SSA-Sponsored Events and Syria-Related Papers at MESA 2012

Zayde Antrim

Meetings in Conjunction

Saturday, 11/17

SSA Board Meeting: 2-3pm, Plaza Court 1 (Plaza-C)

SSA Business Meeting: 3:30-4pm (Plaza Court 3 (Plaza C)

SSA Panel Discussion, “Perspectives on the Syrian Uprising”: 4-5:30pm, Plaza Court 3 (Plaza-C)

Panelists: Seda Altug, Rebecca Joubin, Ben Smuin, Keith Watenpaugh, Max Weiss

SSA Sponsored Panels

1. Sunday, 11/18, 2:00pm:

Post-Ottoman Citizenship Discourses in the Arab Levant (P3008)

The mid-nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire was a period of great reform which in turn influenced new concepts of governance, social structure, and political and civil identities. One of the most influential laws to be passed during this time was the Ottoman Nationality Law, which declared all inhabitants of Ottoman territory as Ottoman nationals. At the same time, French concepts of patrie and so-called 'natural rights' began to spread in the Arab region, particularly Egypt and cities such as Beirut. The ramifications of Ottoman nationality and the discourses it influenced appeared on a broader level after the post-World War I creation of the League of Nations and the international mandate system. Both Ottoman precedents and colonial concepts of citizenship came to play a major role in the history of civic identity and rights and the discussions of nationality and citizenship in the early years of the mandates. This panel seeks to explore legacies of Ottoman discourses of citizenship and nationality, and historicize post-Ottoman legislation, discourses and concepts of citizenship in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq. In particular, how did the figure of the (Arab) primordial national conflict with the figure of the newly-invented, internationally-recognized citizen? What role did education play under the mandate in creating civic identity and counter-narratives to colonial citizenship? What were the differences in citizenship rights and duties under the system of mandates administered by France as opposed to Britain? Emigrant and refugee status are key to these discourses.

Equally important is the position of Arab emigrants who had been born Ottoman nationals but left their homelands before or after the imposition of mandates. In various cases, these native Arabs could not return to their homelands to claim citizenship. In cases such as this, the practices of nationality as discussed by the Arabs came into contrast with the colonial imposition of citizenship. Historians have focused heavily on nationalism and the development of national identities in the post-Ottoman world but the study of nationality and its relation to citizenship have yet to be fully explored. This panel will explore just that, as well as begin the process of comparing how Arabs in different mandates internalized citizenship, as well as practiced and rejected components of its civil, political and social rights.

Shira Robinson (George Washington University), Chair
Benjamin Thomas White (University of Birmingham), “Refugees and Nationality in 1920s Syria and Lebanon”


Hilary Falb (University of California, Berkeley), “‘Are They Educating Their Pupils for a World in which They are To Be First or Second?’: Government Schools and Citizenship in the Mandates for Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine

Seda Altug (Boğaziçi University), “Debating Syrianness in French-Syria (1936-1939)”

Will Hanley (Florida State University), Discussant

2. Sunday, 11/18, 4:30pm:

Blurring Nationalism and Religion in the Early 20th-Century Middle East (P2985)

Anthony Smith has defined nationalism as “a new religion of the people,” with its own prophets, scriptures, holy days, and rituals. Nationalism, rooted in the triumph of secular ideologies of the 19th and early 20th centuries, clearly demonstrated religious qualities. This panel aims to reconsider the nature of the relationship between religion and nationalism in the Middle East following World War I by considering the following questions: How did religion, religious practices and religious classes address nationalist discourse? Did nationalists, as the creators of nationalist rhetoric, did the authors of nationalist rhetoric couch nationalism in religious terms or symbols, and to what extent did they link national struggles or the nation to religion? Did nationalists, as the creators of nationalist rhetoric, did the authors of nationalist rhetoric couch nationalism in religious terms or symbols, and to what extent did they link national struggles or the nation to religion? Were there any attempts to reform, rationalize, modify or nationalize religious ideas, rituals or organizations? How did religious classes and institutions engage nationalist movements and try to shape their respective politics and economies? What did the rise of national consciousness mean to the religious or sectarian minorities? Our first paper will analyze conflicting views of religion held by exiled Kurdish nationalists living in Syria and Lebanon under French mandatory rule. The second paper discusses an activist network in Latin America that linked the Maronite Church to Lebanese emigrant parties and its impact on Lebanese nationalist ideology and the church during the early Mandate period. Our third paper, focusing on investment in Lebanese energy companies, examines the role of the Maronite Church as a material and rhetorical force in the creation of a distinctively national Lebanese economy within the wider French mandate in the interwar period. The final paper will offer an analysis of al-Azhar’s role, through student and ulema activism, in the Egyptian anti-colonial movement prior to and during the 1919 revolution, and ways in which such activism blurred the lines between secular nationalism and religion. In presenting both local and trans-global perspectives, the papers will make use of archival documents, periodicals, private collections, interviews, and diaries in Arabic, English, French, Kurmaji Kurdish, and Turkish. In their respective historical contexts, the panelists will demonstrate the fluid dynamics that characterized the reciprocal interaction of religious and nationalist discourse as well as the role of the church in bolstering the emergent state, its policies and economics.

Lisa Pollard (UNC Wilmington), Chair

Ahmet Serdar Akturk (University of Arkansas), “Many Faces of Religion: Kurdish Nationalism in French Mandatory Levant”
Matthew Parnell (University of Arkansas), “What is ‘National Unity?’: Religion, Egyptian Nationalism and the 1919 Revolution”

Stacy Diane Fahrenthold (Northeastern University), “Men of the Nation, Men of the Cloth: Lebanese Diasporic Nationalism and the Church, 1919-1932”

Simon Jackson (European University Institute, Florence), “Sacred Infrastructure: the Maronite Church as Institutional Shareholder in Mandate-Era Economic Development”

Joel Gordon (University of Arkansas), Discussant

3. Monday, 11/19, 2:30pm:

Mapping Spaces of Inclusion and Exclusion: Sociability in Ottoman Syria (P3118)

What can we learn about the intersection of everyday social practice and imperial power within the walls of favored Ottoman institutions? How is Ottoman authority sustained and/or contested in public bathhouses, coffeehouses, and imarets? How do these institutions treat social difference in the form of Muslim and non-Muslim, and male and female, and urban and rural identities? Drawing upon interdisciplinary methods and archival research, the panelists will show how many local and global trends converged within the bathhouses, coffeehouses, and imarets situated along caravan routes and major arteries in the empire. The panel begins with an examination of the structure and uses of the coffeehouses in Ottoman Aleppo, with special attention to the Coffeehouse of the Waqf of Iphsir Pasha, Aleppo (1653). The rise of new commodities, sociability, and leisure culture in Aleppo's coffeehouses will be linked to the wider global consumption in coffee as well as to the broader architectural environment of the city. The second paper examines urban bathhouses through the lens of eighteenth century bathhouse regulations that sought to segregate Muslim women from non-Muslim women. The author will examine the juridical basis for barring mixed confessional bathing and place it within the context of Ottoman anxiety over the transgression of non-Muslims in public space. The next paper maps bathhouses in Ottoman Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama using historical and archaeological methods to document commonalities and differences. Drawing upon a database of rural baths in Ottoman Syria, the author will examine the ways urban and rural bathhouses were Ottomanized as well as the ways rural bathhouses adapted to local needs and tastes. Another paper explores imperial soup kitchens (imarets) situated along the main pilgrimage and trade routes in Syria. Using endowment deeds, chronicles and travel accounts, the author examines social inclusion or exclusion within imperial public kitchens and mosques. The panel finishes with a discussion of social gatherings in the private space of the home, including courtyards and gardens in sixteenth century Damascus with special attention to ethnic differences between Ottomans and local Arabs who encountered each other in these gatherings and the power relations brokered through social networking. Through the lens of multiple spaces, the panel examines coffeehouses, bathhouses, imarets, and private homes as loci of global and imperial interests that are sustained and, at other times, contested in popular rural and urban social practice.

Helen Pfeifer (Princeton University), “Meet Me in the Majlis: Sociability and Ethnicity in Sixteenth-Century Damascus”

Heghnar Watenpaugh (University of California, Davis), “The Coffeehouse: Architecture and Sociability in the Ottoman City”
Vivian Elyse Semerdjian (Whitman College), “Nudity and the Dhimmi Woman: Regulating Confessional Bathing in Eighteenth Century Aleppo”

Astrid Meier (University of Halle-Wittenberg), “An Ottomanization of the Countryside? Village Bathhouses in Ottoman Syria (Damascus, Aleppo, Hama)”

Marianne Boqvist (Swedish Research Institute, Istanbul), “Hospitality Unlimited or Confined? Imperial Imarets on Ottoman Syrian Highways”

**Full List of Syria-Related Papers**

Saturday, 11/17, 5:30pm:

[P3204-13281] [Aleppine Armenians during the Last Decades of the Nineteenth and the First Quarter of the Twentieth Centuries](#) by Serife Eroglu Memis

[P3021-12772] [Collective Memory and Nationalist Narrative: On the Possibility of Recounting a "Syrian Experience" of the First World War](#) by James L. Gelvin

[P2986-12791] [Arabic Books in Flux: The Early Publications of The American Syria Mission (1836-1860)](#) by Hala Auji

Sunday, 11/18, 8:30am:

[P3134-13612] [The Radicalization and Ruralization of the Ba`th Party](#) by Bassam Haddad

[P3210-13637] [Aspects of Integration and Segregation among the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Communities of 17th-Century Ottoman Aleppo](#) by Charles L. Wilkins

Sunday, 11/18, 11:00am:

[P3022-12821] [Ideological Mobilization in the Age of the Crusades: The Evidence of the Manuscripts](#) by R. Stephen Humphreys

[P3022-12833] [The role of Ibn Sa'd's Tabaqat in Ibn 'Asakir's Tarikh Dimashq](#) by Ahmad Nazir Atassi

[P3022-12858] [Leveraging the Sahaba: Discourses of Orthodoxy and Sunni Revival](#) by Nancy Khalek

[P3022-12867] [Did the Crusades Change Jerusalem’s Religious Symbolism in Islam?](#) by Suleiman A. Mourad

[P3203-12937] [Gentrifiers, Preservationists and the Changing Urban Landscape of Damascus, Syria](#) by Domenico Copertino
The Syrian state and official Islam by Leif Stenberg

Sunday, 11/18, 2:00pm:

Jihad Propaganda in Damascus: Scholars, Rulers, and the Masses by James E. Lindsay

The Earliest Documented Arabic Book Collection: The Profile of an Endowed Library in 13th-Century Damascus by Konrad Hirschler

Apocalypticism in the Service of Politics: 'Ali ibn Tahir Al-Sulami' Response to the Crusades by Paul E. Chevedden

Assimilation and Arabization: Language and Linguistic Identity amongst Kurds in Syria by Christian Sinclair

Kurdish-State Relations in Syria: A Precarious Balance by Matt Flannes

Identity building among Yezidis from Syria: Discourses of history, homeland, and exile by Sebastian Maisel

Analogy and Tradition in East Syrian Law: A Dispute over Cousin Marriage by Lev Weitz

Sunday, 11/18, 4:30pm:

The Echoes of Fitna: Developing Historiographical Interpretations of the Battle of Siffin by Aaron Hagler

Urban Morphology of Aylah, Jordan Through Digital Tools and Virtual Reconstructions by Marika Snider

Monday, 11/19, 8:30am:

Embattled Masculinity: Prison and Marriage Metaphors in Early Syrian Television Drama, 1960s-1970s by Rebecca Joubin

“Turath-ing” the Present: ‘Arada Bands in Damascus, Syria by Andrea Shaheen

Monday, 11/19, 2:30pm:

Court Astrologers and Historical Writing in Early Islam by Antoine Borrut
[P3129-13256] Maghazi and Imperial Ideology in Late Antique Syria: Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri as a Case Study by Sean Anthony

[P3129-13478] Was Al-Zuhri an Umayyad Court Historian? by Steven C. Judd

[P3202-13605] Peasants, Pests, and Pine Trees: State Power and Environmental Control in Late Ottoman Syria by Samuel Dolbee


Monday, 11/19, 5:00pm:

[P3147-13655] Demanding Images: Documenting Revolution in Syria by Anne-Marie McManus

[P3137-13326] “Shaykh Salih al-?Ali” between Local Uprising and Nationalist Revolt by Max Weiss

[P3148-13495] From "Let Me finish" to "Eat Shit": How a Lebanese Political Talk Show on the Conflict in Syria Went Sour by Nadine Hamdan

Tuesday, 11/20, 8:30am:


[P3184-13712] Cultivating Land, Negotiating Change: The History of an Ottoman Agricultural School by Elizabeth Williams


Tuesday, 11/20, 11:00am:


[P3000-12752] New Evidence for the Survival of Libertine Rites among Some Nusayri ‘Alawis of the Nineteenth Century by Bella Tendler


Tuesday, 11/20, 1:30pm:
Confession over Community: Forced Decisions in 1919 Palestine by Andrew Patrick

Prelude to an Uprising: Syrian Fictional Television and Socio-Political Critique by Christa Salamandra

Zayde Antrim is Secretary/Treasurer of the Syrian Studies Association and Associate Professor of History and International Studies at Trinity College.