

XIV Convegno SeSaMO

**PERCORSI DI RESISTENZA IN MEDIO ORIENTE E NORD AFRICA**

Università degli Studi di Torino

31 gennaio – 2 febbraio 2019



**SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE**

**TITOLO: Decaying despots! Historical trajectories of two 'oriental' concepts**

**PROPONENTE/I:** - Elisabetta Benigni

**ABSTRACT:**

The aim of this panel is to analyze the two concepts of 'despotism' and 'decadence' and their historical trajectory by looking at Arabic and Ottoman Turkish sources written between the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taking as a point of departure the idea of 'conceptual history' proposed by Reinhart Koselleck, the panel will look at language as a medium in order to investigate political and social transformations. Language is here intended not only as a mirror or reality but also as the active element that produces specific socio-historical dynamics. Therefore, the two concepts of despotism and decadence, projected by Europe on the Ottoman empire and on its Arab provinces from the 18<sup>th</sup> c. onward and at the same time also central in the reflection on cyclical patterns of history elaborated by Arab and Turkish thinkers, will be taken into exam in their use in different sources, underlining their semantic shift across time. Participants to the panel are particularly invited to discuss sources on historiography, moral, political theory, texts written in marginalized condition (such as prison or exile writings) and female writings. One of the aims of the panel is that of discussing to which extent the concept of despotism is connected with that of decadence, in which sources and starting from when the two concepts appear related and what is their evolution and change during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly under the influence of the increase number of translations from Arabic into Turkish and vice versa and from European languages.

**PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I:**

**Elisabetta Benigni** is ricercatrice in Arabic language and literature at the University of Turin. She was post doctoral fellow at the Forum Transregionale Studien (Berlin) and at the Italian Academy (Columbia University). Her research topics include: prison literature and theories of reception of political literature and circulation of texts in the Mediterranean in the modern period.