



“From the back of the heart”
Third IDEO Conference in Cairo

Reciting in the Early Islamic Empire (7th–9th centuries): Texts, Modalities, Issues

A Conference Organised by the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO)
Cairo, June 29th–July 2nd, 2020

Keynote Speaker: Prof. **Devin J. Stewart**, Emory University (Atlanta)

Call for Papers

Deadlines:

January 31st, 2020 (half a page proposal, sent to secretariat@ideo-cairo.org).

May 15, 2020 (three-page summary, sent to the same address, if your proposal is accepted).

Keywords:

Qur’ānic Recitation – Psalmody – Orality – Transmission.

Islam – Judaism – Christianity – Zoroastrianism – Late Antiquity and Early Islam.

Torah – Bible – Psalms – Qur’ān – *Qaṣaṣ* – Poetry – Prayer – Rites – *Sağ’* – reading – memorisation.

Presentation:

This conference offers a space for reflection on the various types of recitation that took place in the central regions of the Arab-Islamic empire (from Egypt to Persia, including the Arabian Peninsula) during its first three centuries, including different contexts:

- in “**Islamic religious context**”: the Qur’ān, Ḥadīth, stories (*qaṣaṣ*), mystical poetry, etc.
- in a “**non-Islamic religious context**”: Jewish and Christian psalms and prayers (in Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic); Zoroastrian and Manichean ceremonies; magical rites, etc.
- or in a “**secular context**”: poetry and rhyming prose (*sağ’*) in Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic or other languages; political speeches and propaganda; memorizing techniques for learning medical, scientific, philosophical, legal, grammatical knowledge, etc.

NB: the religious vs. secular distinction will be questioned.

These types of recitations will be discussed as a starting point for a reflection on the literary genres of the texts recited, on the recitation techniques, as well as on the actors of recitation, and the socio-

political contexts and issues linked to the act of reciting. This conference welcomes papers on one (or more) of the following themes:

1) The modalities of the recitation

The details of the practices that precede and constitute the act of recitation (both religious and secular): such as listening, learning by heart, reading, reciting or declaiming in front of an audience, chanting, performing, etc. will be considered, as well as the rules and modalities of pronunciation, the vocal interpretation of the text, the artistic and emotional aspects, and finally, the precise contexts in which one recites such or such a text (rites, celebrations, feasts, calendars, circumstances, material conditions, clothes, etc.).

2) Recitation and transmission of knowledge

Reciting is a form of knowledge transmission. In return, some “recitation professionals” transmit the specific knowledge (and know-how) of recitation. This session will address the articulation between recitation and teaching/learning, addressing the materiality of recitation —either linked to manuscripts or epigraphy—, learning practices such as “recitation before the scholar” and validation by the scholar (*iğāza*, etc.), as well as the actors of recitation (often professionals, religious, or artists, etc.) and how they transmit their vocal art and ethics (e.g. *adab al-qurrā*’).

3) The stakes of recitation

The religious/spiritual horizons of recitation practices will be explored (edification, justification, prayer for healing, mysticism, etc.), as well as secular aims (political, social, academic, artistic, etc.): mastery of the content, timing or form of recitation can be linked to power, community identity or creation.

Methodology:

Although being open to the public, this conference mainly intends to be a place for work and scientific debate. Consequently, we will ask the speakers who have been selected to send a 3 to 4-page summary of their paper by May 15, 2020. These summaries will be distributed to the other participants. Each speaker will then enrol as a discussant for at least one paper presented by a peer. It is expected that all the speakers attend all the panels.

The languages of the conference are English and Arabic.

Scientific organization:

Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, *Maître de conférence* at the University of Strasbourg, France.

Asma Hilali, *Maître de conférence* at the University of Lille, France.

Logistics and financial organization:

International transportation, airport transfer, and half-board accommodation will be covered by the IDEO, thanks to a grant of the European Union through the project “*Adawāt*” (2018–2022).

Publication

The issue 37 (2022) of *MIDEO* will be devoted to the same topic and will welcome papers, presented in this conference or not, under the condition that they undergo the usual evaluation principles.

For inquiries, please contact us at secretariat@ideo-cairo.org.

