



Doctoral workshop
Researching Archives: Experiences & Perspectives

Basel, Saturday 12 November 2022

09:00 – 17:00

Maiengasse 51, 4056 Basel – Room 105

Organisation: Jasmine Benhaida & Fares Damien (Department of Social Sciences, Program in Near and Middle Eastern studies)

This workshop is made possible thanks to the Swiss National Science Foundation Research Project "Ottoman Afterlife in Jordan and Iraq" and the Program in Near & Middle Eastern Studies.

- **Dr. Phil. Alp Yenen** | Leiden University Institute for Area Studies
 - *Born in Ankara, Alp Yenen completed his MA in Middle Eastern Studies, Political Science, and Economic Geography at the University of Munich. He received his PhD from the University of Basel with a thesis on the global microhistory of a Muslim revolutionary organization during the aftermath of the First World War. He published several journal articles and book chapters dealing with the international and political history of the Middle East during the First World War and Interwar years. His co-edited volume *Age of Rogues: Rebels, Revolutionaries and Racketeers at the Frontiers of Empires* was published with Edinburgh University Press in 2021. Since 2018, he is assistant professor of Modern Turkish History and Culture at Leiden University.*

- **Funda Soysal** | PhD candidate in History at Boğaziçi University
 - *Born in Ankara, Funda Soysal graduated from Robert College Istanbul, and received her BA in History from Grinnell College, Iowa, in 1996. She completed her MA in Modern Turkish History at the Boğaziçi University in 2001. Since 2002, she has been involved in the publishing of her mother, novelist Sevgi Soysal (1936-1976)'s oeuvre. Her research on the 1895 South African gold-mining share speculation on the Galata stock exchange has led her to conclude that the intertwining of İstanbul's indigenous financial system with global capitalism is a little known but fascinating topic.*

- **Dr. Anaïs Massot** | PHD in History of the Middle East at EHESS/Leiden University
 - *Anaïs Massot holds a PhD in History from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS- CéSor) and from Leiden University. She analyzed inter-confessional relations, religious dynamics, and community-building in the Ottoman province of Damascus in the 19th century. She is now interested in the role of diasporas and religious minorities in the circulation of religious and political ideas in the Mediterranean.*

- **Mathilde Sigalas** | University of Geneva
 - *Mathilde Sigalas is a PhD candidate in modern history at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. Her research project focuses on the circulations and appropriation narratives around the antiquities of the archaeological site of Ur – by following their trajectories between Iraq, the United Kingdom and the United States, and the way they were integrated in Western museums' collections – from 1922 to 1934.*



09h00-09h45		Introduction	
10h00-11h00	Session 1	<i>Decrypting the Ur Correspondence: A Transnational Reading of the Antiquities' Popularization During the Interwar Period</i>	<i>Mathilde Sigalas</i>
11h00-12h00	Session 2	<i>Multiple Discourses: Reading Sectarianism, Inter-Confessional Tensions, and Persecution in the Archives</i>	<i>Anaïs Massot</i>
12h00-12h15		Coffee break (optional if 45min sessions instead of an hour)	
12h15-13h15	Session 3	<i>Fractured Paper Trails of a Resilient Salonican Family</i>	<i>Funda Soysal & Alp Yenen</i>
13h15-14h15		Lunch break	
14h30-16h00	Session 4	<i>Circulation, ownership, access: the role of the researcher</i>	<i>A. Massot, F. Soysal, M. Sigalas</i>
16h00-17h00		Wrapping up, conclusions and ways forward	

Abstracts of sessions:

Session 1 – Mathilde Sigalas

The archaeological site of Ur, in Southern Iraq, was excavated by C. Leonard Woolley and his team for the British Museum, London, and the University Museum, Philadelphia, between 1922 and 1934. During these twelve years, the expedition team discovered about 27'950 objects¹. Following the Antiquities Law of 1924 implemented by the British mandate government, the antiquities were divided into two lots – one for the Department of Antiquities to remain in Iraq and one for the archaeologists and the museums to be exported abroad. The antiquities exported had to be inserted into the permanent collections of both museums and appeal to the public. This presentation introduces the strategy established by C. Leonard Woolley and the museums to cover the archaeological excavation of Ur and popularize the antiquities. The analysis of this strategy relies on a corpus of thousands of letters exchanged from the early 1920s until the end of the 1930s, on the administrative maintenance of the expedition and the care of the antiquities. By decrypting the “Ur correspondence”, the aim of my presentation is to show through a representative selection of sources, how the description of the objects evolves and reveals the use of Mesopotamian antiquities to reinforce national identities in the United Kingdom and the United States during the interwar period.

¹ <http://www.ur-online.org/property/46/>



Session 2 – Anaïs Massot

This presentation will address the difficulty of reconstructing events of inter-confessional violence, tensions, and persecution from the archives, which often present either pre-constructed discourses or narratives tailored to the audience, hindering underlying societal, economic, and political motivations. This presentation will point to the necessity of deconstructing these discourses by cross-reading different archives (Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, Ottoman archives, Consular archives, Arabic chronicles) on different events, thus shedding light on the multi-faceted aspect of inter-confessional relations.

Session 3 – Funda Soysal & Alp Yenen

Modern historians of Ottoman and Turkish Studies are often criticized for their over reliance on state archives. Such state-produced documents might impose a false Weberian rationality upon complex social realities. When social and everyday history is written with state-centric sources, it can often blur the essential human experience of social change. However, the prevailing source bias of the scholarship results from a general lacuna of institutions and traditions of archiving ego-documents, private papers, and family papers in post-Ottoman countries. As cousins and fellow historians, we will introduce in this workshop session our preliminary findings from a recent discovery of a vast collection of letters, documents, diaries, postcards, and photos related to the history of our family from Salonica. The “collection” is still not collected as such, but fractured across the possession of several family relatives, including one major pile of papers at the possession of one family member. This workshop session will first introduce the family history from Ottoman Salonica to Weimar Germany and Kemalist Turkey based on translated excerpts from a hand-written family tree in Ottoman script. Second, we will discuss how to archive the paper trails of fractured family papers based on a rough sample of different types of documents. Third, based on translated excerpts from letters, postcards, and notebooks, we will discuss how such papers can help us recreate a human-scale frame to understand the struggles of the transitional period from the Ottoman to the post-Ottoman world. This workshop session will help us rethink family papers as sites of memory of fractured lives that prevailed and showed resilience in the face of the uncertainty of their times.

Session 4 – Round Table

Open discussion on notions of “archive fever” (Doumani 2009)², “history without documents” and “archival imaginaries” (El Shakry 2015) among others, in the context of current debates on decolonizing archives, access, circulation and ownership.

² Doumani, Beshara (2009). “Archiving Palestine and the Palestinians: The Patrimony of Ihsan Nimr.” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 36 (Winter): 3–12



List of readings per session

Mandatory reading for the day

El Shakry, Omnia. “History without Documents”. *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (2015): 920–34.

Session 1

Recommended reading

MCLEAN Fiona, “Museum and the construction of national identity: a review”, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 3:4, 1998, pp.244-252.

Bibliography suggestions

BARAM Uzi, ROWAN Yorke (ed.), *Marketing Heritage: Archaeology and the Consumption of the Past*, Walnut Creek, AltaMira Press, 2004.

CANNADINE David, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2001.

ELLIOTT Mark, “Archaeology, Bible and Interpretation: 1900-1930”, PhD Dissertation, University of Arizona, 1998, 396p.

GRABILL Joseph, *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East: Missionary Influence on American Policy, 1810-1927*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1971.

HILL Kate, *Museum and Biographies: Stories, Objects, Identities*, Suffolk, The Boydell Press, 2012.

KAPLAN Flora S., *Museums and the Making of “Ourselves”: The Role of Objects in National Identity*, London, Leicester University Press, 1997.

KUKLICK Bruce, *Puritans in Babylon: The Ancient Near East and American Intellectual Life, 1880-1930*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018.

MALOIGNE Hélène, “The Flapper of Ur: Archaeology and the Image of the Young Woman in Interwar Britain”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 2021, pp. 1-24.

MELMAN Billie, *Empires of Antiquities. Modernity and the Rediscovery of the Ancient Near East, 1914-1950*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020.

SÈBE Berny, “Exhibiting the Empire in print: The press, the publishing world and the promotion of ‘Greater Britain’”, in MCALLEER John, MACKENZIE M. John (ed.), *Exhibiting the Empire. Cultures of Display and the British Empire*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2015.

Session 2

Recommended reading

Rogan, Eugene L. “Sectarianism and Social Conflict in Damascus: The 1860 Events Reconsidered.” *Arabica*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2004, pp. 493–511. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27667683>. Accessed 25 Sep. 2022.

Heyberger, B. (2021). Le christianisme oriental à l’époque ottomane : Du postcolonial au global (1960-2020). *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 76(2), 301-337. doi:10.1017/ahss.2021.120

Primary sources: a cross reading of archives of the Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, Ottoman archives, consular archives, and Arabic chronicles.