

Analysis

of Islamic State's
Self-Representational
Photographs
in Rumiya Magazine

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MA Design Research

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Declaration about Visuals

Any violent or sensitive visual content has been obscured.

Rhetorical Design Analysis of the Current State of the Research

I. Formal analysis

As a first step, I recorded quantitative data of what is seen in the photographs by assigning keywords alphabetically for each photograph (below is a screenshot example). These keywords consist of elements seen, location, visual effects, and photography techniques. This step allowed the identification of patterns and their frequencies.

6 Below is an example of the formal analysis of one portrait (see more in Documentation Blog entry " Formal Analysis—Rumiyah Photographs & Keywords version 4.0—Final Version").



Focus
Balaclava
Covered Face with Balaclava
Desert Camouflage
Fighter
Group
Looking Away
Sitting
Uniform
Weapon
Weapon Pointed Upwards

Periphery
Desert
Out of Focus

Location
Outdoor

Field Size
Full Shot

Camera Angle
Slightly Low-Angle Shot

Portrait Type
Candid Portrait

Depth of Field
Narrow

Photographic Composition
Rule of Thirds

Title of text
IMPORTANT ADVICE FOR THE MUJAHIDIN PART 1

issue 11 | page 6

II. Effect analysis & investigation of specific design means in correlation with specific intent

This step is divided into:

(1) Thematic analysis and (2) Technical analysis

Thematic Analysis

Islamic State's self-representational photographs focus on two themes: (1) Heroization of Fighters and (2) Allegorization of Women.

Theme 1 |

Heroization of Fighters

7 The portraits of IS fighters are suggestive of heroic depiction. The first key narrative of IS's self-representational photographs focuses on heroization of fighters. A jihadi fighter elicits notions of heroism, bravery, virtue, strength, and religious devotion, and divine reward (Ostovar 2017, 93). These notions are regularly depicted throughout IS portraits. This narrative is further broken down into five sub-thematics, which were qualitatively assessed both in isolation, and in respect to each other.

Sub-thematic 1 |

Confrontation with the Enemy

IS is a militant organization that claims to follow a fundamentalist Salafi-jihadist doctrine of Sunni Islam. Its goal is to establish an Islamic caliphate governed by its interpretation of the Qur'an and sharia, and to exercise Islam as the first three generations of Muslims (Wood 2017, 6). IS emphasizes on: (1) the unity of the Ummah (Muslim community), (2) Tawhid', (3) and rejection of religious innovations, while adhering to the strict scriptural interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith to practice its imposed form of Islam (Haykel 2014, 38-39), and those who do not adhere to this imposition are subjected to punishment. Many IS fighters' portraits depict physical jihad through visuals of confrontation with the enemy (Figs. 1 & 2). These portraits intend to impress potential recruits and to induce fear in enemies.

1. The Tawhid is the belief in the oneness of God and is a key component in Islam (Ramadan 2017, 55). It is the first half of the shahada, which is an affirmation of faith, one of the five pillars of Islam, and a component of daily prayers: "There is no god but Allah", and the second half is accepting Muhammad as God's prophet.

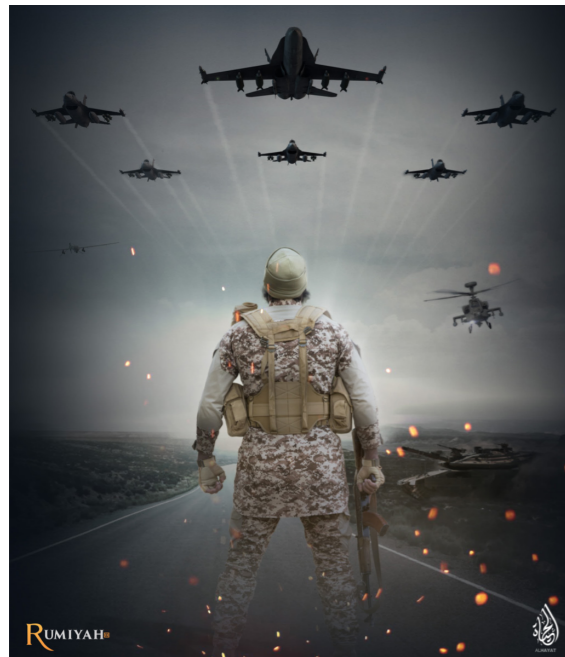


Figure 1

Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 38



Figure 2

Rumiyah no. 5 | p. 16

Sub-thematic 2 |

Religious Legitimacy & Islamic Identity

IS argues that its "caliphate" is the only legitimate Islamic state and system of governance (Hassan 2017, 1), and restorer of true Islam. It furthermore focuses on fueling powerful political and religious psychological dynamics and exacerbating the perception of crisis – the marginalization of Sunnis in Iraq by Shia Muslims and Western Nations – in its audiences by creating the perception of 'out-group'—such as Shia Muslims and Western Nations—and 'in-group' identities: the 'out-group' consists of anyone who is not aligned with the IS, and the 'in-group' consists of anyone aligned with the IS (Ingram 2014, 6). Moreover, to religiously differentiate itself from the out-group, Islamic State justifies itself and its actions by the imperative to be fighting for the divine cause of Allah, Islam, and the Ummah. And it asserts that there are no economic or political motives for the conflict between 'in-group' and 'out-group' except religious ones (Al-Muhajir 2016, 19). To religiously legitimize its status to do so and assert itself, IS depicts its fighters with a focus on piety and virtuous acts (Figs. 3 & 4) and gestures (Figs. 5 & 6) and appropriates Islamic art and notions of Islam's past (Figs. 7 & 8).



Figure 3
Rumiyah no. 3 | p. 32

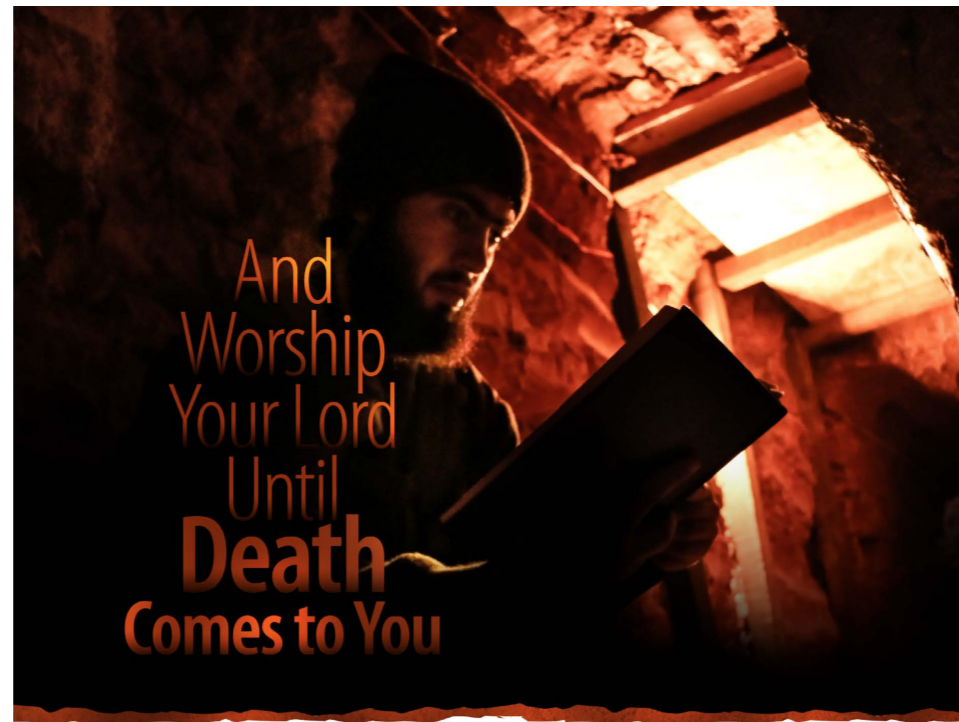


Figure 4
Rumiyah no. 8 | p. 4

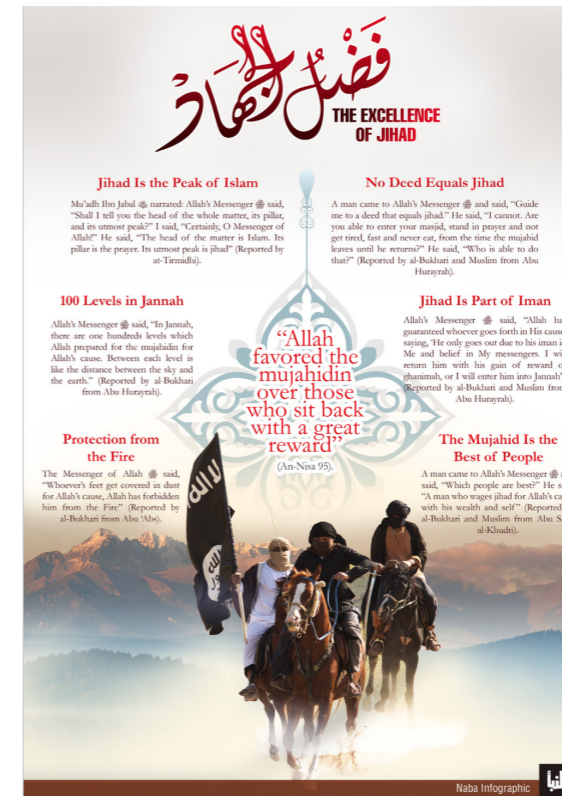


Figure 7
Rumiyah no. 3 | p. 13



Figure 8
Rumiyah no. 12 | p. 18

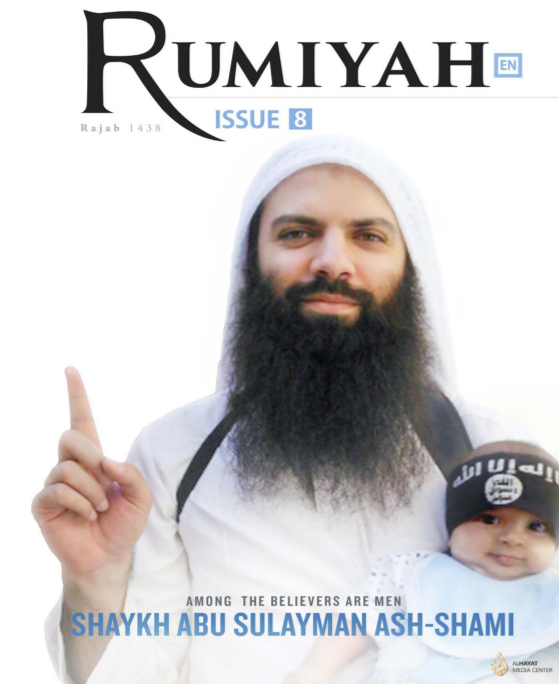


Figure 5
Rumiyah no. 8 | cover



Figure 6
Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 22

Sub-thematic 3 |

Martyrdom

IS views a mujahid as an elite of Allah's creation (see Rumiya no. 1 2016, 3). His greatest accomplishment is to become a martyr and a hero for the Ummah. In a mujahid's vision of Islam, "there is no greater spiritual act than martyrdom for one's faith" (Brachman et al. 2006, 86). A martyr is also believed to get elevated above other believers in the eyes of Allah (Cook 2017, 152) (Figs. 9 & 10).

The visual depiction of martyrs acts as (1) a source of inspiration for jihad, and (2) an allurements to want to attain martyrdom emphasizing its religious nature to potential recruits (Brachman et al. 2006, 86). In this sub-thematic, the majority of the Rumiya articles about martyrdom claim that the fighters depicted are dead—martyrs as Rumiya calls them. The remaining portraits and their articles cannot confirm whether the fighter is alive or dead. Nevertheless, I suggest that it encompasses fighters who became martyrs (dead) or those who hope to attain martyrdom (alive).

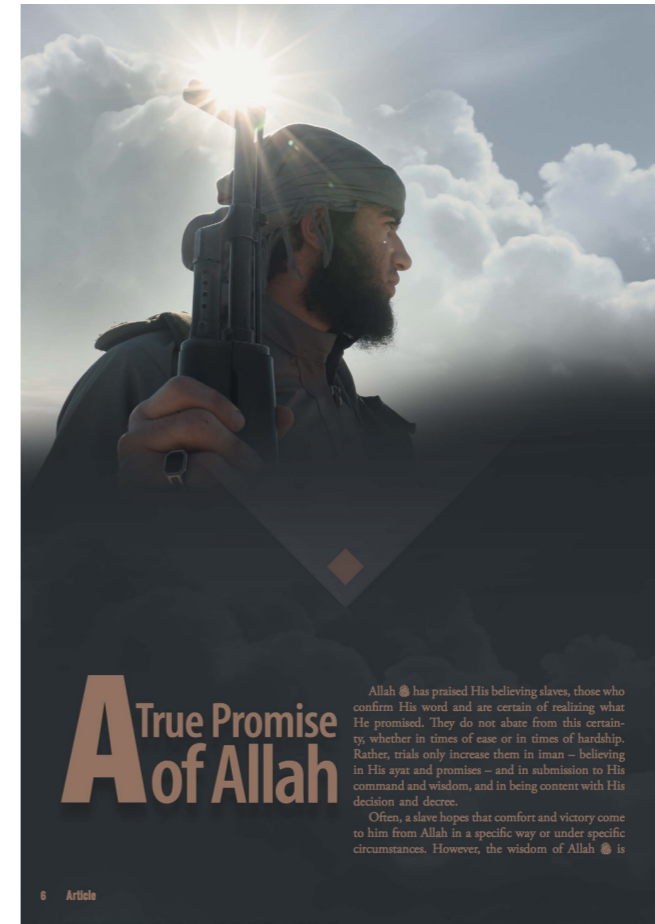


Figure 9

Rumiya no. 8 | p. 6

Figure 10

Rumiya no. 12 | p. 4



**Sub-thematic 4 |
Collective Belonging**

Many of IS portraits place an emphasis on the collective nature of IS by portraying fighters together on convoys, marching, standing next to each other with their firearms, conversing or clasp hands (Figs. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16 respectively). These portraits aim to incite feelings of belonging and brotherhood rather than focusing on brutal visual constructions. These portraits play a crucial role in affecting individuals who feel that (1) their communities, in this case, Sunni Muslims, are marginalized and disenfranchised in Western societies due to their cultural backgrounds, or (2) their communities are occupied and oppressed in their own countries by Western forces; this influence motivates individuals to join IS with the desire to collectively avenge the injustice committed against the community with whom they identify (Harper 2018, 12). This depiction also shows those who feel marginalized that they are not alone, and that there are others who feel the same. Indeed, while the depiction of Collective Belonging is not the only means to recruit foreign fighters, it nevertheless plays a crucial role in luring those who feel marginalized and disenfranchised into making hijra and joining the IS (Winter 2015, 19, 21; Rumiyah no. 1 2016, 3, 16, 24 and no. 2, 15).

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Figure 11
Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 34



Figure 12
Rumiyah no. 10 | p. 46



Figure 13
Rumiyah no. 10 | p. 29



15

Figure 14
Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 14





Figure 15
Rumiyah no. 10 | p. 3



Figure 16
Rumiyah no. 1 | p. 8

This sub-thematic sometimes overlaps with the sub-thematics of: Religious legitimacy & Islamic identity, Martyrdom, and The Future of the Caliphate that I discuss next.

Sub-thematic 5 | The Future of the Caliphate

Depiction of IS child soldiers (Fig. 17) invites newcomers and urge young men to take advantage of their youth and join the group before they are old (Rumiyah no. 8 2017, 32). Second, it aims to shame older, men who do not join the IS, by way of representing the youngsters as young men “who viewed being killed as glorious...” (Rumiyah no. 9 2017, 31), and urges them to “follow their guidance” (Rumiyah no. 7 2017, 3). Third, it calls forth notions of pride, honor, as well as, the need to protect Islam from outside harm for generations to come (Brachman et al. 2006, 90): the IS claims that “[r]aising one’s children in the Khilafah is a great blessing” (Rumiyah no. 2 2016, 16). This statement also shows the confidence of Islamic State that the caliphate is a long lasting project. Fourth, it aims to show parents examples of other children fighting for the IS, and to encourage them to send their own children. And finally, the photographs of young boys also act as a proof to the Western enemies of the rise of a new generation of jihadi fighters, and most importantly they aim to instigate fear and concern in the enemy for the years to come.



Figure 17
Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 20

Theme 2 |
Allegorization of Women

After thorough analysis of the portraits of IS fighters, I explore the representation of women and observe a lack of female identity in the visuals addressing them in Rumiya, and instead, these visuals are of nature (Fig. 18), the Qur'an, praying carpet (Fig. 19), money and jewelry that should be donated for jihad (Figs. 20 & 21), house objects (Fig. 22), or arabesque (Fig. 23). These elements reinforce the message of each article by associating them with the expected behavior of women to construct the ideal Muslim women in the caliphate suggesting their purification and their dependence on their male guardians.

18 Therefore, the second theme could be characterized as: Allegorization of Women. The visuals complement the the ideological constructs and beliefs of the group towards women, and so not representing women reinforces their subordination manifested in the symbolic representation. Therefore, these elements and the photographs themselves become an allegorical representation of women.

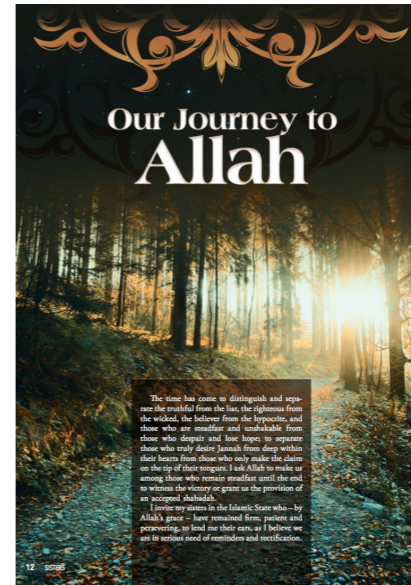


Figure 18
Rumiya no. 11 | p. 12



Figure 19
Rumiya no. 3 | p. 40



Figure 20
Rumiya no. 1 | p. 18



Figure 21
Rumiya no. 1 | p. 20



20 **Figure 22**
Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 18



Figure 23
Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 30

Recurrence of some photos

Prior to discussing the technical analysis of the themes and the sub-thematics, it is worth mentioning that it has come to my attention that there are 4 sets of double photos (used in different issues) that either their backgrounds are manipulated and changed into different backgrounds through photoshop (Figs. 24 & 25; 26 & 27; 28 & 10) or the fighters are photographed from different sides (Figs. 16 & 29)² by possibly more than one photographer. The latter observation suggests that the IS photographs are not spontaneous recordings but staged photographs by doing photoshoot sessions with its fighters. And this in its turn suggests that the IS thoroughly plans the “what”, “where”, and “how” to portray.

2. They are portrayed with the same gestures but within different timing.



Figure 24
Rumiyah no. 1 | cover



Figure 25
Rumiyah no. 1 | p. 2



Figure 26
Rumiya no. 1 | p. 4



Figure 27
Rumiya no. 3 | p. 16

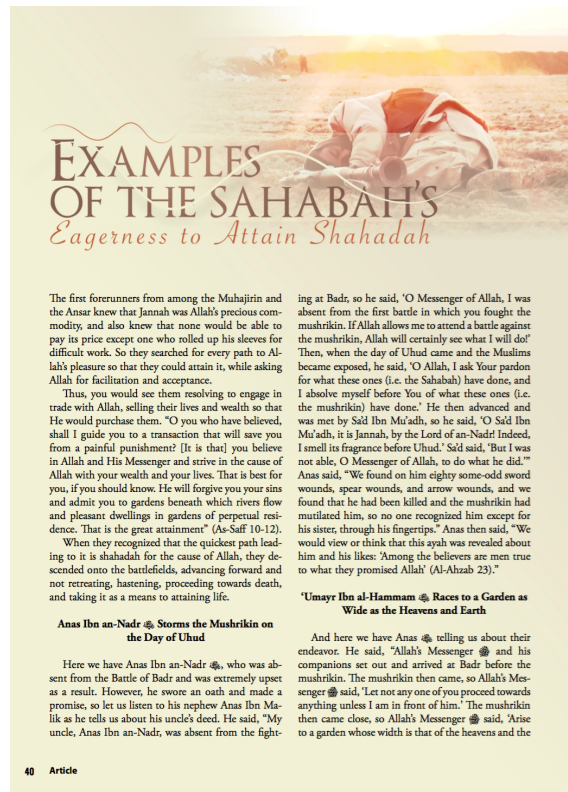


Figure 28
Rumiya no. 6 | p. 40



Figure 29
Rumiya no. 13 | p. 20

Technical Analysis

As mentioned in the thematic analysis, the self-representational photographs published in the English-version of the group's online magazine Rumiya focus on two themes. First, those depicting IS fighters boast heroic efforts of the fighters who are religiously legitimate, to free the Muslims from oppression or from those hindering the unity of the Ummah. And so, we can observe an umbrella theme of Heroization of Fighters that is furthermore divided into 5 sub-categories: (1) Confrontation with the enemy, (2) Religious legitimacy & Islamic identity, (3) Martyrdom, (5) Collective belonging, and (6) The Future of the Caliphate. Whereas, the second theme "Allegorization of Women" suggests to represent women as subordinates in need of purification to construct the ideal Muslim woman in order to support the IS fighter.

The technical analysis section studies the visual techniques the IS employs in each of the themes and the sub-thematics and how each of them has been represented. The features under analysis include motifs and colors, position and gesture of the fighter including his gaze, style of portrait, camera angle, visual construction and composition techniques, typography, and layout.

Camera angles & their impact

Camera Angle is the angle from which the camera views and records the subject. Different camera angles convey different meanings and affect the viewer's perception. A high-angle shot is a shot in which the camera is physically higher than the subject, who is looked down upon, and makes the subject look small, weak or vulnerable (Baranowski & Hecht 2017, 2). A low-angle shot is taken from below the subject's eye-point and has the power to make the subject look powerful or threatening (Baranowski & Hecht 2017, 2). Eye-level angle—also called “neutral shot”—is when the camera is at the level of the viewer's eyes, and it elicits trust in the viewer (Baranowski & Hecht 2017, 8).

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“The more extreme the camera angle, the more likely it is to reinforce or alter the narrative structure” (Baranowski & Hecht 2017, 2). Bird's eye shot or bird's-eye view shots are taken directly above the scene to establish the landscape and the actors relationship to it—as if God is looking down upon the subject—to emphasize the insignificance of the subjects in the surrounding (The New York Times 2011, 214). Worm's-eye view is a shot that is looking up from the ground, and gives the viewer the feeling that the subject is imposing (BBC Bitesize).

Theme 1 |

Heroization of Fighters

The portraits of IS fighters are suggestive of heroic depiction.

The key narrative of Islamic State's self-representational photographs focus on heroization of fighters. A jihadi fighter elicits notions of bravery, virtue, strength, and religious devotion, heroism, and divine reward (Ostovar 2017, 93). This key self-representational narrative is further broken down into 5 sub-thematics, which were qualitatively assessed both in isolation, and in respect to each other. After conducting an analysis of the visual techniques to understand how Islamic State plays with the emotions of their audiences, one can observe an apparent fluidity among the visual constructions and techniques of the sub-thematics under the umbrella theme of Heroization of Fighters, and this fluidity creates visual interconnection among these different sub-thematics. Having said this, the visual techniques and constructions are by no means exclusive to one sub-thematic unless stated otherwise. There are also many portraits that combine more than one visual construction.

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Common motifs

Certain motifs including colors are common through jihadi visuals regardless of the sub-thematic of the visual. For example:

Weapons

Weapons are highly common motifs used in jihadi visuals (Brachman et al. 2006, 96) “to communicate their dedication to armed resistance” (Ostovar 2017, 84). This motifs is common throughout the different sub-thematics further evoking: (1) the violent nature of jihadi warfare, (2) the power of the jihadists’ military technology, (3) jihadi victories, association with jihadi fighters’ and martyrs’ identities with violent jihadi activism (Brachman et al. 2006, 97).

Greenery & Mountains

26

Greenery and landscape are usually used as a background elements eliciting notions of the Islamic concept of heaven being a lavish garden (Brachman et al. 2006, 24). These motifs could also (1) connote ascension to heaven through physical jihad, and (2) showcase the vast land under the Islamic caliphate that awaits the newcomers. Whereas, a mountain, a symbol highly present in the Qur’an, is directly associated with the divine revelation (El Difraoui 2013, 162).

Greenery, water, mountains, sky, haloes are all symbols that might seem insignificant, nevertheless, for jihadis and initiates, they refer to Paradise³ and evoke an emotional force that should not be underestimated (El Difraoui 2013, 339).

The next section elaborates on culturally shaped color associations.

3. In the Qur’an, the descriptions of Paradise are very precise (El Difraoui 2013, 346).

Colors

Colors have different associations—color codes—in different cultures and sub-cultures, so then “color functions as a marker of social identity” giving it furthermore an affective component (Koller 2008, 397, 419). Jihadi visuals are connected to broader Muslim aestheticism (Holtmann 2013, 35) and certain colors bear a deeply rooted theological meaning in Islamic culture (Holtmann 2013, 34).

Across different cultures, the color white represents purity, piety, peace and innocence (Holtmann 2013, 36). In Islam, white also stands for honor goodness, theological purity (Vidyarthi 2011 as cited in Holtmann 2013, 36), theological authority and religious trustworthiness (Holtmann 2013, 35). In Islamic culture the color red can have different meaning; however in jihadi visuals it stands for blood, conflict (Holtmann 2013, 35), and thus violent jihad. Cross-culturally, the color black is regularly used as a color of protest (Ostovar 2017, 100). In Islamic history, black as well as the black flag hold further significance. The battle flags of both Muhammad and the 8th century Abbasid Caliphate are said to have been black (Brachman et al. 2006, 105; Holtmann 2013, 37). The Abbasid Caliphate, which aimed at installing an orthodox Islamic centered ruling came to power by overthrowing the Umayyad Caliphate that was seen as religiously wayward (Brachman et al. 2006, 95). Today, different jihadi militant groups adopt the black flag representing jihad and the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate thus tracing roots to the very beginning of Islam (Brachman et al. 2006, 105). And so, in

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Islam the color black is associated with war and conquest, and messianic visions of the Judgement Day in jihadi culture. Therefore, black is associated in Islam with “war” and “conquest” (Holtmann 2013, 37). Furthermore, in jihadi culture black stands for messianic visions of the Day of Judgment and the fear aimed at instigating in the enemies (Holtmann 2013, 37-38). It suggests operating in secrecy and working from the shadows to attack the enemy (Ostovar 2017, 96). For example the masked, faceless fighter seen in many of IS’s portraits evokes an intimidating sight, which projects strength, mystery, violence and anonymity (Ostovar 2017, 96). Islamic culture has long been associated with the color green. First, it is considered to be the color of the Prophet Muhammad as it is said that he wore green garments, and so green is perceived to be the color of Islam and the first community of Muslims, which jihadis aim to adhere to (Holtmann 2013, 38). Furthermore, green is mentioned multiple times in the Qur’an, including the Jannah being green (Ar-Rahman:64), the clothing believers will wear in Jannah (Al-Kahf:31; Al-Insan: 21), and the cushions believers will lie on in Jannah (Ar-Rahman:76). The blue color is also an important color in Islamic culture, and is often used in mosques. For example, the Sultan Ahmed Mosque also called the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, or the Blue Mosque in the center of Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan. In both Islamic and jihadi cultures, blue evokes the notion of hope, and again paradise and its excess of water (Holtmann 2013, 41; Brachman et al. 2006, 17), and particularly in jihadi visuals it represents the hope jihadis place in jihad and martyrdom (Holtmann 2013, 41). Cross-culturally the color brown connotes

stability and security (Holtmann 2013, 41). The color gold often used in Arabic calligraphy evokes wealth, nobility and sophistication both in Islam and in Arab cultures (Chebel 2001, 314). Even though colors play an important role in jihadi aesthetics (Holtmann 2013, 34), there is no uniformity in the choices of colors in the IS fighters’ portraits. In general, some portraits use earthy color tones (tonalities of browns and tans as well as orange, red, green, yellow, and blue), and some others use vivid colors without differentiation amongst the sub-thematics.

Visual composition techniques

The IS visuals regularly employ visual composition techniques such as digital collage, Golden Ratio, and Rule of Thirds. The employment of these techniques further asserts that Islamic State puts expert effort in producing appealing visuals delivered to its audiences and that the designers and photographers of Al Hayat Media Center have knowledge and expertise in visual composition principles.

Sub-thematic 1 |

Confrontation with the Enemy

The portraits that fall under this sub-thematic employ visual constructions often with observable visual similarities with cover art of shooter video games and posters of Hollywood movies despite their cultural differences furthermore, glamorizing and gamifying warfare (Winter 2015, 27). Some of the visuals are not fixed to one visual construction, and are concurrently employing more than one visual construction especially those that are a digital collage of different portraits (Fig. 30). The following subsections are a discussion of the different visual constructions that create an overall impression that constitute this sub-thematic.

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Figure 30

Rumiyah no. 1 | p. 9

Fighter from behind facing the enemy

This visual construction of Islamic State's portraits is commonly seen among Hollywood movie posters (Figs. 31 & 32) and shooter video games visuals (Figs 33, 34, & 35) as a portrayal of a confrontation with the enemy often depicted through destruction, explosion, and sometimes landscape suggesting the enemy's position (Figs 1, 36, & 37). This visual construction is often used in still shots of video games to highlight the location of the game (Anhut 2016).

As a jihadi fighter aims to elicit notions of bravery, strength, and religious devotion, and his greatest accomplishment is to become a martyr and a hero of the Ummah, the portraits of IS fighters with the enemy in the background suggest depiction of this bravery to overcome any obstacle to attain heroism. And the portraits of IS fighters looking at a vast landscape suggest the fighter's insignificance in comparison to Allah—the Creator of the heavens and the earth (Rumiyah no.3 2016, 17).

31



(left to right)

Figure 31
I Kill Giants
Directed by Anders Walter
(2017)

Poster design by
RLJ Entertainment, Inc.
(2017)

Figure 32
Captain America:
Directed by Joe Russo,
Anthony Russo (2014)
Poster design by
BLT Communications, LLC
(2014)



Figure 33
Star Wars Battlefront I
Niklas Fegraeus (2015)



Figure 34
Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice (2019)



Figure 35
Rumiyah no. 4 | p. 26

Figure 36
Rumiyah no. 6 | p. 33



Straight posture with legs spread

Throughout popular culture, particularly in Hollywood war and Science Fiction movies and shooter video games, the prototypical hero is often visualized with a focus on the character's physical fitness, and often with a weapon. The visualization of the prototypical movie or video game hero focuses on the physical traits such as having a fit body with muscles, and with a tool such as in the case of the character of Deadpool or Thor, and some others with no tool such as Spiderman. Regardless of whether the characters have a tool or not, they are all portrayed having a straight posture with legs spread suggesting fearlessness and readiness to face any obstacle (Fig. 1). In the case of the IS fighters, none of the portraits attempts to reveal their physical fitness. The general focus tends to be on the merging of the fighter with a weapon and his straight body posture with legs spread.

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Fighter as shadowy/silhouetted—all black

Also a visual construction commonly seen throughout Hollywood and shooter video games visuals, depicting the fighter as shadowy/silhouetted—all black, is achieved through different means in different IS portraits. For example, some portraits are manipulated to literally depict the fighter as fully black through the image adjustment of exposure (Fig. 2), others have added layer with opacity (Fig. 37), sometimes this is achieved simply by wearing all black outfit with Balaclava on their heads ,and/or adding shadows all around the portrait (Fig. 38). This depiction of

the fighter is not just for visual effect but the fighter could be considered as a rhetorical visual figure acting as a tool of persuasion by which the masked, faceless IS fighter evokes an intimidating sight, which projects strength, mystery, violence and anonymity. This rhetorical depiction further suggests operating in secrecy and working from the shadows to attack the enemy. In its turn, this anonymity allows exchangeability of the protagonist so that the viewer can put himself in this anonymous fighter's place.

In the visual constructions “Depiction of the fighter from behind facing the enemy” and “Straight posture with legs spread” the notions of bravery, strength, and heroism are depicted by the strong color contrast between the fighter—who is illuminated with a light effect—and his surroundings. Whereas, in the visual construction that depicts the fighter as shadowy, it is his surrounding that is bright mostly due to the fire effect in the background.

35



Figure 37

Rumiyah no. 1 | p. 22

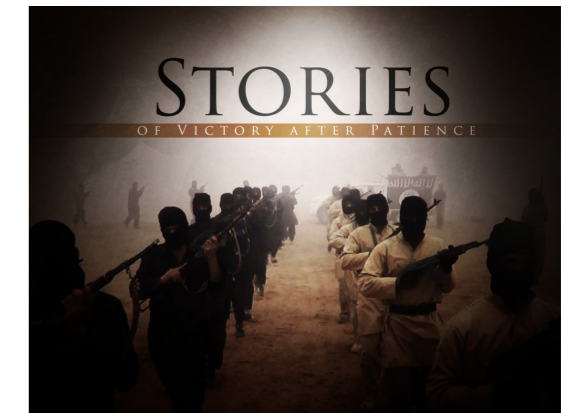


Figure 38

Rumiyah no. 4 | p. 28

Shooting position

In many portraits, IS fighters have shooting positions. These portraits act as evidence suggesting “proof of action” of putting one’s life in danger for the divine cause of fighting for Allah, for “Islam”, and for the Ummah—showing bravery of the IS fighters in action even though none of these portraits prove that an enemy is actually on the receiving end of the bullets being fired. In this visual construction, there are two different visual aesthetics: ones that have apparent post production looks to them with strong light effects (Fig. 39), and others that look raw—giving them a war photojournalistic look (Fig. 40). While the former look higher in quality, the latter look more realistic and serve their purpose of serving as evidence coming straight from the battle zone without passing through editing phase to give the “perfect” look to the portrait.

But we cannot overlook the fact that these portraits aspire a sense of adventure with IS; as if saying “come and join us, and you will see all the adventure waiting for you”. More speculatively, it may also suggest that, these portraits also express the idiom “boys with their toys” that evokes the idea that adult men sometimes excessively cherish and use machines, automobiles, and other gadgets. Nevertheless, the reflection of this idiom is toned down by the portrayal of religious legitimacy discussed later.



Figure 39
Rumiyah no. 10 | p. 36

Figure 40
Rumiyah no. 6 | p. 29



Infliction of punishment

Although it has lost favor as a form of capital punishment in modern societies⁴, in pre-modern history, beheading was a standard method of execution throughout different societies and civilizations (Misra 2018, 29). The IS has resurrected such a punishment. Exhibiting and portraying punishment such as beheadings and throat cutting of the enemy or individuals acting wrongly under the sharia is a technique to assert and represent the authority of the IS because without “this representation violence has very little or no meaning” (Misra 2018, 30). In a sense, portraits following this visual construction (Figs. 41 & 42) communicate “proof of action” to show to the IS audience that its fighters do indeed punish opponents of sharia, opponents of the caliphate, anyone who hinders the IS advancement, and anyone who does not obey the group’s view of Islam. Many of these punishment portraits are of beheadings. Hence, these portraits - some more gruesome than others - could also be viewed as a fear inducing technique targeted at the enemies of the IS. In this case as well, these portraits seem raw without passing through the editing phase and of lower quality.

4. Although it is still widely applied in some societies such as Saudi Arabia.



Figure 41

Rumiyah no. 5 | p. 14



Figure 42

Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 29

Others

Three portraits do not fit in any of the visual constructions mentioned above. For example, one photo depicts a fighters standing on the side of the street looking at a car (Fig. 43). The second photo is a close up shot of a fighter's hands loading a weapon with bullets (Fig. 44). And the third one is of a uniformed fighter walking and the background is of a gate and an architectural structure (Fig. 45).

40



Figure 44
Rumiyah no. 12 | p. 10

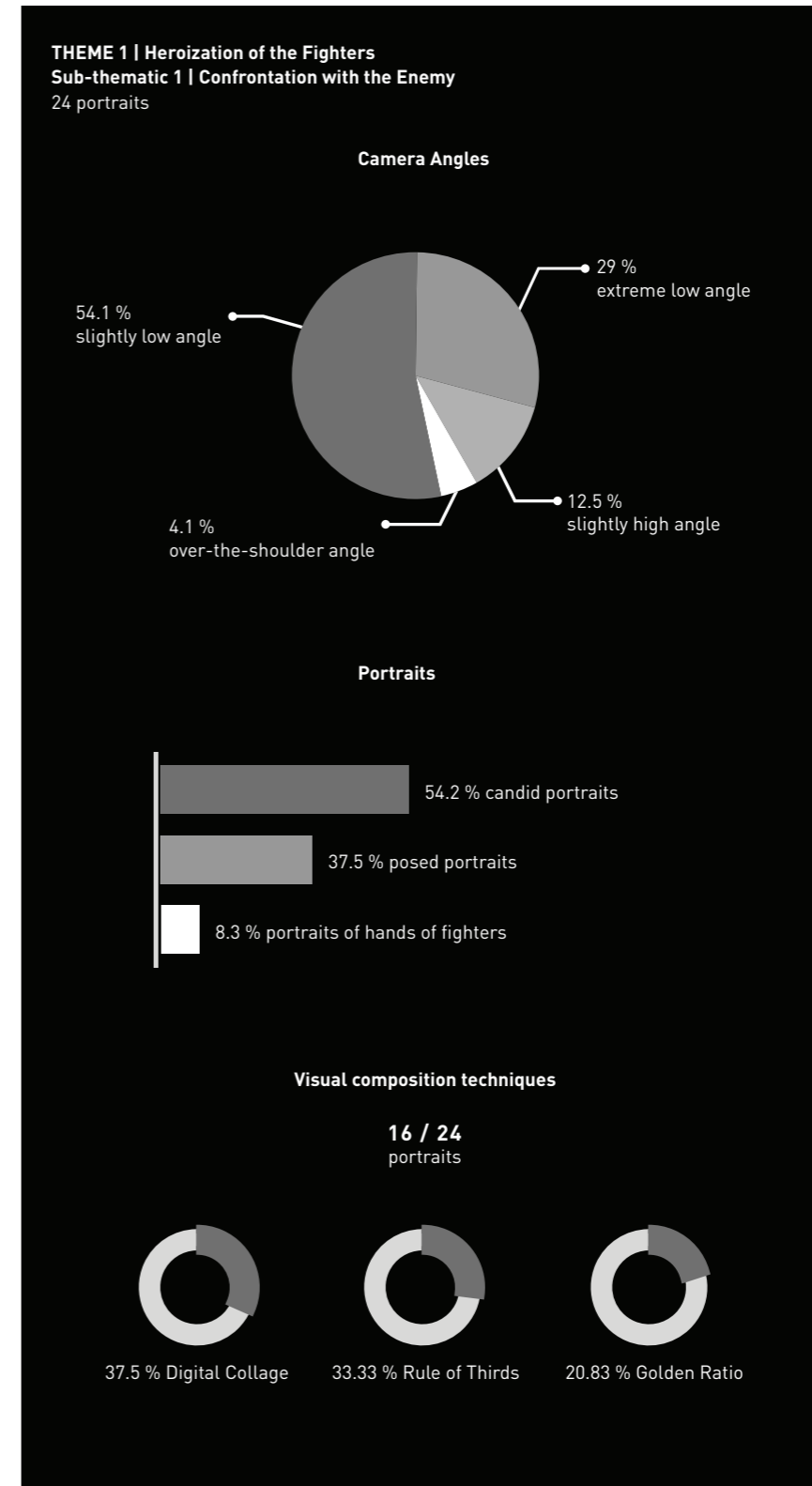


Figure 43
Rumiyah no. 10 | p. 39



Figure 45
Rumiyah no. 13 | p. 37

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



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Sub-thematic 2 |

Religious Legitimacy & Islamic Identity

Islamic State justifies itself and its actions by the imperative to establish sharia and Islamic Caliphate by way of physical jihad against opponents. And so the depiction of confrontation with the enemy is inseparable from religious legitimacy. To religiously legitimize its status to do so and assert itself, Islamic State depicts its fighters with a focus on piety and virtuous acts through the employment of different visual constructions. Hence, the fighter is depicted in the following visual constructions:

42 **Worshipping, preaching, or reading the Qur'an or a theological book**

The portraits revolving around devotional acts are of dual-purpose. First, to visually display that IS fighters are pious worshippers, who are legitimate to defend the Ummah, thus giving legitimacy to Islamic State as an organization to impose sharia and punish those who do not adhere by it. And second, to be good examples for the readers, followers, and potential recruits to worship Allah in the way the IS expects - also appealing to those who wish to become better Muslims. These portraits act as reminder that a jihadi fighter for the cause of Allah should not rely on his weapon, rather, he should only count on Allah's might and power instead of his own (Rumiyah 2017 no. 7, 12). Therefore, these portraits aim to create a balance in the eyes of the reader giving high importance to devotional acts, and remind the reader that Islamic State is not only

about violence and war but has a reason and a purpose to the violence it commits and the war it wages. This builds further on legitimizing the fighters and the IS as an organization legitimate to establish the Islamic caliphate. If Rumiyah had solely focused on visuals of confrontation with the enemy, the reader might forget its religious legitimacy.

In many cases, in the portraits of this construction, there is a strong light projection on the fighter's face creating contrast between the fighter and his surroundings, which is portrayed black—total darkness (Figs. 3 & 4).

Embracing the Finger of Tawhid

43 There are recurring postures of fighters embracing the Finger of Tawhid (raising right index finger) (Figs. 46, 47, & 48). According to Rita Katz, the director of SITE Intelligence Group, the gesture has been used by jihadis for many years including Osama bin Laden (Crowcroft 2015) as well as militants of Hamas during the first Intifada of 1987 according to Romain Caillet, a researcher in the Institute français du Proche-Orient (BELGA 2014). Katz also states that the Tawhid finger takes on political meaning rejecting governments not following sharia law (Crowcroft 2015), which is the religious law forming Islamic traditions. Furthermore, in the context of Islamic State, this gesture was used as a salute by the Prince of the Caliphate (Fig. 49), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014 when he claimed himself a caliph (Crowcroft 2015; Rumiyah, no. 13, page 18), as well as, IS fighters. According to Caillet,

in the jihadi context the Tawhid gesture could signify that the individuals using this gesture are ready to die for Islamic State's cause in that moment" (BELGA 2014). In IS's portraits, the alternative political meaning that this religious gesture has gained could be familiarized with the Nazi salute (Crowcroft 2015), the Raised Fist, and the "V" gesture. Moreover, considering Romain Caillet's analysis that the Tawhid gesture used in the jihadi context "could signify that the individuals using this gesture are ready to die for IS's cause in that moment" (BELGA 2014), the weapon pointing upwards (sometimes on purpose and sometimes not i.e. resting) could not only be a gesture of reinforcement to this concept but it could also signify the individual's readiness to die for the cause with a fight in the battlefield. I cannot but also associate this visual construction with J.M. Flagg's 1917 "I Want You" poster (Fig. 50), which was used to recruit soldiers for both World War I and World War II. This poster depicts Uncle Sam (stands for U.S.), a popular national personification of the U.S. federal government (Bell 2014) pointing with his finger in an authoritarian manner at the viewer ("You") ordering to enlist in the U.S. military.



Figure 46

Rumiyah no. 13 | p. 21



Figure 47

Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 31



Figure 48

Rumiyah no. 8 | p. 38



Figure 49

Rumiyah no. 13 | p. 18



Figure 50

Uncle Sam

With the IS flag

In Islamic history, the black flag is highly significant. Different jihadi militant groups including the IS adopt the black flag (Figs. 51 & 52) representing the black battle standards carried by Muslim forces in some of the earliest armed conflict in Islamic history; this mirrors the groups' sensibilities towards the early Ummah (Ostovar 2017, 88). The battle flags of both Muhammad and the 8th century Abbasid Caliphate, which overthrew the corrupt rule of the Umayyad replacing it with a new orthodox Islamic centered caliphate based in Iraq are said, to have been black (Brachman et al. 2006, 95; Ostovar 2017, 90; Holtmann 2013, 37). Thus, the usage of the black flag today represents jihad and the reestablishment of the Islamic Caliphate tracing roots to the very beginning of Islam (Brachman et al. 2006, 105). Moreover, Islamic State flag depicts the first phrase of the Shahada (at the top) "La Illah Ilallah", which means "No God but Allah". And the white circle represents the second phrase of the Shahada, "Mohammad rasulullah" which means "Mohammed, the Messenger of Allah", in the form that according to a statement by the IS in jihadi discussion forums about the design of the flag is the historically accurate seal of Mohammed as contained in the Ottoman records, and the order of the words (from top to bottom: god, messenger, Mohammed) developed by following Islamic oral traditions describing the seal of Muhammad (Ostovar 2017, 89-90). The IS flag could furthermore suggest a representation of territory control, a marking of the organization's territory, advertisement and an announcement of the presence of its forces in a

specific location (Ostovar 2017, 87-88). Islamic State regularly uses its flag in the portrait photographs, for example, in one photograph a fighter holding the IS flag stands on a rock and the background is a vast landscape (Fig. 52). Another example is fighters holding the IS flag during a convoy, which could possibly be a territory victory celebration (Fig. 11).



Figure 51
Rumiyah no. 2 | p. 18



Figure 52
Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 3

With a digital collage of Arabic Calligraphy & arabesque

Many portraits of the IS fighters are a digital collage with added Arabic calligraphy (Fig. 53) and arabesque⁵ (Fig 54). These visual elements are not fixed under the sub-thematic of religious legitimacy; they are also seen in the other sub-thematics, except sub-thematic 5: The Future of the Caliphate. To interpret the usage of calligraphy and arabesque in the context of IS, it is important to have a certain understanding of the relationship between calligraphy, arabesque, and Muslim identity in Islam.

48



Figure 53
Rumiyah no. 6 | p. 33

5. forms of decoration based on rhythmic linear patterns such as interlacing foliage as decoration



Figure 54
Rumiyah no. 2 | p. 26

Allah ﷻ created His slaves and made tribulation something constant for them, so that the pure become distinct from the corrupt, and that those who perish may perish upon clear proof and that those who live may live upon clear proof. Thus, there will be no consolidation without trial, no victory without hardship, and no ease without difficulty. The path to Allah ﷻ and what He prepared for the believers therein of immense reward is a costly path, and these costs cannot be expended except by true believers, those whose hearts are attached to Allah alone, who are steadfast upon the methodology of the Prophet ﷺ and his noble companions. These – the true believers – are not confused by famous men and popular names. They seek the truth and recognize its people. And the people of truth are not those whose reputation in "jihad" circulated for decades, only to distance themselves therefrom, to deteriorate and regress, eventually becoming people who desert jihad and deny it. Nor are they those who spent their lives reading and writing about jihad, but when the herald called, "The Islamic State has been established, so come and follow up your knowledge with action," they turned in arrogance, as if they were hard of hearing.

Describing the path to the gardens of eternity, Ibnul-Qayyim ﷺ said, "How far are you from the path? It is the path upon which Adam became exhausted, upon which Nuh cried [in prayer], upon which Ibrahim was cast into the fire, upon which Isma'il was laid down for slaughter, upon which Yusuf was sold for a meager price and spent years in prison, upon which Zakariyya was saved in half, upon which Yahya was butchered, upon which Ayyub faced harsh illness, upon which Dawud wept greatly [in fear of Allah], upon which 'Isa walked with wild beasts, and upon which Muhammad ﷺ faced poverty and all kinds of abuse" (Al-Fawa'id).

So if this was the condition of the Prophets ﷺ, among whom were those of utmost determination, who met what they met for the sake of Allah ﷻ, had patience, and were steadfast despite the great harm they endured due to their da'wah to tawhid, never slackening or becoming weak, then what about those who are lesser than them? Are they not tried so that they might become pure? Are they not tested so that they might become sincere? Ash-Shafi'i ﷺ was asked, "Which is best for a man, to be granted consolidation or to be tested?" He said, "He will not be granted consolidation until he is tested" (Al-Fawa'id).

Indeed, one who does not have a scorching beginning will not have a shining end. So there is no consolidation until the trials are intensified and the constraints are tightened, as Jannah is only promised to the truthful men and women. Therein they shall gaze upon Allah's face, which is the highest of blessings and the dearest of hopes. Could that be at-

28 Article

In early history, Arabs were nomadic people and so relied on oral tradition to record information and communicate including the transmission of the Qur'an among Muslims (Lee-Niinioja 2018, 18; Bannister 2014, 2). Since the Qur'an can only be transmitted in Arabic even amongst non-Arabic speakers (El Difraoui 2013, 74), from its origin, Islamic culture has largely been based on the Arabic language, becoming the lingua franca of all Muslim peoples. And so, Arabic calligraphy is the most representative symbol of Arab and Muslim culture (El Difraoui 2013, 73-74). The first full Arabic writing dates back to the 7th century Qur'anic manuscript (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica 2016). The art of writing became the most superior in all of Islamic arts due to the centrality of the Qur'an written in

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Arabic and its status as the divine revelation in the Islamic faith (Lee-Niinioja 2018, 54; El Difraoui 2013, 74). And so, Arabic calligraphy attained sacramental character (Lee-Niinioja 2018, 47). Today, Arabic calligraphy is regarded as one of the greatest achievements of the Islamic civilization (Lee-Niinioja 2018, 5). Shared by all Muslims, it communicates a strong Islamic traditions and identity. As this magazine is directed towards Western audience, I cannot but question another purpose to its usage other than playing with the identity notion related to Arabic writing and calligraphy. Arabic calligraphy and arabesque became characteristics of Islamic art (Lee-Niinioja 2018, 17) and having an understanding of their importance in Islamic art, tradition, and identity gives a clear comprehension of their usage in the IS portraits. Their usage intends to touch the emotions of IS's audience by playing on the religious and identity factors and their legitimacy⁶. Although the great paradox according to El Difraoui (2013) is that the most radical group [i.e. al Qaida—but also applies to IS] claiming itself to practice real Islam, a religion based on writing and not on representation of particularly any living creature; this exemplifies how jihadists' imagery although appropriates visual symbolism from Islamic culture it nevertheless capitalizes on it and manipulates it as well only to break with the traditions of Islamic history (15-16).

6. They play on the notion of religious (Islamic) legitimacy even when employed in the other sub-thematics.

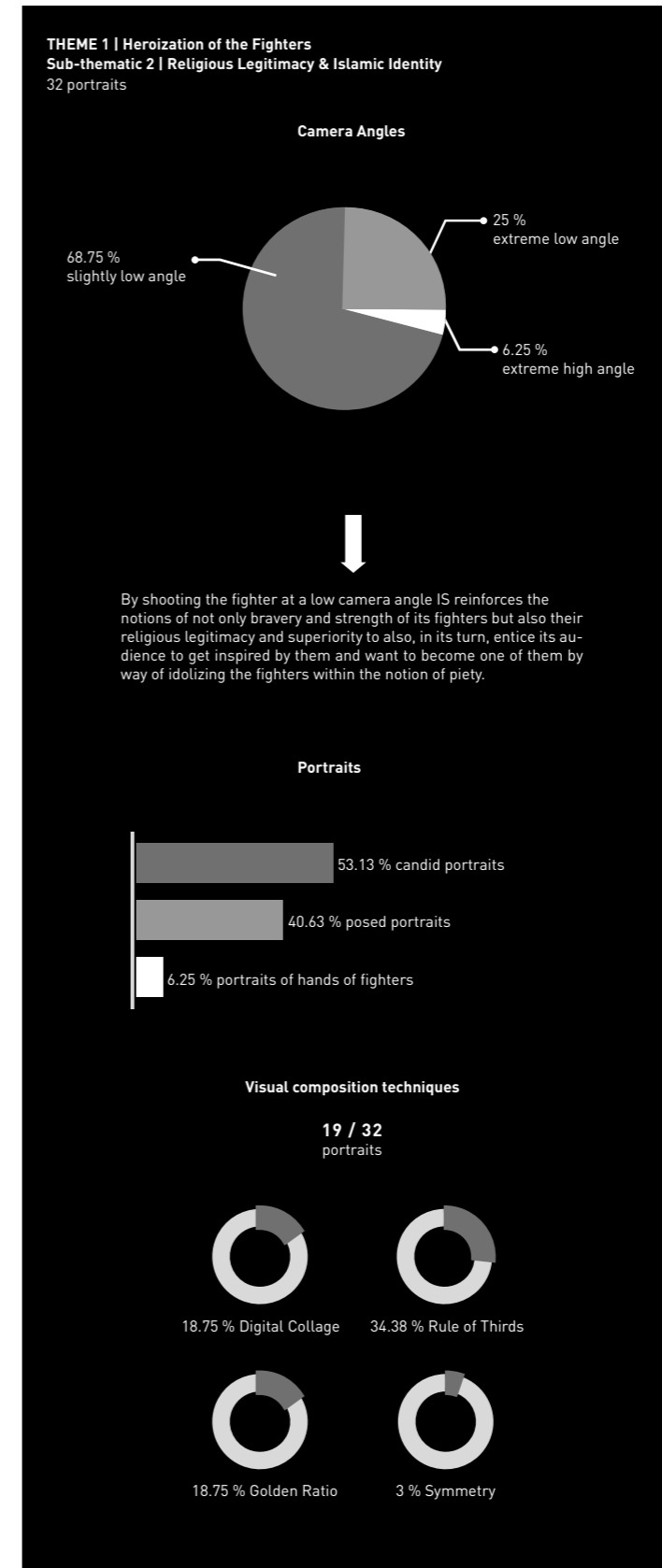
In a pre-modern appearance

As mentioned earlier, Islamic State's ideology is to exercise the pure form of Islam by emulating the image of the Salaf (the first three generations of Muslims) (Wood 2017, 6). And so, to evoke Salafi religious sentiments, in some portraits the group literally depicts fighters in a pre-modern appearance such as on a horse, and with a sword suggesting notions of Islam's past (Ostovar 2017, 94; Brachman et al. 2006, 33) specifically associating with the legacy of Islam's founding generations (Ostovar 2017, 95) and their early successful jihadi campaigns (Brachman et al. 2006, 33), which also grants legitimacy to modern jihad and the group itself. Moreover, in Arabic and Islamic cultures horses are identified with chivalry, battle, bravery, and victory (Brachman et al. 2006, 33). In jihadi imagery depicting horses and horsemen are important symbols of virility and warfare (Cook 2017, 159). Some portraits consist of a combination of a horse, rider/fighter, the IS flag: visual construction of holding the IS flag, and sometimes a weapon (rifle or sword) (Figs. 7, 8, & 55) visually asserting in a stronger and militaristic manner the notion of Salafi-jihad (Brachman et al. 2006, 36, 38).



Figure 55
Rumiyah no. 12 | p. 20

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



Sub-thematic 3 |

Martyrdom

To entice individuals to respond to the concept of martyrdom by way of joining the IS, the group depicts its fighters, who became a martyr or looking forward to becoming one, in three dominant visual constructions:

Smiling

What better way to promote martyrdom than to depict the happiness of the fighters— whether dead or not yet. In general, the visual constructions of the photographs in this visual construction is focused on the fighter's facial expression of happiness (Figs 30, 56, 57, & 58). The articles of 10 out of 22 portraits of smiling fighters claim that the fighters depicted are dead –martyrs as Rumiyaah calls them. The remaining portraits and their articles cannot confirm whether the fighter is alive or dead.

As the general focus of the photographs in this visual construction is on the fighter's facial expression of happiness, these portraits humanize the IS fighters portraying them not only as individuals beyond war but also as individuals, who are happy with the path of jihad they have chosen knowing that they will eventually become martyrs for their appropriated vision of Islam.



Figure 56

Rumiyaah no. 1, p. 17



Figure 57

Rumiyaah no. 7, p. 36



Figure 58

Rumiyaah no. 7 | p. 3

Dead

By portraying the dead fighter extremely close and showing off his bruises (Figs. 59 & 60), the headshot portraits aim to create intimacy between the viewer and the fighter and demand empathy by the viewer towards the depicted fighter and the cause he became a martyr for. Once the feeling of empathy is achieved, I suggest that then the feeling of guilt for not joining the cause is also stirred. Categorizing the 2 portraits—although the 2 portraits are of the same fighter but used in 2 different issues and with different yet similar visual effects (Figs. 10 & 28)—as environmental can be justified with the fact that, in these portraits, the fighter is laying on the wide field, the sunlight in the background is shining on him, and in one of the portraits, there is the additional visual effect of clouds beneath him giving the illusion that fighter is floating on them. In jihadi imagery, the sun and thus sunlight is generally used to evoke association with the divine, legitimizing themselves spiritually as well as religiously,



Figure 59

Rumiyaah no. 1, p. 3



Figure 60

Rumiyaah no. 1, p. 14

and it also evokes association with the afterlife (Brachman et al. 2006, 10-11). The sun or the moon combined with clouds highlights a martyr's heavenly reward (Brachman et al. 2006, 12).

Looking away into the distance

Another visual construction in this sub-thematic, I identify as the fighter looking away into the distance (Figs. 9, 24, & 25). If we look throughout history, one of the most iconic photographs with this construction is Guerrillero Heroico picture of Che Guevara⁷ (Fig. 61), which is often accompanied by the famous quote "Hasta la Victoria Siempre"⁸ that reinforces the meaning of the gaze past the camera suggesting looking into the future. Moreover, shooting the subject from a low camera angle, which is often the case, glorifies the subject as if looking up to the person in admiration (Jackson as cited in Galloway 2006). This visual construction could also be seen in portraits of Communist leaders, to some of USSR's propaganda posters, and Nazi propaganda posters (Figs. 62, 63, 64 respectively). In IS portraits of fighters, this suggests making plans by fighting to ensure the future success of the caliphate. Moreover, the articles of Rumiya associated with these portraits adopt vocabularies that reinforce the heroization, glorification of the IS fighters, and the planning for the future of the caliphate.

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7. It was photographed by Alberto Korda in 1960.

8. "Towards Victory, Always"



Figure 61
Guerrillero Heroico
Ernesto "Che" Guevara
Alberto Korda (1960)

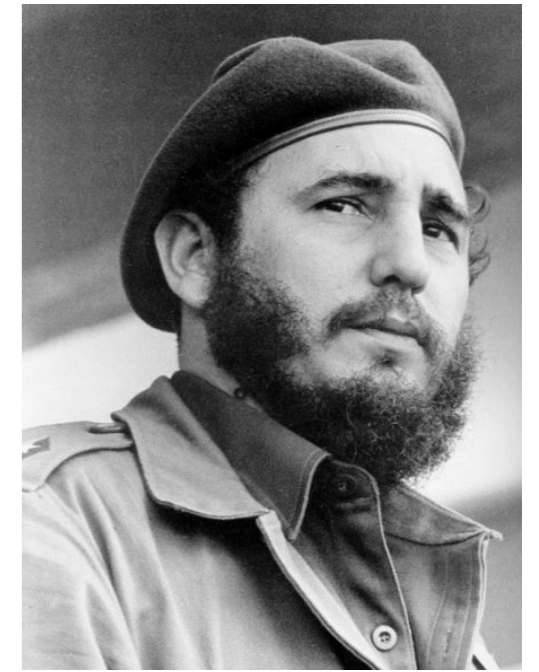


Figure 62
Fidel Castro
Liborio Noval (1953)

57

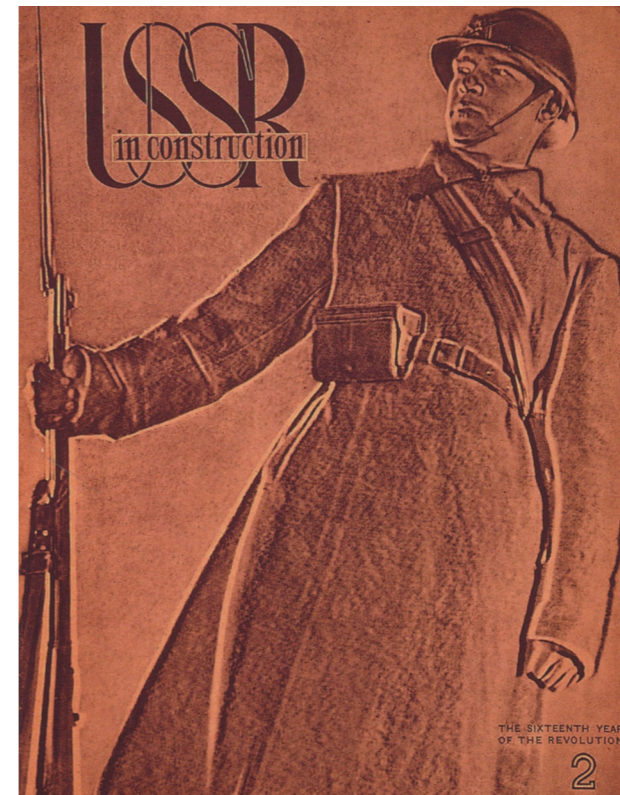


Figure 63
The Workers' and Peasants' Red Army
El Lissitsky (1933)



Figure 64
Waffen SS

لا اله الا الله

الله
رسول
محمد



The Shuhada
Of the Gulshan Attack

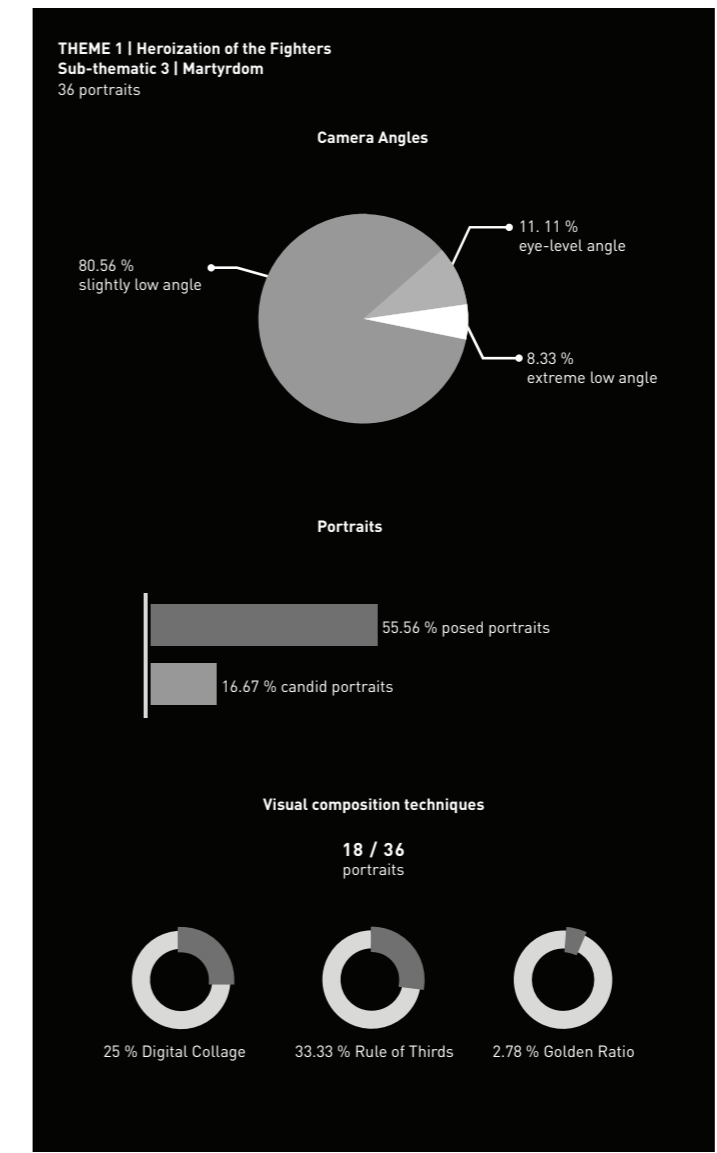
By Abu Dujanah al-Bengali (Tamim Chowdhury)
Former Head of Military and Covert Operations of the Soldiers of the Khilafah in Bengal

8 Exclusive

Figure 65
Rumiyah no. 2 | p. 8

The visual constructions focusing on martyrdom also incorporate the sunlight glowing on the fighter or have added light/glow effect on him, or the portrait is overexposed—as if giving it light effect (Fig. 65). A dead fighter is sometimes depicted with the additional visual effect of clouds beneath him giving the illusion that he is floating on them (Fig. 10).

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



Sub-thematic 4 |

Collective Belonging

As mentioned in the thematic analysis section, many IS portraits stress on togetherness, unity, friendship, brotherhood and community i.e. collective belonging rather than focusing on brutal visual constructions—even though either firearms or camouflage military uniforms are ever present. The visual constructions used in this sub-thematic range from portrayal of fighters together on convoys, marching, standing next to each other, conversing or clasping hands (Figs. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16 respectively). This sub-thematic sometimes overlaps with the sub-thematics of: Religious legitimacy & Islamic identity (Fig. 55), Martyrdom (Fig. 65), and The Future of the Caliphate (Fig. 66) that I discuss next; this means that there are visual elements such as arabesque (Fig. 54), Arabic calligraphy (Fig. 7), and IS flag (Fig. 7 & 26) present in these portraits. To depict collective belonging, fighters are depicted in the following visual constructions:



Figure 66
Rumiyah no. 1 | p. 24

On Convoys

Portrayal of IS Convoys (Fig. 11) could be considered as a portrayal of modern victory parades suggestive of victory and announcement of the presence of its forces in a particular region; this depiction asserts the idea that unity brings victory.

Marching & standing together

These depictions depend whether they are in a military context or not. If so, then the focus is order (Fig. 67)—showing that order and obedience are crucial to attain victory. If they are depicted in a social context (Fig. 68), then the focus is that there is more to these fighters—such as brotherhood in their appropriated version of Islam—than just battles and killing the “out-group”.



Figure 67
Rumiyah no. 9 | p. 3



Figure 68
Rumiyah no. 7 | p. 23

Clasping hands

Cross-culturally clenched hands in a team-like manner, both in secular and religious ideologies including jihadi visuals, stands for unity, community, and action (Holtmann 2013, 46; Brachman et al. 2006, 112). This depiction is highly common in jihadi visuals; for example, Figure 15 is a photograph of IS fighters' hands grasped together in a team-like manner is shot from God's-Eye View camera angle that evokes circle, which in its turn also represents unity in Islam additionally reinforcing the unity representation of the clasped hands (Sarand et al. 2016, 108). According to Holtmann (2013), the repeated use of the clenched hands (Figs. 15, 16, 26, 27,28 & 69) is supposed to attract mainstream Muslims with the aim of awakening their interest in jihad (46).

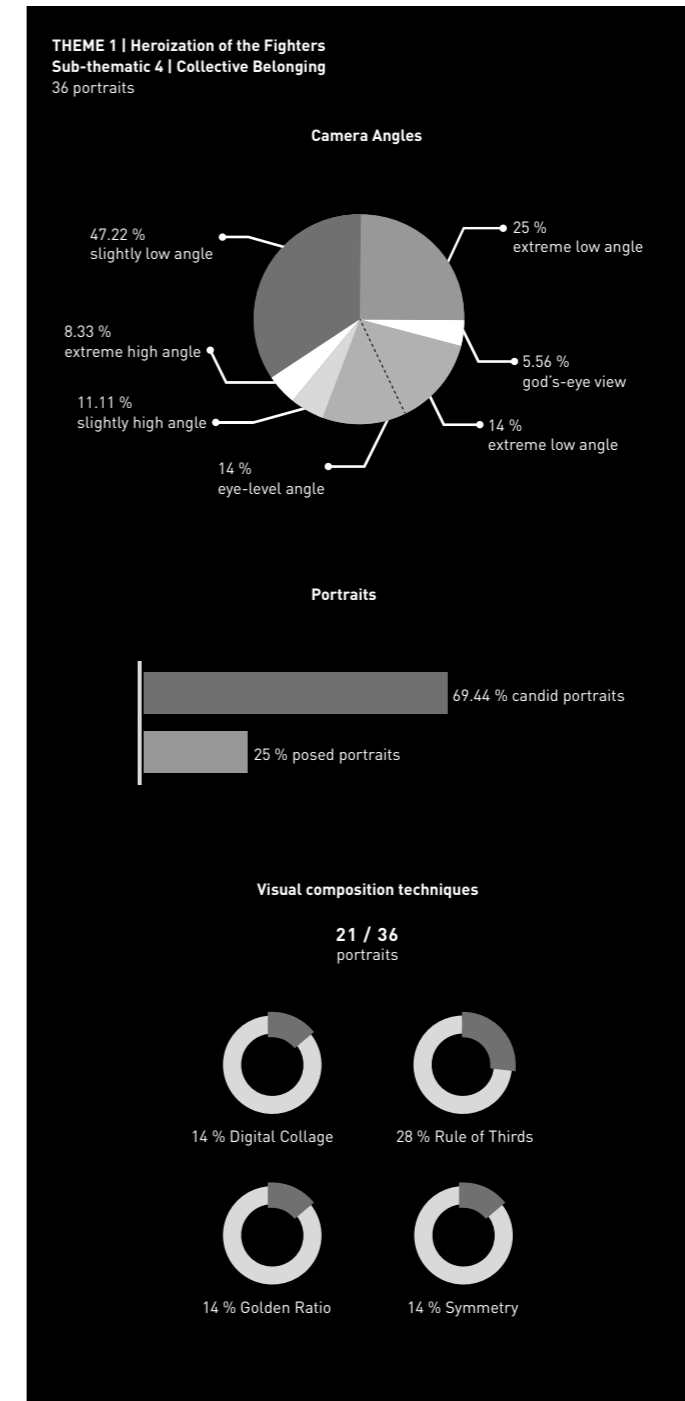
62



Figure 69

Rumiyah no. 2 | p. 20

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



63

Sub-thematic 5 |

The Future of the Caliphate

With only 11 portraits of child soldiers, I cannot conclude that there are particular visual constructions for this sub-thematic, except that:

In Rumiya, child soldiers are depicted with firearms but are never depicted in brutal acts.

3 portraits of child soldiers are with older men—possibly a parent (Fig. 70)

3 portraits of child soldiers smiling (Fig. 17 & 70)

3 portraits of child soldiers embracing the Finger of Tawhid—while having their firearms pointing downwards (Fig. 47)

1 portrait of children standing in an orderly manner with firearms in the middle pointing upward (Fig. 71)

1 digital collage of 2 portraits next to each other: one is of a little girl reading, and the other one of a boy in a shooting position with his firearm (Fig. 72).



Figure 70

Rumiya no. 11 | p. 3



Figure 71

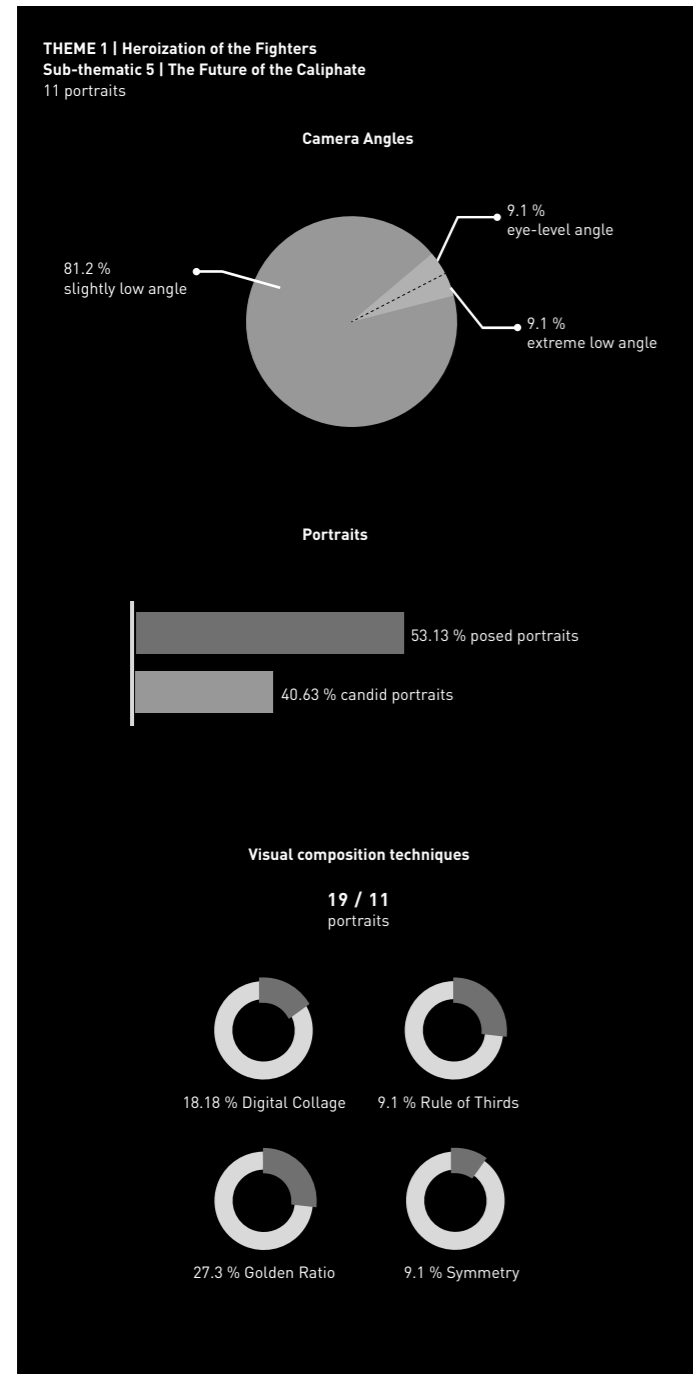
Rumiya no. 2 | p. 37



Figure 72

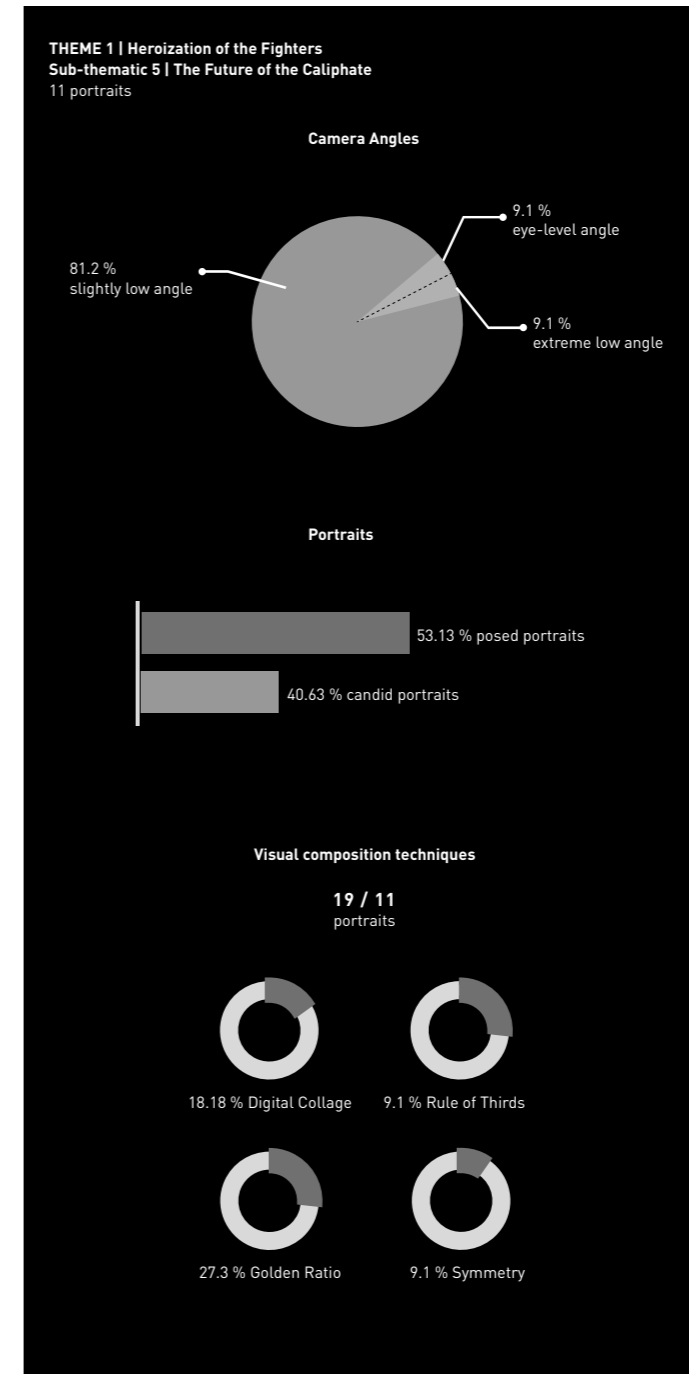
Rumiya no. 5 | p. 34

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



General to all sub-thematic

The majority of the portraits of Heroization of Fighters theme are candid portraits (57 posed portraits and 65 candid portraits).



Typefaces & their colors

There is no consistency in the usage of typefaces through out Rumiya. For example, some articles under the same title—such as “Among the Believers Are Men”, which focuses on the life story of different dead fighter in every issue—would use a serif typeface in one issue, and a sans serif in another issue (Figs. 73 to 76). Furthermore, neither is there typeface patterns that could be traced within sub-thematics. Nevertheless, the text of the titles are consistent with the color palette of each article’s main portrait.

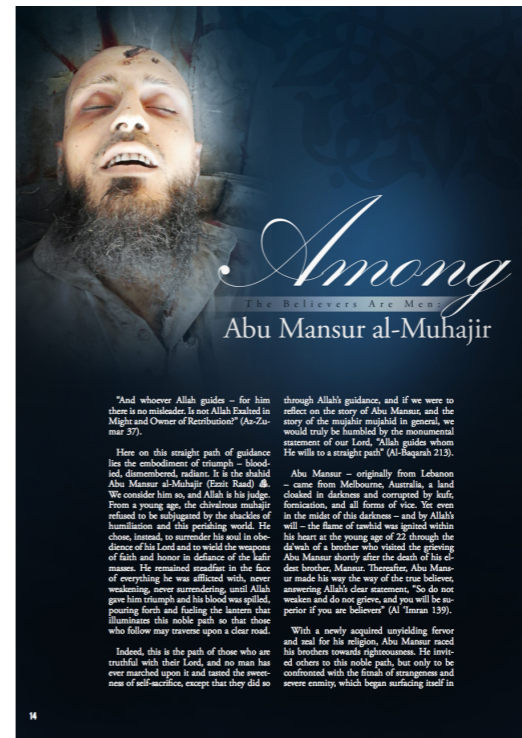


Figure 73
Rumiya no. 1, p. 14

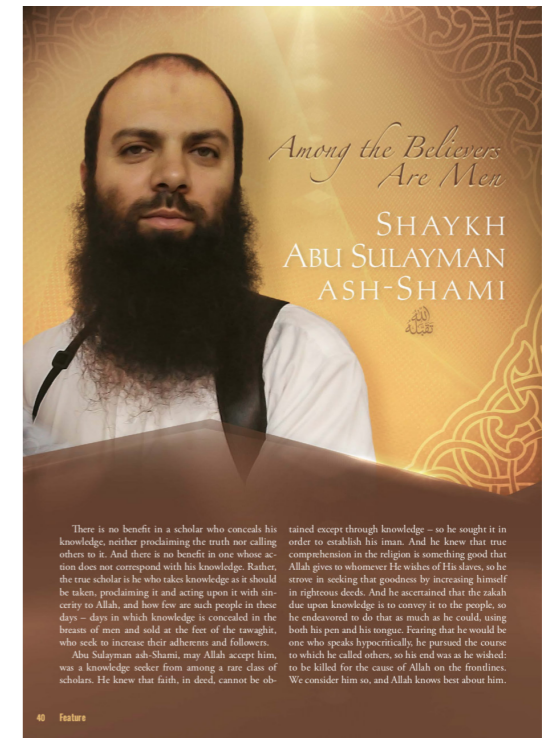


Figure 74
Rumiya no. 8, p. 40



Figure 75
Rumiya no. 3, p. 14

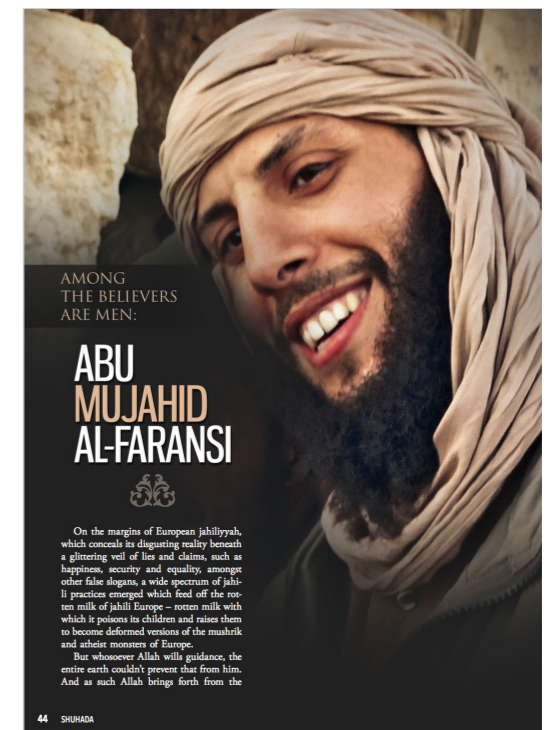


Figure 76
Rumiya no. 11, p. 44

Digital collage

There is a sporadic use of digital collage with or without Arabic calligraphy and arabesque. And this usage is not restricted to one sub-thematic nor to one visual construction. The Arabic calligraphy and the arabesque illustrations also use earthy color tones (tonalities of browns and tans as well as orange, red, green, yellow, and blue), and some others use vivid colors—keeping consistency and coherence with the overall page and the elements it incorporates.

The majority of the portraits in Heroization of Fighters theme employ low camera angle, which as mentioned earlier, has the power to make the subject look powerful or threatening (Baranowski & Hecht 2017, 2)—although they are not always extremely low angles but are more subtle and slightly low.

Continuity & Fluidity of sub-thematics

As mentioned in the introduction of the technical analysis section, it is important to note that not only there is a continuity among the sub-thematics but they are also tightly interlinked, and so the visual constructions are not fixed to one sub-thematics; they are interchangeable and fluid as IS portraits fall into more than one sub-thematic, and share different visual constructions from different sub-thematics, especially if the visual is a digital collage and consists of more than one portrait; for example, Figure 30. Below I describe thoroughly this visual to demonstrate the different sub-thematics and visual constructions it includes.

Figure 30 is a digital collage is the cover of the video titled “THE WILL TO FIGHT”, from the “Selected 10” videos from the wilayat (provinces) of the Islamic State of issue 1 of Rumiya. As a whole, this digital collage,

which seems to consist of a general narrative, features 5 different images creating a banner similar to that of a Hollywood movie. On the top-left of the digital collage, there is the title of the video written in upper case letters, and in white and gray gradient colors: the words “THE WILL” and “FIGHT” are separated with the preposition “TO” and a red line - this separation gives further emphasis to the separated words. Behind the title, there is the depiction of a shadowy fighter on a truck with his machine gun (sub-thematic 1: Confrontation with the enemy; visual construction: Depiction of the fighter as shadowy/silhouetted—all black). This might have been an added effect to make the title more visible. Below it, there is the portrait of an imam. The Iranian flag behind him, as well as, the superimposed word Iran in Arabic suggest that he is an Iranian imam thus Shiite Muslim. The designer has placed a target on his head reinforcing the enmity between Iran, Shiism, and the Islamic State. Next to this depiction, the designer has placed an illustration of a plane, which seems to refer as written to a B-1B lancer, a heavy bomber used by the United States Air Force — another enemy of IS. If we look next to the plane illustration, we can see another fighter—shot with a neutral camera angle pointing his machine gun towards the Iranian imam (sub-thematic 1: Confrontation with the enemy; visual construction: Shooting position). Almost in the middle of the composition, the designer has placed a frowning, confident looking fighter holding his gun, and who is photographed at an extreme—low camera—angle giving the illusion of grandeur; a low-angle shot has the power to make the subject look powerful or threatening (sub-thematic 1: Confrontation with the enemy; visual construction: Straight posture with legs spread). The right side of this fighter’s figure is contoured in orange as if conveying the emission of light from him. Furthermore, on the left and right sides he is separated from the rest of the photos with dashed orange and yellow lines, as if emphasizing on this fighter thus furthermore reinforcing his central position in the composition

and reinforcing his impressiveness. On the right side of the visual, the designer has placed the sepia colored portrait of another fighter - shot with eye-level camera angle - with his gun - this time with a full smile. The background of this photograph is the landscape of what might be from the province of Anbar, and a smoke from possibly a fighting or an explosion scene (sub-thematic 3: Martyrdom; visual construction: Smiling). The fighter's smile is contradictory to the attitude of the fighter in the center. Nevertheless, this smile is of high importance because it suggests that the IS fighters are happy to willingly fight and wage jihad in the name of Allah for the Islamic caliphate.



Theme 2 | Allegorization of Women

We cannot see any Arabic writing calligraphy in the visuals addressing women; instead we can see incorporation of arabesque in some layouts of visuals. When there is a use of a photograph of an object, then the layout does not incorporate any arabesque. The use of arabesque accompanies only solid color backgrounds (Figs. 23 & 77). Moreover, more than half of the visuals of objects are overexposed—as if giving them light effect.



In "Al-Mahab" by Abu Ja'far al-Baghdadi, there is a section he titled, "The Names of Women Who Married Three Times or More," and among them he mentions a collection of the best of the Sahabiyyat.

Furthermore, the Sahabah would race to propose to a Muslim woman whose husband had passed away and to care for an orphan whose father had passed away. Accordingly, were the Sahabah ignorant of the wisdom supposedly grasped by those women today who oppose the marriage of widows? Where is the belief of such women in that the Sahabah were the greatest of people after the prophets?

Furthermore, from among the daughters and granddaughters of our prophet were those who married once, twice, and thrice. Ibn Kathir said, "Zaynab was married by Abul-'As Ibn al-Rabi' Ibn 'Abdil-'Uzza Ibn 'Abdi Shama Ibn 'Abdi Manaf, the son of Khadijah's sister - his mother was Halah Bint Khawwajid - and she bore him a son named 'Ali and a daughter named Ummamah Bint Zaynab who was married to 'Ali Ibn 'Abi Talib... 'Ali died when she was with him. Then after him, she married al-Mughlah Ibn Nawfal Ibn al-Harith Ibn 'Abdil-Muttalib" (al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah).

He also said, "As for Umm Kulthum, Amirul-Muminin 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab married her and she bore him Zayd. 'Umar died and she married after him the sons of her uncle, Ja'far, one after another; she married 'Awam Ibn Ja'far and he died, then his brother Muhammad married her and then died, then their brother 'Abdullah Ibn Ja'far married her and she died while she was with him" (al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah).

Yes, Umm Kulthum married four men, and she is who she is; the granddaughter of the Prophet and the daughter of 'Ali and Fatimah, and not a single eyelid was batted at her, not a single tongue criticized her, and she did not bear a single wretched statement to the effect of, "Was to you, how could you forget your first husband and what was between you of companionship and love?"

Likewise, there is a good example for the believing women in the Sahabiyyah Anna Bint 'Umayy, the performer of two hijabs - may Allah be pleased with her and her husbands. It is mentioned in "Ma'arif as-Sahabah" by Abu Nu'aym that "she performed hijrah with her husband Ja'far Ibn 'Abi Talib in the land of al-Habashah, she bore him 'Abdullah, 'Awam, and Muhammad... Then Ja'far was killed, so Abu Bakr as-Siddiq married her and she bore him Muhammad Ibn 'Abi Bakr as-Siddiq in the year of the Farewell Hajj at ash-Shajarah. Then Abu Bakr passed away, so 'Ali Ibn 'Abi Talib married her and she bore him Yahya Ibn 'Ali Ibn 'Abi Talib."

Likewise, "Khawlah Bint Qays Ibn Qahd Ibn Thalhah al-Ansariyyah, Umm Muhammad - and it was said, Umm Habibah. Her husband Hamzah Ibn 'Abdil-Muttalib was killed, so an-Nu'man Ibn 'Ajan al-Ansari married her."

And in "Usud al-Ghabah" by Ishaq-Adhbi, he says, "Atiqah Bint Zayd was married by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abi Bakr. Then when he was killed, al-Faruq 'Umar married her. Then when he was killed, al-Zubayr Ibn al-'Awwam married her."

And you should ponder, O Muslimah, how a woman can remarry after the likes of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab, 'Ali Ibn 'Abi Talib, and Hamzah Ibn 'Abdil-Muttalib!

These are just a few of the many examples from the history of the women belonging to the best generation. And if we were to try to count the number of women who remarried after their first husbands, we would not be able to do so.

Those widows who oppose remarriage - may Allah guide them to that in which there is good for them in the Dunya and the Akhira - have some doubts. Among them is that any woman who is

Allah's Messenger said, "The best of my ummah is the generation in which I was sent, and then those who come after them" (Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurayrah). An-Nawawi said, "The scholars have agreed that the best of generations is his generation, meaning his companions... and what the majority of scholars are upon is that every Muslim who saw the Prophet - even if only for an hour - is from among his companions."

What was a common practice by the women of that generation from among the Sahabiyyat is that they would remarry after their husbands died or were killed, with the exception of the Mothers of the Believers, who were forbidden for any man after the Prophet. And if we were to examine the books of biographies and histories we would rarely find a woman from among those believing, noble, pious women who did not remarry after the passing of her husband, regardless of whether or not she had children. Likewise, we have never read that any of the men or women around her criticized her for remarriage or accused her of not being loyal to her first husband! And whoever defames a woman that has married another man after her husband died or was killed should beware of opposing something which Allah has legislated and permitted for His slaves. Thus, if there is a woman whose husband passes away and she remarries, and then he passes away and she remarries, and then he passes away and she remarries - and so on as much as Allah wills, even if a hundred times - and then someone comes and censures and forbids her without a shar'i justification, but rather on the basis that this is "shameful," thereby placing a false understanding of "shame" that is rampant among many people - except for those whom our Lord has protected - over and above the halal that Allah has permitted or the haram that He has forbidden - then such a censorious individual should fear for his worrisome condition.

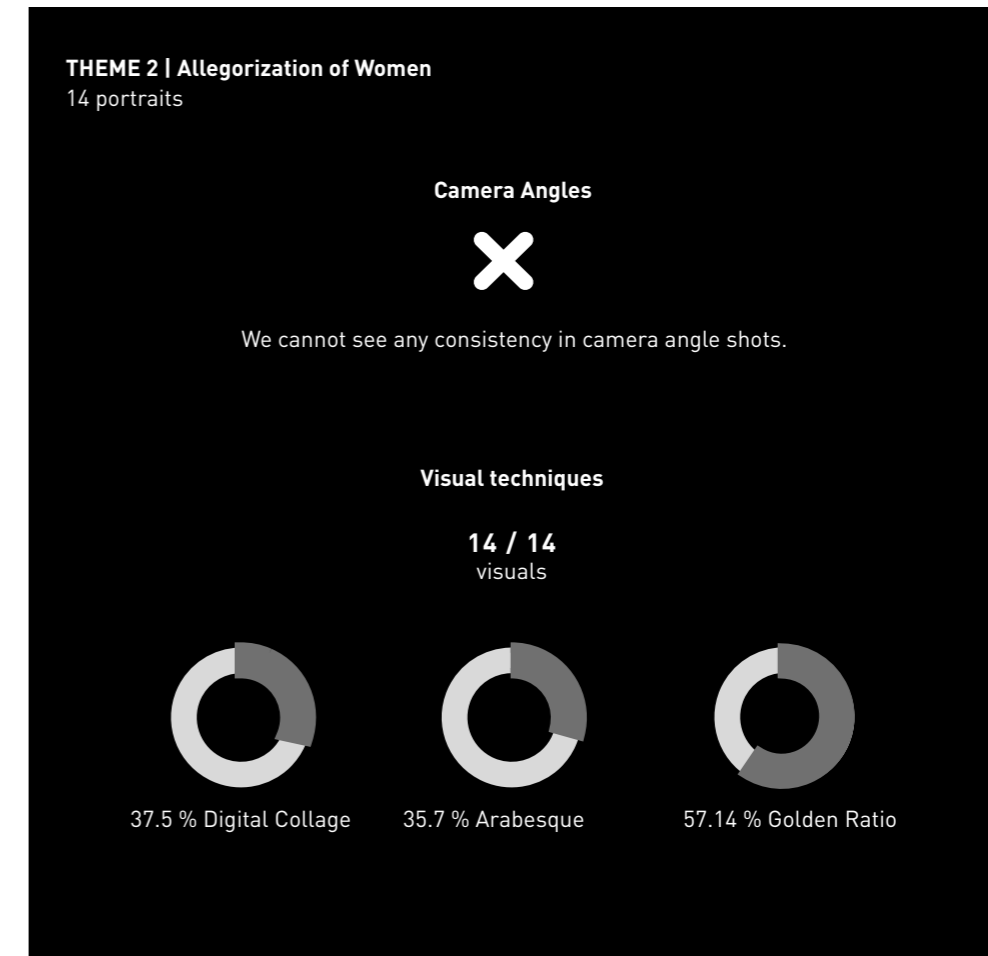
Figure 77
Rumiyah no. 4, p. 32

Colors

Similarly to the first theme, we can see the usage of the colors yellow, green, orange, red, blue, grey and brown. Nevertheless, the color pink is added to the color palette in the visuals representing women. Pink, like many other colors, has socio-cultural connotations to it—today, particularly in Western cultures, in which the color pink is associated “with femininity and its stereotypical features, such as softness and delicacy, with childhood and innocence” (Koller 2008, 396). There is a holistic approach in the relation established between visual elements, colors, and language in the articles addressing women in Rumiyaah in a way that the visuals reinforce the language used in the text, and its turn, “given the cultural association of pink with femininity, the function of the pink titles or the arabesque of the articles denote that those articles are addressing women i.e. feminine (Koller 2008, 410), which also reinforces the language used (Koller 2008, 410). And so as Koller states, “[i]n artefacts and visual texts, pink is seen as gendering textual referents and as attracting female readers’ attention, often in tandem with verbal components” (Koller 2008, 418). Marketing and consumer culture have certainly helped disseminate the pink color concept across Western cultures (Koller 2008, 404) as well as Eastern cultures; I remember while living in Lebanon or when I would visit Syria, in terms of the stereotypic representation of pink it was not different than in Western cultures. On the other hand, pink can also be associated with lust and sexuality (Koller 2008, 396); it is in contradiction to the connotation discussed above but this can be explained by the different shades of pink, their brightness, saturation, and other colors pink is accompanied with that highlight different connotations—“an increase in brightness and saturation promotes sexual connotations,” whereas, the combination of white and pink triggers association with innocence (Koller 2008, 404-405). And so, going back to the IS visuals representing

women, the pink used is bright and highly saturated, thus contradict to message and intention of the Rumiyaah articles.

Further visual composition techniques employed in this sub-category



Conclusion

In the current state of this research I have identified two themes within Islamic State's self-representational photographs: (1) Heroization of Fighters and (2) Allegorization of Women. The first theme plays on notions of IS fighters' bravery, strength, heroism, collective belonging, and religious devotion. This theme can be distinguished into five sub-thematics: (1) Confrontation with the Enemy, (2) Religious legitimacy and Islamic Identity, (3) Martyrdom, (4) Collective Belonging, (5) The Future of the Caliphate. All these sub-thematics can be characterized as Pull Factors—grievances on a personal level such as acceptance, sense of identity and belonging, search for adventure, self-worth, and spiritual comfort (Nemr 2017; UNESCO 2016, 12). These sub-thematics were qualitatively assessed both in isolation, and in respect to each other, revealing an apparent fluidity among the visual constructions and techniques across the sub-thematics. Whereas the visuals representing women completely exclude any depiction of the female gender, and instead the visuals addressing them are elements that reinforce the expected behavior of women to construct ideal pious and devout Muslim women, who are subordinates to the jihadi fighter. The visual constructions and techniques employed by the Islamic State to the portraits of its fighters elicit and modulate to aspire its audience's perception and emotions to join the group. I can thus far conclude that this elicitation and modulation of perception and emotions is achieved through the visual manipulation of (1) preconceived ideas of heroes, (2) Hollywood and shooter video game styles, while combining with manipulation of (3) elements of Islam, (4) Islamic traditions and identity, to give itself religious legitimacy.

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