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## CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds  
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



## Panel 59

## In search of Islam? The interest of a biographical approach for a history of representations (18th-20th century)

Based on the achievements of micro-history, prosopography and advances in connected history, the speakers of this workshop, most of whom have been actively involved in the elaboration of a Dictionary of French-speaking orientalist (IISMM/Karthala, 3rd edition, 2013), intend to illustrate the fruitfulness of an approach based on the examination of individual trajectories and their traces (biographical, artistic, intellectual), in the history of the relationships between East and West. These ad-hoc approaches make it possible to highlight situations that enrich the knowledge of highly periodized historical processes. It is to illustrate these achievements that they will focus on a few particularly significant cases which are part of collective publications that are in progress (the series of bio-bibliographical dictionaries Christian Muslim Relations directed by David Thomas and John Chesworth at Brill) and to be published (a project of work on Islam in the literature of the French colonial space).

**Person in charge : Barthélemy Guy (IMAF)**

**Discussant : Pouillon François (EHESS, IMAF)**

### Program

#### Barthélemy Guy (IMAF)

*Nerval, Fromentin: what travelling means*

According to Maxime Ducamp, Fromentin complained of being «condemned» to paint, in order to earn a living, these little Arab horses affected, with the public, of creating part of the success of the orientalist canvases born from his stays in Algeria. From these, however, arose not only a striking pictorial work but also two autobiographical accounts that attest to a sharp and singular look at this country and to the echo he found in the artist's sensibility. Nerval too, in the middle of the century, certainly found in the Orient a source for «copying», but above all, he found a world that he then observed with an eye for detail and into which he projected, in a complex manner, a set of expectations and concerns, the treatment of which is impossible to compare with the barren products of literature often doomed to fall into dull exoticism. The example of these two authors will allow us to discuss the fruitfulness of the encounter with the East.

#### Durand Jean-François (Paul Valéry University, Montpellier, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Human and Social Sciences)

*André Chevrillon's Morocco: a civilization of the old world*

André Chevrillon (1864-1957) allocated three books to Morocco, *Un crépuscule d'Islam* (1906), *Marrakech dans les palmes* (1919), *Visions du Maroc* (1933). He describes an ancient Eastern civilization with

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perfectly preserved customs, based on a strong religious culture, but that is now subject to powerful transformations «at a time of all the changes in the world». Marrakech dans les palmes is particularly interested in the «tremors» which will break the «enchancements of immobility» to quote him again. Thus he opposes Marrakech and a «nascent Casablanca». By painting the picture of an ancient Moroccan world, with its secular architectural features, its relationship to the sacred, its craftsmanship, its still intact customs, facing a West whose relationship to time, religion and technology takes a very different path, the traveler of still romantic sensibility that is Chevrillon finds in Morocco something like an essence of the East that he fears will evaporate.

### **Larzul Sylvette (IMAF)**

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*Antoine Galland (1646-1715): from a curiosity for Islam to the translation of the Koran*

Known above all for his translation of the One Thousand and One Nights (1704-1717), Antoine Galland acquired, during the fifteen years he spent in the Levant, remarkable training as a «scholar in oriental languages» by frequenting both Muslims and indigenous Christians. We will observe how his work, both printed and manuscript, reflects an extended curiosity for Ottoman culture and at the same time takes a step back from a polemical vision of Islam that is still deeply rooted in Europe.

### **Messaoudi Alain (University of Nantes, Research Centre for International and Atlantic History)**

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*Albert de Kazimirski-Biberstein (1808-1887) and Abbé Bourgade (1806-1866): two Catholic perceptions of Islam in mid-nineteenth-century France*

Through a cross-analysis of the work of two scholars who showed a certain sympathy for Islam, Albert de Kazimirski-Biberstein, author of a French translation of the Koran (1840, revised three times until 1865) and Abbé Bourgade, who renewed the forms of the Islamic-Christian controversy through a series of publications, the aim is to shed light on the perception of Islam in French Catholic circles from the 1840s to the 1870s.