New insights on medieval Libya

5e congrès du GIS MOMM

(Lyon, France ; 11th of July, 2023)

Being well-known for Ancient times, the history of Libya remains quite understudied in the Islamic era (7-16th centuries). Published in the « Que Sais-Je » series in 1996, the *Histoire de la Libye* written by both André Laronde and François Burgat is still affirming to its readers that Libya would have "left history" after the Islamic conquest. However, that statement is less a consequence of its historical trajectory than to the historiographical disinterest towards Libya, in the colonial era as well as after the independence (1951). Moreover, the coup d'état of Mouammar Gaddafi (1969), which led the country to close its borders to foreign scholars, and more recently the civil war that waged from 2011, braked down many academic initiatives.

Having been created in 2021, the « LibMed » team (https://libmed.hypotheses.org/) is gathering scholars from the Southern shore of the Mediterranean (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt), as well as European scholars. It is precisely aims at relaunching the academic interest for medieval Libya, spotlighting original sources and mutualizing problematics and resources. With four members of the « LibMed » team, this panel will deliver the reflexions we are dealing with, present some collective projects underway and give an insight into the results we got or are currently expecting. In defining new methodological perspectives, we will illustrate the importance of a field that remains neglected due to its supposed documentary paucity.

Hafed Abdouli (LERIC, University of Sfax, Tunisia)

Rural landscape in medieval Tripolitania

Until now, the medieval Tripolitania region has never been investigated from a rural perspective, and no global study was ever led. Indeed, archaeological studies dedicated to the settlement problem are mostly focused on the urban sites, like Tripoli or Leptis Magna, or just described rural structures scattered all through the territory. In my talk I will propose a monographical study to fill that gap, confronting textual and archaeological data about all the Islamic remains from the medieval times (*qaṣr*, citadels, villages, *ribāṭ*, etc.), to draw a general overview of the rural landscape in the medieval Tripolitania.

Sébastien Garnier (associate researcher at the CJP-UMR 8230)

The manuscript collections of Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniyya (Benghazi). Cataloging and perspectives

The National Library of Libya keeps more than a hundred manuscripts who differ in domains, origins and eras. The PhASIF program, hosted by the Centre Jean Pépin (CNRS, UMR 8230), collaborates with the Department of Manuscripts of the NL in order to elaborate a paper and digital catalogue of the collections. For this purpose, they use the professional database Abjad. The presentation of what has been achieved so far will give a general overview and report some items that are scientifically significant.

Enas Mohamed Ali Bubtana (University of Benghazi, Libya)

Commemorative writings from Cyrenaica and their historical significance (in Arabic)

Like other inscriptions, Islamic inscriptions are considered an important source of history, especially in the medieval era, because they contain texts and dates that refer back to important events, that in turn help to understand and acknowledge the places in which they were found in. The importance of these inscriptions is due to the fact that they are an important source of historical records. However, they are scarce, and most of the time difficult to discover, specifically in Libya. They are very limited, due to the partial research and archaeological excavations in this period, as opposed to the general orientation in archaeological research for

the classical periods. In this paper, we will study a group of Islamic inscriptions – some published and some unpublished – that were found in Cyrenaica, specifically from the cities of Tocra (Taucheira), Tolmeitha (Ptolemaïs), al-Marj (Barqa), Ajdabiya and Surt (Medinat Sultan).

Louis Fandre (PhD candidate, Orient&Méditerranée-UMR 8167) and Aurélien Montel (associate researcher to the CIHAM-UMR 5648 and to Orient&Méditerranée-UMR 8167)

New data from a captivity narrative of the 17th century: the Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly *(BnF, Fr 12219-12220)*

Written by a French captive who lived in Tripoli between 1668 and 1676, the *Histoire chronologique du royaume de Tripoly* is considered a primary document to write the history of Ottoman Libya, as well as Ancient Libya, due to the classical culture of its author. However, that text was never used to challenge the medieval history of Tripoli and its region. Yet, the author himself is claiming to use Arabic texts that from the pachas' library, that were translated to him. Basing on it, he wrote an original narrative – that we are currently working on publish – about the history of the city, dedicating very interesting pages to its moment of political autonomy that is predating the Spanish conquest (1510), rather unknown through other texts.

With the support of the **Institut de Recherche sur le Maghreb Contemporain**, of the **Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle** of the French Embassy in Libya, and the **GIS Moyen-Orient Mondes Musulmans**.