. 3). The solar boat, in distinctive golden color, resembled the myth of the resurrection of the sun on a daily basis, which is embodied through the image of



Figure 3: Sun Barque of the Martyrs. Courtesy of Mosireen Collective Creative Commons, Egypt, 2012.

the Sun God Ra traveling in the darkness to reach Osiris. The sun God, the creator of the universe and the origin of all life, popularly known as Ra, would travel every night through the underworld where he unites with Osiris, defeats the forces of darkness and allows the sun to rise again thereby bringing a new day to light. Ra is depicted as traveling in a barque or a boat (Taylor 28-9).<sup>18</sup>

The barque or boat, as an ancient Egyptian symbol, was adopted by the Copts in their protest. In Coptic symbolism, the boat represents the church as the vessel that saves the soul from drowning and doom. It is thus through the church, through its teachings and guidance, that believers are pro-

tected from straying into sin and resurrection made possible (Wiscopts 5).

Throughout both marches, the main-core group was dressed in a distinctive manner and carried the artifacts described above. After the display, groups of organized activists walked in lines. They were dressed with red, white and black t-shirts, the colors of the Egyptian flag. All t-shirts carried the ankh sign. Priests that took part in the marches also had a red bleeding ankh sign that was worn around their necks.

The prominence of the ankh sign, in the place of the cross, is telling. It has usually been seen in pictures of temples of Gods giving the *ankh of life* to kings, thus giving them power and eternity (Lurker 155), but Coptic Christians have adopted the ankh as their cross also known as *crux ansata* (Atiya 2164). For Christians, it is through the crucifixion of Christ and the doctrine of sacrifice that salvation and eternal life are attained (Hanna 34). The ankh was used, albeit in a covert manner, in the protest as a cross. However, as previously stated, the doctrine of sacrifice and salvation has no place in the ancient Egyptian mythology.

In addition, wreaths and flowers were used in both the 2011 and 2012 protests. In



ancient Egypt, wreaths of flowers were a symbol for denoting the innocence of the dead after judgment had taken place and thus the vindication in the afterlife (Lurker 146). This is believed to originate from the amulet granted to Osiris from God Atum, which was believed to assist him against his enemies (Lurker 54-5). Flowers are also related to the beginning of life in ancient Egyptian mythology, they thus played an important role in death ceremonies and rituals and denoted continued life (Lurker 146). Furthermore, wreaths of flowers were believed to have divine powers and its scent was sacred (Lurker 146). While flowers are not believed to have particular powers in Christianity, wreaths were carried by activists and placed around the pictures of the martyrs and on the coffin. It was possibly an attempt to declare the innocence of the protesters and their continued life as martyrs.

The prominence of the music 1492: *The Conquest of Paradise* by the Greek composer Evangelos Odysseas Papathanassiou known as Vangelis throughout both ceremonies was also significant (DNE 1). However, it is important to note that this piece of music referred to the 1492 epic that portrayed Columbus' discovery of the new world (Ramzy 663). The colonialist underpinning of the music is indeed anti-

thetical to the themes of nativism and Egyptian authenticity, which the performative protests seek to display.

When arriving at Tahrir square, which was the destination of the first protest, the music of the *The Conquest of Paradise* stopped, possibly referring to Tahrir (*liberation*) as the yearned for paradise. In Tahrir, the protest music took on a different tone starting with the current Egyptian national anthem, first in Arabic then in Coptic language. As the anthem was both sung in Arabic and Coptic, it was made to represent the equality of both identities in the public space, but it also reveals their difference by highlighting their distancing from the Arab identity. In this sense, the protest ends by claiming Coptic citizenship and equality is paradise.

### Continued Persecution or Equal Citizenship?

The Coptic commemorative protests in 2011 and 2012 attempted to perform a Pharaonic identity, the larger aim of which was to occupy the public space with a national identity discourse, one that was different from the widespread Islamic dominated discourse. Even the Egyptian national-unity discourse, rooted in Islamic and Arab imagery was thus paralleled with a Coptic-nationalist discourse. This paper has presented the manner in which

Pharaonic symbolism was used to portray a Coptic nativism and highlight the superiority of the Coptic identity. By attempting to merge Christian beliefs with ancient Egyptian mythology, the Coptic community might have been seeking to oversee the contradictions and the incompatibilities between these two traditions.

Another issue is the centrality of persecution and martyrdom within Coptic identity, and invisibility becomes a normalized method of ensuring coexistence and for maintaining community cohesion. This is obvious in the way the Christian symbols were consciously suppressed and its beliefs were enacted through Pharaonic symbols. Paradoxically, while the protest was a means of rejecting forms of discrimination and inequality through performing a Coptic identity in public, it also normalized martyrdom as an identity construct. As Ramzy notes, the visibility of the Copts was made though the theme of death, or the state of ultimate negation (Ramzy 664). While Butler holds that the performative appearance in the public space is a way of resisting precarity, she asserts that this precarity is not a separate isolated identity, and she rejects identity politics as a basis for political coexisting (Butler 27, 58). This brings a new meaning to performativity beyond that developed by Butler, and it allows us to speak of the reinforcement of

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collective sub-national identities through performative protests, thereby, asserting those identities, in a contentious manner, into the public space.

### Notes

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<sup>3</sup> Muslim neighbors had attacked the Church, stating that they did not want it in their village. The local governor's response was far from pacifying, denying the existence of the Church in the first place (EIPR 1).

<sup>4</sup> Yet, SCAF (the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces), which led Egypt in the aftermath of Mubarak's deposal, denied that the military police had committed any of these attacks.

<sup>5</sup> These protests were primarily organized by the Maspero Youth Union, the largest of the Coptic movements at the time as well as the activists affiliated with the Theban Legion Magazine (*al-Katiba al-Tibiya*) which was a newsletter published by the Church of St. Mary in Ezbet al-Nakl, Cairo. Its writers and activists were involved in the planning of the protest.

<sup>6</sup> Maspero Youth Union activist interviewed by author, 19 August 2015

<sup>7</sup> For additional material on the construction of identities see:

Al-Katiba al-Tibiya. "Ihtifaliyit Ta'bin Shuhada Maspiro Kamila". *YouTube*, 13 Nov. 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fou6tRN6ZfA>. Access on 29 September 2016.

Bora S. Kamel (2011). "al-march al-gana'izi: Masirat ta'bin shuhada maspiro" *YouTube*, 11 Nov. 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bhdwiz3hNB0>. Access on 29 September 2016.

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2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upSBsFT5oLc>. Access on 29 September 2016. Al-Katiba al-Tibiya. "Masirat al-Zikra al-Ula lshuhada Maspiro". *YouTube*, 11 Oct. 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE1NNjpaWEc>. Access on 29 September 2016.

<sup>8</sup> For visual representation of the revolution in 1919 see "1919 Revolution." *Civic Egypt*, <http://www.civicegypt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/خروش-19.jpg>. Access on 25 April 2017.

<sup>9</sup> The "Flag of Egypt," *Wikimedia Commons*, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/fe/Flag\\_of\\_Egypt.svg/255px-Flag\\_of\\_Egypt.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/f/fe/Flag_of_Egypt.svg/255px-Flag_of_Egypt.svg.png). Access on 25 April 2017.

<sup>10</sup> The author is thankful for Dr. Marco Pinfari for explaining this part.

<sup>11</sup> As Kamil argues, the native churches could be easily differentiated from the Melkite churches due to the former's style that is rooted in the pharaonic tradition (Kamil 201).

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this is why some Coptic writers on ancient Egypt prefer to consider them monotheistic (cf. Seleem 11)

<sup>13</sup> For an iconological comparison of funeral processions see "Great funeral procession of a royal scribe at Thebes". *New York Public Library Digital Collection*, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-6fd3-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Access on 25. April 2017.

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→ <sup>14</sup> For an iconographic comparison of mourning women see "Burial Chamber of Ramose, Vizier and Head of Thebes under Amenophis III and IV, Scene: Lamentations." *Wikimedia Commons*, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/89/Maler\\_der\\_Grabkammer\\_des\\_Ramose\\_001.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/89/Maler_der_Grabkammer_des_Ramose_001.jpg). Access on 25. April 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Coffins are also rooted in the story of Osiris, whose brother Seth trapped him in one and threw it in the sea.

<sup>16</sup> For an iconographic comparison see "Fayum Portrait." *Wikimedia Commons*, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/db/Fayum-07.jpg/220px-Fayum-07.jpg>. Access on 25. April 2017.

<sup>17</sup> It is argued that the *Fayūm* Portraits were the predecessors of the devotional icons which was believed to establish communication with a saint in heavens through the likeness on an icon (Skalova 48-50).

<sup>18</sup> For an iconographic comparison of the barque in ancient Egypt see "Book of Gates Barque of Ra." *Wikimedia Commons*, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Book\\_of\\_Gates\\_Barque\\_of\\_Ra.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Book_of_Gates_Barque_of_Ra.jpg). Access on 25. April 2017.

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## The Alid Iconography between Bektashi Claiming and Popular Piety in Contemporary Albania

Gianfranco Bria and Gustavo Mayerà

In this work, we analysed the intertwining of social transformations and evolution of lived religion through the kaleidoscope of Alid iconographic worship in a post-socialist context such as Albania. In this framework, the Bektashi community restored and renewed Alid iconography, at first supported by transnational Iranian and Alevi networks, in order to hold social and political legitimation within the fragmented religious field. The embodying experiences of iconographic worship

could shape the cognitive perceptions and moral dispositions of believers who partly play, critically and individually, their own religiosity. Finally, the spread of the icons seems to indicate a marketization of religious piety and a surfacing of public Islam, promoted by the Bektashiyya, in order to renegotiate power relations within Albanian society.

**Keywords:** Islam; Albania; Bektashiyya; Sufism; Iconography

"I keep this image always with me, to bring me luck."

(Interview with Ramisha).<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This sentence synthetically expresses the intertwined factors and varied discourses about the veneration of Islamic Alid icons in contemporary Albania. The iconographic cult of some figures related to Alid tradition seems to be absolutely spontaneous and integrated within the religious experience as an integral part of the living religions in Albania.

In recent time, several works have analysed the institutional and political mutations of Balkan Islam in the post-Communist era (Elbasani 2; Bougarel and Clayer 15). Less attention has been dedicated to the study of everyday-life Islamic transformations (Duijzings 157). Starting from this point, this work analysed the iconographic worship at the local and supra-local levels where it takes on several social and political connotations, composed within different discursive fields. This study is based on information collected during a year of ethnographic research within the Albanian mystical networks in 2014.<sup>2</sup> The general aim is to examine the intertwining of the social and cultural transformations with different religious traditions, native or foreign, that are thus directly detectable in

the evolution of the religious worship – such as Alid iconography – in public and private spaces. Considering this, we will focus exclusively on the worship of Islamic icons related to the Alid tradition promoted by the Bektashi community in contemporary Albania. By Alid iconography we mean “the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for the figures of ‘Alī bin Abī Ṭālib<sup>3</sup> and his descendants Ḥusayn, Ḥassan and all Shi’a Imams”. Although this work concerns Islam in particular, it is important to note that Albania is a multi-confessional country; according to the last census, conducted in 2011, the makeup of the country was 60% Muslim, 10% Catholic, and 7% Orthodox (IPSOS).<sup>4</sup>

The first goal of this paper is to analyse the material and discursive strategies produced by Bektashi community and the transnational frame of this phenomenon related to the networking strategies of some foreign actors, Iran and Turkish Alevis, and by Bektashis. The paper will then analyse the counter-narrative generated by religious authorities about the “orthodox cult of icons” to contribute actively to the configuration of the power landscape that shapes and fragments the religious field (Salvatore 91). Later, we will focus on the narratives intertwining with worship diversification and subjective embodied experiences by believers

This paper partly follows the theoretical approach of Talal Asad on the discursive nature of the Islamic tradition (Asad 14). From this contemporary standpoint, this work considers that the internalisation of public meaning, cognitive categories and recognised norms are configured by the worship *embodying* (Csordas 11) that develops the *habitus* (Bourdieu 124) and the practical-emotional dispositions of the believers’ “sense of self” (Pinto 104).

### **Albanian Backgrounds: Secularisation and Fragmented Religious Field**

During the communist period that ended in 1990, the religious field underwent a strong sclerosis<sup>5</sup>: through a control and monitoring system, the Communist regime banned religious worship, which could only be practised clandestinely (Clayer, “Saints” 36). After the Communist regime collapsed, the reconstruction of religious worship was carried out to ensure support and legitimacy for the new post-communist political course (Clayer, “God” 279). However, post-socialist Albanian society was partially transformed: the secularisation of society from 1967 to 1990 – the period of the religion ban – showed its effects in the decline of religious practice (Clayer and Bougarel

228). and exaltation of the ecumenical and multi-faith and secular character of the Albanian civil religion (Sulstarova 28). The role of religion was politically marginal in the public sphere; the atheist constitution and the secular/atheist ideological background avoided the presence of religious authorities within state apparatuses. The state, through its bureaucratic apparatus built during communist times, continued to monitor and control Albanian society (Elbasani and Roy 461). However, this did not prevent some politicians from exploiting religion for their own electoral and geopolitical goals (Lakshman-Lepain 156). The collapse of the regime led to several mutations, such as the appearance of a competitive political system, a rapid urbanization of the Tirana district and the opening of the global space after years of isolationism. The secularisation legacy and religious pluralism favoured a critical individualistic attitude of believers towards the institutional religions.

In this mutable and changeable context, several actors contributed to the reconstruction of religious worship according to a triple dynamic (Clayer, “God” 290). Firstly, the state-supported religious authorities *from above*; secondly, several foreign religious actors *from outside* – Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran – tried to proselytize their own faith; thirdly, the popula-

tion *from below*, especially in peripheral areas, produced locally and individually a relatively strong need for religiosity.

The overlapping of secular/religious, individual/institutional and domestic/ foreign instances *fragmented* the religious field (Elbasani and Roy 462) that was temporarily *formatted* by national-secular ideology. This double dynamic created a strong competition between different official and unofficial actors who implement different strategies of self-legitimation and de-legitimation. Sometimes these strategies grasp the offer of religious goods such as practices or items that are critically *consumed* by believers who subjectively *choose* their own be-in-the-world. Contemporarily, it contributes to frame and embody moral disposition, corporal technique and cognitive schema by the believers-customers. To understand this double dynamic, this work analyses how the Bektashi community reconstructed the iconographic worship of the Prophet's family, in order to legitimise its religious and political authority within post-socialist Albanian society.

### The Alid Iconography: Post-socialist Revival and Customizing Spread

The Bektashiyya, treated administratively as a *ṭarīqa* (sufi order), was one of the largest Sufi brotherhoods in the Ottoman imperial territory, due in part to the symbiotic bond with the Janissaries. The founder of the order was Hajji Bektashi (1209-1271),<sup>6</sup> considered a descendant of Musa al-Kazim<sup>7</sup> (Melikoff 58). Nevertheless, historical information about Bektashi origins is often fragmented or unclear (De Jong 7). The suppression of the Janissary order<sup>8</sup> in 1826 weakened the Bektashi presence in Ottoman territory. A few decades later, the Bektashiyya had a moderate revival mainly concentrated in the Balkan Peninsula.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Bektashiyya played an active role in the construction of the Albanian separatist project; several Bektashi *babas*<sup>9</sup> encouraged the spread of the Albanian language and books in the national language (Clayer, "Bektachisme" 281). By integrating nationalism with its doctrine and participating in national liberation movements, the Albanian Bektashiyya had a strong expansion between 1878 and 1912. The number of *tekke*<sup>10</sup> doubled from twenty to over fifty, mostly located in the south of the country (Clayer, "Bektachisme" 281).

This position assumed by Bektashis contributed to the forging of the ecumenical and laic character of the Albanian nation that never held Islam as the official religion, despite being a Muslim majority - 70% versus 20% Christian Orthodox and 10% Christian Catholic (Clayer, *Origines* 413). The matter was to legitimize the presence of a predominantly Muslim nation in Europe, different from the Turkish nation, and to allow the establishment of an Albanian state after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, this brotherhood acquired a specific place on the religious and political scene in Albania: it became *de facto* a religious community apart (Clayer, *Origines* 413).

The symbiosis with the Albanian nation marginally influenced Bektashi beliefs, even the iconographic worship that was widespread in several Bektashi branches within the imperial territory.<sup>12</sup> As de Jong quoted, the Alid iconography is a feature of Bektashi tradition:

One of the central dogmas in Bektashism is that the Imam 'Alī was a manifestation of the Divine on earth [...] the images (of Ahl el-Bayt) epitomize the central elements of Bektashi teaching. They confront the Bektashi with some of the essentials of Bektashi belief. Thus, these symbols derive their force from their feedback to this belief, i.e.



they are important since they stand for what is important in the Bektashi belief-system which, in its turn, retains its importance by dint of the force of the symbol (9).

In many senses, the Bektashi iconography embodies the heart of its creed. The relationship between icons and beliefs is dualistic: the icons draw their legitimacy from the Bektashi beliefs, but they in turn reinforce beliefs. As a result, the iconography is characterized by Sufi, Alid and Hurufi elements of the Bektashi order (Birge 88).<sup>13</sup> According to de Jong's study, these icons are basically divided into three categories: purely figurative, purely calligraphic and finally both calligraphic and figurative compositions. Many images were formed by two sides that symbolize the division between *bāṭin* (the esoteric) of the Divine embodied by 'Ali and the exoteric of *ẓāhir* (the Divine) embodied by Muhammed that are both the manifestation of the same Divine Reality (de Jong 9).

In this way, Allah, 'Ali and Muhammed represent a Trinity manifesting the same and ultimate *ḥaqīqa* (truth); it follows that the cult of 'Ali, real deity, was presented by many images or calligraphic works that express his union with Allah and Muhammed (Bektashi trinity). In addition to the transformation of 'Ali into a lion, dif-

ferent images represent his famous sword, *dhū al-fiqār*, with two points that symbolizes his supreme power. Over the anthropomorphic cult of 'Ali, Bektashi icons represent the Twelve Imams and Fatima in calligraphic or figurative form. Imam Husayn assumes a certain pre-eminence as a martyr in Karbala; the colour green, used as background in different icons, symbolizes his martyrdom. In addition to the Prophet's family, the Bektashi icons depict their saint epitome, Hajji Bektashi, often in the form of a golden lion (de Jong 11.).

According to interviews with some Bektashi *babas*<sup>14</sup> and surveys in the field, the Alid iconographies were quite widespread among Bektashi networks in inter-war Albania. Moreover, the iconographic worship seemed to spread in the Balkans, as demonstrated by the study of de Jong, who found several icons in the former Yugoslavia and Greece dating back to the early 1900s.

Following the interview with some old Albanian dervishes,<sup>15</sup> it appears probable that the iconographic worship was spread not only in Bektashi courts (Interview with Agroni; Hasani). The Alid cult, not merely iconographic, could be present in other Sufi orders that spread<sup>16</sup> in post-Ottoman Albania, such as the Rifā'iyya, the Sa'diyya, the Qadiriyya, the Mevleliyya and different

branches of the Halvetiyya.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, at the moment we do not have empirical proof on this specific topic because during the Communist regime, many icons and religious leaders were destroyed.<sup>18</sup> After the end of the communist period and of the religion ban, Bektashism was rebuilt primarily around the memory of the community, which tried to reorganize through its leaders (Clayer, "L'Islam Balkanique" 38). The remains and memories of old Bektashi *babas* were exhumed, while several sacred sites were reopened. In addition, religious legitimacy was revived by the demand of sanctity by local populations (Clayer, "L'Islam Balkanique" 38). This revival also included the reconstruction of religious practices, including iconographic worship.

However, the community lacked the material and economic means to restore the icons destroyed during communist times. A decisive help came from the Iranian and Turkish Alevi<sup>19</sup> networks. From 1995-1996, the contact with Shi'a missionaries, who shared the common beliefs between the Shi'i and the Bektashis, provided Shi'a literature to Bektashi leaders (Clayer). The Iranian support was linked to a governmental expansion strategy of political and economic power in the Balkan area (Lakshman-Lepain 147). Offering support to Bektashi post-socialist revivalism, Alevi

tried to evolve from a locally invisible to a transnationally visible belief community, heightening their symbolic and political weight in post-Ottoman space (Zihr 1760). These bilateral relations involved the circulation of several images dedicated to the veneration of 'Ali, Husayn and the Twelve Imams; in the mid-nineties, several icons of the Prophet's family came from Iran and Turkey (see fig. 3). The formation of these transnational networks is one of the most important transformations compared to the post-Ottoman period that affected Sufism in the Balkans (Raudevere 2). It contributed to the legitimation of authority and even the practical and doctrinal corpus of many Islamic mystical communities (Henig 910).

In the case of Bektashis iconographies, the Shi'a and Alevi icons placed inside the *tekke* generated a partial renewal of iconographic worship. From one side, the main subjects were the same as in pre-communist time: the characters of 'Ali, Husayn, Hajji Baktash and the Twelve Imams depicted or simply written in Arabic or Turkish language (see fig. 1 and fig. 3). On the other side, these new icons were different: the serial printing techniques improved the quality of the images and expanded the number of copies available. The new printing media *renewed* the Bektashi iconography; images were more

numerous, more accurate and more accessible. The spread of these icons did not exclusively involve Bektashism, but also the Albanian Sufi networks: several Alid icons were purchased to adorn the sacred sites of the Rifā'iyya, Halvetiyya and Qadiriyya orders<sup>20</sup> (see for example fig. 3). A further renewing boost of the iconographic cult occurred at the turn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the Bektashi community decided to gradually organize the fabrication and diffusion of the icons by themselves. Most of the images taken by the Bektshiyya were inspired by Shiite iconographies, which were already widespread in Albania. However, this time the icons of the Prophet's family were joined by some prominent *babas* portrayed as fathers of the Albanian homeland. The *sanctification* and *iconisation* of these Bektashi figures, such as Naim Frashëri,<sup>21</sup> aimed to promote an intellectual and nationalist identity looking for legitimisation in the post-communist religious space. The Albanian language was used in these gadgets to demonstrate the alliance with the national identity (see fig. 2).

Moreover, this new strategy caused an iconographic renewal that concerned not only frames and portraits, but various objects, such as pens, pins, and pocket images. New icons did not replace the earlier ones, which still continue to exist,

but increased the iconographic presence in the religious field. Several images, printed by local manufacturers in the Tirana industrial area,<sup>22</sup> were spread in Bektashi holy centres, religious shops and libraries in Albania, and even in Macedonia and Kosovo, where Alid iconographic worship is also common among the Sufi brotherhood.<sup>23</sup> It promoted the emergence of local and even transnational distribution networks that gave undeniable economic benefit to the Bektashi community.

This iconographic renewal corresponds to the Bektashi looking for political accreditation and religious legitimacy within Albanian society. Mixing traditional religious elements, nationalism and progressivism, the community tried to approach different parts of Albanian society. On the one hand, the Bektashis sought to keep exercising the forms of traditional religiosity, reorganizing pilgrimages<sup>24</sup> and offering spiritual and social support to local populations; on the other hand, a substantial part – not everyone<sup>25</sup> – of the Bektashi clergy proposed the implementation of some rationalists and nationalist elements to involve the highly educated young people and the cultural-political elite of urban zones. In this way, Bektashism tried to boast a monopoly on Albanian mysticism and simultaneously be a third

religious way, compared to Islam and Christianity: a way more evolved, according to a rational-positivist perspective, more democratic and intrinsically tolerant.<sup>26</sup> In this way, the Bektashi community attempted to claim the status of an independent religious community recognized by the Albanian state, as it had been during the interwar period.<sup>27</sup>

However, the iconographic impulse by Bektashis led to counter-narratives by other Islamic authorities about their correctness within the Albanian religious field. The Islamic Community of Albania (KMSH) distanced itself from the Alid iconography promoted by Bektashis, but basically tolerates its worship because „everyone should be free to practice the religion of his choice“ (Endresen 224). KMSH is government-supported and encompasses, under its organisational umbrella, the main madrasa and mosques of the country. Moderation and tolerance are the fundamental principles of its Islam that are traditionally Albanian-rooted (Endresen 224). However, while not directly delegitimizing the narratives of the Bektashi, the KMSH find a legitimacy space through tolerance and affirmation of freedom of worship according to the surah of the Qur'ān (2: 256; 109: 6).

In contrast, the League of Imams (LI) linked to scriptural Islamic interpretation

(Endresen 231) strongly opposes the use and dissemination of Alid icons, considering them “blasphemous” and contrary to the “original and true principles” of Islam. The LI is composed of clerics who studied in some Islamic religious institutions of Saudi Arabia and Syria and who were then expelled from KMSH due to being considered fundamentalists and fanatics (Endresen 231). For the LI, the only acceptable religious models are the Prophet and his companions, and any other figure is blasphemous, as is the use of any type of image:

Bektashis use the icons because they are politicians, nothing to do with the religion. They are against the teachings of the Prophet [...] these pictures cannot be used in Islam. It's haram!!! (Interview with Samiin).<sup>28</sup>

The Sufi brotherhoods in Albania, the Rifā'iyya, the Halvetiyya, the Qadiriyya and the Sa'diyya, maintained a rather ambivalent attitude toward Bektashi icons. Some shaykhs, such as Sheh Hajdari of Rifā'i in Tropoja, do not want to adopt the Bektashi icons and criticise their aspirations. Although sharing the Alid worship, the Rifā'iyya in Tropoja assert their distinct identity from Sufi Sunni Islam and from Bektashis:

the Bektashiyya is a *tarīqa* like us in all [...] only in Albania it is a religious

sect, but just for politics and economic advantages [...] The worship of Alid icons belongs to all brotherhood, not even Bektashiyya. (Interview with Sheh Hajdari).<sup>29</sup>

Other shaykhs instead fall under the institutional umbrella of KMSH and respect the positions of Bektashis, carefully using their icons. For Sheh 'Ali Pazari who led the Halveti Center in Tirana under the KMSH umbrella:

They became a religious sect [...] they are free to do so. It's right; they are different than us (Halveti brotherhood). They are free to pray to those who want. (Interview Sheh Ali Pazari).<sup>30</sup>

Some shaykhs decided to join the Bektashi community and Iranian embassy. For example, Sheh Qemaludin Reka of Rifā'iyya in Tirana stated:

The Bektashi are our friends [...] we are all sons of Ahl el-Bayt! The Alid way is the best! (Interview with Sheh Qemaludin Reka).<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, new icons made and traded by the Bektashi community are often spread not only among the Bektashi but are also used by other brotherhoods. Images of 'Ali, Husayn and the Twelve Imams are present in several Sufi lodges and graves, while dervishes usually buy icons for their homes and gadgets to wear. The narrations and counter-narrations

towards Bektashi iconographies resulted from the presence of a conflictual and fragmented religious arena; each actor mobilises different strategies of self-legitimation or de-legitimation to validate its authority. In fact, they choose whether to criticize or support Bektashi iconographies according to their different strategies of legitimisation concerning both, internal and external factors or institutional and personal elements, like religious charisma.

### Embodied and lived icons

In many ways, the confrontation between these religious authorities seems to be detached from the faithful who choose critically and individually how to express their religiosity. The main iconographic users are the believers that obtain the icons to satisfy their individual religious and sacred needs. For many reasons, Bektashis could intercept the contingent, individualized and extemporaneous religiosity of the faithful. On the other hand, by spreading their icons, the Bektashis sought to shape popular piety to receive religious and social legitimacy within Albanian society. In this sense, the iconographic renewal contributed to *customize* and *format* the Albanian religious field

framing religious behaviours by believers-customers. Bektashis seem to use these images as *consumer-products* to satisfy the religious needs of the faithful that use the icons for different reasons: requests for money, luck or health. In this sense, the icons could represent *fast-items* that are rapid to use and easy to find within the religious market.

The faithful who obtain the icons do not necessarily have detailed knowledge of 'Ali, Husayn and the Twelve Imams and the history associated with them; they focus more on their healing and merciful influence. They are not necessarily Bektashi or even have an Islamic-familiar background; their confessional membership seems to be extremely varied, while their social extraction is also very heterogeneous. These faithful seem to be relatively occasional consumers of icons. In this sense, the veneration of icons could intercept individualised religious instances by believers who can express their religiosity even in a private space according to their contingent requirements and needs.

However, the rapid use/consummation of snapshots and the icons frames cognitive behaviours and emotional perceptions. For the faithful, the icons are a tactile visual and material device that emits beneficial power and reconnects the *baraka* (divine blessing) of the saint wherever and when-

ever. The impact and the visual perception of the icons modulate the believers' semantic interpretation. Some aspects, such as scratches and tears on the face of Husayn focus the mercy and admirations of the faithful. The dreams are the privileged visionary experiences that seem to express these blessing aspects:

I dreamed [of] H̱usayn telling me to be patient, that my husband would find a job soon [...] He got off his horse and gave me some coins in my hands. [...] Later my husband got a job. We received a miracle. (Interview with Sabura).<sup>32</sup>

I bought these images to keep here with me [...] I live in Italy; a year ago, I returned to Tirana and bought a little picture in a kiosk in the street before taking an exam. Before I dreamed he (Ali') gave me a pat on the cheek [...] He made me well. Later, I bought a badge that I always keep in my bag; I would not want the good luck to go away! (Interview with Nada).<sup>33</sup>

These experiences are perceived as authentic and contribute to *legitimising* the iconography as a *correct* linking-divine worship. It forges the religious behaviour and shapes living religion; the icons have become one of the main ways

to link the human being to the divine. This embodying experience produces cumulative effects in the construction of moral disposition and a sense of self of the believers. 'Ali and Husayn are represented as figures that are merciful and righteous; pious models forged by embodying experiences of the believers that fix solidarity-community webs between the actors. These networks share a morality formed by the symbolic capital of Bektashism, based on ecumenical, progressive and neo-spiritual values. The slogan "Bektashism supports religious harmony and tolerance" is the most widely shared quote of many believers.<sup>34</sup>

The faithful believe that Bektashi-made icons can protect and sanctify their bodies and homes. When the icon is a baba gift, its beneficial effect cumulates with the sanctity of the donor. In this way, the iconographic miraculous effects not only come from the magic powers of the characters portrayed, but also from the hands of the giver. As a gift from *Baba*, the icons embodied his sacred power (*baraka*):

The Baba's touch has magical benefits; even his breath can make good or heal. (Interview with Agron).<sup>35</sup>

This model of holiness in Albania is defined using the name *njeri i mire* (holy man) and takes on a multi-faith character i.e. not limited to Sufism. The *Baba's* holy

body is perceived as an extension of the ambience of divinely inspired love (Werbner and Hasu 6); his touch gives the opportunity to enjoy the beneficial and miraculous effects of his divine transcendence. Even the objects that come in contact with his body absorb his magical powers:

A Baba gave me these pictures, telling me to pray [to] them to renew his blessing [...] I keep some images with me. My children do it too. Holiness can constantly protect us. (Interview with Feriha).<sup>36</sup>

Through iconography, this model of traditional holiness is transformed and spread through modern techniques of dissemination. The large-scale production of images and objects provides the opportunity to more easily spread the Bektashi holiness. The beneficial influence is not only obtained through the life or death of saint people (shaykhs, priests), but also through icons that become part of the Albanians' lived religion.

However, it would be wrong to think that believers are merely passive actors. Their embodying experiences contribute to setting the normative and semiotic elements of the worship. For example, in the mausoleums and tombs, they deposit the photos of people to ask for beatification and healing for them (see fig. 1):

I leave this picture so that the Holy [one can] bless my daughter<sup>37</sup> said an old woman at the Bektashi grave of Sari Saltik<sup>38</sup> in Krujë. This practice indicates the believers' roles in shaping worship through their experiences. It shows that the believers are active agents in the establishment and restructuring of religious worship detached from the narratives implemented by the Bektashi establishment.

## Conclusions

The case of Alid iconography would indicate a public counter-return of spiritual piety (Casanova 14), after the secularisation by the Communist regime. In some contexts, Sufism, or religious esotericism in general, seems to be isolated in a so-called escape to "the realm of private religious conscience" due to the public space domination by nationalistic projects and secular institutions (Heck 3). In Albania, the fragmented and competitive religious space encouraged the emersion of "public Islam", which concerns the intertwining of Islam with the political process (Salvatore 91). The aim of Bektashism is to find a space in the public sphere of thought, renegotiating the relationships of power and co-opting the national-ecumenical and secular ideology. From this point of view, iconography has a public

relevance: its daily experiences embody semantic values and practical dispositions that would affect the social and political legitimization of the Bektashi community. Simultaneously, religious piety seems to be touted as an individual piety product.

Iconography meets the religious needs of the faithful and contributes to customize the sacred within the global-local religious market.





Figure 1: This portrait was found in the Bektashi Headquarters in Tirana. It portrays various images of 'Ali, Abbas and Husayn according to a Shiite iconography. Husayn's is pictured on a horseback and pierced by some arrows, which recalls his martyrdom at Karbala. In the lower right there is a photo of a baby - in Albania, it is common to leave pictures of people at gravesites for blessing. Courtesy of the authors, Albania, 2014.



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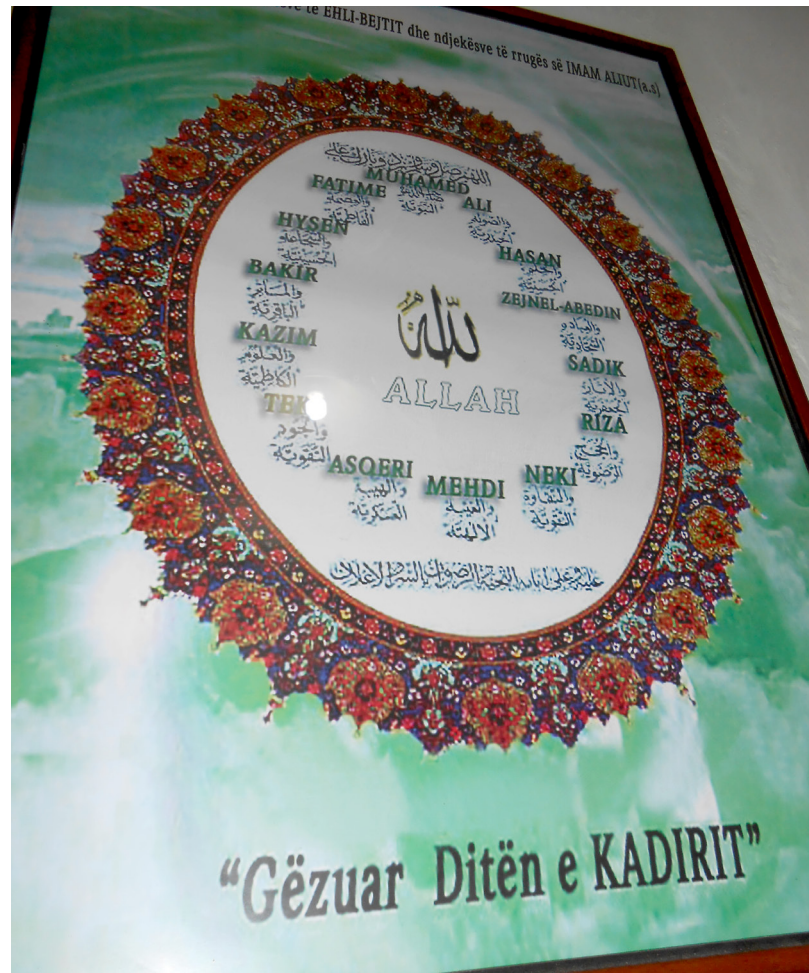


Figure 2: This frame was found in a Bektashi tekke in Gjakastër, Southern Albania. This frame was produced by Bektashi community for Musa, the Baba of the center. It shows the names of the Twelve Imams, Muhammed and Fatima in Albanian and in Arabic. During the ethnographic survey in Albania, this image was found also in several Sufi lodges, such as Halveityya in Tirana. Within the frame is printed in Albanian: “To all the lovers of the Prophet’s Family and followers of ‘Alī Way” and “Good Day of Laylat al-Qadr (Night of Destiny)”. Courtesy of the authors, Albania, 2014.



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Figure 3: According to dialogue with Hasani, the shaykh of the center in Mallakstër, this frame comes from Alevi Turkish networks. It shows the images of the Twelve Imams and their names in Turkish. Under the Bektashi frame, there are the pictures of several shaykhs belonging to the Halvetiyya in Albania. Courtesy of the authors, Albania, 2014.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ramisha is a 60 years old woman in Kavaja, in September 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Gianfranco Bria's Ph.D. research focused on a Sufi revival in post-communist Albania. This one year research adopted an ethnographic method based on observing participation of daily life of Albania dervishes, including ritual and practices.

<sup>3</sup> The Prophet, his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali, his daughter Fatima, his grandchildren Hasan and Husayn and their direct descendants and successors, the Imam, are certainly a peculiar framework in the Shi'ism. However, the function of these figures is characterized by a number of peculiarities that have their origin in the sacred story and in the doctrine of all forms of Alidism. These characteristics have favored the rise over the centuries of political ideology and even artistic or religious expressions, such as the iconography of this family within the Islamic world. Probably, the original confessional fluidity between Shiism and Sunnism (crystallized only in the Safavid era) shaped an inherent common presence of some elements of Alid worship among the mystical movements borne or formed in Anatolian-Iranian area. See Bausani, Alessandro. *Persia religiosa. Da Zarathustra a Bahá'u'lláh*. Edizioni Lionello Giordano, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> These percentages have been widely criticized and are still a sensitive topic. For more information see Endresen, C. "Status report Albania 100 years." *Strategies of symbolic nation-building in South Eastern Europe*. Ed. Pål Kolstø, Ashgate, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Many Sufi shaykhs were imprisoned or killed and many places of worship were closed and destroyed; also many religious items were lost, see Clayer, Nathalie. "God in the 'Land of the Mercedes'. The Religious Communities in Albania since 1990". *Albanien*. Peter Jordan et al., Österreichische Osthefte, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> On the person of Haji Bektashi see Melikoff, Irene. *Hadji Bektach: Un Mythe Et Ses Avatars: Genesee et Evolution du Soufisme Populaire en Turquie*. Brill Academic Publishers, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> Bulbrahim Musa b. Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Kazim (745-799) was the seventh imam of the Imamiyyah.

<sup>8</sup> *Janissary elite corps*, from Turkish *yeniçeri* (new soldier) and collectively the *new militia*, of the Ottoman Empire (established in the 14th century). Originally, they were formed of young people forcibly enlisted from Christian families who were then brought up in the Muslim religion (*devshirme*). Cf. Rossi, Ettore. "Giannizzeri." *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1932.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to clarify the hierarchical levels within the Bektashi Community: first of all, *Kryegjyshi Boterori Bektashinjve* (The world leader of the Bektashi); first degree is Dede; second degree is *Baba*; third degree is Dervish; last degree is Myhib. Cf. *Statuti I Kryegjyshatës Botërore Bektashiane*, 2009.

<sup>10</sup> *Tekke* in Turkish (in Albanian *teqe*) is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation.

<sup>11</sup> For further information on Albanian nationalism see Clayer, Nathalie. *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais : la naissance d'une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*. Karthala, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> For a general survey about iconographies in the Ottoman and post-Ottoman Empire, see Schick, Irvin Cemil. "The Iconicity of Islamic Calligraphy in Turkey." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 53/54, 2008. Schick, Irvin Cemil. "The Content of Form: Islamic Calligraphy between Text and Representation." *Sign and Design: Script as Image in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Brigitte M. Bedos-Rezak and ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Dumbarton Oaks, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> For full details on the Bektashi belief see Birge K. J. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. Luzac, 1927.

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- <sup>14</sup> The most significant interviews about this topic were two: the first to Hanif, Bektashi *dede* (approx. 60 years old) in the headquarters of Bektashi Community in Tirana, December 2014; the second, to Musa, a *baba* (approx. 50 years old) in Gjirokastër in April 2014. Both said that Alid iconography was spread in Bektashi *tekke* in post-Ottoman Albania.
- <sup>15</sup> For Agroni a 60 years old Rifā'i dervish, the icons were placed in several Albanian *tekkes*, and contained calligraphic and figurative illustrations relating to the family of the Prophet and the Twelve Imam. Also for Hasani, a 63 years old dervish of Halvetiyya, the icons of Twelve Imams were present in the *tekke* of his father.
- <sup>16</sup> In interwar Albania, there were present Sufi orders Nqshbandiyya and Tijaniyya that probably did not get iconographies. Cf. Tahsin, Hasan. *Shtyllat themelore të tarikatit tixhani*. Gutenberg, 1941; Luli, Faik, Islam Dizdari, and Nexhmi Bushati. *Ne kujtimet brezave*. Rozafat, 1997.
- <sup>17</sup> In 1936, under the invitation of King Zog, the Rifā'i, the Sa'diyya, the Qadiri and Tijaniyya formed the association *Drita Hyjnore* (Divine Light), under the institutional umbrella of the Islamic Community of Albania. Cf. Popovic, Alexandre. *Les Derviches Balkaniques hier et aujourd'hui*. Les Éditions ISIS, 1994.
- <sup>18</sup> "Hoxha's communist servants destroyed many images [...] only the images of the dictator were permitted" said Hanif, Bektashi *dede* (approx. 60 years old) in the headquarters of Bektashi Community in Tirana, December 2014.
- <sup>19</sup> The definition of Alevi, sometimes called Kizilbaş, is somewhat complex and problematic. This article treats Alevi as a mystical branch of Islam whose adherents are followers of 'Ali, the Twelve Imams and their descendants in contemporary Turkey. For further information about Alevis and Kizilbaş (terms often confused) see Dressler, Markus. *Writing Religion. The making of Turkish Alevi Islam*, Oxford UP, 2013.
- <sup>20</sup> According to Bria's ethnographic surveys in 2014, the Sufi orders still present in post-socialist Albania are Halvetiyya, Rifā'iyya, Qadiriyya and Sa'diyya.
- <sup>21</sup> Poet and leader of the Albanian Renaissance, Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), was the author of an epic poem *Qerbelâ* dedicated to the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet, from which nationalist and patriotic themes develop. The Bektashi leaders elected him to *baba of honor*, as the father of Bektashism and the Albanian nation.
- <sup>22</sup> Information gathered during a survey in Albania in March 2016.
- <sup>23</sup> Information gathered during a survey in Kosovo and Macedonia in March 2016.
- <sup>24</sup> One of the most famous pilgrimages is performed to Mount Tomor every August. Cf. Çuni, Nuri. *Tomorr, o mal i bekuar*, 1999; Amir-Moezzi, Mohammad Ali. *Lieux de l'islam. Cultes et cultures de l'Afrique à Java*, Éditions Autrement, 1996.
- <sup>25</sup> Some members of the Brotherhood criticized this intellectualist interpretation of Bektashism, because it excessively distances Bektashism from Islam. See Baki, Dollma. *Historiku i Sarisalltëk Babait e Teqesë bektashiane të Dollmës*, 2004.
- <sup>26</sup> All these values are reported in the last Community Statute. See *Statuti i Kryegjyshitës Botërore Bektashiane*, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> See *Statuti i Kryegjyshitës Botërore Bektashiane*, 2000.
- <sup>28</sup> Samiin is a 28 years old gym-coach in Tirana who frequents the mosque of *rruga e durrësit* in Tirana, which is managed by an imam of the League of Imams.
- <sup>29</sup> Sheh Hajdari is the shaykh of a Rifā'iyya center in Tropoja.
- <sup>30</sup> Sheh Ali Pazari led the Halvetiyya in Tirana Reka.
- <sup>31</sup> Sheh Qemaludin Reka is Shaykh Rifā'i in Tirana.
- <sup>32</sup> Sabura is 52 years old housewife in Durrës.
- <sup>33</sup> Nada is a young female business university student in Tirana.
- <sup>34</sup> According to several Interviews conducted in Bektashi headquarter in Tirana in October-November 2014.
- <sup>35</sup> From a dialog with Agron, a Bektashi dervish in Tirana.
- <sup>36</sup> Feriha is a 35 years old housewife in Shkoder.
- <sup>37</sup> According to an interview conducted in Kruja in September 2014.
- <sup>38</sup> Sari Saltik (m. 1298) was a 13th century semi-legendary Turkish dervish, venerated as a saint by the Bektashis in Albania. See Kolczynska, Marta. "On the Asphalt Path to Divinity. Contemporary Transformation in Albanian Bektashism: The case of Sari Saltik Teqe in Krujë." *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2013.
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## Competing iconographies in Jerusalem's Old City

Thomas Richard

The Old City of Jerusalem is at the core of an ongoing visual struggle between two sets of iconographies, with the Palestinian and Israeli sides trying to assert by this mean their claim to the City, both on a private and a public level, with diasporic and tourists as their target audience. This struggle has led to the appearance of a specific visual culture of the Old City, with visitors being entangled in this struggle.

At the same time, this specific target has had a very strong influence on the choice of images, which are designed to fit its tastes and demands in a global cultural context.

**Keywords:** Jerusalem, iconography, tourism, diaspora, cultural globalization, identity

### Introduction

Welcoming millions of visitors annually ("Yaakov"), Jerusalem has seen the development of a particular touristic iconography, both publicly and privately. This iconography is aimed at helping tourists find their way around the city, but it also serves other purposes, namely asserting a person's legitimacy in the city and building a narrative for this legitimacy. Under tourism, we understand the phenomenon of short-term migration for leisure or cultural purposes, and the system of actors, practices and spaces created for the accommodation of these visitors away from home (Ceriani-Sebregondi 10). This article is more focused on the iconography that sustains these practices, the one which is created to guide the tourists, and the one which offers them an image of what they have come to visit. Although this iconography can be rather neutral, particularly when it is aimed at religious pilgrims, it coexists with a more identity iconography, albeit also touristic, that is linked to the Israeli and the Palestinian narratives. Based on field research conducted through participatory observation in the museums and touristic shops of Jerusalem in 2010 and 2014, this study focuses on this second type of iconography and intends to understand how it is used to assert these narratives amongst its target audi-

ence, foreign visitors. Tourists and visitors are offered a wide array of Israeli and Palestinian symbols and objects of identity, which they can, in turn, bring back home and be bearers of these narratives themselves. In this way, visitors to Jerusalem become “entangled” in this narrative through the iconographic choices they make while shopping in the Old City (Gell 16). This will lead us use a homogenized frame in order to focus on images and products which demonstrate, in the most visible way, their identity content. We will consequently pay less attention to iconographies in which this aspect is more ambiguous or can be linked to multiple narratives (the association would depend on the place of purchase and on the possible intention of the buyer, such as Dead Sea products, photos of Jerusalem’s landscape, or images simply labelled “Holy Land”, which can be interpreted to support none or either narrative).

It is present on city banners and road signs, but mostly appears on much more intimate objects, such as lighters, T-shirts, key chains, kitchen gloves, etc. so that the buyers become the bearers of a particular narrative as they use the items throughout their daily lives. This iconography is to be linked with the political and memorial geography of the Old City

(Halbwachs .11), elements which the visitors have in mind when visiting the Old City, and they are being invited to take part in a particular memory (Cohen-Hattab “Zionism” 67; Brin “Politically-oriented tourism” 215; Stein “National itineraries” 107). This is to be understood through the question of diasporic tourism (Kelner *Tours that bind* 191.; Coles and Dallen *Tourism* 215) and transnational mobilization through images (Tarrow and Della Porta *Transnational Activism* 203.; Doerr et al “Visual Analysis” 13) in which visitors are conceived as potential supporters of one national claim on the city or the other.

At the same time, this political iconography in a touristic place is to be analyzed in light of the creation of a new visual image of Jerusalem, one that is deeply linked to these competing narratives when taken as a comprehensive phenomenon. As this iconography is conspicuously present, it questions the visual culture of the Middle East and its evolution (Gruber and Haugbolle 9). As it has been addressed toward a global audience, it has absorbed and transformed symbols from all over the world, and has turned these symbols into parts of the existing narratives, which consequently, questions the evolution of culture in a postcolonial world (Appadurai 89.). This visual and militant culture is

transformed by its target audience. As a result, this iconography can be interpreted as creating a new visual identity for the Old City, one that is centered on competing narratives within the visual culture of a particular form of war tourism (Butler and Suntikul 132, 143, Debbie 91).

To address these questions, we will study this iconography first on the Israeli and then on the Palestinian side and will examine both the public and private levels. Then, we will study the transformation of the visual identity of the Old City through the integration of these iconographies in a global cultural context.

### **Israeli iconography and the diaspora: a biblical, Oriental, and military identity**

The most obvious features of public iconography in Jerusalem are the signs and banners that guide the visitors. As such, they are part of a policy of Israelization of the Old City (Nassar 5., Bar and Rubin 775), a policy that places a particular emphasis on archeology and the on the imposition of an Israeli historical narrative about Old City places (el-Haj 130 and 163), especially in the Jewish Quarter and in the City of David (Ricca 25, Pullan and Gwiazda 10). From an iconographic point of view, this Israelization is done through the choice of images that should symbolize the various sites of Jerusalem and blends

together biblical and historical references into a narrative that sustains the Israeli claim and is directed, in particular, towards diasporic tourists, guests who want to visit places that have been identified through biblical archeology, which focuses on the search for historical proofs of the Bible, as being biblical sites (Ben-Yehuda et al 299, Finkelstein and Silberman 4).

These references accompany visitors along their way through the City as soon as they are welcomed by the tourist office of Jerusalem at the Jaffa Gate. Its symbol portrays two characters carrying a large grape on a stick, this being a reference to the entrance of the Hebrews into the Holy Land (Numbers 13). As visitors, they follow the steps of Jerusalem's mythical topography (Halbwachs 11), a topography that has been marked by an Israeli iconography that reinterprets the traditional pilgrimage roads. The same mix of references appears next to the Dung Gate with its symbol of the City of David. While most of this site is more modern, an ancient harp, a reference to King David, is printed onto the flashlight that each visitor receives as a memento.

Within the City, tourists are invited to visit the Davidson Center, the Archeological Park, the Damascus Gate and the Ancient Quarries of Jerusalem, each signaled by

banners bearing a particular character. For the Davidson Center, the character is a Herodian stone worker; an Ottoman character was chosen for the Archeological Park; a Roman legionary represents the Damascus Gate; and a Hebrew royal figure was selected for the Ancient Quarries. The stone worker is an allusion to the building of the Second Temple, about which much of the Davidson Center's exposition is devoted to, and the Roman legionary alludes to the fact that at the Damascus Gate, one can also visit the remains of the Roman gate. The royal figure hints at the water drops in the quarries that are called "Zedekiah's tears", while the quarry is also said to have been used to build the First Temple. The Ottoman character stands for all of Jerusalem, but most particularly, the ramparts built under Soleiman I.

Each of these characters strengthens the Israeli narrative, which uses biblical archeology to identify places where biblical narratives could have occurred. Zedekiah and the First Temple resort to invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1, Finkelstein 27) and strengthen the link between present-day Israel and the Ancient Kingdom in the model of imagined communities (Anderson 2006). This narrative is fostered by the Herodian sculptor who rebuilds the Temple after

the First Exile. The Roman legionary, in the attire of the Flavian dynasty, is reminiscent of the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman legions in 70 AD, and of the diaspora, as the history of the Jewish Revolt by Josephus has been deeply appropriated by the Israeli narrative (Ben-Yehuda 247, 71, Weingrod 228) and thereby transforms the visual identity of the gate. The Ottoman character erases the Palestinian narrative of the city, especially the whole of the Middle Ages and incorporates this entire period into the domination of the Ottomans (which are conceived of as a foreign power). From the First Temple to present day Israel, iconography appears to be a powerful tool for the Israelization of the city and for linking its past to its present. The images give a sense of reality to the Israeli narrative, and transform the mythical topography of the Holy Land (Boytner, Dodd and Parker 142, Silberman 487).

This mix of archeology and biblical references is also prevalent in the souvenir shops that offer visitors a wide variety of posters and models, together with ritual objects to be used at home (*mezuzahs*, candlesticks, Sabbath tablecloth etc) and are decorated with such iconography. Among these, the representations of the Second Temple are common. The image is designed according to biblical accounts

and archeological evidence and thereby creates a virtual representation of Jerusalem that is supported by archeology and that fits the Israeli narrative better than the actual Old City. This virtual image serves the construction of the community between Israel and the diaspora, the image being more relevant in this regard than the actual remains, and it creates a common identity around that image (Edensor 135, 103) through diasporic tourism (Holmes 192).

Through ritual objects, diasporic visitors are invited to Israelize their Jewish lives (Collins-Kreiner and Olsen 279). These objects are made in Jerusalem or are made with Dead Sea stone, or olive wood grown in Israel, and they bear views of the Old City, the Jerusalem coat of arms, the Lion of Judah, the Wailing Wall, or the Tomb of Absalom, all elements that are key to the identification of Israel as the heir to the ancient Jewish kingdoms that built these structures. Further relevant are the symbols that appear on official emblems, with mentions of "Israel", "Sion", or "Jerusalem" in Hebrew. They also feature another virtual iconography, that of the replica of the original menorah that dominates the stairs above the Wailing Wall, which thereby participates in the virtualization of the City around models that are archeologically precise and recreate the

Holy Land according to an identity narrative (Long 165).

This recreation is not devoid of exoticism, as the Israel pictured on these objects is also deeply oriental. This is linked to the construction of Israel as an Oriental land alongside its archeological and biblical references (Khazzoom 489, Kalmar, Davidson and Penslar 80, Peleg 75). Objects often feature paintings of Israel that present its cities as Oriental villages with domes and white houses, creating an identity landscape (Thiesse 189, Sgard 23) that is evocative of the ancient Israel and of the Middle Eastern identity of the country. This is in fact an Orientalized version of the country that fits visitors' demands, which are visually derived from the Palestinian landscape of the 30's (which has been appropriated by the Israeli narrative) and which is coherent with the sale of reproductions of touristic posters of the 30's that feature such landscapes. This has led also to the adoption of ceramic paintings presented as a "traditional" Israeli crafts, something that is considered to be more Oriental and that better fits the visitors' tastes. This Orientalization of Israel has also led to the adoption of the camel as a national symbol on T-shirts, fridge magnets, postcards, etc, as a manifestation of the Oriental flavor that visitors seek when visiting Israel (Bendix 131).

Nevertheless, the most popular iconography on the Israeli side is linked to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), particularly on T-shirts, but also on all forms of intimate objects such as kippahs, lighters and necklaces, anything but those objects that would appear disrespectful (for example, ashtrays). It is a common sight in the Old City to come across visitors wearing IDF T-shirts, or bearing the emblem of the police, the Air Force, or the Paratroopers. When not in uniform, Israelis do not wear such symbols, and this iconography appears to be specifically targeted at the touristic audience. It is most particularly aimed at the diasporic visitors, who can also buy a wide array of products labeled as being "similar to the ones in use in the IDF". Tsahal is perceived as being at the core of the Israeli identity (Ben-Amos 103, 201), and the wearing of such shirts creates participation in that community (Cohen 2013, pp 97 Helman 305) and assigns the visitor to a particular side within the narrative conflict. It is a way to manifest one's sense of belonging and solidarity with Israel (Habib 139, Lev Ari and Mittelberg 86, Kelner 191), and could even be perceived as a symbol for the diaspora itself.

### **Palestinian iconography of resistance for a local and global audience**

The Palestinian narrative cannot benefit from an official iconography as the Israeli one does, but, within the political frame imposed onto the Old City, it is nevertheless very much present. If the Palestinian Authority lacks the possibility to officially present its national narrative, it nevertheless appears through private initiatives in interstitial spaces. For lack of banners, Palestinian graffiti and advertisements are common and act in the same manner, as markers of national property, and show the Palestinian flag or praise the resistance and glorify the spirit of Saladin. Since the *Haram-ech-Cherif* itself cannot be appropriated in a Palestinian perspective, due to the Holy Places regulations, in the same way other pilgrimages have been portrayed in Palestine (Aubin-Boltanski 131), this iconography is to be found on the ramparts that surround it. This appears as an iconographic counter-virtualization, and these images are linked to the Palestinian narrative and to the campaigns of Saladin, the liberator of the city from Crusader rule, around which the Ottoman ramparts are reinterpreted (Khalili 90).

Saladin himself is rather common on Palestinian commercial banners in the Old City with an iconography inspired by

the film renditions of his rule, particularly Youssef Chahine's *Al Nasser Salah-ed-Din* (Aigle 189, Mayeur-Jaouen 91), which portrays the sultan as a national hero. The image of Saladin and his troops advancing towards Jerusalem is also a popular feature on T-shirts or on posters that are sold on the Palestinian side of the Old City. Nevertheless, this image appears limited to such products, as other objects would appear disrespectful.

Since the Israeli authorities forbid the appearance of martyr posters or militant groups' logos, the Palestinian iconography revolves around a few political, religious, and identity symbols that appear on all kinds of supporting objects, but here again, the objects matter in the sense that the political statement made should not interfere with the necessary respect that should be given to a religious symbol. In that sense, symbols that bear a sacred meaning, such as the Dome of the Rock, and al Aqsa Mosque (Vale 391), which are often accompanied with Koranic verses, appear commonly as posters, embroideries, paintings and mosaics that are intended to be displayed in the home as both national and religious symbols, or they also appear on keychains that are intended to be used as personal amulets. The *nazar* is used in the same manner, but less on T-shirts, con-

trary to the Israeli side, where non-Jewish religious monuments are considered landmarks and appear more frequently on touristic clothing.

Apart from the Holy Places, these symbols also encompass the map of Palestine as it was before 1948, where it is often combined with the Palestinian flag, the *keffiyeh* (Swedenburg "Keffiyeh" 63), portraits of Yasser Arafat, and drawings of Handala (Najjar 255, Halevy 2009). These images evolve from the Palestinian national iconography into a touristic context (Le Troquer and Nammari 201). The *keffiyeh*, which has been identified as the primary symbol of the Palestinian struggle since the 30s, is linked to the Palestinian rural identity (Sanbar 50, Khalidi 89), and, through its use by Yasser Arafat, has become particularly important in this regard (Sayigh 151). Handala is also very common, and Naji el-Ali's cartoon has represented the Palestinian refugees for decades and has also been widely used among leftist organizations that support the Palestinian cause. Symbols of Palestinian suffering putting an emphasis on pathos, such as images of mothers and children weeping, are also common and are linked to the particular visual culture of the Middle East, especially in Turkey (Haugbolle and Gruber 103), but these images seem to be limited to books, pos-



ters and CD covers in religious bookstores which may interest militant Muslim visitors, but their scope remains limited, due to the Israeli regulations and their lack of appeal for other tourists. Moreover, the symbols offered to buyers differ according to the places where they are sold, with portraits of Yasser Arafat being more concentrated around the Damascus Gate and the *Haram-ech-Cherif*, along the lines of religious iconography, in shops targeting a local audience. Shops aimed at a more global audience tend to prefer Handala and the national flag.

These images are often combined, especially as olive wood, from which many decorative objects and key chains are made, is used as a national signifier (Abufarha 343) of the Palestinian rural identity but also as a symbol of peace. In the same manner, images displaying an identity Palestinian landscape are often painted on ceramic. It is the same ceramic as the one in Israeli shops, but it is interpreted in a different sense as here the focus is on the original (pre 1948) Palestinian landscape (Thiesse 189, Sgard 23). The case is the same for floral ceramic painting, similarly presented as bearing the national identity in both Palestinian and Israeli shops. In each case, it is the context and sometimes the political symbol associated with the painting that

places it in its own narrative, each one claiming authenticity. At the same time, both of these narratives are faced with a particular iconographic competition over these paintings in the Armenian quarter. Ceramic painting here is presented as a traditional Armenian craft was imported in Jerusalem after the 1915 genocide. Armenian ceramic shops in Jerusalem link this particular iconography to their own narrative, displaying next to their products photos and posters that depict the Armenian genocide, thereby drawing attention their ill-recognized agenda (Oron 351) through this iconographic competition.

In line with this iconography, Palestinian shops also offer a wide range of images based on the traditional embroideries of Palestinian dresses, which, when reinterpreted in a national sense, play a role in women's clothing that is rather parallel to that of the *keffiyeh* for men (Khalidi 14, Allenby). These embroideries appear on dresses, but also on different cloth objects (purses, bags...), and they particularly appear on posters displaying pictures of women wearing these embroideries, with the origin of each dress also carefully mentioned. These embroideries, reinterpreted to fit both local needs and global taste, are markers of the Palestinian national identity that are linked to its

strong relation to the land (Swedenburg "The Palestinian peasant" 22, Bardenstein 148, Abufarha 352).

Part of these products are aimed at a local audience, who, as Palestinians of Jerusalem and the West Bank, want to assert their national identity, especially when it comes to intimate objects such as keychains and lighters. At the same time, this iconography is also aimed at Jewish and Israeli tourists who visit the Arab quarters of the Old City, where products are cheaper than on the Israeli side. To answer the demands of these customers, Palestinian iconography can appear side by side with the Israeli one. This entails a complex relationship with the Israeli visitors, considered as adversaries, neighbors, and customers at the same time. Palestinian shops play on the orientalist stereotypes of authenticity and exoticism for marketing purposes and make a statement of political existence (Stein "National itineraries" 105, Tamari and LeVine 77) through the various images they sell.

Beyond this local audience, these products are aimed at militant visitors who, by wearing these dresses made in the colors of the *keffiyeh* and the Palestinian flag, or T-shirts with Handala, take sides within the narrative conflict and assert their solidarity with the Palestinians. Through iconography, these objects are a symbol of trans-

national mobilization in favor of Palestinians, and mirrors the visitors who claim adhesion to the Israeli narrative (A. Cohen 109). In that regard, iconography is a way of voluntarily entangling oneself in the conflict (Gell 16) and thereby transforming a touristic activity into a political statement of affiliation with a national cause. Nevertheless, this type of touristic militancy transforms the products themselves, as they are tailored to fit particular needs and cultural references, and in doing so, create a new kind of cultural iconographic product.

### **Transforming conflictual iconography in a global cultural context**

The competition between Israeli and Palestinian iconographies in the Old City is more complex than frontal opposition. Both iconographical sets have been transformed and have evolved through the touristic context in which they are bought, leading to the creation of a new visual identity for Jerusalem that is centered on global cultural references, and a form of war tourism.

This appears through the transformation of the iconography, which draws a bridge between local references and more a global imagery. This is most obvious when it comes to T-shirts made on demand. Both on the Palestinian and the Israeli side,

visitors can buy shirts with the logo of various famous international sport teams or local ones, the first having clearly influenced the designs of the local teams' logos. The same goes for fake local universities shirts, which are modeled after their American counterparts. In the same manner, it is possible to buy T-shirts bearing a (fake) logo for "Planet Hollywood", "Hard Rock Cafe" Jerusalem, or "Harley-Davidson", sometimes mixed with the Israeli or Palestinian national colors, or the tourist's name written in Hebrew or in Arabic. This is linked to a global consumer culture (Stenger 42, Bryman 57) that is keen to look for a local meaning in its consuming experience but one that also fits its global references. This hints at a global mainstream culture that local sellers must comply with in order to earn their living and to "entangle" consumers in their narrative competition (Martel 251, Al Sayyad 34, Mignolo 91).

Objects and iconography are thus transformed to fit this global taste and its understanding of the competition. On the Israeli side, this appears in relation to the appropriation of the camel as an identity animal: some representations are made to look "traditional and local" (sewn with glass beads and Bedouin-looking ornaments), following the process of an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and

Ranger 1) Others are inspired by the global cigarette brand's character, Joe Camel (Calfee 168). The same appears on the Palestinian side with the use of Che Guevara's portrait, associating the global icon (Maguet 153, Kunzle 17) with the Palestinian colors, or carving his likeness onto olive wood in order to link him to the local Palestinian cause. Both iconographical narratives aim at resolving the tension between the contradictory visitors' demands of local authenticity and his or her global references, which then results in the creation of new hybrid iconographies.

This hybridization can be problematic from a narrative point of view as it blurs the solidarity relationship built around one or the other iconography. While the act of buying such iconography can be militant, it is nevertheless also a touristic experience. This can be seen, for example, with the *keffiyeh*. As much as it is a symbol of the Palestinian struggle, the *keffiyeh* and its related iconography can also simply be worn as fashion statement (Swedenburg "Keffiyeh" 64, Ferrero-Regis 4), which in turn considerably lowers its militant significance. This is revealed in the proliferation of *keffiyehs* of different colors in Palestinian shops, or by its use in other garments in a movement that is both intended to keep the Palestinian symbol

relevant and to fit the global fashion demand of tourists, a tension which is paralleled by the pashmina scarves worn by Palestinian women. These have become internationally fashionable, and their local use has to be reconciled with the fact that they became globally trendy.

Various figures have also been reinterpreted locally in this way, from superheroes to cartoon characters, but the main movement seems to be the importation of global characters and references into the local narrative in order to fit the audience's wishes, rather than the contrary. This appears, for example, with Superman T-shirts that have been transformed into "Super-Jew" shirts with the orthodox attire completing the super-hero logo (Fink 108). "Hello Kitty" can also be reinterpreted in a local way with the addition of a pun or a feature considered to be typically Israeli or Palestinian. The styles and turn-overs follow political events and global cultural trends. During the beginning of the 90s, T-shirts representing the Israeli and Palestinian flags together with the word "peace" (in Hebrew, Arabic and English) were a common sight (Fink 106), while during Mahmud Ahmadinejad's presidency, a popular design listed all the powers which failed to destroy the Jews, beginning with the Pharaoh of the Exodus and Haman (from the Book of Esther) and

ending with the Islamic Republic, hinting at its final failure.

Beyond this transformation, this iconography can also be interpreted as self-reflexive, as it questions the relationship that visitors build with the places they are visiting. Since 9/11 a design representing an F-16 launching a missile with the sentence "America don't worry, Israel is behind you" is widely seen. This joke about military power and the supposed influence of Israel on America is also a way of making fun of the Americanization of Israel (Rebhun and Waxman 65, Diamond 335) as is demonstrated by the evolution of iconography itself. At the same time, it is a means of mocking the touristic fascination with Israeli elite troops and their adulation of the IDF.

This type of mockery is also present on the Palestinian side with T-shirts bearing the face of Homer Simpson dressed as Che Guevara with the sentence "Hasta la ultima cerveza siempre", a pun on the slogan "hasta la victoria siempre", this time making fun of the touristic interpretation of the Palestinian struggle through romantic Cuban references (Chaliand 39). These types of jokes can be interpreted as a sign of resilience in the ongoing conflict, but at the same time, the F-16 and Homer Simpson belong to the local interpretation of a global visual culture, and are jokes on

something which is already an interpretation of the local situation. This self-reflection can be seen as the appearance of a new visual culture that roots itself in the touristic, militant and diasporic view of the Middle East, with visitors coming in search of the romanticism of the Palestinian cause or of a militaristic Israel.

Thus, this iconography can be seen as the result of the touristic visual culture that is present on both sides of the narrative competition and that is rooted in the war experience of Jerusalem (by now engrained enough to create its own iconography that makes fun of the situation). In parallel, and not contradictory to diasporic and militant tourism, visiting the Old City of Jerusalem can be interpreted as a kind of war tourism, with visitors coming to a contested place to be witnesses of this contestation while looking for an iconography that is the iconography of conflict. For Israelis, this can mean a visit to the ancient battlefields (Brandt 20, Ryan 17), particularly around the Hurva Synagogue and the Museum of the Old Yichuv, which commemorate the 1948 War (Bar and Rubin 775), and their adjacent shops. But for other visitors, coming to Jerusalem can also be coming to a place that is marked by conflict, and a place that has harbored bitter fighting, but that is still relatively safe for them to

experience first-hand (Butler and Suntikul 132, 143, Ryan pp.153 Lisle 91).

As tourists, they visit places that still bear bullet holes (the Zion Gate); they pass by an UNRWA flag (near the Dung Gate); they cross paths with soldiers; they may witness people being searched or demonstrations, etc. And as visitors, they are also looking for an iconography that reflects this experience. So, there is a secondary meaning to the military and militant iconography, beyond their narrative dispute; it is a meaning by which it answers the demand for a touristic iconography that fits the visitors' experience of a conflicted place, and that is expressed with references that fit these visitors' expectations. In this regard, making fun of Che Guevara or Israeli military power is not intended to be disrespectful towards the conflictual narratives at stake. It is a way to transform the iconography so that it fits this dark and war-driven tourism (Lennon and Foley 99, 129.), something often already obtained through a visit to Jerusalem during the Yad Vashem museum (E. Cohen 193), where visitors can buy an iconography similar to the one described above. Due to the length of the conflict in Jerusalem, and to the global attention directed towards it, an iconography has appeared that has made use of this conflict in order to turn it into a visual identity, a kind of

visual war folklore that is the product of both local competing narratives and militant touristic globalization. The conflict has shaped the iconography of the city to the point that it has become part of its visual identity and something that visitors expect to experience.

### Conclusion

The touristic iconography in Jerusalem is a multi-layered phenomenon. It can be neutral, or it can demonstrate a religious identity, particularly in the case of Christian iconography, which is particularly visible around the Holy Sepulcher, and which, usually (apart from some Palestinian Christian shops and the pro-Israeli Christ Church near the Jaffa Gate) does not involve a claim on the Old City but instead only focuses on its religious heritage. It showcases the conflict between the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, but it would be a mistake to consider this the end of the visual identity of the Old City. The Israelization of the City through the design of banners and touristic institutions is quite obvious, as is the Palestinian way of contesting this Israelization by displaying an iconography of resistance. At the same time, both narratives are expressed through an iconography that adapts the local visual culture to the image that visitors expect to see. This competition

between mirror narratives has reached the point of appropriating the same designs and materials that both narratives consider to be authentically their own. In both cases, iconography appears as a means to virtualize the actual Old City in order to make it better fit the national narrative, thereby transforming the way the City is seen. At the same time, this iconography, through the touristic phenomenon, deeply interrogates the narratives at stake. It has been deeply transformed, in order to fit the demand for some particular aspects of the narratives, which in turn have been visually transformed by this demand. In this case, identity narratives are a particularly specular phenomenon that develops through the look of others (Luque 65, Todorova 101) and that adapts its visual presentation for the sake of their appreciation.

The global references that are used in the iconography present in Jerusalem, combined with local elements, have transformed these narratives (Appadurai 178) to the point that the visual identity of a city in conflict has become a conflictual visual identity that is linked to new ways of expressing feelings on a global scale (Appadurai 15.) and that positions itself between local politics, global culture and means of consumption. A hybrid visual culture of war has been created through

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the touristic market. This is symbolized by one of the most popular T-shirts on sale in Jerusalem, both on the Palestinian and on the Israeli side: above the sentence "Peace in the Middle East?" are three characters laughing hardily. The absence of peace is now an image for sale.

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# ANTI/THESIS

## ANTI-THESIS

## Antagonist Images of the Turk in Early Modern European Games

Ömer Fatih Parlak

“The Turk” is a multifaceted concept that emerged in the late Middle Ages in Europe, and has gained new faces over the course of time until today. Being primarily a Muslim, the Turk usually connoted the antichrist, infidel, and the ultimate enemy. With such attributed qualities, the concept influenced European art and literature by providing a subject with negative visual and textual representations. Current scholarly corpus about representations of the Turk sufficiently investigates the subject, yet, without offering different reading and conclusion. This paper aims at introducing a new

perspective to the image of the Turk by shedding light on its representations in early modern European board games and playing cards; thus, contributing to a nouvelle scholarly interest on the image of the Turk. It argues that, belonging to a familiar but relatively obscure world of games, board games and playing cards have the potential to reinforce an antithesis to the negative image of the Turk.

**Keywords:** Image of the Turk, Board Games, Playing Cards, Early Modern Period, the Ottomans

The earliest representation of the Turk in art appeared in Venetian Quattrocento paintings as a result of the increasing commercial activities of Venice, which played a role as the main connection between Europe and the Levant (Raby 17). The perception of the image of the Turk varied depending on the conflicts between Venice and the Ottomans, usually provoked by religious and political propaganda. Gentile Bellini's circa 1480 portrait of Mehmed the Conqueror, who conquered Constantinople, is one of such rare early examples that reflected an appreciation of an *incognito* enemy before the early modern period, which had faded over the course of time as tensions increased. Bellini, who started a short-lived early Renaissance Orientalism, was commissioned by Mehmed II, whose private patronage was “eclectic with a strong interest in both historical and contemporary Western culture” (Raby 7).<sup>1</sup> The formation of the Holy League of 1571 against the Ottomans was celebrated in Venice with a procession in which “the *Gran Turco* [was represented] as a huge dragon with a crescent on its head” (Gombrich 63). Similarly, the 1683 Battle of Vienna, which marked a decisive victory for European forces over the Ottomans, was glorified by commissioned artists who symbolized the Turk in like manner. Such celebrations

inspired not only artistic but also ludic expressions.<sup>2</sup>

The Turk, with all these qualities, became a part of cultural productions in art and literature. Their terrible image was re-produced by artists and writers who needed an antagonist in their works. Winning a war against the Turk was glorified in paintings depicting enslaved Turkish soldiers, broken scimitars and Ottoman flags on the ground. Titian's 1573-75 "Allegory of the Battle of Lepanto" represents an example of such a depiction commemorating victory against the Turk. Robert Daborne's 1612 play "*A Christian Turn'd Turk*" expressed a deep anxiety of Christians' conversion to Islam. Religious conversion was regarded as the most gruesome victory that Turks could gain at a personal level.

The image of the Turk from the point of view of the Europeans has been broadly investigated by researchers from different fields whose views have been revolving around unfavorable connotations attributed to the Turks from the time they became a topic in Europe in the 15th century. These connotations are so strong that it seems impossible to propose a different reading that claims otherwise, due to the fact that the repetitive negative image in

historical sources is highly ubiquitous. Delicate yet significant new approaches have yielded a more multifaceted image that argues for a revision to the simplistic dichotomy of a positive Europe vs. a negative Turk. As a researcher on this topic, I find the image of the Turk in early modern European board games and playing cards particularly promising, bearing the potential to provide a counterargument to the mainstream image of the Turk in other media as well.

Considering the long history of wars between the Ottomans and the Europeans, the image of the Turk may have emerged out of a perception of fear, threat and aggressive military conditions. Thus, according to many scholarly publications, the Turk was seen as the enemy, antichrist, infidel, barbarian, and terror of the world. Despite the growing interest, early modern writers' insufficient knowledge about the Ottomans consolidated an imagined Turk that was widely circulated in many early modern publications. James Hankins states that he collected more than four hundred texts on the necessity of a crusade against the Turk, written by more than fifty humanists and printed between 1451-81, and this number is by no means complete (Hankins 112). In parallel, Ottoman advances in Balkans, especially in the 15th century, attracted not only pub-

lications, but also translations of documents regarding the Turks.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this, early modern humanists situated the Turk into a different context by classicizing them in accordance with classical antiquity, as a result of which the Turk was identified with Scythians (the epitome of barbarism).<sup>3</sup> The humanists' insufficient knowledge on one hand, and their growing interest about the Turk on the other, resulted with an imagined Turk. This approach of the humanists towards "the Turk" resonates with what Stephen Greenblatt calls "engaged representations": representations override the objective knowledge, as a result of which the points of departure (in our case, of the humanists) are the very imagination (of the Turk). Studies on how wide the image of the Turk spread to the world with European colonialism and missionaries and how fragmented it could get in relation to the geographical and cultural distance show that the image of the Turk travelled faster than the Turks themselves.<sup>4</sup>

However, there are examples in representations of the Turk in the early modern period suggesting differing views which should not be disregarded. While traditional historiography claims that Muslim communities became inexistent in Europe after the Spanish Reconquista, this notion of a homogenous Europe has been criti-

cized by Tijana Krstic. Krstic collected the ever-present Muslim strata in Europe under four groups: slaves and captives, merchants, diplomats and travelers, and scholars (Krstic 671-693). Although slavery and captivity are closely related to wars, these groups had constant interaction with the two parties beyond militaristic practices. The intensity of diplomatic “networks of contacts” and the Ottoman “go-betweens” in the Mediterranean polities highlighted by Emrah Safa Gürkan are novel scholarly contributions to this end (Gürkan 107-128). Anders Ingram’s thorough inspection of the frequently referenced works of Richard Knolles on the Ottomans, on the other hand, reveals that while addressing the Ottomans as “the terror of the world”, this early modern English historian had a different mindset that the current scholarship has neglected in its interpretation. (Ingram, p.3) This recent research on the familiarity with Turks and Muslims necessitates a reevaluation of the earlier consensus of a purely negative image of the Turk, which will be conducted in an exemplary fashion on the level of card and board games in this article.

### The Turk as a Biblical Enemy

Early modern board games and playing cards form a part of cultural production expressing reflections of the society in a



Figure 1: Meister PW's playing cards; Turkish King and the Over Knave. The British Museum, Inv. Num: 1878,1012.41, 1878,1012.24.

ludic way (Jessen 102-103). Thanks to the developments in printing technology pioneered by Johannes Gutenberg, early modern European societies could access printed playing cards and board games, with playing cards in particular enjoying an unprecedented popularity. Since the production of pictures on the playing cards required skillful woodcut and etching artists, unique pieces of art were produced in this medium by leading German Renaissance artists, some of whom also were engaged in the production of other genres such as Biblical illustrations. The image of the Turk was reflected in their exotic and uncanny appearance on most

of the cards. In this regard, Albrecht Dürer's contribution to the early depictions of the Turk is both paradigmatic and controversial. As Raby noted in his “Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode” (25), during Dürer's first visit to Venice in 1495 through 1505, all Orientals in his works (mostly Biblical characters) were Ottomans, wearing distinctive Ottoman headwear such as the turban, *taj* and *börk*. However, he also drew Turks in compliance with exoticism and by no means derogative.<sup>5</sup> His Orientals influenced other woodcut artists and card makers alike in establishing a “German” image of the Turk.<sup>6</sup>



One of the earliest German woodcut artists was Meister PW, whose initials appear on a number of works. Although little is known about him, he lived and produced his woodcuts in Cologne in the last half of the 15th century. Besides illustrations for the Bible, he produced playing cards, among which a round deck is the most notable. Produced around 1500, this round deck of cards has five suits, some of which contain the first known depictions of the Turk on a playing card: a Turkish King, Over Knave (*Ober*) and Under Knave (*Unter*) (Figure 1). The almost identical appearance between Meister PW's Turks and Dürer's demonstrates that the former was familiar with the Orientals depicted by the latter.<sup>7</sup>

Peter Flötner (1490-1546), another German card-maker, introduced the Turk in his deck to German card players as the King of Hearts. The Turkish King and his deputy were depicted murdering three children (Figure 2). As Rainer Schoch argues in "Das Flötner'sche Kartenspiel", it is reminiscent of the biblical story "The Massacre of the Innocents". Behind the figures, an army camp can be seen with tents and soldiers, who are in celebration. The rest of the cards in the deck portray a carnivalesque world with imaginary situations, absurdity, and ordinary people, as well as



Figure 2: Peter Flötner's 1535-1540 playing cards; Turkish King of Hearts on the bottom right. The British Museum, Inv. Num: 1900, 0127.2.1-48.

royalties from around the world: the King of Denmark, King of Native Americans, and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (Maximilian I or Charles V). The presentation of the Turkish King card in this fashion shows a contradiction with the other images in the deck, in terms of composition and religious references.

Nonetheless, the Turkish King represents power, fear and threat.

In conclusion, the German depictions of Turks on early modern playing cards draw on a vestimentary iconography first apparent in Dürer's work and connect the Turk iconographically with negative figures of biblical salvation history.

### The Static Turk

Giuseppe Maria Mitelli (1634-1718), a Bolognese artist, produced his board games and caricatures during a period when the Ottomans and the Europeans (mainly the Habsburgs and the Venetians) were engaged in a number of military conflicts. Mitelli illustrated the Turk as the enemy, generally representing bad luck and the least possible advantage. Turks are static and cannot be chosen to play, in some instances even positing the Turk as the opponent against which all the players play to win the game. With these qualities, Mitelli's Turks constitute fundamental differences from that of the above-mentioned German playing cards.

Mitelli's "The Game of the Eagle (Il gioco del aquila)", for instance, was published some time after the 1683 Battle of Vienna (Figure 3). According to the game's instructions, the players put coins into the circle in the center of the page. Depending



Figure 3: Giuseppe Maria Mitelli's Game of the Eagle; after 1683. The British Museum Inv. Num: 1852,0612.458.

on the number of eyes on the dice thrown by the players, they either pay coins to the pot or take coins from the pot. The possible combinations of eyes on the dice are represented as contestants in a European-Turkish struggle. The Ottoman commanders, who are the result of a throw of dice containing at least one dice with one eye, bear the letter P.1, which means paying out one coin. The sole exception in this is the Pasha of Vidin, who has the minimum dice

combination (1-1): When throwing his dice combination, the player pays 3 coins. On the other hand, the Imperial Eagle protects all European commanders under its wings. All of them bear the letter T.1, meaning the player should take 1 coin from the pot. A double six dice combination will take all the coins as they correspond to the combination of the Imperial Eagle. The depiction of the Turks in the game is strikingly grotesque, with grades of grief and astonishment visible on their faces. The Turk in the center, presumably the Sultan, is chained up like all the other Turks. The Imperial Eagle holds the chains of the enslaved Pashas. In marked opposition, the chivalric European commanders are protected by the Eagle.

### The Knightly Turk?

Although fewer in number, some board games and playing cards represent a markedly different image of the Turk. The Turk in these games bears neither negative aspects, as in the German tradition, nor are they static, as in the games of Mitelli discussed above. On the contrary, they are part of the game and placed on an equal level with Europeans. This contradiction derives in part from the complexity of the gaming world that may sometimes manifest its own reality: enemies in reality can become friends in

games.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, some of the best examples of such games belonged to the elites of Habsburg Empire, which had to undertake a long-lasting conflict-centered relationship with the Ottomans throughout the early modern period.

A prime example of this tradition is a chess set produced in southern Germany around the mid-16th century (Figure 4). The chess board has an unconventional 8 × 15 squares and 53 chess pieces, which raises doubts as to whether it was ever played. The pieces include winged stal-



Figure 4: Chess set with Turkish, Spanish and German figures; 16th Century South Germany. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Inv. Num: PA 34 and PA 772





Figure 5: A game piece representing Sultan Süleyman, 16th Century Augsburg. Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Inv. Num: 3859

lions with black, yellow and red colors on their wings, Turkish figures with shield and mace, Spanish figures and a German king and queen. This unique set implies that the Turk is part of a combined army of Europe. Moreover, the Turk fights against a common enemy together with his European friends. In other words, the perception of the Turk in this set manifests an antithesis to the image of the Turk in some sort of opposition that has been discussed so far.

A similar perspective can be seen in a set of a board game called *langenpuff*, which was played with counters and dice. The

counters in this game resemble medallions and were perhaps produced by medallion artists of the time. The example in Viennese Kunsthistorisches Museum is comprised of 27 counters, who all are rendered in the shape of royal persons of the 16th century, among whom Sultan Süleyman (1494-1566) is also present (Figure 5). Produced around 1535-40 in Augsburg, the counter illustrates the Ottoman sultan in a realistic way, refraining from any negative depiction. In parallel with the above chess set, the counter is a part of the game on equal terms with the other pieces/peoples.

A curious deck of English fortune-telling cards is also worth mentioning in this context (Figure 6). Dateable to the early 1700s, the deck was produced and sold by a London-based stationer called John Lenthall and comprises the typical 52 cards in 4 suits (hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades). The King cards represent four biblical rulers (Holofernes, Pharaoh, Nimrod and Herod), and the Queens represent four famous women from ancient times (Proserpina, Semiramis, Dido and Clytemnestra). The Knaves include, as inscribed on the tops of the cards, Cupid, Wat Tyler, John Hewson and a certain Mahomett in an Oriental costume. Other cards include a number of implications for



Figure 6: Some of the cards from Lenthall's fortune-telling cards. Mahomett in bottom-left, early 18th century. The British Museum Inv. Num: 1896, 0501.942

fortune-telling and astrological signs, like zodiac diagrams (Wayland 12-21).

From the instructions written by Lenthall on the "Use" cards, the knaves, who hold three books in their hands, lead the player to a zodiac card before finding the answer. Mahomett is, accordingly, a guide that takes the player from one stage to another

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in search of his/her fortune. From this perspective, in terms of composition and functionality within the game, Mahomett does not bear a negative connotation.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the image of the “positive Turk” in the examples presented in this article forms an antithesis to the well-known and widespread negative image of the Turk. Although the image is multifaceted and cannot be generalized by a simplistic dichotomy, the overall conflictive nature of the relationship between the Ottomans and Europe caused both positive and negative imaginations in the minds of early modern Europeans. In this context, it should be noted that the image of the European in early modern Ottoman

literature was predominantly negative. Europe, seen as the land of the infidels (dār-ı küffār) was the ultimate enemy opposing Islam.<sup>10</sup>

The fact that the positive examples discussed above come mainly from more expensively wrought games played (or exhibited) by the European aristocracy allows the question of whether this positive image was restricted to aristocratic circles, which also showed great interest in Oriental fashion.<sup>11</sup> In this context, the predominance of a negative image of the Turk in games presumably played by common people suggests a more negative perception of the Turk in these social con-

texts. As in other instances, the arbitrariness and complexity of the gaming world seem to have accommodated different opposed traditions in the representation of the Turk, as presented in this paper.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman defeat against a European coalition resulted in large celebrations that helped change the Ottomans' invincible image and increased the sense of a united Europe. The 1571 Battle of Lepanto, for example, temporarily united the Catholic powers of Europe; Habsburgs, Venetians and the Papal States. Although the battle did not stop the Ottoman

advance and power, the spectacle of its celebration went beyond the battle so as to cause a downfall of the invincible image of the Turk (Jordan; Gombrich 62-8). The 1683 Great Siege of Vienna comprised even more diverse European forces than that of Lepanto, and the victory was celebrated as in post-Lepanto celebrations. There are two known decks of cards thematizing the 1683 Siege of Vienna, published in Vienna in the beginning of

the 17th century (Witzmann “Das Spiel Der Mächtigen”, British Museum Inv. No:1896,0501.251).

<sup>2</sup> Robert Schwoebel states that, due to the curiosity emerged in Europe about the Turk, the 1480 Ottoman siege of the island of Rhodes, for example, covered three history books, one of which was printed ten times between the years 1480-83 and translated from Latin to

Italian, English and German languages. See, Schwoebel, “*The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk*”, B. de Graaf, Nieuwkoop, 1967.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy Bisaha employs a closer analysis on the question of the Turk in early modern humanist writing, rooting the issue from the medieval tradition of crusade literature as a genre, which was re-devised by humanists at the expense of their humanist views. See, Bisaha, “*Creating East and West: Renaissance Humanists and the Ottoman Turks*”, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004.

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→ <sup>3</sup> As Paulino Toledo claims, there had already been an image of the Turk in 16th century Chile carried by the Spanish *Conquistadors* long before the Turks travelled to Chile. See: Toledo, "Türkler ve Hristiyanlar Arasında" Adlı Komedi Türk İmgesinin Biçimlenmesi" in Kumrular (Ed.) *Dünyada Türk İmgesi*, Kitap Press, İstanbul, 2005; "İslam Korkusu: Kökenleri ve Türklerin Rolü", Doğan Kitap Press, İstanbul, 2012.

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<sup>5</sup> A comparison of Dürer's 1508 Martyrdom of Ten Thousand and 1523 portrait of Süleyman the Magnificent clearly shows different approaches to the subject: while the former thematizes the Turk in a religious enemy context, the latter implies curiosity.

<sup>6</sup> Dürer's Orientals included some irrelevancies to their original appearance, which were also copied by German artists. Similarities between his Orientals' footwear, for instance, can be followed in figures 1 and 2, made by different artists.

<sup>7</sup> See Dürer's "The Whore of Babylon" for a better comparison.

<sup>8</sup> See Caillois "Man, Play and Games"; and Huizinga "Homo Ludens".

<sup>9</sup> This can be better explained by the fact that England followed a different, rather neutral, pathway in its relationship with the Ottomans than other Continental countries. In search of access to Mediterranean waters, England formed an alliance with the Ottoman vassal state of Morocco. Nabil Matar states that during the early 17th century, there were so many British workers in North Africa that they established their own lobby.

<sup>10</sup> A reflection of the Turk in art shaped by a shared trading interest in early modern Netherlands was discussed in Michael Wintle "Islam as Europe's 'Other' in the Long Term: Some Discontinuities" in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*, 2016, pp. 42-61.

<sup>11</sup> For the European interest in Oriental dress and motives, see Charlotte Jirousek "More Than Oriental Splendor: European and Ottoman Headgear, 1380-1580", in *Dress* 1995 (22) pp: 22-33; Onur Inal "Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes" in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp: 243-272; "Turquerie". *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series*, Vol. 26, No. 5, 1968, pp. 225-239.

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# OFF-TOPIC

## Explosion of meanings: Complexities surrounding the multiple meanings of martyrdom in the context of Turkey

Gulizar Haciakupoglu

This article critiques the erosion in the meaning of martyrdom through the attribution of diverse connotations to the word by different parties with diverse aims, and the proliferation of the application of martyrdom to define political deaths in diverse contexts by different parties in the political context of Turkey. It seeks to question the normalization and

justifications that arrive with the construction of knowledge through the discourses on martyrdom, and critiques the irony between beyond-earthly promises of martyrdom and the earthly decision of rewarding martyrdom.

**Keywords:** Martyrdom, Turkey, Discourse, Jihad, Islam

An explosion occurred on the night of our flight from the İstanbul Atatürk Airport. We were at most thirty minutes shy of being at the place of the turmoil and being one of the “martyrs”. Martyr is a loaded word that is being echoed in different platforms on a continuous basis in Turkey. It, as a word, and more so as a concept, has evolved into a combination of letters that is attached as a label to various political deaths. It is a discourse that helps construct knowledge on political deaths with its emergence in different sites, its repetition and its constant circulation. At the same time, it receives diverse connotations through its employment in different political contexts and its selective ascription to diverse political deaths. Hence, on the one hand, repetition and circulation of this constructed concept of martyrdom, with the ambiguity around its meaning, is serving to justify, even to normalize, the deaths and alleviate the possible aggravation that may emerge as a reaction to the loss of lives. On the other hand, the very same word is implicated in the justification of violent attacks, and martyrdom, with its promise of heaven, helps convince terrorists to commit attacks. Hence, who is a martyr is defined in a particular political context and, especially in events like terror attacks, in relation to the opposing side, or enemy.

Herewith, the erosion in the meaning of martyrdom through the attribution of diverse connotations to the word by different parties with diverse aims and the proliferation of the application of the word to define political deaths calls for a critical inquiry. While contemplations on the expansion of the meaning of martyrdom - and the ambiguity that comes with it - is nothing new<sup>1</sup>, within the aforementioned context, abstruseness caused by the widening of the subjective application of the word to define various political deaths necessitates the evaluation and examination of the following queries. First, the roots of the word martyr in the Islamic culture and in Turkish and the clash between beyond-earthly promises of martyrdom and the earthly decision of rewarding martyrdom call for an interrogation. Second, construction of subjects with the help of interpellation and related to this creation of an enemy, formation of categories including 'good' and 'bad' Muslim, and the implications of enemy creation and categorizations in the justification process necessitate discussion. Third, jihad which is often carried out with a belief in the rewarding of martyrdom in death begs for an explanation. Herewith, I will first explain what I mean by discourse and subsequently discuss the aforesaid three queries in sequence.

Discourses, like martyrdom, emerge in different 'sites' such as family, media, and education, compose meanings, generate knowledge, give birth to societal values in a particular context and time period, and receive authority through their penetration into social behaviors and understandings (Hall, "Foucault" 75; Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* 46, 227; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 93, 94, 107)<sup>2</sup>. Dominant discourses construct certain knowledge as 'truth' while sidelining other knowledge, and the knowledge and truth constructed by dominant discourses have the potential to further authorize the discourse (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 81-84, 93). Circulation and acquisition of discourses help pervade various power relations, build knowledge and truths, and infiltrate discourses into social practices, and they obliquely assist the normalization of the constructed truths and knowledge (Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* 46; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 81-84, 93). Thus, daily news with numbers of "martyrs" from the clashes between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)<sup>3</sup> and the increasing numbers of victims of ISIS bombings contribute to the knowledge and truth creation on martyrdom. Dissemination of news that carry discourses on martyrdom in different sites shapes society's percep-

tion on being a martyr, and helps alleviate the anger and agony by attributing high status to martyrs. This knowledge construction on martyrdom is also related to the increasing number of political deaths and the need to stretch the application of martyrdom to different contexts and cases to find a correspondence to the political deaths of the time.

Receiving news on "martyrs" on a daily basis is not strange in Turkey, if not already accepted as normal. The word is repeated in different venues such as media, family, and education with references to different events and contexts. Here it should be kept in mind that the process of repetition leads to a separation from the origin, as the originality derived from the origin disappears in the linear "illustration", "imitation" or "copy" (Gendron xx). Eventually, what is delivered in relation to the origin is far from the original. This is especially the case in today's new media-infused atmosphere, as every discourse is multiplied, disseminated and further diversified in its transfer and reception. Accordingly, in the context of Turkey, we see the departure from the origin with every single use of the word. In addition, the number of "martyrs" Turkey has in a day, beyond the diversities in meanings and classifications, incites the normalization impact of the circulation.

Martyrdom is integrated into the knowledge and truth construction process with its political weight and religious promise. Martyrdom, with its circulation and constant referral by both the nation-state and terrorist organization, is planted in different contexts to refer to political deaths that are at times labeled differently by two opposing sides. Hence, martyrdom, with the various connotations it has taken in the Quran and the meaning it received within the context of the nation-state, becomes an apparatus of political strategy, legitimacy and justification. Herewith, it is necessary to discuss the meaning of martyrdom in Islam and in the context of Turkey.

Martyr, *şehit* in Turkish, is driven from the Arabic word *şahīd*, which means witness (EtmolojiTurkce “*şehit*”), and the Turkish Language Society defines the word as a person who lost her/his life “in the cause of a holy (or divine) ideal or belief” (Turk Dil Kurumu “*şehit*”)<sup>4</sup>. The Arabic origin of the word *şehit*, *shahid* or *shuhada* (plural), refers to bearing witness in the Quran (Cook 16). According to David Cook this concept of witness is two-fold: “the Muslim should be living testimony towards the rest of humanity” and at the same time, when and if necessary they may serve as witnesses on the “Day of Judgment”

(Cook 16). While bearing witness is the essence of the word, “teaching about martyrdom” in the Quran is “diverse”, “disorganized” and “underdeveloped”, and there are verses that attribute different or extended meanings to martyrdom (Cook 17). These meanings stretch from ones who suffered or were tortured for being Muslim, like Bilal, to ones who stayed committed and true to Islam until death despite being challenged, like *Khubabyb* (Cook 22), and from ones who were agonized for their commitment to Islam by non-Muslim states to the ones who died of plagues (Cook 22, 28, 29).

Cook, drawing emphasis on the variety of definitions of martyrdom, argues that the “Muslim ideal for a martyr became that person – usually a man – who through his active choice sought out a violent situation (battle, siege...) with pure intentions and was killed as a result of that choice. Ideally his actions expressed courage and defiance of the enemy, loyalty towards Islam and the pure intention to please God, since the acceptable manner of *jihad* was to “lift the Word of Allah to the highest” (Qur’an 9:41)” (Cook 30). According to him: “this type of martyrdom...required the martyr to speak out prior to his death” and make his “immortal contribution to Islam” (Cook 30).

Hence, within such a configuration, who is to decide one’s sincere devotion and loyalty to Islam other than God? Despite all the definitions and conditions provided for being announced a martyr after death, I am skeptical about a mere human being’s capacity to classify a death as martyrdom according to the aforementioned definitions of martyrdom when the contexts and times are changing. A human declaring a deceased as a martyr would be obliquely judging an individual’s death and deciding on her/his afterworld faith. Furthermore, this judgment would not be independent of a political agenda and mindset.

Related to this point, Cook argues that the acclaimed “*hadith* collectors” stressed God’s omnipotence in deciding “who is and who is not a martyr” (Cook 33). However, he adds that “the early *hadith* reflect a process of widening the definition of martyrdom to the point where it began to lose all meaning and simply came to cover anyone who had died a worthy death and should be admitted immediately into paradise” (Cook 33). Correspondingly, Ayşe Hur draws attention to the *hadiths*’ comprehensive approach to who can be regarded as a martyr and lists conditions ranging from people whom lose their lives in natural

disasters to people who die when conducting scientific work and/or fair trade (Hur, "Özgeci Intihar"). Furthermore, she proposes two approaches to this widening of definition: first, to argue that the effect of the word martyrdom diminishes with the proliferation of its meaning; second, to claim that the expansion of meaning is a result of the re-shaping of the 'terminology' to respond to contemporary needs and to facilitate its infiltration into every aspect of life to render martyrdom desirable (Hur, "Özgeci Intihar"). While assessing the effect of the word is not easy, the political drive to render martyrdom desirable and the circulation of discourses on martyrdom to protect political legitimacy can be connected to martyrdom's association with nationalism and Islam in Turkey. Furthermore, martyrdom's adaptation to contemporary times works hand in hand with its selective employment to define various political deaths. I will first establish the centrality of nationalism and Islam to martyrdom, and then discuss the selective ascription of the word, which beget the categorizations of 'good' Muslim and 'good' citizen versus 'bad' Muslim, terrorist, and/or 'bad' citizen.

In the Turkish context, martyrdom has been affiliated with nationalism and Islam since the Ottoman Empire (Hur, "Özgeci

Intihar"). Because the army has been seen as the protector of the religion, and of the sultanate then and the nation-state now, sacrificing one's life for them has long been regarded as an honor (Hur, "Özgeci Intihar"; Gedik 32, 33). Accordingly, the book issued at the request of the Chief of General Staff in 1925 to teach religion to soldiers assigns martyrdom the highest rank a soldier can achieve (Hur, "Özgeci Intihar"). The book serving the same purpose in the Turkish National Army in 1981 maintains the relation between religion and nation, and reasserts martyrdom as the highest rank for a soldier (Hur, "Özgeci Intihar"). Esra Gedik establishes this relation between nationalism and religion by emphasizing religion, culture and language's importance in the nation-state building process (32). While the establishment of the republic and the introduction of secularism has brought the separation of state and religion, state regulation over religion, and - arguably - religion's push out of the public sphere, the affiliation between being a Turk and a Muslim has mostly prevailed, and religion has continued to serve as an instrument helping to institute legitimacy (Gedik 33). Religion prompts legitimacy through offering a context where political power can be applied, provokes "positive political behaviors from society" and through act-

ing as a component of social control, which encompasses principles including respecting government and public officials, helps sustain political authority (Gedik 33, 34). Accordingly, martyrdom, with its religious reference, is implicated in religion's mobilization for legitimacy and political power.

In the context of nation-states, who can and who cannot be considered a martyr is defined in relation to politics and nationalism. The ascription of martyrdom to the people who lose their lives in the battle between Turkey and the PKK exposes the role of politics and nationalism in the selective application of martyrdom. For instance, Nerina Weiss in "The Power of Dead Bodies" gives an example of the classification of a deceased body as a terrorist by Turkish officials and as a Kurdish fighter and a martyr by his relatives, and she draws attention to the political agency of the dead body, the ties between nationalism and martyrdom, and to the use of martyrdom as a political strategy (Weiss 161, 163). Furthermore, martyrdom is being selectively ascribed to various political deaths caused by different opposing or enemy groups. Recent deaths in the failed coup attempt are categorized as July 15 Martyrs ("15 Temmuz Şehitleri..."), Democracy Martyrs (İncesu "İşte

Demokrasi Şehitleri”) or 15 July Democracy Martyrs (“15 Temmuz Demokrasi...”) by different news sources. Victims of ISIS bombings are also considered as martyrs. In this vein, martyrdom is selectively ascribed in a certain context with a particular political view, and it is used to define victims of ‘terror’ acts committed by different organizations. Thus, knowledge and truth on being a martyr is created in relation to the opposing side and construed based on the political strategy embraced in a certain context. A martyr in one context can be regarded as a ‘bad’ Muslim or ‘disloyal’ citizen in another context.

This widening of contexts accommodating martyrdom and complex and often clashing categorizations remind of Jean Baudrillard’s argument that “every individual category is subject to contamination, substitution is possible between any sphere and any other: there is total confusion of types” (Baudrillard 8). Accordingly, the category of martyrdom that deaths with certain classifications are being subscribed to is subject to contamination. Today, the ambiguity surrounding martyrdom is further deepened with Muslims killing other Muslims in the name of a particular interpretation of what it means to be a “good” Muslim. These categories and classifications, like good Muslim, bad

Muslim or martyr, with the assistance of the knowledge composed through the discourses at work, help control the object (Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*). Correspondingly, ideologies, “concepts and premises, which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and ‘make sense’ of some aspects of social existence” (Hall, *Racist Ideologies* 271), work hand in hand with discourses to instigate normalization, and consequently, trigger interpellation. Here, the political force of interpellation in depicting a certain image and character of a good Muslim and bad Muslim through the process of interpellation gains importance.

On interpellation, Louis Althusser argues that the “Ideology ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects by that very precise operation which” he has “called interpellation or hailing” (Althusser 118). According to him, individuals are interpellated as subjects in a condition which “presupposes the ‘existence’ of a unique and central other subject, in whose name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects”, and accordingly God, “subject par excellence... interpellates his subject, the individual subjected to him by his very

interpellation... a subject through the subject and subjected to the subject” (Althusser 121). Althusser argues that the “(good) subjects” who do not challenge the process of subjection are incorporated into the “practices” guided by Ideological State Apparatuses (Althusser 123). Consequently, the ideology not only conditions the “interpellation of individuals as subjects”, but also initiates a self-recognition process within which the individual recognizes her/his subjection and her/his actions get conditioned accordingly (Althusser 122). In this vein, “good” Muslim who died in a terror attack are interpellated as martyrs and subjects who recognize their position in relation to this interpellation, accept the deaths and perceive the cause and eventuality of such deaths. In light of the aforementioned explanations and examples, in the Turkish context the interpellation is influenced by politics of the nation-state and the religious connotation of martyrdom is employed as a political strategy to retain political power and legitimacy. Additionally, I suggest that the interpellation of “good” Muslim is also closely tied to the denouncement of the perpetrator of the attacks as inhumane and villainous. What is puzzling here is that the same mechanism is at play on the side of the ISIS terrorists who claim to be the true



believers and who see Turkey as their enemy and “blame” Turkey for “the deformation of Islam and Muslim identity” (Daskin 9). In regards to this, Emin Daskin argues that the enemy creation, which encompasses the identification of political agents to be held responsible for the discontentment, and to be “demonized” and “targeted”, is a component of terrorists’ efforts to justify their violent attacks (Daskin 4). Herewith, interpellation is related to interpretation as it involves reading a phenomenon and interpreting it in such a way that facilitates subjectification and control. ISIS defines its subjects and enemy, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims, and martyrdom according to its particular interpretation of the Quran and more importantly, according to its political aims. Turkey, on the other hand, establishes ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslim and martyrdom categories in relation to its approach to Islam, political strategy and national aims. While one leads to inhumane acts, under both conditions dominant powers define their subjects as potential martyrs and use martyrdom, with its promise of paradise, to render death acceptable.

Perhaps, for ISIS militants, the road to their interpretation of paradise, and thus martyrdom, passes through “disciplining” non-Muslims and “bad” Muslims through

the “*jihad*” they engage in. Jihad, according to Bernard K. Freamon is twofold in Prophet Muhammad’s view: “greater *jihad* [*jihad al akbar*]”, which denotes the persevering individual “struggle” against one’s inherent “immorality” and is placed above the second, “lesser *jihad* [*jihad al asghar*]”, which involves the collective Muslim engagement in military endeavor to guard “the religion or the community” (Freamon 301). While the “greater jihad”, with its hegemony and influence over “lesser *jihad*”, with its stress on “justice, rectitude, fidelity, integrity, and truth”, composes the central definition of *jihad* (Freamon 301), I suggest that there emerges a clash between the ‘greater’ and ‘lesser jihad’ mainly due to the diversities in the interpretation of justice, rectitude, fidelity, integrity, and truth as each one of these terms are constructed in a certain political context and at a particular time. Today these terms carry various meanings for different individuals, and the context and time that accommodate these terms is long detached from the ones these concepts, with all their historical conceptions, were born into. Furthermore, what is just and what is true are constructed within a particular political belief system. According to Daskin, doctrines, which are organized “principles, rules, norms and values” of a political or religious establish-

ments including justice and truth, help “shape interpretations and actions” and render violent acts acceptable to their committers (Daskin 4). I propose that the doctrines help justify “lesser jihad”, and “lesser jihad” intervenes in “greater jihad” by its proposition as a wage to protect Islam and by the doctrines’ employment to convince terrorists that this wage is a moral act and death would be rewarded with martyrdom. The propagation of ‘lesser jihad’ is evident in ISIS’s saying “*who needs words when you have deeds*” (Daskin 7).

The change in the evaluation and interpretation of Islamic theology and law is almost inevitable with the developments in social, economic and political life, advancements in technology and globalization. However, disparities emanating from varieties in approaches to Islamic theology and law, and more importantly to the interpretation of Quran, arrive with dangerous categorizations that designate people in terms of their relation with Islam God, and the nation-state from a certain perspective. Categorizations based on these designations serve to justify acts and their results. With respect to *jihadi* actions, for *jihadis*, categorization of the victims as non-Muslim or bad Muslims, *munafiqun* or victims en route to their view of a ‘proper’ Islamic

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world, serve to validate their villainous actions and to degrade victims to mere sacrifices in the course of their investment in excelling to heaven. However, the very same heaven is promised to the victims of these inhumane attacks through their designation of martyrs. The irony is that the heaven would not be a paradise if it is cohabited by both perpetrators and victims.

Rewinding to the first sentence of this article, we were 30 minutes shy of becoming victims of a terror attack - martyrs with an earthly promise of heaven. Yet at the same time, from the opposing perspective

of ISIS, our dead bodies would be simply seen as sacrifices en route their rigid understanding - if not distortion - of Islam. Sadly, amidst these bodily and verbal political and military battles, the individual lives that are lost are unrecoverable. With all in mind, when consuming labels such as martyr, we should analyze the context and time that accommodate it, scrutinize the discourses constructing knowledge on martyrdom, and remind ourselves of the complications and constructions that arrive with the use of discourses on martyrdom for political means.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Sevan Nişanyan in his column in the Taraf Newspaper provided an examination of the word şehit in reference to Christian terminology of the term and made references to the Arabic root of the word. According to him, in Christian terminology şehid is affiliated with 'witnessing the Prophecy of Jesus', and the ones who believe in something that they have not eye-witnessed

with the power of faith' are regarded as şehid. He argues that in the next stage, people who 'face up to death to witness' were 'deemed worthy of' şehid status. Nisanyan, in reference to the connotation of the word in Arabic provided the following three explanations: present participle form of the word şâhid to the ones who 'recount a witnessed event', adjective form şehîd to the ones who die in the course of God's religion, and lastly

he mentioned the definition of the term as the ones 'who are killed in the battlefield by infidels' by various authorities (Nisanyan). Please note that the original article was not traceable on Google, thus the article was read through the site İzafe, which provided it with commentaries. It should also be noted that the owner of the site made reference to the ambiguity arising from the attribution of diverse meanings to the word şehit.

<sup>2</sup> While the references to Foucault are made on the basis of my inferences from my readings of The Archeology of Knowledge and Power/Knowledge, and Hall's (2001) interpretation of Foucault and should not be limited to the page numbers in the in-text citation, looking at the following page numbers in Foucault's works may help understand how I deduced my arguments on his work: "Power/Knowledge" 81-84, 93, 94, 107; The Archeology of Knowledge 46, 56, 227.

<sup>3</sup> While the fight with the PKK is central to the discussion of martyrdom, ISIS is the main focus of this article, as the evaluation of martyrdom through the conflict between Turkey and the PKK opens many more dossiers of knowledge that cannot be condensed into this short inquiry.

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→ <sup>4</sup> The Turkish Language Society (Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK)) uses the words 'ülkü' (ideal) and 'inanç' (belief) in its definition of şehit (Türk Dil Kurumu "şehit"). The stated ideal or belief is expected to be holy (or divine). For reference, original definition provided by TDK is as follows: "Kutsal bir ülkü veya inanç uğrunda ölen kimse" (Türk Dil Kurumu "şehit").

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# REVIEW

## **Tangier from Below**

### **Two books reviewed**

**Natalia Ribas-Mateos: “Tanger, Maroc: La sociologue d’une ville-frontière (A Sociological Study of Tangiers, Morocco).” With a Préface par Rosa María de Madariaga.**

**Dieter Haller: “Tanger: Der Hafen, die Geister, die Lust. Eine Ethnographie.”**

Steffen Wippel

Lewiston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press; 2014; ISBN: 978-0-7734-4256-6.

Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag; 2016; ISBN: 978-3-8376-3338-2.

Two books have recently been published that seek to shed light on the considerable contemporary reconfigurations experienced by and in the northern Moroccan city of Tangier. For a long time, the state's central authorities neglected Tangier and the northern provinces of Morocco. However, since the late 2000s, the Tangier Peninsula has been experiencing deep urban and economic transformations. A vast brand-new container port connects Tangier to the world, terrestrial infrastructure has been upgraded, the old inner-city port is being converted into a sumptuous shopping and leisure zone, tourism is under expansion and high-standard, mostly gated residential communities, are being constructed. At the same time, however, the globalizing city is experiencing a growing spatial and social fragmentation. Among other things, Tangier is a nodal hub in transcontinental migration, and certain quarters have become reputed strongholds for Jihadists and Salafists.

With that, Tangier has attracted new attention in the broader public, but in particular in academia. Several research projects have been initiated in recent years, and a growing number of publications are appearing. This contrasts with a substantial body of literature on the city's cosmopolitan past, when it was under multina-

tional administration and, at times, was an International Zone that was territorially separated from the rest of the country – a period whose loss is still widely bemoaned. Current publications, mainly written by geographers, economists and political scientists, mostly take a macro-perspective on the large-scale reconfigurations of the city, the expansion of mega-projects and their socio-economic and ecological effects. At the same time, micro-analyses, in particular from sociological and anthropological points of view, are largely missing – a gap that the two publications under review assertively endeavor to close.

The first book was published by Natalia Ribas-Mateos, a sociologist who has been a researcher at several universities in Spain and abroad, and whose work has repeatedly focused on issues of age, remittances and mobilities.<sup>1</sup> Dieter Haller, author of the second book, is a professor for social anthropology at the Ruhr University of Bochum and a co-founder of the Centre for Mediterranean Studies there; his research centers on topics like cosmopolitanism, sexuality and ethnicity. Besides gender, both authors have a common interest in border issues; namely, they have worked on both sides of the Strait of Gibraltar and have shown an extensive interest in research on the wider Mediterranean.

Haller started to do research in Tangier in 2013 when he had the opportunity to leave his university post in Bochum for nearly one year of continuous fieldwork. In contrast, Ribas-Mateos based her research on discontinuous, sequential fieldwork in several stages between 2002 and 2008. Participant observation was Haller's central research methodology, while Ribas-Mateos shares with her readers her reflections on "distanced participation" vs. "participating distancing". According to her, her several trips to Tangier allowed her to keep her external perspective and to generalize her findings, while Haller underlined the importance of manifold inclusionary moments when, for instance, he nearly became a member of the Ḥamādša brotherhood (cf. below). Additionally, his research methods include Facebook conversations, from which he presents several excerpts. While Ribas-Mateos points to the difficult terrain in Morocco, especially regarding access to private enterprises, she considers her status as a foreigner to have facilitated parts of her research.

The two authors pursue a number of common issues, but also address dissimilar points and accent topics differently. The analysis of border effects and of practices of coping with daily urban

life is a central ambition of both monographs; this also includes migration issues and the deconstruction of outdated myths. Yet, while Ribas-Mateos has a stronger interest in patterns of familial and economic patchworks, Haller concentrates more on the spiritual and sensuous sides of life in Tangier. He presents us an extensive introduction followed by a sequence of seven chapters of varying length and a summarizing epilogue. In contrast, his counterpart divides her book into two parts: The first three chapters develop a kind of reference model for her subsequent ethnographic study of seven chapters, which advance from general aspects to more concrete details. In addition to the foreword, an epilogue by Saskia Sassen closes her book.

In his first chapter, Haller starts to introduce his topics with the help of the history of the house in Tangier where he lived during a long period of his field research. This and his chapter on cosmopolitanism both connect to the memory of the city's international period (ch. 2). While reference is frequently publicly made to the historical legacy of the city, in fact it is not maintained and often annihilated, by carelessness, but also by a postcolonial attitude. In contrast, certain strata still remember the international time as a period of personal



liberties. For her part, Ribas-Mateos starts by reviewing the diversity of notions about the city that have been and are still being applied to Tangier (ch. 1). This allows her to give a historical overview, too, and to tackle the nostalgic mystification of the past and its erosion.

Beyond their investigation of processes “at the bottom”, both authors point in the middle of their respective publications to pervasive macro-reconfigurations of Tangier at the moment of their field research. For Ribas-Mateos, this is the outsourced and offshore industries that made Tangier also an “industrial city” (ch. 6). Besides working ethics and working culture, her main interest is in the experiences and strategies of families and individuals dealing with the massive presence of subcontractors for foreign firms. This joins with the subsequent broaching of urban polarization, briefly particularly addressing expats in Tangier, their myths and dreams, their interests and inclinations, their prejudices and racism (ch. 7). Export-oriented industrialization creating domestic demand for labor, and international labor migration driven by the need for manpower abroad, seem to be two sides of the same coin for Ribas-Mateos (ch. 9).

Haller's focus, in contrast, is on the current urban reconfigurations emerging from the new economic and infrastructural projects that are involved in the modernization of the city (ch. 5). He gives an overview of the three main programs, but concentrates on the shifting of the port to the agglomeration's periphery and on the effects that the conversion of the old port area into a luxury consumer and tourist destination has on the inhabitants of the adjacent medina – rather more in terms of perception and belief in the future than in material terms. Rich ethnographic details – including portraits of fishermen, fishmongers, artists and an antiquarian – illustrate the effects of the modernization projects in the context of the remodeling of the old city harbor. Likewise, Ribas-Mateos includes many exemplary cases throughout her text.

Relating to her interest in border issues, Ribas-Mateos presents Tangier in her introduction – among other things – as a “border city” (ch. 1). Repeatedly, she goes into the ambivalent meaning of territorial and cultural borders, which fluctuate between closing and opening and create spaces of physical containment, but which also are gates for cultural interpenetration, offer opportunities for contact and exchange and instigate alternative,

yet highly vulnerable, circuits (namely, in ch. 1, 2, 5). Other chapters point to the hardening of the nearby sea and land borders through militarization and materialization (ch. 4, 5).

The border topic links with the migration theme when Ribas-Mateos presents Tangier as a “transit place” (ch. 1, 5) and a “waiting room” (ch. 2), but also a “point of departure” for migrants (ch. 8). The author differentiates several types of people crossing the borders around the Tangier Peninsula to and from the Spanish mainland and the Ceuta enclave (ch. 4). She points to their different experiences and to the different images they create of migrants and borders. Finally, she turns to the importance of remittances for the socio-economic sustenance of Tangier and its inhabitants (ch. 8). Among the motives for emigration, we find the revolt against state repression and the desire to escape (also from the grasp of emigrants' families) to a more liberal environment as being as essential as the socio-economic reasons – the culture of mobility as a reflection of pessimistic attitudes (ch. 8, 9).

For Haller, lack of confidence is a central point, too: according to him, the population does not trust the tarnished promises of the development programs that have

been promulgated by state authorities in the face of widespread abuse of power, corruption, repression and discrimination and under a general mood of mistrust of others (ch. 5). This not only makes people averse to specific modernization projects, such as the port reconversion, but also includes a broader dissatisfaction with living conditions. Propagated visions of openness and tolerance contrast with widespread experiences of having a lack of hope and a lack of prospects for a “good life”, as well as encountering prudence, fundamentalism and foreign domination (ch. 2, 5).

However, spiritual aspects have the most prominent place in Haller's book. By focusing on jinns (ġnūn), he introduces “magical realism” and refers to the myths of Aïsha Qandisha, to the local spirit of Lalla Jmila and to animals (like goats and dogs) that also present gates to other worlds (ch. 3). This continues when he deals with demonic possession and exorcism, rituals and trance in Sufi brotherhoods, namely the local popular Ḥamādša order (ch. 4). Haller points to the increasing Salafism and Islamism in Tangier and its growing spiritual and political rivalry with the traditionally strong belief in ghosts, which is becoming increasingly discredited. On the other hand, the monarchy endeavors

to contain religious extremism not only by economic development, but also by revalorizing popular Islam. In a separate short essay, Haller briefly plunges into deep Tangier far from the central quarters in order to describe the ritual slaughtering on the occasion of Aïd El Kebir (ch. 6).

Social issues, especially familial changes, are a further focus of Ribas-Mateos' publication. She points to the increasing plurality of family types in Tangier (ch. 9), including an incipient shift toward a “matriarchy of industrial life” with women as families' main breadwinners, and parallel to that, male international migration leading to double-income households (ch. 6, 9). This goes hand in hand with an increasing number of celibate men and women, the mixing of sexes at industrial workplaces (ch. 6), the great importance of marrying abroad and the multi-country transnational dispersion of families – which results, in particular, in the emergence of patchwork economies and the multiplication of familial strategies (ch. 9). This includes high social vulnerability as is highlighted by the “children of sin:” illegitimate children who are released for clandestine adoption abroad while their unmarried mothers suffer from multiple exclusions (ch. 10).

Sex, lust, and angst are other central themes in Haller's book (ch. 7). This is closely connected to Tangier as a long-reputed sensual and emotional “place of longing” for Western visitors. Locally, certain spiritual categories are often interlinked with indigenous concepts of gender roles. The discrediting and bad reputation of Sufi orders hinges not least on practices of ritual and sexual transgression, such as the strong participation by female adepts, the devotion to female ġnūn, homosexuality and (same- and mixed-sex) marriages between human beings and spirits (ch. 4). However, traditional morality and tolerance are increasingly being superseded by more rigid, prudish and dangerous conditions, and revulsion at certain sexual practices is increasing amongst a new consumption-oriented middle class under conditions of growing Salafism (ch. 7). These investigations of sexual life join with Ribas-Mateos' short delving into issues of transactional sex in Tangier (ch. 7).

All in all, both publications show that “it is worth rediscovering Tangier” (Haller), especially “from below”. Haller's statement, that in the center of his book is the city's population and how they deal with the changes, applies to both monographs. However, both authors underline their

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incapacity – and lack of pretense – to behold the city's complexity in its entirety. Rather, Tangier evokes the idea of a "kaleidoscope" (Ribas-Mateos). Consequently, they "highlight" (Haller) certain aspects that they deem important and to which access was possible, leading to a kind of "collage" (Ribas-Mateos). Haller, in particular, has adopted a plurality of writing styles – ranging from predominantly ethnographic essays to stricter analyses borrowed from social science and more poetic and belletristic presentations – reflecting the highly fractionalized city and the diverse topics approached. Both authors undertake anthropological self-reflection about the role of the researcher in his or her field and intersperse their analyses with methodological considerations. They focus on individual stories and individual strategies and emphasize the importance of the local. But, they show that actors in Tangier not only act locally and in accordance with local references, but also are embedded in wider translocal, transnational and transregional contexts and processes. Notably Ribas-Mateos' insights demonstrate the range of "regionalizations" taking place in Tangier, which are linked to work in foreign firms, marriages in Spain, relatives in Europe and international migration. Haller extends this perspective to the spiritual sphere, namely

the transregional connections of mythical Aïsha Qandisha (ch. 3).

In accordance with his or her own interest, the reader will choose between the two books. While the books have some common themes, they are rather complementary and both worthwhile reading. Beyond a few inaccuracies in both publications, commenting on which is beyond the reach of this review essay, Haller's monograph is more stringent and consistent and his book better structured in presenting his results, while Ribas-Mateos is a little more erratic and eclectic in her arguments – in particular, when we compare their presentations of the current macro-social and -economic transformations of Tangier and of methodological considerations. Haller intentionally went into the field rather "unprepared", but demonstrates an extensive theoretical background and bibliography; in contrast, Ribas-Mateos almost does not refer to, for instance, the wide body of conceptual literature in interdisciplinary border studies, while the border is central to her argument. The time between Ribas-Mateos' field research and the publication of her results was considerable and spans a period of important transformations in the city, while Haller managed to publish his more up-to-date insights from the field

in a rather short period of time. Finally, the price of Ribas-Mateos' book is quite prohibitive, especially considering the poor printing quality. Many writing and typesetting mistakes pervade the book – including the title and the repeated displacement of end-of quotation marks between lines. As a final remark, both publications show the paramount importance of taking notice of non-English publications in social research and, in particular, if researchers want to gain multifarious insight in a case like the city of Tangier.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> An Arabic version of her book, Natalyā Ribās Matiyūs: "Tanja Boulevard du Détroit/Ṭanġa Būlifār al-Būġāz", has been published by the local publisher Litograph.

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