

English Abstracts

Gogol as an Historian and the Development of Russian Oriental Studies

Roman Vater

Exemplary of the alliance between literature, social thought and Oriental studies is the Russian writer Nikolai Gogol's essay 'Al-Ma'mun: an Historical Overview'. The essay, a social and political parable, reveals Gogol to be an original historiographer, an erudite scholar of the early Islamic period as well as an ardent opponent of czarist despotism. In tracing the development of academic Oriental studies in Russia from the early 18th century until the October Revolution in 1917, the article draws attention to the Orientalist biases of Gogol and his contemporaries. It proposes a concept of 'popular Orientalism' and allocates Gogol's 'Al-Ma'mun' to that genre in Russian letters.

Boundaries, Identities and Territoriality: Seven Shi'i Villages as a Case Study

Asher Kaufman

This study explores the history of seven Shi'i villages in mandatory Palestine, since the end of World War I. Specifically, it examines the villagers' relations with the Jewish population and the Sunni-Arab population between 1924-1948 and, their status as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon (1948-1994), and their new civic identity following the naturalization bill of 1994, which granted them Lebanese citizenship. To fathom the shifts in territorial identity and border politics, the tale of the seven villages is examined from three perspectives: that of the villagers, the Palestinian perspective, and the Lebanese perspective. The different narratives shed light on the colonial heritage in the Middle East, regional boundaries and the formation of national identities, and contemporary domestic politics in Lebanon.

‘A Stronghold of Ignorance and Cowardice’ – the Arab Combatant in the Eyes of the Israeli Combatants in 1948

Avner Wishnitzer

Despite the fact that Arab regular and irregular forces often waged bitter war against the Israelis in the 1948 war, a ridiculous image of the Arab combatant was to dominate Israeli collective memory. In the Israeli war literature of 1948, upon which this study is based, the Arab combatant was scorned for his alleged cowardice, stupidity and helplessness. A systematic analysis of this image of the Arab combatant shows that his ridiculous portrait was meant to serve the construction of the Archetypal figure of the Israeli soldier and commander as his complete opposite, and glorify the newly formed Israeli army.

To Reveal a World that Constantly Demands Revealing

Adonis

The Syrian-Lebanese ‘Ali Ahmad Sa‘id, better known under his pseudonym Adonis, is an internationally renowned poet, essayist, and theoretician of poetics. In this well-known essay, Adonis advocates liberating Arabic poetry from traditional formalism. To this aim, he proposes an aesthetics, which articulates an individualistic and introspective perspective of our highly fragmented contemporary world.

Theory of Climates and the Historiography of Science in the Islamic World

Keren Abou-Herskovitz

This article examines the debate between Muslims who opposed the medieval scientific enterprise and those who supported it. Through the analysis of the book of al-Andalusi (d. 1070) – which depicts the development of science and its way to the Muslim world – it shows how Muslims used climate theory to depict the development of science and to legitimize the cultivation of science.