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The Narrative of Islamic violence in History. Creation, artifice and reality. ICS, University of Navarra, the 14th -15th of December 2018

The Early Development of the Narrative of Islamic Violence

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The paper attempts to trace the origins of the image of Islam's first expansion as a violent phenomenon. After noting briefly the long history of Europe's negative portrayal of Islam, and its relation to an essentializing polemic, we examine first the Qur'an's attitude toward violence and coercion, and its teachings on *jihād*. The sparse more or less contemporary evidence for the events of the conquest is then considered, along with historical evidence for the attitude of the Qur'an and the early community of Believers toward Christians and "peoples of the book" more generally. The contribution of apocalyptic ideas to the early expansion is considered, especially in relation to the key sites of Jerusalem and Constantinople, and how it may have affected Islam's attitude toward Byzantium. The Qur'an's contradictory statements on Christians, and their relationship to an increasingly combative attitude toward Christians on the part of Muslim rulers, is explored. The development and valorization of a violent perception of the expansion in Islamic historiography seems to have occurred in the eighth and ninth centuries, as part of the elaboration of the historiographical *futūḥ* genre, and also traceable in the development of such notions as the dichotomy *dār al-islām* / *dār al-ḥarb*, which is not found in the Qur'an. As Islamic notions of the Christian 'other' evolved and policies toward Christians hardened under the Abbasids, Eastern Christian authors in the Near East seem to have projected their discomfort under increasingly oppressive Islamic rule back to the origins period in a manner not shared by the earlier Christian sources. Western Christians, receiving the assault of Muslim states, gradually came to interiorize a largely negative view of Islam as the ultimate enemy.