

Peripheral Visions: European Soldiers and Cultural Encounters in the Long Nineteenth Century

Trinity College Dublin

2 - 4 June 2016



Roger Jouanneau dit Irriera, *Chasseur d'Afrique*. Salonika, 1916.
Courtesy of the Musée d'Histoire Contemporaine, Paris

Making War, Mapping Europe: Militarised Cultural Encounters, 1792-1920

www.mwme.eu

www.tcd.ie/warstudies/



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Themes and Perspectives

From the late 18th to the early 20th centuries, European powers mounted military expeditions to the eastern periphery of the continent and to the edge of what they considered to be the ‘civilized’ world. From the Napoleonic expeditions to Italy, Egypt and Russia to the British conquest of Egypt in the 1880s, and from the German Empire’s involvement with the Ottoman Empire to the British and French campaigns in Macedonia and Palestine during the First World War, European soldiers ventured into exotic lands. In so doing, they experienced the unknown while also confronting their own cultural pre-conceptions about the territories they visited and the people against or amongst whom they fought. Often the places they visited were redolent with European cultural significance (Rome, Egypt, Jerusalem), a significance belied by the modern realities of those same sites. In making war, they mapped a Europe of their own imagining. Yet because they engaged in the overt violence of war and the more covert violence of occupation, their encounters were not those of tourists, traders or travel writers, though they certainly contained elements of all three. There was a military specificity to what they saw, to whom they encountered and to how they did so. The encounters were important for the soldiers themselves, for their home countries and for the societies to which they went. Indeed, in terms of numbers and influence, these militarized encounters were one of the most important ways in which Europeans engaged with the eastern and southern periphery of their continent in the course of the long 19th century.

In order to explore the evolving nature of the military encounters and the cultural mapping that they generated, this conference will combine a clear framework of time and space with a comparative and thematic approach. The seven expeditionary episodes on which it draws are those studied by each of the four participating universities in the HERA project, of which the conference is the culminating event.¹ They are:

- The French expedition to Italy and the French and British expeditions to Egypt in the 1790s, as well as British participation in the Peninsular War (Spain and Portugal) (TCD, York)
- German participation in the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812-1813 (Swansea)
- The British invasion and occupation of Egypt from the 1880s (York)
- The German military involvement in the Ottoman Empire 1755-1918 (Freie Universität , Berlin)
- French and British soldiers in Macedonia, 1915-1918 (TCD)
- The British military occupation of Jerusalem, 1917-1920 (TCD)

The spatial and temporal dimensions will be addressed directly in an iconographic display in the course of the conference that will use images from the project’s online exhibition in order to illustrate the different places and evolving time frames concerned. However, each session will be organized on a thematic basis ranging in a comparative manner across the time and

¹ HERA = Humanities in the European Research Area. HERA has funded the three year project Making War, Mapping Europe: Militarized Cultural Encounters, 1792-1920 and the four participating universities are: Freie Universität Berlin, Trinity College Dublin, University of Swansea and University of York. For more information visit: www.mwme.eu

space of the project. The five themes will be Encounters; Patrimonies; Counter-Encounters; Capturing Landscapes; and Perceptions and Power.

‘Encounters’ will focus on the engagement with the people of the regions invaded or occupied, including fighting, occupying, looting, trading, tourism and sex. It will encompass religion and customs and the multiple ways in which such encounters were expressed, from diaries, letters and official records to drawing, painting and photography. Vital here will be the issue of whether the nature of these encounters evolved across the 19th century, and if so how.

‘Patrimonies’ will deal with the cultural and artistic content of the territories invaded and occupied. The European expeditionary forces and advisory missions had often invested these lands with symbolic meaning connected to the belief that Europe was the inheritor (and thus the custodian) of human ‘civilization’ more generally. Not only did they define themselves in relation to the art, artefacts and monuments of these ancient lands (especially in the Levant), they also appointed themselves the custodians of this ‘patrimony,’ including its selective dispatch to collections in Europe. Art, archaeology, architecture and urbanization are all relevant issues here.

‘Counter-encounters’ pose the question of how the encounters (and the constitution of ‘patrimonies’) were experienced by the invaded and occupied peoples. Another form of ‘counter-encounter’ was that of colonial troops fighting with European armies against other non-European people. While linguistic and other limitations mean that this theme will not be treated as fully as the ‘encounters’ from the dominant European side, the conference will draw on the work of scholars who have been able to address these other, very different sides of such exchanges.

‘Capturing Landscapes’ addresses the iconography of encounters that has been at the heart of this project. It explores how battle painting and photography were among the important ways in which expeditionary and occupation forces appropriated the strange landscapes, which, more than just the setting for encounters, were themselves a vital part of the encounters.

‘Perceptions and power’ raise a more command-centred view of the encounters between European soldiers and the inhabitants of the ‘periphery.’ The violence of war gave the dominant Europeans both military and political authority over the peoples and territories concerned. Military authorities were concerned to administer and (where invasion turned into occupation) even to institutionalize the relationship between their own soldiers, the enemy and the indigenous peoples. They also assumed (or failed to assume) responsibility for the ‘patrimonies’ under their control, which included the fraught issue of the holy sites of various religions. Working with the military, other Europeans decided what should be permanently expropriated for the benefit of the custodians of ‘civilization’ back in Europe.

The conference is open to interested scholars. We request intending participants to register (with no charge) in advance. In order to do so, and for all further information, please contact: Dr Fergus Robson (frobson@tcd.ie) or Dr Mahon Murphy (murphm73@tcd.ie)

Conference Programme

Thursday, 2 June

- 13:00 - 13:30** **Registration**, Trinity Long Room Hub, Trinity College
- 13:30 – 14:30** Oliver Janz (Freie Universität, Berlin): Introduction to the project.
Joseph Clarke and John Horne (TCD): Introduction to the conference.
- 14:30 – 16:00** **Encounters I**
- Joseph Clarke (TCD), ‘Soldiers and the Sacred: British and French Encounters with the Religious Other’
- Sheona Davies (University of Swansea), ‘”Marsh and Forest”, Barbarism and Civilization in Memoirs of the 1812 Campaign’
- 16.00-16.30** **Coffee**
- 16:30 – 18:00** **Encounters II**
- Leighton James (University of Swansea), ‘Violence and the Barbaric East: Germans and the Russian Campaign of 1812’
- Justin Fantauzzo (Memorial University, Newfoundland), ‘“Arise, Phoenix-like”: British Soldiers, Civilization, and the First World War in Macedonia, 1915-18’
- 19.00** **Dinner (speakers and chairs)**

Friday, 3 June

- 9:00 – 10:30** **Patrimonies I**
- Catriona Kennedy (University of York), ‘Military Ways of Seeing: British Soldiers’ Views of the Egyptian Coast, 1801’
- Paul Fox (University of York), ‘Architecture and the language of damage: patriotic British representations of physical destruction in Khartoum, 1884-98’
- 11:00 – 12:30** **Patrimonies II**
- Oliver Stein (Freie Universität, Berlin), ‘German Military and Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1918’
- John Horne (TCD), ‘A “Civilizing Work”? The French Army in Macedonia, 1915-1918’

- 12.45-14.00** **Lunch (speakers and chairs)**
- 14:00 – 15:30** **Counter-Encounters**
- Zeinab Abul-Magd (Oberlin College, Ohio), ‘A Crisis of Images: French, Jihad, and the Plague in Upper Egypt, 1798-1801’
- Santanu Das (KCL), A Bengali stretcher-bearer in the First World War
- 16:00 – 17:30** **Capturing Landscapes**
- Tom Gretton (UCL), ‘Edgy Encounters in North Africa and the Balkans: R. C. Woodville’s pictures of military life for the *Illustrated London News* 1884 – 1903’
- Jennifer Wellington (UCD), ‘Imagining Landscapes in Palestine during the Great War’
- 17:30 – 18:30** **Time and Place: Images and Objects from Europe’s Military Peripheries, 1792-1920** (presentation based on the MWME online exhibition)
- 19.00** **Dinner (speakers and chairs)**

Saturday, 4 June

- 9.30 – 11.30** **Perceptions and Power**
- Fergus Robson (TCD), ‘Bearers and Begetters of the Torch of Civilization; French Soldiers’ Evolving Conceptions of the Self and the Other through Militarized Cultural Encounters’
- David Gilks (UEA), ‘Anti-clericalism and the dispute over plundering Rome during the French revolutionary wars’
- Mahon Murphy (TCD), ‘The ‘Hole-y’ City: British Soldiers’ Perceptions of Jerusalem during its Occupation 1917-1920’
- 11.30-12.00** **Coffee**
- 12.00 – 13.00** **General discussion** Chair: Oliver Janz (Freie Universität)