Meanings of MORALIA. Mirrors for Princes and Ethical Instruction at Court and in Society in Western Asia.

Saturday 27 October 2012. Trinity Hall, Leslie Stephen Room. 2.00 pm - 7.00 pm

FAMES Graduate Seminar
Wright Lectures Series 2012

Convenors
Louise Marlow, James Montgomery, Christine van Ruymbeke

PROGRAMME

2.00-3 pm
Discussant: Julia Bray (Oxford)
Key-note address: Louise Marlow (Wellesley College): Beyond the Court; A Public Culture of Advice

3-4.30 pm
Discussant: James Montgomery (FAMES)
Istvan Krsto-Nagy (Exeter): Wisdom vs. Wildness. How to Tame Killing Kings and Punish Cunning Careerists. Lions and Jackals, Rulers and Administrators in the Kalila wa-Dimna (translated into Arabic by 757 CE).

Amira Bennison (FAMES): The Construction of Kingship in the Chronicles of Medieval Maghreb.

4.30-5.00 pm
Coffee break

5- 6.30 pm
Discussant: Francesca Orsini (SOAS)
Camillo Formigatti (FAMES): The Nepalese Pali Recension of the Pancatantra (CUL MS Or 727)


6.30-7 pm
Closing remarks.

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ABSTRACTS
Amira K. Bennison
The construction of kingship in the chronicles of the medieval Maghrib

The dynasties of al-Andalus and the Maghrib did not produce a vast quantity of 'Mirrors for Princes' literature. The most famous one is the fourteenth century work written by Ibn al-Khaṭīb for the Naṣrid sultans of Granada in which it is hard to decide whether the key individual is the lion king or his tiger chief minister. However, there are many dynastic chronicles which present an idealised view of history which expound on appropriate kingly actions and, more rarely, criticise activities and ethics contrary to the social construction of kingship. In this paper, I shall consider what Maghribi chroniclers, generally of urban, educated origin, present as normative values for their rulers, the majority of whom were of tribal origin. I shall also consider how adherence to these values was promulgated using urban patronage and other modes of communication. Finally, I shall look briefly at how biographies in the abaqāt literature can add an additional dimension to understanding the ethics of rule for both rulers and their chief courtiers and officials.

Christine van Ruymbeke
Va’ez Kashefi fifteenth-century rewriting of the Kalila-Dimna text and the not-so-moral sequel to the story of Dimna.

This paper will examine the sequel to the story of jackal Dimna which has famously been added to the collection of fables by Ibn al-Muqaffa’. I will argue that the received view on the sequel as an opportunity to “let morality win in the end” is based on very hasty conclusions and unsatisfactory readings of the text. Having ascertained what I propose as the real aim of the chapter, I will then examine how, addressing his fifteenth-century Timurid Herat audience, Va’ez Kashefi rewrites this particular chapter, basing himself on the three centuries-old Ghaznavid Kalila-Dimna version by Nasrollah Monshi.

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