

# Annual Report 2023



*The Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) is an independent academic research institute, part of the Max Weber Foundation and mainly funded through the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. It conducts interdisciplinary research on the Arab world and the region of the Middle East and North Africa at large. Its research community comprises long-term research associates and short-term visiting fellows from all over the world, who represent the major disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, including Islamic and Arab studies, history and anthropology of West Asia, as well as sociology and political sciences. The OIB is a long-standing partner of academic institutions in Lebanon and the region at large. It aims to foster academic relations across the MENA region and increasingly conducts its research in transregional perspectives.*

*One of the great academic treasures of the OIB is its public research library, which holds important collections of books, journals and newspapers. It comprises around 130.000 volumes relating to Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the broad sense. The OIB publishes two major book series and additional titles through extra series. The institute engages with a larger academic community through regular research seminars, lecture series, international conferences and workshops. Local and international partnerships are crucial in designing and funding the institute's projects. In particular, the OIB is at the forefront of facilitating research collaborations between institutions in the Arab world and institutions in Germany and Europe. It thereby seeks to encourage innovative academic perspectives on the region.*

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# OIB in numbers

## RESEARCH



**26** RESEARCH PROJECTS

## SUPPORT



**9** RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

**2** POSTDOCTORAL VISITING FELLOWS

**11** DOCTORAL VISITING FELLOWS

**13** AFFILIATED RESEARCHERS

**2** RESEARCH RELIEF FELLOWS

**17** INTERNS

## PUBLICATIONS



**4** INSTITUTE **18** RESEARCHERS

## LIBRARY



**> 140.000** VOLUMES

**> 75.000** ONLINE RESOURCES

## SOCIAL MEDIA



**> 5.800** FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

**> 1.200** INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS

## EVENTS



**5** LECTURES

**7** WORKSHOPS / SYMPOSIA

**6** BOOK TALKS

**3** FILM SCREENINGS

**2** SUMMER SCHOOLS

**16** PUBLIC RESEARCH SEMINARS

**1** PANEL DISCUSSION

**14** RESEARCH COLLOQUIA

# *Director's Address*

JENS-PETER HANSEN



Every year, the Director of the Orient-Institut in Beirut has the opportunity to look back on the past year and present academic activities of the Institute. This is my first annual review. Such a review should cover the past year and be completed shortly after the end of the year. This is not the case here, because we are in an extraordinary situation in which many people, whose lives, whose past and whose future we care deeply about, are facing existential threats.

It is not that we did not organise and hold any outstanding events last year. The comprehensive Annual Report 2023, now presented by my colleagues Drs Thomas Würtz, Sarah El Bulbeisi and Sami Khatib, speaks for itself. In these times, however, it is very challenging for me to limit myself to the academic achievements of the OIB. It is impossible to ignore the facts that since the Hamas massacres of 7 and 8 October last year, Israel has been carrying out an unprecedented military offensive on the Gaza Strip in the name of self-defence and that, according to UN experts as well as the International Court of Justice, Israel has breached all limits of proportionality set by international law. Whether and how Israel is legally committing genocide against the Palestinian people will ultimately be determined by a decision of the International Court of Justice.

Due to the shared history that has separated Israel and Lebanon for decades, Lebanon has also been in the sights of Israeli war planning from the very beginning. According to newspaper reports, a pre-emptive attack on Lebanon immediately after 7 October was only averted for the time being through the mediation of US President Biden. Since then, Lebanon has feared an Israeli attack.

What did this mean for us in concrete terms last year? On the advice of the German Foreign Office, the German researchers left the country in mid-October last year. Other staff members came to the office from time to time, the rest worked remotely. There were and are evacuation and emergency plans to fall back on.

At the end of November, all researchers returned to continue the institute's operations as 'normally' as possible. We also reopened the library for staff and affiliated researchers. However, we have cancelled public events on site. Instead, we have decided to organise larger events with partners in Germany and other countries. Our conferences in 2024 will take place in Berlin, Munich, Kassel and Princeton, in cooperation with other Max Weber Institutes also in Istanbul and Delhi or our own branch office in Cairo. The OIB has many years of experience working under difficult conditions. My predecessor had to lead the institute under extreme conditions, too: the financial and economic collapse of Lebanon, the popular uprising against corruption and sectarianism, the harbour explosion that destroyed large parts of the city and cost over two hundred lives, and the Covid pandemic.

In this context, it is important for me to talk about the Institute's historical experiences, because our institutional memory is very much alive. In these times, the experiences, memories and history of the Institute keep coming back to the minds of my colleagues. They are also the topic of our regular meetings, where all employees have the opportunity to catch up and exchange ideas three times a week.

Our institute used to belong to the German Oriental Society, which was founded in 1845. The 'DMG' bought the Villa Farajallah in 1963, where our magnificent library with over 145.000 titles has been accessible to registered researchers ever since. Since 2002, our work here has continued to grow under the umbrella of the Max Weber Foundation.

Our work in Lebanon has a long and rich history. We are guests in this country, certainly, and yet we feel deeply connected and integrated. And that is exactly what is currently at stake.

During the Lebanese civil war from 1975 to 1990, OIB staff risked their lives to keep the institute running, even after they were left on their own when the Germans were suddenly forced to leave the country in 1987. Throughout the war, the OIB was located near the Green Line that divided Beirut into East and West. Nevertheless, my predecessors Bachmann, Haarmann, Rotter and Heinen managed the institute with the greatest possible consideration for all the sensitivities and legal idiosyncrasies of the country. The memory of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 2006 is also still omnipresent at the Institute. The bombs fell so suddenly, including on the southern suburbs of Beirut and the airport, that some German OIB employees were evacuated quickly – and by land.

For over sixty years, OIB has stood for a continuity that is highly valued in the country. Our Lebanese colleagues inside and outside the institute reflect how much they appreciate the fact that, despite all the political constraints, the OIB has helped to ensure that Beirut has remained the academic centre of the Arab world. In this city, where the histories of the entire region and the great powers intersect, research is conducted as freely, critically and pluralistically as states of war and military occupation allow. And we are determined to preserve and defend the practice of academic freedom under these circumstances.

For these reasons, it is gratifying to report how great the interest in cooperation and joint OIB events in Lebanon and beyond continues to be. In January 2024, we joined forces with 'Der Divan – Das Arabische Kulturhaus' in Berlin and, together with our partners in Princeton, organised the first of three conferences on the topic of 'Global Weimar/Global Nahda'. In March, we welcomed our new and very lively cohort of seven pre- and postdoctoral researchers from Germany, Lebanon and the United States to the Institute. For them, we launched a theory and methods seminar and a colloquium on Lebanese and Syrian studies, led by Dr Zeina Halabi and Dr Carol Hakim respectively. Unfortunately, we had to postpone our long-awaited conference 'Crisis, Memory & Critique'. In the meantime, we have teamed up with Prof Ulrike Freitag to jointly organise Middle East lectures at the Freie Universität Berlin, including one with Prof Avi Shlaim on 21 May.

We are also developing a Kant@300 lecture series, which will conclude in April 2025 with a public lecture by Prof Andrea Marlen Esser. We are particularly proud to carry out research- and event collaborations with partners in Lebanon, such as the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS), the Institute of Palestine Studies (IPS), the UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, the Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME) and the Lebanese Association for Ottoman Studies, as well as with international partners, such as the new Merian Centre at the Université de Tunis (MECAM), Princeton University, and the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

The OIB has also become an indispensable part of a global Max Weber Foundation's network that stretches from Tokyo to Washington, Paris and Moscow. Collaboration between the institutes is growing, and the three locations in the 'global South' (Beirut, Istanbul, Delhi) are valued as critical workshops for academic self-reflection.

This past year, I have become aware of just how much more is at stake as head of a German institute abroad than as a full professor in Canada, especially regarding the role as an independent social critic. Immanuel Kant's classic 'What is Enlightenment?' is more relevant today than ever. While rereading it, I realised that, despite all the necessary restrictions at a publicly funded institute, tests of political conviction fundamentally contradict the Kantian principle of the public use of reason. As researchers, we are committed to its public use. I quote:

*The public use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among mankind; the private use of reason may, however, often be very narrowly restricted, without otherwise hindering the progress of enlightenment.*

*By the public use of one's own reason I understand the use that anyone as a scholar makes of reason before the entire literate world. I call the private use of reason that which a person may make in a civic post or office that has been entrusted to him.*

In this balancing act between 'office and literate world', I see my vocation as an intellectual 'bridge-builder' between promoting critical dialogue with colleagues in the region and criticising public perception in Germany and the world. In this respect, the OIB's burden is to grasp contradictory realities independently and bifocally, because the Middle East conflict itself is such a reality full of contradictions in Lebanon, the region, in Germany and also the wider world.

It is true that post-war Germany has a historical responsibility towards the victims of the Holocaust. This responsibility gives rise to Germany's particular relationship with the state of Israel and its citizens. How this responsibility is organised politically and what conclusions are drawn from it, especially with regard to the Gaza war and the war crimes committed in it, is the subject of necessary debates. These debates also reach the OIB. We cannot and will not duck our share of responsibility.

The history of Palestine has been intertwined with that of Germany since the origins of the DMG in the late Ottoman period. However, most of the Palestinians living in Germany today fled Lebanon after the Israeli invasion in 1982 or are their descendants.

As our research associate Sarah El Bulbeisi explains in her book *Taboo, Trauma and Identity* (2020), Palestinians lead an existence between statelessness, residency-limbo and work-ban, collective punishment, shame and self-denial.

The Palestinians still lack social recognition in Germany. The German debate about the current war in Gaza war also shows that there is a dearth of expertise in public discourse about Palestine. Scientific debate could help here: By creating an academic space where the history of the Palestinians can be told and analysed in its own terms. If a group of far-sighted people had the courage to found an Institute for Palestine Studies in Germany, a scholarly hub where, under the Basic Law and based on principles of international law, researchers work together collegially and conduct research on Palestine according to international scientific standards, then this would be a gain for society as a whole.

So let us try to be confident that the survivors of the war on Gaza and ongoing military and settler violence will finally receive the rights to which they are legally entitled. Let us have the courage to imagine a better future in which all people in the region can live in peace and justice.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all OIB staff for their work and the incredible team spirit of the last few months: Our Deputy Director Thomas Würtz, who has assumed the duties of Director as Interim Director until I officially took office on 1 July; our Assistant Directors Caroline Kinj and Hussein Hussein; our Research Assistants Sarah El Bulbeisi, Fatih Ermiş, Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, Christian Thuselt, Carol Hakim, Sami Khatib, Nadia von Maltzahn, Zeina Halabi and Yasmin Amin; our librarians Peter Pökel, Dina Banna, Fatima Shaheen, Nasma Tayara; our administrative management around Angelika Sadek and Nirvana Ghandour; the IT specialists David Kattan and Patrick Mzaaber; the editorial team Barraq Zakaria and Micheline Kachar Hani; and, last but not least, the housekeeping staff Mohammad Siala, Rabia Omeirat and Ali Wehbe. The gardener Walid Bitar and the security team daily provide essential work. And I thank my wife, from the bottom of my heart, especially for always finding a way and never giving up faith in humanity.

Thank you so much for your support and dedication to your research and keeping the institute afloat, for tackling difficult issues together, for laughing together, for having the courage to disagree, for giving us a sense of purpose as a team and for us as an institute. As difficult as the times ahead may be, I am confident and full of anticipation for the productive co-operations and challenges that the coming years will bring for us.

Jedes Jahr hat der Direktor des Orient-Instituts in Beirut die Gelegenheit, auf das vergangene Jahr zurückzublicken und die akademischen Aktivitäten des Instituts vorzustellen. Dies ist mein erster Jahresrückblick. Ein solcher Rückblick sollte sich auf das vergangene Jahr beziehen und kurz nach Jahresende fertig sein. Das ist hier nicht der Fall, denn wir befinden uns in einer außergewöhnlichen Situation, in der viele Menschen, deren Leben, deren Vergangenheit und deren Zukunft uns sehr wichtig sind, existenziellen Gefahren ausgesetzt sind.

Es ist nicht so, dass wir im vergangenen Jahr keine herausragenden Veranstaltungen organisiert und durchgeführt hätten. Der umfassende Jahresbericht 2023, den meine KollegInnen Dr. Thomas Würtz, Sarah El Bulbeisi und Sami Khatib jetzt vorgelegt haben, spricht für sich. In diesen Zeiten fällt es mir jedoch sehr schwer, mich auf die akademischen Leistungen des OIB zu beschränken und die Tatsachen zu ignorieren, dass Israel seit den Hamas-Massakern vom 7. und 8. Oktober letzten Jahres im Namen seines Rechts auf Selbstverteidigung einen Angriff auf den Gazastreifen ausführt, der laut UNO ExpertInnen und dem Internationalen Gerichtshof, wie auch für die meisten unserer KollegInnen in der Region, die Grenzen der völkerrechtlich zu beachtenden Verhältnismäßigkeit bei der Selbstverteidigung sprengt. Inwieweit dies zutrifft oder rechtlich einen Völkermord darstellt, obliegt letztlich der abschließenden Entscheidung des Internationalen Gerichtshofs in Den Haag.

Aufgrund der gemeinsamen Geschichte, die Israel und den Libanon seit Jahrzehnten trennt, hat auch der Libanon von Anfang an im Visier der israelischen Kriegsführung gestanden. Zeitungsberichten zufolge wurde ein Präventivangriff auf den Libanon unmittelbar nach dem 7. Oktober nur durch die Vermittlung von US-Präsident Biden vorerst abgewendet. Seitdem fürchtet der Libanon einen israelischen Angriff.

Was hat das für uns im vergangenen Jahr konkret bedeutet? Auf Anraten des Auswärtigen Amtes haben die deutschen ForscherInnen Mitte Oktober letzten Jahres das Land verlassen. Andere MitarbeiterInnen kamen ab und zu ins Büro, der Rest arbeitete im Home-Office. Es gab und gibt Evakuierungs- und Notfallpläne, auf die man zurückgreifen kann. Ende November kehrten alle ForscherInnen zurück, um den Betrieb des Instituts so ‚normal‘ wie möglich fortzusetzen. Wir haben auch die Bibliothek für MitarbeiterInnen und angeschlossene ForscherInnen wieder geöffnet. Allerdings haben wir öffentliche Veranstaltungen vor Ort abgesagt. Stattdessen haben wir beschlossen, größere Veranstaltungen mit PartnerInnen in Deutschland und anderen Ländern zu organisieren. Unsere Konferenzen im Jahr 2024 finden in Berlin, München, Kassel und Princeton statt, in Kooperation mit anderen Max-Weber-Instituten auch in Istanbul und Delhi oder in unserer eigenen Außenstelle in Kairo.

Das OIB verfügt über langjährige Erfahrung, unter schwierigen Bedingungen zu arbeiten. Auch meine Vorgängerin musste das Institut unter extremen Bedingungen leiten: dem finanziellen und wirtschaftlichen Zusammenbruch des Libanon, dem Volksaufstand gegen Korruption und Konfessionalismus, der Hafenexplosion, die große Teile der Stadt zerstörte und über zweihundert Menschenleben kostete und der Covid-Pandemie.

In diesem Zusammenhang ist es mir wichtig, auf die historischen Erfahrungen des Instituts einzugehen, denn unser institutionelles Gedächtnis ist sehr lebendig.

In diesen Zeiten kommen die Erfahrungen, Erinnerungen und Geschichte des Instituts immer wieder in die Köpfen meiner KollegInnen zurück. Sie sind auch Thema bei unseren regelmäßigen Treffen, bei denen alle MitarbeiterInnen dreimal die Woche die Möglichkeit haben, sich zu informieren und auszutauschen.

Unser Institut gehörte früher zur 1845 gegründeten Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft. Die DMG kaufte 1963 die Villa Farajallah, in der seither unsere prächtige Bibliothek mit über 145.000 Titeln für registrierte ForscherInnen zugänglich ist. Seit 2002 ist unsere Arbeit hier unter dem Dach der Max Weber Stiftung weiter gewachsen. Unsere Arbeit im Libanon hat eine lange und reiche Geschichte. Wir sind Gäste in diesem Land, gewiss, und doch fühlen wir uns tief verbunden und integriert. Und genau das ist es, was derzeit auf dem Spiel steht.

Während des libanesischen Bürgerkriegs von 1975 bis 1990 haben die MitarbeiterInnen des OIB ihr Leben riskiert, um den Betrieb des Instituts aufrechtzuerhalten, auch nachdem sie auf sich allein gestellt waren, als die deutschen Entsandten 1987 plötzlich das Land verlassen mussten. Während des gesamten Krieges befand sich das OIB in der Nähe der Grünen Linie, die Beirut in Ost und West teilte. Dennoch haben meine Vorgänger Bachmann, Haarmann, Rotter und Heinen das Institut mit Klugheit und größtmöglicher Rücksichtnahme auf alle Befindlichkeiten und rechtlichen Tücken im Land geführt. Auch die Erinnerung an den israelischen Einmarsch in den Libanon im Sommer 2006 ist im Institut noch allgegenwärtig. Die Bomben fielen so plötzlich, unter anderem auf die südlichen Vororte von Beirut und auf den Flughafen, dass deutsche OIB-MitarbeiterInnen teilweise Hals über Kopf – und auf dem Landweg – evakuiert wurden.

Das OIB steht seit über sechzig Jahren für eine Kontinuität, die im Lande hoch geschätzt wird. Unsere libanesischen Kolleginnen und Kollegen – innerhalb und auch außerhalb des Instituts – spiegeln wider, wie sehr sie es schätzen, dass das OIB trotz aller politischen Einschränkungen dazu beigetragen hat, dass Beirut das wissenschaftliche Zentrum in der arabischen Welt geblieben ist. In dieser Stadt, in der sich die Geschichten der gesamten Region und der Großmächte kreuzen, wird so frei, kritisch und pluralistisch geforscht, wie es Kriegs- und militärische Besetzungen zulassen. Und wir sind entschlossen, die Praxis der akademischen Freiheit auch unter diesen Umständen zu bewahren und zu verteidigen.

Gerade deswegen ist es erfreulich zu berichten, wie groß das Interesse an Kooperationen und gemeinsamen Veranstaltungen des OIB im Libanon und darüber hinaus nach wie vor ist. Im Januar 2024 haben wir uns mit ‚Der Divan – Das Arabische Kulturhaus‘ in Berlin zusammengetan und gemeinsam mit unseren Partnern in Princeton die erste von drei Konferenzen zum Thema ‚Global Weimar/Global Nahda‘ durchgeführt. Im März haben wir unsere neuen und sehr lebendige Kohorte von sieben DoktorandInnen und PostdoktorantInnen aus Deutschland, dem Libanon und den Vereinigten Staaten am Institut begrüßt. Für sie haben wir ein Theorie- und Methodenseminar und ein Kolloquium über libanesische und syrische Studien ins Leben gerufen, die von Dr. Zeina Halabi bzw. Dr. Carol Hakim geleitet werden. Leider mussten wir unsere lang erwartete Konferenz ‚Crisis, Memory & Critique‘ verschieben. In der Zwischenzeit haben wir uns mit Prof. Ulrike Freitag zusammengetan, um gemeinsam Nahostvorlesungen an der Freien Universität Berlin zu veranstalten, unter anderem mit

Prof. Avi Shlaim am 21. Mai. Außerdem entwickeln wir eine Kant@300-Vorlesungsreihe, die im April 2025 mit einer öffentlichen Vorlesung von Prof. Andrea Marlen Esser ihren Abschluss finden wird. Wir sind besonders stolz darauf, Forschungs- und Veranstaltungskooperationen mit Partnern im Libanon, wie dem Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS), dem Institute of Palestine Studies (IPS), dem UMAM Documentation and Research Centre, dem Finnish Institute in the Middle East (FIME) und der Lebanese Association for Ottoman Studies, sowie mit internationalen Partnern, wie dem neuen Merian Centre an der Université de Tunis (MECAM), der Princeton University und der Tokyo University of Foreign Studies durchzuführen.

Heute ist das OIB auch ein unverzichtbarer Teil eines globalen Max-Weber-Netzwerks, das sich von Delhi und Tokio bis nach Washington, Paris und Moskau erstreckt.

Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Instituten wächst, und die drei Standorte im ‚globalen Süden‘ (Beirut, Istanbul, Delhi) werden als kritische Werkstätten für wissenschaftliche Selbstreflexion geschätzt.

In diesem Jahr ist mir klar geworden, wieviel mehr als Leiter eines deutschen Instituts im Ausland auf dem Spiel steht als bei einer ordentlichen Professur in Kanada, insbesondere in der Rolle als unabhängige gesellschaftliche Instanz. Hierzu ist Immanuel Kants Klassiker ‚Was ist Aufklärung?‘ heute aktueller denn je. Es ist mir bei der erneuten Lektüre bewusst geworden, dass bei allen notwendigen Einschränkungen, die ein Amt in einem öffentlich-rechtlichen Institut mit sich bringt, dem Kant'schen Prinzip des öffentlichen Gebrauch der Vernunft gerecht werden muss. Als ForscherInnen fühlen wir uns diesem Grundsatz verpflichtet. Ich zitiere:

*Der öffentliche Gebrauch der Vernunft [von Gelehrten] muss jederzeit frei sein, und der allein kann Aufklärung unter Menschen zustande bringen; der Privatgebrauch derselben aber darf öfters sehr enge eingeschränkt sein, ohne doch darum den Fortschritt der Aufklärung sonderlich zu hindern. Ich verstehe aber unter dem öffentlichen Gebrauche seiner eigenen Vernunft denjenigen, den jemand als Gelehrter von ihr vor dem ganzen Publikum der Lesewelt macht. Den Privatgebrauch nenne ich denjenigen, den er in einem gewissen ihm anvertrauten bürgerlichen Posten oder Amte von seiner Vernunft machen darf.*

In diesem Spagat zwischen ‚Amt und Lesewelt‘ sehe ich auch meine Berufung im und zum intellektuellen ‚Brückenbau‘, zwischen der Förderung des kritischen Dialogs mit den KollegInnen in der Region und der Kritik der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung an vielen Plätzen der Welt. In dieser Hinsicht besteht die Bürde des OIB's darin, widersprüchliche Realitäten unabhängig und bifokal zu erfassen, denn der Nahostkonflikt ist selbst eine solche Realität voller Widersprüchlichkeiten, vor Ort, in Deutschland und auch weltweit.

Nachkriegsdeutschland hat eine historische Verantwortung gegenüber den Opfern des Holocaust. Aus dieser Verantwortung erwächst Deutschlands besonderes Verhältnis zum Staat Israel und seiner Bevölkerung. Wie diese Verantwortung politisch gestaltet wird und welche Schlüsse daraus gezogen werden, gerade auch im Hinblick auf den Gaza-Krieg und

die darin verübten Kriegsverbrechen, ist Gegenstand notwendiger Debatten. Diese Debatten erreichen auch das OIB. Wir können und werden ihnen nicht ausweichen.

Die Geschichte Palästinas ist seit den Ursprüngen der DMG in der spätosmanischen Zeit mit der Deutschlands verflochten. Die meisten der heute in Deutschland lebenden PalästinenserInnen sind jedoch erst nach der israelischen Invasion 1982 aus dem Libanon geflohen oder sind deren Nachfahren. Wie unsere wissenschaftliche Referentin Dr. Sarah El Bulbeisi in ihrer 2020 erschienenen Doktorarbeit ‚Tabu, Trauma und Identität‘ erläutert, führen die Palästinenser in Deutschland ein Dasein zwischen Staatenlosigkeit, Kettenduldung und Arbeitsverboten, kollektiver Bestrafung, Scham und Selbstverleugnung.

Den PalästinenserInnen fehlt in Deutschland nach wie vor die gesellschaftliche Anerkennung. Die deutsche Debatte um den aktuellen Krieg gegen den Gazastreifen zeigt auch oft, dass es im öffentlichen Sprechen über Palästina häufig an Expertise fehlt. Hier könnte die Wissenschaft helfen: Mit der Schaffung eines akademischen Raums, der es ermöglichen würde, die Geschichte der PalästinenserInnen zu erzählen und unter ihren epistemischen Prämissen zu analysieren. Wenn eine Gruppe weitsichtiger Menschen den Mut aufbrächte, in Deutschland ein Institut für Palästina-Studien zu gründen, einen akademischen Ort, an dem – im Einklang mit dem Grundgesetz und auf der Grundlage völkerrechtlicher Prinzipien – kollegial mit einander umgegangen und nach international wissenschaftlichen Standards über Palästina geforscht werden könnte, dann wäre das auch ein Gewinn für die gesamte Gesellschaft.

Versuchen wir also zuversichtlich zu sein, dass die Überlebenden des Kriegs gegen den Gazastreifen und der anhaltenden militärischen- und Siedlergewalt endlich die Rechte erhalten, die ihnen zustehen. Lassen Sie uns den Mut aufbringen, uns eine bessere Zukunft vorzustellen, in der alle Menschen in der Region in Frieden und Gerechtigkeit leben können. Ich möchte an dieser Stelle allen OIB MitarbeiterInnen für ihre Arbeit und den unglaublichen Team-Geist der letzten Monate danken: Unserem Vizedirektor Thomas Würtz, der als Interims-Direktor in der Zeit bis zu meinem offiziellen Amtsantritt die Pflichten des Direktors übernommen hat, unseren DirektoratsassistInnen Caroline Kinj und Hussein Hussein; unseren wissenschaftlichen MitarbeiterInnen Sarah El Bulbeisi, Fatih Ermiş, Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, Christian Thuselt, Carol Hakim, Sami Khatib, Nadia von Maltzahn, Zeina Halabi und Yasmin Amin; unseren BibliothekarInnen Peter Pökel, Dina Banna, Fatima Shaheen, Nasma Tayara; unserer Verwaltungsleitung um Angelika Sadek und Nirvana Ghandour; die IT Spezialisten David Kattan und Patrick Mzaaber; das HerausgeberInnen-Team Barraq Zakaria und Micheline Kachar Hani; und, last but not least, das Haushaltspersonal Mohammad Siala, Rabi Omeirat und Ali Wehbe. Auch der Gärtner Walid Bitar und die Mannschaft von der Security leisten jeden Tag sehr wertvolle Arbeit. Und ich danke von Herzen meiner Frau, besonders dafür, dass sie immer einen Weg gefunden hat und den Glauben an die Menschlichkeit nicht aufgegeben hat. Herzlichen Dank an Sie alle für die Unterstützung und Ihre Hingabe, Ihr Engagement für die Forschung und den Fortbestand des Instituts, die gemeinsame Auseinandersetzung mit schwierigen Themen, das gemeinsame Lachen, den Mut zum Widerspruch, den Sinn für uns als Team und für uns als Institut. So schwierig die Zeiten auch sein mögen, die vor uns liegen, ich bin zuversichtlich und voller Vorfreude auf die produktive Zusammenarbeit und die Herausforderungen, die die kommenden Jahre für uns bringen.

**JENS-PETER HANSSEN** studied Arabic and Islam at Tübingen University, the University of Alexandria, and Durham University, where he graduated with distinction in 1993. He completed his MPhil in Oriental Studies (1993–95) and his PhD in Modern History at St. Antony's College, Oxford University (1995–2001). As a doctoral student he held junior research fellowships at the Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur les Mondes Arabes et Musulmans (IREMAM), Aix-en-Provence, France; the American University of Beirut and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft in Beirut and Istanbul. He also served on the academic advisory committee at the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and Higher Education to host Beirut as the cultural capital of the Arab world in 1999. He held a Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Erlangen to conduct research on the Arab renaissance before he started teaching at the University of Toronto. Jens Hanssen has been at the University of Toronto since 2002, where he teaches in the departments of History, Near & Middle Eastern Civilisations, and the department of Historical Studies on the Mississauga campus. From 2017 to 2018 he was visiting Chair of Arabic Studies at the University of Göttingen, and from January 2020 to June 2023 he held a visiting fellowship in Global Intellectual History at the Freie Universität Berlin.

Hanssen's research explores the intellectual entanglements between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East since the late 19th century as well as the afterlives of Abbasid and Andalusian philosophy in German, Jewish and Arabic intellectual debates of the 20th century. He is interested in the connection between intellectual trends and urban culture, the rationalities of late Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces; diffraction, translation and travelling theory.

His publications include 'Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital' (2005), 'A Clarion for Syria: A Patriot's Call Against the Civil War of 1860' (2019), and 'Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda' (2016) and 'Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History' (2021). His other writings have appeared in 'The New Cambridge History of Islam, Critical Inquiry, Arab Studies Journal', the 'International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies' and [www.hannaharendt.net – Zeitschrift für Politisches Denken](http://www.hannaharendt.net – Zeitschrift für Politisches Denken).





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# *Islamic Studies*

Islamic studies at OIB pertains to Islamic civilisation, past and present. We specialise in theology, history and historiography, Qur'an exegesis, Hadith, law, philosophy, ethics and Sufism. Our projects are interdisciplinary and often focus on the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge both within and beyond Islamic civilisation.

The interdisciplinarity of our projects can be detected in the ways in which, for instance, we study Islamic law by incorporating exegetical traditions and Hadith, as well as Islamic and Muslim Feminism. The transfer of knowledge can be demonstrated in the case of Greek philosophy and its reception in the framework of Islamic ethics. Our interest in interreligious and intra religious interdependency is highlighted best in how we study the way humans of different faiths perceive each other as for example how the 'religious other' is described in Qur'anic commentaries.

The intersection between Islamic Studies and the arts is another of our interests, specifically the study of the Qur'an as a material object.

As much as we focus on the past, we are also interested in how modern Muslim theology addresses the challenges of our time.

With regard to ethics, the interdisciplinary character ranges from Law to Sufism and also spills into gender issues, Islamic law, which claims to be based on the Qur'an and Sunna, and therefore incorporates exegetical traditions, Hadith and literature such as the 'Shahnāmeh and 1001 Nights'. Modern approaches to produce more gender-egalitarian readings, as well as more women-friendly interpretations are also incorporated. In this process stereotypical generalised images, especially with regard to role of women, are overturned.

We also look at the environment from a religious perspective, with the aim of studying the legislation and recommendations that affect the environment. Naturally, this is also tied to ethics, again in terms of use and abuse of resources, treatment of animals, methods of food production (*ḥalāl* versus *ṭayyib*) among other issues. In an upcoming project we plan to work on court documents, dealing with marriage, divorce and child custody. The lived reality can then be reconstructed and compared to the theoretical law books and manuals to determine whether a discrepancy exists between ideals and real-life practices or not. It also investigates the autonomy of judges versus the perceived hegemony of legal theories. Taken together, our projects cover vast geographical area – from Morocco to India – as well as a wide time frame – from early Islam to contemporary times.

After describing what we are doing at OIB, we would like to offer you a glimpse of a vision. One of the aims of Islamic studies at OIB is to build bridges between different religions and religious interpretations. An important vision is to offer critical readings and alternative interpretations, by providing different ones from the rich literature of Islamic history.

Therefore deconstruction is accompanied by a reconstruction, using the rich original source materials, as well as modern theories and hermeneutics.

Islamic studies are thus conducted, on the one hand, within an analytical framework that examines the genesis and differentiation of Islamic doctrines. On the other hand, modern Islamic theology and the constructive intellectual accompaniment of its scope for dealing with society and the environment play a major role in our approach to Islamic Studies.

# Abrahamic Interdependence – Relationship of the Islamic to the Jewish in Marital Law // Religious and Theological Knowledge as a Transcultural Product of Interreligious Relations

AHMED ABD-ELSALAM  
RESEARCHER

The project 'Abrahamic Interdependence' explores the influence of social issues in plural communities on the built and rebuilt religious norms and knowledge. It examines the relationship between Islamic and Jewish marriage law in different social and historical contexts. When studying Islamic law, it is noticeable that numerous Islamic legal norms correspond to Jewish ones. In 2023, my research on the topic continued. Current results of the research include the role of customary law in shaping Islamic law in theory and practice, and the later influence of the Islamic doctrine of norms on Jewish marriage law. In November 2023, I began writing the monograph on the project. On 4 and 5 May 2024, I am organising a conference in cooperation with the University of Al Akhawain in Ifrane, Morocco, on the topic 'Woman and Families across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics'.

Additionally, part of my project is a sub-project of the cooperation project 'Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean' of Marburg University in cooperation with the OIB, DAI Cairo, and the AUB. In my sub-project, 'Material Culture in Medieval and Modern Marriage Documents', I am investigating the development of bridal gifts in the first half of the 20th century and the Mamluk era. As part of the sub-project, I am organising a 'Material Culture in the Mamluk Daily Life' workshop in cooperation with the Egyptian Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo. The workshop will take place at the museum in early June 2024. In the workshop, I will present and analyse a marriage certificate from the Mamluk period. The sub-project will end in December 2025, and the results of the various sub-projects will be published as contributions to an anthology.

I have also prepared three anthologies for publication in 2023. One is entitled 'Coexistence Theology' and contains contributions to the first conference in the 'Discussing Interdependences' series. The anthology will also be published in April/May 2024 by Redsea Publishing in Cairo as open access. The second book is the anthology of the second conference in the series, to be published in July/August 2024.

The third anthology is a second edition of my anthology, 'The Post-Revolutionary Documents of Al-Azhar', edited and expanded. The same publisher will publish the anthology in October 2024.



**AHMED ABD-ELSALAM** joined the OIB in October 2021 as a research associate. He holds his PhD in Islamic Studies from the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg with a dissertation 'Das Verhältnis des beduinischen zum islamischen Recht in sozialem und historischem Kontext' (The relationship between Bedouin and Islamic law in a social and historical context). At the OIB, he studies social and theological issues of Abrahamic interdependence concerning marriage and divorce as recorded in the human production of theological and religious knowledge. Moreover, his research also focuses on social and legal transformations in Muslim societies, past and present.

At the OIB, he works on his project 'Abrahamic Interdependence – Relationship of the Islamic to the Jewish in Marital Law: Religious and Theological Knowledge as a Transcultural Product of Interreligious Relations' that deals with legal issues of marriage and divorce in Theory and Praxis. Previously, Abd-Elsalam worked as a lecturer and researcher of Islamic Theology at the Centre for Islamic Theology at the University of Münster (2012–2021) and as a visiting professor for Religious Comparative Studies at the Humboldt University Berlin (2019–2020). He also taught at Al-Azhar University on Islam and modernity (2011–2012) and at the University of Innsbruck on Islamic social and governance theory in the past and present (2018–2022).

# Women's Participation in Knowledge Production // Evidence from Manuscripts of the Islamic Material Culture

YASMIN AMIN

RESEARCHER (CAIRO OFFICE)

'I hope that whoever finds a mistake or an oversight in the manuscript will forgive me, because I was writing with my right hand, while I was rocking my new born son's cradle with my left hand', wrote Maryam bint Abd al-Qadir in the colophon al-Jawharī's book *al-Šihāh* in her own handwriting at the end of the sixth/twelfth century in Iraq. This entry in a biographical dictionary is one of the available proofs that women worked at home to transmit knowledge, even while they were looking after their children and households. It became the catalyst for searching for more such instances in the abundant biographical dictionary literature to refute the widespread accusation that women were not involved in knowledge production and to overturn this assumption.

Ibn Bashkuwāl (Pascual), (d. 578/1101), the Andalusian traditionist, historian, jurist, and scholar of Spanish origin, mentioned 170 such women in Andalusia alone in his best-known work: the biographical dictionary 'Kitāb al-Sila fī Tārīkh A'immat al-Andalus' ('The Continuation on the History of the Sages of al-Andalus'). One of the scholars he mentions is Lubna, known as al-Kātiba al-Kubra or the Scribe of Cordoba, who was a secretary for the Caliph Abdurrahman III (350/961) and also the curator and manager of the library of Madinat-ul-Zahra, the capital of al-Andalus. She was a prolific scribe, an avid polymath, an eloquent poet, and had an extraordinary command over linguistics. According to Ibn Bashkuwāl, she was known for a very steady hand well into her old age and was also in charge of teaching the children of the royal household. Slightly later and in a different geographical location, there is Fātimah bt. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Samārqandī (d. 581/1185). The daughter of the Ḥanafī jurist Abū Manṣūr al-Samarqandī (d. 575/1179), author of 'Tuḥfat al-Fuqahā'. She was a learned women and an expert in Qur'an, 'Hadith', fiqh, theology and grammar and was also qualified to issue formal religious opinions ('fatwas'). Fātimah Fātimah was recognised by her contemporaries as one of the most learned women of the sixth/twelfth centuries.

Her legal opinion was valued by many political rulers, including Prince Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (r. 541–569/1146–1174). She moved to Aleppo with her husband where she was consulted on the specifics of the religious law and where she started to teach.

The Syrian historian 'Umar ibn Aḥmad b. Hibat Allāh Kamāl al-Dīn ibn al-'Adīm (660/1262) in his 'Bugyat al-ṭalab fī tārīkh Ḥalab praises' Fāṭimah as among the most learned scholars in the history of Aleppo, even surpassing her more famous husband. In addition to her credentials as a religious authority, she was also known to be a great calligrapher. Several biographers state that Fāṭimah authored several important legal treatises and works on Hadith which were widely read by the intellectual elite in 12th- and 13th-century Syria. She used to write down her classes and issue 'ijāzās' on them for her students.

Being a scribe, a calligrapher or a manuscript illuminist is a profession that suits women well, as it allows them to work from home. Yet this topic remains understudied, though not for the lack of such learned women. This is just a small introduction, and this research intends to find many more women scribes, calligraphers, and illuminists, and their works to refute the accusation that women were not involved in knowledge production. So far, 24 women have been researched and are waiting for their sisters, also armed with pens.



**YASMIN AMIN** has been working as a Representative of the Orient-Institut Beirut (Max-Weber-Stiftung) in Cairo since May 2022. She is an Egyptian German who holds a BA in Business Administration, a PGD, and an MA in Islamic Studies, all three from the American University in Cairo. She received her PhD in Islamic Studies from Exeter University's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, researching 'Humour and Laughter in the Hadith'.

Her research covers various aspects of gender issues, early Muslim society and culture, as well as the original texts of Islamic history, law, and Hadith, along with gender issues in Islam. She is the co-translator (with Nesrin Amin) of 'The Sorrowful Muslim's Guide' and the co-editor (with Nevin Reda) of 'Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion, and Change' (2020). She has published extensively, and her forthcoming book is a translation of Nazira Zeineddine with Edinburgh University Press in the Series Muslim Thinkers in Translation.

#### PUBLICATIONS

**'Wa ka'anaha majhūla'** (as if she is unknown) **The Mystery Surrounding Umm Ishaq: a Manipulation of history!**. In *Gender lens = lentilles de genre* 3, pp. 11–33, 2023.

Asma Afsaruddin (ED.) **'Early Muslim Women as Moral Paragons in Classical Islamic Literature: al-Mubashsharāt bi-l-janna'**. In *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Women*, pp. 223–247. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Asmaa El Maaroufi, Katajun Amirpur and Dina El Omari (EDS.)

**'Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Hadith – Ein Oxymoron?'**

In *Eine Frage des Geschlechts? Islamisch-theologische Perspektiven für eine gendergerechte Theologie der Gegenwart*, pp. 141–160. Baden Baden, Ergon Verlag, 2023.

Suad Joseph (GENERAL ED.) **'Representations: Humorous Depictions: Hadith'**. In *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures*, consulted online on 27 February 2024, first published online 2023. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1872-5309\\_ewic\\_COM\\_002223](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1872-5309_ewic_COM_002223)

#### **LECTURES**

**'Waving the Mantle of the Prophet: The Journey of Umm Salama's narration of Hadith al-Kisa over 10 Centuries'**, OIB, Beirut // 25 JANUARY.

**'Refuting the Religious Arguments for Allowing Child Marriage to Underage Girls'**, Social Science Lab // 18 MARCH.

**'Al-Insan al-Kamil: Perfect or Complete?'**, in the OIB-COSIMENA Research Colloquim on Ethics, DAAD Cairo // 22 JUNE.

**'Women's Participation in Knowledge Production: Evidence from Manuscripts of the Islamic Material Culture'**, research project **'Dealing with Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean. Between Excavation and Digitization'**, first conference of the Ta'ziz Science Cooperations 2023–2025 // 12–14 SEPTEMBER.

#### **SEMINARS**

**'Justice & Beauty in Muslim Marriage'**, book launch at the School of Oriental & African Studies (SOAS) in London // 25 FEBRUARY.

**'Justice & Beauty in Muslim Marriage'**, book launch at Oriental Hall, American University Cairo // 17 JUNE.

#### **CONFERENCES**

**'Weibliche Koran Rezipitorinnen'**, keynote lecture at the conference

**'Der Koran und die Stimme'**, Catholic Academy in Berlin // 28–30 MARCH.

**'Geschlechtergerechtigkeit im Hadith – ein Oxymoron? Wie Gender in Hadithwissenschaften eingebettet werden kann.'**

lecture at the conference **'Eine Frage des Geschlechts?'**, Münster University (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) // 11–13 MAY.

**'Manuscripts: Trash or treasure?'**, keynote lecture at The Next Generation Researcher Conference at the Oxford Centre for Muslim Christian Studies, University of Oxford // 30 JUNE–2 JULY.

**'Fatwa and the Challenges of the Third Millennium'**, at the 8th International Conference by Dar Al-Ifta in Cairo // 18–19 OCTOBER.

#### **ORGANISATION OF CONFERENCES**

**'Living in a Digital Age: Technology and its Effect on Culture & Society'**, in partnership with the Nile University in Cairo // 11–13 MARCH.

**'The Religious Other in Qur'anic Tafsir'**, in partnership with the Dominican Institute in Cairo (IDEO) // 19–21 MAY.

# God Upholds the Just State even if it is Unbelieving

FATIH ERMIŞ  
RESEARCHER

The theory of the circle of justice is certainly one of the oldest political ideas, which briefly states that if a ruler is just, everybody under his rule will only be concerned with his/her profession. This will increase the tax revenues of the state, which will enable the ruler to finance a strong army, which is inevitable for the ruler to exercise justice. It's called a circle because the lineage of argumentations starts and ends with justice. The circle of justice can be regarded as an extended form of justice from the individual to the societal level. However, how is justice understood in the classical texts?

Ķinālīzāde 'Alī Çelebī (1510–1572), an Ottoman moral philosopher, whose 'Akhlāk -i 'alā'lī' ('The Sublime Ethics') became the definitive book of ethics in the Ottoman Empire, argues that the most necessary thing for the rulers is justice. This, however, is because of worldly reasons. At this level, justice is understood as giving everybody his/her right, which includes distributive justice, juridical justice, and commutative justice. Not only Ķinālīzāde but the majority of premodern scholars were of the opinion that as long as this is maintained, states will have strong structure. Through civic justice, cities flourish, and by civic injustice, they ruin. In this framework, justice is nothing but equilibrium. For economic transactions, money is the ideal instrument to remove imbalances and to re-establish the balance by adding to some and taking away from others until equivalence is established between them so that business may be carried on fairly, as between, for example, the farmer and the carpenter. The relation between justice and equivalence is so valuable for Ķinālīzāde, because equivalence can only be conceived in the form of unity, while unity is the highest degree of superiority and perfection, because it denotes going back to the one.

Ķinālīzāde further discusses this point with reference to Mongol ruler Genghis Khan's (d. 1227) laws ('yasa'), which were by their nature non-divine / human created / worldly laws. Genghis Khan succeeded in establishing policies based on reason and governance. This law was accepted and used by his children and followers as well. Ķinālīzāde accepts the possibility of this kind of worldly order, however at the same time arguing that the 'shari'a' – being divine law – still the most ideal instrument to realise justice in the world. Although the ultimate aim is to establish justice in the country, Ķinālīzāde, who was a judge, is of the opinion that the worldly laws cannot be as perfect as the 'shari'a'.

Statements like 'God upholds the just state even if it is unbelieving' were meant in the above-described framework. However, in 'Akhlaq-i 'alā'ī' as well as other classical works the absolute justice is defined as 'putting things in their proper places'. This seemingly vague definition is in fact a comprehensive definition of justice. As the Aristotelian analysis of the soul attributes three powers to it, justice here means to follow the middle path between two extremes, which is nothing but putting things in their proper places. The resulting three virtues are called wisdom, temperance and courage. When these three characters are together and interact with each other, then from this mixture emerges a vague form, which is the whole and the perfection of all virtues, and it is called justice. These proper places are determined, according to Қınālīzāde, with reference to the 'shari'a'. In this regard, he defines injustice as everything that is prohibited in the 'shari'a'.



FATIH ERMIŞ joined the OIB in 2018. He received a doctorate from the University of Erfurt with a thesis entitled 'Ottoman Economic Thinking before the 19th Century'. He holds an MA in economic history from Marmara University and a BA in economics from Boğaziçi University, both in Istanbul. Before joining the OIB, he worked as a research assistant for the Chair of History of West Asia at the University of Erfurt and, most recently, as a post-doctoral associate at the Centre for Islamic Theology, University of Tübingen. His main research interest is pre-modern Islamic intellectual history, with a particular focus on intellectual endeavors in Ottoman lands. His work is also concerned with economic, social, religious and literary writing as well as with Sufi thought. His research at the OIB focuses on a famous book of ethics, 'Aħlāk-i 'Alā'ī', written in Damascus by the Ottoman scholar Қınālīzāde 'Alī Çelebī (1510–1572).



This is the only drawing of Kınâlîzâde to hand. He is depicted as a teacher in a collection of biographies of poets from Kınâlîzâde's own time. *Āshîk Çelebî, Mashâ'ir al-Shu'arâ'*, fol. 240A, Turkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, Millet Kütüphanesi, Ali Emiri 772.

# The New Testament Quotations in Ibrahim Al-Biqā'īs (d. 1480) // Commentary on the Qur'an

THOMAS WÜRTZ  
RESEARCHER

In the course of Islamic intellectual history, the genre of Qur'ān commentaries (Tafsīr) has steadily grown in importance and scope. More and more areas of knowledge, especially Greek philosophy, were integrated and analysed. Main characteristic of Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 1210) Tafsīr is the joy of discovering the hitherto unknown, while at the same time also continuously transmitting the known from the tradition. Another extensive commentary in this long history of Tafsīr in Islamic intellectual history was written by Ibrahim al-Biqā'ī (1406–1480), who dared to integrate the Holy Scriptures of other religions into his commentary. He was born in the Beeka Valleys, later he lived in Cairo where he started working on his Tafsīr work 'Nazm ad-durar fī tansānub al-ayāt wa-s-suwar' – 'Arrangement of the Pearls in the Context of the Verses and Suras' in 1456. What makes this commentary unique is that al-Biqā'ī made use of biblical material, which hardly any Tafsīr before or after him did. Doing so – unlike Rāzī – al-Biqā'ī included knowledge that had been known but fell into oblivion over the centuries: Next to the Old Testament he considered the four gospels of the New Testament to be helpful for elucidating numerous Qur'ānic passages that contain echoes of biblical narratives. These narratives were familiar to the first-time Qur'ānic listeners, but many centuries later, in the time of al-Biqā'ī, this very same knowledge was no longer conveyed in detail. The religions of Judaism and Christianity and their books had to be reconsidered, at least for al-Biqā'ī.

In the interpretation of the Qur'ān, attention is currently very much focused on new hermeneutical approaches and this line of research is also pursued here and differentiated according to hermeneutic categories. To this end, the function of the biblical quotations is embedded in three hermeneutical dimensions. The textual hermeneutics enquires into the interactions of the individual groups of quotations in the commentary of al-Biqā'ī at nearly thirty qur'anic verses and into the character of the entirety of the quoted passages. So, the synopsis of all quotations results in a text that transforms the four Gospels of the New Testament into a compact version – an Islamic diatessaron – that is compatible with Muslim dogma. The factual hermeneutics attempts to derive from this corpus individual predetermined theological guiding questions, which make plausible the distinction found between deliberate non-quotation on the one hand and the selected quotations in the Qur'anic commentary on the other. Ultimately, the reader-hermeneutic dimension of the project is concerned with the question of how a historically unusual

crossing of boundaries – the use of the Bible for the exegesis of the Qur'ān – can fertilise the view of today's forms of positive dissolution of boundaries and turning away from religious isolation or distancing.

In May a conference entitled 'The Religious Other in Quranic Tafsīr' was held at the IDEO in Cairo, at which research on al-Biqā'ī also had its place. Under the title 'The known and the Unknown in dealing with the bible', the positioning of the commentary with regard to the parable of the labourers in the vineyard was the central topic. In addition to the composition of the quotations, the focus here was always on the omissions. Sometimes they are not relevant to the context, but sometimes they can contain Christian ideas that the commentator does not want to convey. There is also far more hermeneutic potential for research in the direction of what is not said.



THOMAS WÜRTZ joined the Orient-Institut in May 2021 as deputy director. He became the institute's interim director between October 2022 and June 2023. After studying Islamic Studies, Politics and Philosophy in Bamberg and Cairo, he wrote his doctoral thesis on the history of Islamic theology at the University of Zurich. The thesis is published under the title 'Islamic Theology in the 14th Century. Doctrine of Resurrection, Theory of Action and Conceptions of Creation in the Work of Sa'd ad-Din at-Taftāzānī'. He was then a research assistant at the universities of Bern and Aarhus. In the process, he completed several research trips in Egypt and Pakistan. In 2015, he taught as a guest lecturer at the Freie Universität Berlin. For several years, he worked as an academic advisor at the Catholic Academy in Berlin in the fields of Islam and the Middle East as well as Christian-Muslim dialogue. His research interests lie primarily in the areas of the Qur'an and Qur'anic exegesis as well as Qur'anic translations and the history of theology, and in the Muslim view of the Crusades.

#### PUBLICATIONS

'Metaphorische Denkbewegungen zwischen Zitadelle und Märkten. Gedanken von Nassif Nassar übertragen auf geschichtsträchtige Orte in Kairo'. In 'Wissenskulturen Muslimischer Gesellschaften. Philologische und islamwissenschaftliche Zugänge. Festschrift für Anke von Kügelgen'. Berlin 2023, pp. 153–174.

#### PRESENTATIONS

'Memorised Future', MECAM Travelling Academy on 'Solidarities in/ between the Middle East & North Africa', Beirut // 19–24 FEBRUARY.  
'The Orient Institute in Beirut: German Legacies and International Research Trajectories', at the international conference 'Transnational Research in a Multipolar World', panel of 'Research Positions in the Triangle Middle East – Japan – Germany', DIJ Tokyo // 8–9 MAY.

# Archiving Absence and Loss //

## 'Āmilī Manuscripts in Libraries Worldwide

FATIMA AL-BAZZAL

FELLOW

My research tackles an under-represented and highly dispersed manuscript archive. According to a popular narrative distributed among the people of Ḍabal 'Āmil Region, today's Southern Lebanon, Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, the Ottoman governor of Acre confiscated all the 'Āmilī manuscripts and ordered them to be burned in the incinerators of Acre, which remained ignited for days.

While this incident cannot be proven, the widely known narrative suggests the neglected intellectual history of South Lebanon, once renowned for its schools and madrasas founded by prominent 'Āmilī scholars between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. This literary heritage was documented within several bio-bibliographical encyclopedias, including 'Amal' al-āmil by al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī and 'A'yān al-Shī'ah' by Muhsin al-Amīn. However, despite the availability of documentary sources, a significant loss was observed when searching for Amili manuscripts within Lebanese finding aids, whereas research conducted within finding aids for manuscript collections preserved in Europe and the United States revealed various relevant results.

This study is foundational as it attempts, for the first time, to reconstruct an absent and dispersed manuscript archive and restructure the documentary heritage of an intellectually productive region. Through the analysis of manuscript notes, the research seeks to establish relationships between texts, agents, and places relevant to the 'Āmilī intellectual memory, shedding light on transmission paths from production to preservation. During my stay at the OIB, the primary aim was to define the scope and focus of my research, considering the vast and diverse field of study. The distinction between two main branches of the 'Āmilī intellectual archive, total and provisional, helped to shape and structure this focused approach, extensively utilising the rich primary finding aids available at the OIB library. While the total archive covers the region's intellectual production in both its homeland and diasporas, the provisional archive suggests a more focused approach on single collections preserved together in one institution. Exploring the endowment of Asad Allāh al-al-Khātūnī al-'Āmilī to the library of Astan Quds, Mashhad in 1067 AH provides a rich historical context that I began delving into. Furthermore, raising attention to local literary genres, particularly the safina used by the Ḍabal 'Āmil people to write poems commemorating Imam Hussein, adds a cultural and historical layer to this research. Exploring these local expressions of grief and commemoration can provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural aspects of the region under study.



**FATIMA AL-BAZZAL** is a trained librarian and researcher with over a decade of experience in the field. Following the completion of her undergraduate studies, she joined the Lebanese National Library Rehabilitation Project as a cataloguing librarian. In this role, she gained exposure to fundamental concepts and practices of librarianship. Concurrently, she earned a Master of Arts degree in information sciences from the Lebanese University. During her tenure with the Lebanese National Library Rehabilitation Project, Fatima actively participated in various projects aimed at describing the library's collection and managing its preservation and accessibility. She further expanded her expertise by working for different Lebanese cultural institutions in various capacities related to librarianship and archiving. Notable contributions include her work with the Shamaa Arab Educational Database, The Fire Horse Archive, Knowledge Workshop – The Feminist Library, and March Lebanon-Virtual Museum of Censorship Project. Fatima's PhD research project focuses on an under-represented intellectual archive of 'Amil Mountains Region in Southern Lebanon. Her aim is to virtually reconstruct this archive against its political, social and intellectual modes of emergence using manuscripts notes as primary documentary sources. Recently, Fatima has joined the Bibliotheca Arabica project, established through a joint supervision agreement between the Saxon Academy of Humanities and Sciences, Bibliotheca Arabica Research Project, Leipzig and the Lebanese University, Doctoral School of Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences, Beirut.



Muhadarat al-Kaf'amī,  
aw, Hadīqat al-Nufūs wa  
Hijlat al-'Arūs.  
Süleymaniye Library,  
Reisulkuttab Collection,  
no. 897. Digitised image  
of the original.

# A Philological and Philosophical Study of al-Sirr al-Maktūm // Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Infamous Work on the Occult

MUHAMMAD FARIDUDDIN ATTAR  
FELLOW

During my residency at the Orient-Institut Beirut I worked on the interaction between natural philosophy, theology, and the occult sciences in Islamicate thought. The central figure of my research is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH/1210 CE), a major authority in Islamic philosophy and theology and a stalwart defender of the Ash'arite school. In his youth, he wrote a major work dealing with the occult sciences of astrology, talisman construction, and the invocation of astral spirits, entitled 'al-Sirr al-maktūm fī asrār al-nujūm' ('The Concealed Secret of the Secrets of the Stars'). This work became controversial due to its doctrines and practices seemingly at odds with established scientific paradigms, notably the Arabic, Peripatetic tradition, and opposing religious creeds, revealing a universe filled with the celestial spirits that appear diety-like, represented by talismans often taking the form of statues ('aṣnām').

My project consisted of two avenues of research. The first was to establish the authorship and reception history of 'al-Sirr al-maktūm'. To do this, I had to ascertain the number of extant witnesses, their locations, and accessibility for examination. I then studied these manuscripts to determine authorship, copy date, location of production, and any historical data disclosing transmission history. Collaborating with another researcher at the OIB, Rosy Azar, we found at least 65 manuscript extant witnesses of the 'Sirr', acquiring digitised manuscripts of 25 of them. Through the OIB, I travelled to Cairo to research at Dār al-Kutub al-Qawmiyya al-Miṣriyya and al-Ma'had al-Makhtūtāt al-'Arabiyya. I was assisted by the Cairo office staff, who provided workspace and navigation advice. Describing manuscripts, transcribing key witnesses, and producing a outlining an integrated text is ongoing. The research results will be presented in an upcoming symposium on the thought and influence of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī organised by Prof Michael Rapoport at Florida Atlantic University (26–28 April 2024).

The second avenue of research was to examine the philosophical and theological content of the 'Sirr'. Previous research on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī tended to overlook this text. Occult lore on magic and astrology might not seem promising for philosophical thought, but the Sirr became influential Islamicate occultism because Rāzī approached these subjects philosophically and systematically, more so than any other previous author. I am currently working on an article analysing Rāzī's philosophical

approach in writing the 'Sirr', entitled 'Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Cosmological Theories' in 'al-Sirr al-maktūm: Celestial Archetypes and the Nature of the Human Soul', to be presented at the aforementioned symposium. During my residency at the OIB, I wrote and submitted a paper for publication exploring the interaction between philosophy and the occult sciences – particularly psychology, medicine, and physiognomy ('ilm al-firāsa), titled 'Human Types, Character, and Psychosomatic States in the Arabic Medical and Philosophical Tradition: From Galen to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī'. I presented a summary of this paper at the 11th International Colloquium of the S.I.H.S.P.A.I. (Société Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences et de la Philosophie Arabes et Islamiques), held 6–8 September, Munich.



**MUHAMMAD FARIDUDDIN ATTAR** is a postdoctoral fellow at the OIB. He earned his PhD in Islamic Studies from McGill University.

His dissertation focuses on the cosmological theories of Ibn Sīnā (d. ca. 428/1037) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH/1210 CE), both representing the philosophical tradition of the Islamic East (al-mashriq), encompassing northern Iran, Khurasan, and Transoxiana. Within the framework of intellectual history, he explores speculative theories concerning celestial entities' nature and their impact on the sublunar world's changes. Currently, he is researching Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's infamous work on astrology, talismans, and the invocation of celestial spirits, titled 'al-Sirr al-maktūm fī asrār al-nujūm' ('The Concealed Secret of the Secrets of the Stars'). He recently co-authored 'A Comprehensive, Annotated, and Indexed Bibliography of the Modern Scholarship on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (544/1150–606/1210)' (Brill, 2023) with Dr Damien Janos. Additionally, he served as assistant editor for the 'The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam' (2018).

He is co-organiser of a workshop on Islamic philosophy supported by the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU). The workshop 'Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions' will take place in Munich from Nov 15 to 18, 2024. It marks the first-ever scientific gathering dedicated specifically to the 'post-classical' philosophical tradition, which is still in its early stages of scholarly exploration. The workshop aims to assess recent developments in research and propose new perspectives on the broad and ambiguous designation of the period as a 'post-classical' tradition.



MS Petermann I.207 (Berlin), f.44r.  
A representation of Saturn based on Fakhr al-Din's description in al-Sirr al-maktūm, which reads: '[Saturn] is an old man. In his right hand is the head of a human being, and in his left hand is the palm of a human being. He rides a wolf, and he moves the dead with his staff'. The witness is dated 1000 AH.

# **Qur'ān as Ta'līf //**

## An Unorthodox Meaning for a Key Term

MARIAM SAEED EL ALI  
FELLOW

This undertaking commenced within the expansive intellectual realm of memory in classical Islamic tradition. My primary objective was to scrutinise the explicit reflections on memory and its manifestations in diverse early compilations, investigating how these expressions shaped the Islamic Scriptural, historical, literal, and architectural legacies. The genesis of this exploration was rooted in the Qur'ān and its affiliated sources directly linked to its lexica. It initiated with a fundamental inquiry: 'How is the Qur'ān remembered in history?!'. To unravel this, I immersed myself in an examination of the reports pertaining to the compilation of the Qur'ān. My focus was on 'Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif' by Ibn Abī Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 316/929), a seminal work in classical Islamic scholarship on the history of the text. The inaugural accounts of 'Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif' spotlighted the first generation of Qur'ān readers (*qurra'*), distinguished not only by their mastery in reciting the text but also by their exceptional memorisation prowess. This prompted a meticulous inquiry into how Qur'ānic knowledge was disseminated, established, and perpetuated both individually and collectively in the nascent Islamic milieu. However, unraveling the identity of these esteemed *qurra'* as a cohesive group proved to be more intricate than anticipated. The orthodox link between the Qur'ān and recitation prompted a broader investigation into the elusive definition of the term Qur'ān itself. According to the standard view of scholarship, the term *qur'ān* is not just an exclusively Arabic development from an infinitive of the same meaning but is, rather, a borrowing from the Syriac noun *qeryānā*, with the double meaning of 'recitation' and 'lectionary', and which simultaneously assimilated to the pattern *fu'lān*.

This project aspires to illuminate an unconventional interpretation of the term, positing that *qur'ān* denotes 'compiling' ( 'jam', *ta'līf* ). Classical Islamic sources attribute this minority view to Qatāda b. Di'āma (d. 117/735), a renowned successor, and Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthanna (d. 209/824), a celebrated philologist. To underscore this unique sense of the term, I will primarily scrutinise 'Majāz al-Qur'ān' by Abū 'Ubayda, edited by Fuat Sezgin (two volumes, Cairo edition, 1954–1988), a work that faced criticism as early as the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. Philologists during that era harbored reservations about Qur'ānic interpretation by their peers, firmly believing that such interpretation fell within the domain of the *fuqahā'*. Through meticulous micro-philological assessment and semantic comparative examination of the Qur'ānic occurrences of the word '*qur'ān*' alongside related expressions, this project aims to build

upon Abū 'Ubayda's independent perspectives. The proposed analysis anticipates reviewing classical and modern perceptions concerning intertwined notions surrounding the denotation of this pivotal term, including the divine nature of the Qur'ān, the Prophet's illiteracy, the phenomenon of 'wahy', and the aural/written transmission in early Islam. Ultimately, this project aspires to demonstrate that Abū 'Ubayda's views, though contentious to many, both in the past and present, merit scholarly consideration.



**MARIAM SAEED EL ALI** Before joining OIB as a postdoctoral fellow (September 2022–2023), she received the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, Center for the Arts and Humanities at the American University of Beirut (2020–2021). She holds a doctorate in Arabic language and literature from the same university (2017). She published her first book for OIB in Beiruter Texte und Studien series (volume 139) under 'Akhabar Khadija Bt. Khuwaylid in the Islamic Sources: Frames of Narration, Memory, and History' (December, 2020). Mariam has taught Arabic and History at AUB and USJ. Her Arabic translation of Maurice Pomerantz's 'Licit Magic: The Life and Letters of al-Šāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995)' (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018) appeared for Dār al-Mashriq in Beirut under 'Al-Sihr al-ḥalāl: Al-Šāhib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995) wa-rasā'iluhu' (2022).

#### PUBLICATIONS

**'On Zionism or The Zionist Question by Muḥammad Rūḥī al-Khālidī (1864–1913): Exploring the Context of a Pioneering Work'.** In *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* (Osmanlı Araştırmaları). (FORTHCOMING).

**'The Sea Sight of Istanbul: A Description from Rūḥī Al- Khālidī's (1864–1913) Notebook'.** In *Keshif: E-Journal for Ottoman-Turkish Micro Editions* 1/2, pp. 32–39, summer 2023.

#### CONFERENCES

**'Heroisation and Demonisation Discourses in Protest Movements in the Middle East'**, internal colloquium by Elena Fellner (OIB doctoral fellow from Freiburg University, Germany), moderated by Mariam El Ali, OIB // 16 MARCH.

**'Khadīja fī al-kitāba al-tārīkhiyya al-islāmiyya al-mubkira: sardiyya kubrā muttaṣila am sardiyyāt ṣughrā munfaṣila?'**, [IN ARABIC] lecture by Mariam El Ali, İlahiyat Fakültesi, İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi, Türkiye // 22 JUNE.



Qur'ān (Landberg 822,  
194v, line 1  
featuring Q.75:17.).

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# How Dukhan Made Doha // Urban History, Labour, and the Political Economy of Post-Protectorate Qatar

JAVIER GUIRADO ALONSO  
FELLOW

'How Dukhan Made Doha' is a social history of the events that examines the events leading to Qatar's independence and its aftermath, alongside a spatial history of the country during the Long Sixties. It argues that Qatar's current state is primarily shaped by the social context of the 1950s and 1960s, during the twilight of the British protectorate, further solidified in the 1970s.

The relationship between Dukhan, a coastal town where oil was first discovered in Qatar, and Doha, the capital, symbolises the various ways in which the country's social fabric and political economy evolved during this period. Urban features analysed include the 1950s oil camps, the political feuds and protests in the 1960s, and Doha's 1970 master plan. While many Gulf studies focus on the ruler and government's role in these transformations, this project explores the activism and socio-political engagement of Qataris themselves. Rapid changes in the built environment and documents produced by Qatari society, media and government serve as both sources and objects of study.

During my stay in Beirut in 2023, I gathered crucial sources from collections at AUB (such as the Qatar Petroleum collection), OIB (including works of Riad Rayyes, a Syrian-Lebanese journalist reporting on the political changes in the Gulf in the late 1960s), and other bookshops and private collections like Abboudi Abou Jaude's (memoirs of Qataris or individuals who worked in Qatar, published in Beirut, like Ali Khalifa Al Kuwari or Lotfi Sumi).



JAVIER GUIRADO ALONSO is a PhD candidate at Georgia State University, holding an MA in Contemporary Arab and Islamic Studies from the Autonomous University of Madrid. He is a fellow at Project SEPAD (Lancaster University) and has previously served as a guest researcher at the Nederlands-Vlaams Instituut in Cairo.

His research focuses on the evolving relations between society, the built environment, and narratives of modernity in the Gulf. Specifically, his dissertation explores the social, political, and urban dynamics in Qatar during the Global Sixties. Javier has also written about Oman and the transformation of Greater Muscat during the reign of Sultan Qaboos.

# Arrive – Acquire – Apply? // Middle Eastern Students of Social Sciences in the GDR

STELLA KNEIFEL  
FELLOW

After World War II, relations between the Eastern Bloc and the Global South began to develop in a variety of ways. In addition to economic, cultural and political relations, agreements on the education of students from the Third World in the socialist states played an important role. Researchers have only recently begun to investigate the history of students from the Global South in the GDR. The main focus has been on students from Africa and Latin America. Students from the Middle East have been studied only marginally. Analyses of their experiences during their stay in the GDR, the content of their studies, their careers, or their lives after graduation are almost completely lacking. The dissertation therefore examines the history of Middle Eastern students in the GDR. It specialises in students of the social sciences. The social and political paradigms of the time can be read from the examination of social science subjects. Three main research questions are central of the study of these students:

(1) Who were the Middle Eastern students and why did they come to the GDR?  
(2) What did they learn and study in the social sciences? How did they use the knowledge they learned for their theses? and (3) What did they do with their knowledge and the relationships they were able to build during their studies after graduation?

The previous years were used mainly for archival work and interviews with contemporary witnesses. In 2023, the focus was on writing. The internal colloquium in May 2023 and the discussions that took place there contributed significantly to refining the theoretical and practical design of the dissertation. I would like to express my sincere thanks for the numerous references and information provided by colleagues at the OIB.



STELLA KNEIFEL holds degrees in Sociology and Education from the University of Jena (BA) and in Middle Eastern Sociology and History from the University of Erfurt (MA). She joined the University of Erfurt as a PhD student in history in 2018. She was research associate at the OIB from March 2019 to February 2022 for the research project 'Relations in the Ideoscape: Middle Eastern students in the Eastern bloc: 1950s to 1991'. She is a lecturer at the University of Erfurt (Winter Semester 2021: Seminar 'Arab Socialism'; Summer Semester 2023: Seminar 'Arab Students on the Move').

# Arab Students of Journalism in the Soviet Union, 1960s–1980s

EKATERINA VASILEVA  
FELLOW

In my PhD project I am exploring and describing the history of the progressive approach to international media and communication relations, focusing on the theoretical contribution of Arab students and Soviet scholars in the field of Arab-Soviet educational, cultural and intellectual exchange. During the late period of Soviet socialism, Arab scholars came to the USSR in search of concepts that differed from the dominant Western media theory of the free flow of information. This was later reworked into a concept of 'synthesis of cultures' and 'universal civilisation'. Scholars from the so-called developing countries aimed to conceptualise an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial theoretical framework for the international and national media spheres, seeking relevant ideas in Soviet media scholarship to provide an alternative to Western epistemologies.

This year, following the kind and helpful feedback I received at the internal colloquium at the Orient-Institut Beirut, I was able to finish developing the general argument for my dissertation, as well as separate arguments for the four chapters. The main dialectic unfolds between different understandings of the purpose of journalistic work: the dominant concept of objectivity in Western journalism and the press as a weapon of anticolonial struggle in the works of Arab scholars. My thesis therefore describes the development from orthodox Marxist-Leninist approach to the public sphere and journalism as a profession towards a more postcolonial understanding introduced by Arab students. I focused on three main case studies: three generations of Iraqi students of print journalism, a Syrian student of Soviet sociology, and a French student of Soviet documentary studies. The introduction of a postcolonial outlook helped Soviet academia adjust to the changes in the global context while simultaneously subverting the canonical structure of socialist scholarship in the USSR.



**EKATERINA VASILEVA** was a recipient of Doctoral Fellowship at the OIB from September 2022 to May 2023 and served as a research associate at the OIB from 2019 to 2021. She received her double Master's degree from University of Erfurt, Germany, and University of Saint Joseph, Lebanon, in the history and sociology of Arab world in 2018. Her expertise includes Arab history, Soviet history, history of ideas. She is interested in ideas and imagery used in the intellectual exchange between Arab countries and the USSR aiming to demonstrate how these exchanges differed from similar exchanges in the West, occurring in what was perceived as the 'periphery' of the world. She is currently working on her PhD project titled 'Arab Students of Journalism in the Soviet Union, 1960s–1980s'.

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

**'Studying Publitsistika: Soviet Media Theory Through the Arab Lens (1968–1993)'**, internal colloquium, coordination by Fatih Ermış (OIB), moderation by Fatima Albazzal, OIB, Beirut // 27 APRIL.

**'Between Arab socialism and Iraqi exceptionalism: Iraqi Students of Journalism in Soviet Academia'**, panel of 'Relations in the Ideoscape: Middle Easterners in the Eastern Bloc'.

**'Horria Saïhi: Algerian TV Documentary through the Soviet Academic Lens'**, panel of 'Arab/Soviet Relations: In Search of Reality', coordination by Prof Elizabeth Bishop (University of Texas) and Prof Birgit Schäbler (University of Erfurt), 29th International Congress of DAVO, Vienna // 21–23 SEPTEMBER.

# *Social Sciences*

Drawing on a variety of approaches (quantitative and qualitative), using different ways of collecting material (oral history, discourse analysis, digital humanities, participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, etc.), the social sciences cluster engages with the social as a contested field of relations.

Conceiving social sciences as a reconstructive approach, we try to understand the epistemologies of those participating in these relations, their specific practices, representations, and the structures they are embedded in.

We explore, among others, the social mobilisations underlying them, societal co-operation, conflicts, hermeneutics, but also transnational dimensions, that allow us to engage with comparative approaches and theoretical conceptualisations.

Our interdisciplinary background includes among others: Middle-East studies, political science, sociology, economy, political sociology, social and cultural anthropology, social and economic history, oral history, cultural studies, gender studies, critical race studies, psychoanalysis, urban studies, geography.

By studying the Middle East and engaging with Middle Eastern communities, we aim to practice social science in a non-asymmetric manner, reinforcing ties with the local research community. This includes critical scholarly self-reflection.

# Living in Liminality

SARAH EL BULBEISI  
RESEARCHER

Based on narrative-biographical interviews, conversations and psychoanalytically informed anthropology/ethno-psychanalytic approaches, I explore issues of violence and trauma, relationships and subjectivities, and their interdependencies in the context of contemporary Lebanon. My research project particularly revolves around the nexus between intimacy and violence. It examines this in the context of different types of relationships, among them family/intergenerational relationships, romantic relationships, and relationships to the confessional group. Unbearable suffering causes various forms of psychological wounds which affect the entire network of relationships within which the individual lives. Trauma threatens the psychological structure that regulates the relationship between the Own and the Other. The war and displacement experiences of the Lebanese (post) civil war generations have left visible traces. Mistrust, alienation and uncertainty still characterise people's attitudes to life. The 15-year Lebanese civil war was, among other things, a legacy of European colonial policy. Both, war and post war generation, share a sense of alienation from home and face the challenge of making sense of an unresolved past. In addition, the post-war generation seems denied both the present and the future in Lebanon. Life only begins, so to speak, with emigration. For many of them, the October 2019 protests were their first opportunity to feel a sense of belonging to their country. The civil war past and its legacy in public discourse and in families were suddenly discussed more intensively. The denominational 'other' was replaced by the state as the new 'other', which opened up the possibility of recognising and evaluating social differences from scratch. This new narrative was reinforced by the August 2020 port explosion. Precisely because violence plays such a key role in past and present, it makes sense to bring the concept of trauma out of the clinical into the historical and socio-political realm. Based on psychoanalytical theories and methods and conversations about the desires, fears, conflicts and self-interpretations of Lebanese urban middle and working class interlocutors, I aim to contribute to understanding how systemic and subjective violence influences relationships within the family and how this, in turn, shapes libidinal economies as well as (gendered) subjectivities; and this in particular with regard to the question along which axes ruptures and perpetuations of traditional gender roles run; why gender norms persist although they are visibly undermined by the realities of life; how they are handed down within the family and reproduced within gender relations

and in which contexts their subversion takes place. It will also ask how gender identities relate to other forms of collective identity, such as confessional identities, and how they serve each other. Furthermore, it will be considered to what extent forms of structural experience of violence influence relationships and self-interpretations. How do they shape approaches to the perception to the 'other' and the self, to emotional and physical intimacy, but also to agency and self-actualisation in the world?



**SARAH EL BULBEISI** joined the OIB in November 2019 after completing her PhD at the Institute for Near and Middle East Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich (LMU Munich), Germany. Before joining the OIB, she lead the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) project 'Violence, Forced Migration and Exile: Trauma in the Arab World and in Germany'. This was a Higher Education Dialogue between seven Palestinian and Lebanese universities as well as with the LMU Munich, a project she had initiated and purchased the third party funding for. Prior to that, she worked several years as a lecturer and research associate at the Institute for Near and Middle East Studies at the LMU Munich. Her PhD thesis was published at transcript in 2020: 'Taboo, Trauma and Identity: Subject Constructions of Palestinians in Germany and Switzerland, 1960 to 2015' is an oral history of first and second generation Palestinians in Germany and Switzerland and explores the repercussions of the stifling of Palestinian history and identity on Palestinian lives, selves and intergenerational relationships. Sarah El Bulbeisi's postdoc research at the OIB revolves around the interrelations between systemic violence and family & intimate relations in contemporary Lebanon.

#### **PUBLICATIONS**

**'Über den Schmerz des Verschweigens: Palästinenser:innen in Deutschland und in der Schweiz'.** In *Geschichte der Gegenwart*, 2023.  
<https://geschichtedergegenwart.ch/ueber-den-schmerz-des-verschweigens-palaestinenserinnen-in-deutschland-und-in-der-schweiz/>

#### **PRESENTATIONS**

**'Violence, Forced Migration and Exile: Trauma in Germany and the Arab World'**, MECAM (Merian Centre for Advanced Studies in the Maghreb) Traveling Academy // 20–22 FEBRUARY.

**'The Globalisation of Palestine Reconsidered: Solidarity Movements and Entangled Revolutions of the 1970s'**, moderation and discussion of the public research seminar, OIB, Beirut // 23 MARCH.

**'Nakba und tabuisierte Erinnerung'**, book talk at Bookstore Labyrinth, in cooperation with the editorial office of the magazine *Widerspruch*, Basel // 28 MARCH.

**'Psychoanalysis and Anthropology'**, international symposium 'Anthropology in Arab Countries' // 25–29 APRIL.

**'On Taboos and Traumatic Experiences in Democratic Societies: Palestinians in Germany and Switzerland'**, as part of the lecture series 'The Historicity of Democracy' of the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient // 8 MAY.

**'Palästinensisches Trauma und Identität'**, book talk at the conference of Deutsch-Palästinensischen Gesellschaft (DPG), Höxter // 9–11 JUNE.  
**'Palestinians in Central Europe: De-subjectification and Revolutionary Subjectivation in the Context of Colonial/Racializing Violence'**, BICAR (Beirut Institute for Critical Analysis and Research) Summer School 2023: 'Is There a Revolutionary Subject?', AUB, Beirut // 26 JUNE.

**'Trauma and Taboo, Palestinians and the Politics of Remembrance in Post-Holocaust States'**, guest lecture at Art x Science School for Transformation, Universität für angewandte Kunst, Wien // 24 NOVEMBER.

**'Trauma und Tabu: Auswirkungen der Tabuisierung palästinensischer Gewalterfahrung'**, at Deutsche Islam Akademie, Berlin // 23 DECEMBER.

#### **MODERATIONS / ORGANISATIONS**

**'The Question of Palestine in German'**, public research seminar by Dirk Moses (City College of New York), OIB, Beirut // 3 JULY.

**'Is there a Revolutionary Subject'**, co-organisation of the BICAR Summer School 2023, OIB, Beirut // 19–30 JUNE.

#### **MEDIA / INTERVIEWS**

**'Staatenlos in Deutschland – Weder angenommen noch abgeschoben?'**, Fussnoten // 27 FEBRUARY.

**'Palästinensische und israelische Diaspora: 'Die Stimmung ist auch in der Schweiz gefährlich aufgeheizt'**', Tages Anzeiger // 14 OCTOBER

**'German Guilt or Structural Racism towards Palestinians?'**, Afikra // 27 OCTOBER.

**'Nahost – Gewalt ohne Perspektive'**, Club – discussion programme (SRF TV) // 31 OCTOBER.

**'Schweiz-Palästinenserin und Zürcher Jude im Gespräch'**, SRF News video contribution // 8 NOVEMBER.

**'Krieg in Nahost: Meistens antwortet niemand'**, WOZ // 16 NOVEMBER.

**'Lost in Nahost – der Podcast zum Krieg in Israel und Gaza: Was heisst es, Palästinenserin oder Palästinenser zu sein?'**, ARD // 17 NOVEMBER.

**'Sarah El Bulbeisi on Institutionalized Discursive Violence'**, MISBAR // 25 NOVEMBER.

**'Palästinenser:innen in Deutschland: Wir haben es mit Tabus zu tun'**, TAZ // 27 NOVEMBER.

#### **PODIUM DISCUSSIONS**

**'Perspektiven auf den Krieg'**, Schauspielhaus Zürich // 15 DECEMBER.

**'Talking on Unsteady Ground: Israel & Palestine'**, Second PEN Berlin Congress: 'With Our Head Through the Walls', Berlin // 16 DECEMBER.

# Future Spaces //

## Concepts of Political Order in Iraq since 2003

CHRISTIAN THUSELT  
RESEARCHER

The research project aims to bring together two research paradigms that have hardly been connected so far: the study of spatially bound identity patterns in political geography and a political science perspective on the constitution of political orders. Using an interpretative-constructivist approach on statehood, borrowing from political philosophy and philosophical anthropology, it is argued that three dimensions of political-territorial orders can be analytically distinguished: (1) sociocultural differentiations separate an 'us' from the 'others' (identity) and (2) in many cases naturalise this differentiation with, among other things, the delimitation of spaces through a location of supposedly pre-existent spaces based on these practices. Finally, they connect these two dimensions with the conception of a 'polity' (3), understood as the formal constitution of societies.

By focusing on 'polity', we avoid limiting research to formal statehood without losing sight of the importance of polity. Empirically, we focus on the designs of 'future spaces' that have been produced and disseminated by key actors in the region since 2003. The aim of this project is to gain, against the background of the destabilisation or 'dislocation' of nation-state orders in Iraq, a comparative and systematic overview of the orders that have been designed by central actors in the region since 2003. On this basis, we contribute to the debate on possible post-war orders in the region.

Since the question now obviously arises in the Middle East whether, analogous to sub-Saharan Africa, a 'post-Westphalian' order beyond legalistic statehood could also be a relevant vision of the future in the Middle East, the selection of cases must be oriented to the positioning of relevant actors in relation to the existing statehood of the region, i.e. Iraq as an internationally recognised subject of international law.

First and foremost, we will focus on the communication of political orders, which is to be understood as a hegemonic practice and aims at hegemony in the sense of an unquestioned validity of order.

The first group includes those actors who exercise governmental power in Iraq, or who at least refer most outspoken to it. They thus strive for a re-establishment of a centralised polity. We will here analyse Muqtada a-Sadr's discourse. In a second group, we survey actors who strive for a new polity based on an ethnic 'us'-identity, here: the Iraqi KDP.

A third group consists of those actors who initially define their identity in a way, often dubbed 'sectarianisation', which seem to be oriented primarily against the discursive hegemony of just another actor. In their apparent retreat into the lifeworld of the 'microstructure', they seem at first glance like prototypes of a 'denationalisation' of the Middle East, although that seems to be rather doubtful.

In 2022 and 2023, we analysed Muqtada al-Sadr's discourse, which is certainly the most influential in Iraq at the moment with regard to the defence of established statehood. We have succeeded in localising core elements of the untouchable resources of the order al-Sadr seeks to establish. Of particular relevance here were the questions of embedding the underlying normativity into regional narrative patterns, especially the significance of the region as a normative point of reference, but also the central question of the connection between secularity and modern statehood, and Sadr's populist political style. His case offers an interesting input into research on populism which largely focusses on Western cases: obviously, it makes more sense to understand populism as a style than as a 'thin ideology.' Like all populisms, also this one walks a thin line between democratic self-articulation of at least part of society and anti-democratic practices of excluding other Iraqis from the rhetorical constitution of 'the people' as a homogeneous body politic. Yet, his discourse on 'the people' and the nation-state allows him to increase his own factual power while at the same time shifting partially at least the conditions under which authority is recognised. Sadr oscillates here between different logics: the political with the state and its system with its very own logic, and the religious. These findings necessitate further exploration of the question of secularity and statehood. It is becoming apparent that a purely Asadian inspired understanding of secularity as a discursive practice will not suffice to cope with the underlying systemic logics.



**CHRISTIAN THUSELT** joined the OIB in October 2021 as a research associate and is responsible for the in-house production of the 'Beiruter Texte und Studien' (BTS). He holds an MA from Tübingen University and received his PhD in Social Sciences from Roskilde University with a study on Lebanese political parties as expressions of a global modernity. His research interests have focused on modernity as a global asymmetric reference and, in relation to that, political self-locations as part of legitimating strategies. From 2009 till 2021 he worked at Erlangen University, most recently as an assistant professor at the Institute of Political Science. His research at the OIB focusses on Iraqi statehood as part of a discourse on legitimacy.

## PUBLICATIONS

**Libanon: Politökonomische Kurzanalyse (PÖK) für das Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Entwicklung und Entwicklung (BMZ), 2023.**

## CONFERENCES

**'Charles Malik and the early reception of Martin Heidegger in the Near East'**, organisation together with Prof Nader El-Bizri, Prof Edward Alam, and Dr Tony Nasrallah from the Notre Dame University Louaize (NDU), Beirut and Louaize // 12–13 JUNE.

The early reception of the thought of Martin Heidegger went beyond the European, North-American, and Australian contexts into cultures and geographical locations that can be referred to as being 'non-Western' whether in Asia, Latin America, and North Africa. The aim of the symposium was to consider the reception of Heidegger's thought in the Near East, and the Levant and Lebanon in particular, while situating this within the broader realm of the engagements with the Heideggerian legacy in the Middle East, the Arab World, and the Islamicate societal milieu. A special emphasis is placed in this regard on the relationship of Charles Malik with Heidegger, while setting this encounter in its academic context in addition to the wider Lebanese, Levantine, and Arab cultural landscapes, with a consideration as well of the impact of Christian theology on Malik's thinking. The theme of the symposium reflected a growing interest in this line of research in philosophy, and it attracted experts on the oeuvres of Heidegger and Malik. This event also coincided with launching the volume on Malik and Heidegger by the OIB in its BTS series in association with NDU under the title: Charles Malik, *On Being and Time: The Division on Heidegger from the 1937 Harvard Thesis*, ed. Nader El-Bizri, with a Foreword by Fred Dallmayr and an Epilogue by Laurence Paul Hemming, BTS 143 (Würzburg: Ergon-Verlag, 2022). The volume was language-edited by Christine O'Neill (English) and Christian Thuselt (German & scientific supervision).



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# Avocado in Lebanon // What can the Involvement of Development in the Value Chain say about Forms of Global Dependencies?

LAYLA BARTHELDI  
FELLOW

Currently, I am halfway through my fieldwork, which focuses on the role of development projects in the Lebanese agricultural sector, specifically avocado production. I have been conducting interviews with farmers and NGO workers, as well as initiating participant observation, which will continue over the next few months in one of the chosen farms. I have been observing various actors involved in the value chain, asking about their motivations and the factors that determine the space in which they negotiate their conditions. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how NGO workers perceive their role and the attitudes they adopt toward the values promoted by development work. Additionally, I explore how farmers articulate their expectations for the projects and how these expectations shape their relationships with entities such as the state, private sector, or the regions where most development agencies operate. Working on the project in the country has given me numerous opportunities to reconsider many of my previous assumptions and establish new connections in this complicated and complex field – a process that has been both painful and valuable.



**LAYLA BARTHELDI** is a PhD anthropology student from Prague. She has previously focused mainly on the anthropology of religion and various forms of otherness. She is currently interested in the economic forms of neo-colonialism and the role of the development sector in maintaining global hegemony.

# Obligation and Relationality in the Wake of Critical Events in Lebanon

JOWEL CHOUFANI  
FELLOW

My ethnographic research explores how people's sense of obligation to others is formed and enacted in Lebanon amidst chronic state abandonment. Through participant observation and qualitative interviews, I examine assistance and documentation responses across three sites. First, I work with Beirut-based journalists who documented the names of noncitizen victims of the 2020 Beirut port explosion left off the official state list of victims. Second, I study staff and customers' responses to the begging encounter in affluent cafes in Beirut. Third, I investigate a community kitchen NGO that distributes daily hot meals to Lebanese residents in select Beirut neighborhoods. By analysing the three sites alongside one another, my research investigates the factors that influence whom people feel obligated towards, how people put this feeling into practice, as well as their potentialities and limits.



JOWEL CHOUFANI is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the George Washington University. She has an MS in Public Health Nutrition from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and an MPhil in Anthropology from George Washington University. Her dissertation examines how people's sense of obligation to others in Lebanon comes to be defined, experienced, and materialised within a context of organised state abandonment and experiences of multiple violent critical events. Her research has been supported by the American Ethnological Society, the GWU Institute for Middle East Studies, the Lewis N. Cotlow Foundation at GWU, the US National Science Foundation, and the OIB.

## PRESENTATIONS

**'Obligation and Relationality in the Wake of Critical Events in Lebanon'**, guest lecture with the Anthropological Society in Lebanon, Beirut // 28 FEBRUARY.  
**'Obligation, Kinship in Lebanon'**, guest lecture for the course Anthropology of Kinship, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Media Studies at the American University of Beirut // 5 DECEMBER.

# Role of Courts in Consociational Systems of Power-Sharing

**SOUAD ETMIMI**  
FELLOW

My project focused on discourse analysis. The corpus contained six books on contemporary Arab thought (Edward Said, Samir Amin, Ali Harb...). The goal of this research is to exploit perspectives of these thinkers to extract, first of all, contexts and reasons of criticism. The Arab intellectual is the main subject in the research. It's also interesting to know the issues of criticism and its intellectual trends (liberal, socialist, Islamic...).

The intellectual affiliation is a qualitative key to understand the thinker and their background, expectations, and lapses. I suppose that every thinker has a project that conflicts with formal authority and its different types (cultural, economic, social...). In contrast, there is marginalised authority, which has hidden and influential roles. It's people and their popular culture. In fact, the popular culture seems almost like a warning of the shortage made by the official authority. The criticism of Arab Intellectual is a part of the entire system that needs to be criticised also and it is responsible as well, for different crises in the Arab and Islamic world.

The last part of this project is to criticise the criticism discourse and extract mistakes made by critics. This project looks forward to systematic and cognitive analysis of the critical discourse. So, the purpose based on how we see the intellectual and how we criticise him as an owner of symbolic capital (cognitive authority). In addition, his relationship with the formal authority is almost a criterion for knowing an intellectual's interests, concerns and aspirations for the future. Moreover, the responsibility of involvement with authority is one of the reasons for criticising the intellectual. So, if there is an occurrence of an economic or social crisis, it should be a result of collective responsibility and not just the responsibility of the intellectual.

Therefore, the evaluation of an intellectual's thinking is not based on distortion or praise. Criticism is fruitful if it is objective and if we deal with the intellectual on the basis of his role and function and also on the basis that he is a human being who makes mistakes like everyone else. The target of criticism is not the person, but rather ideas, choices, and intellectual projects that may cause regression and backwardness, instead of being an impetus for progress and intellectual sophistication.

The visit to the Orient-Institut Beirut was an opportunity to discover rich library containing Arabic and foreign references. In fact, attending lectures at the Institute provided an addition to our cognitive level and expanded our social network with colleagues at the Institute. Communicating with colleagues from different specializations and backgrounds contributed to enriching our experience and reviewing our ideas.

One of the specific activities that we benefited from was attending the sixth conference of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, entitled 'Producing Critical Knowledge in the Arab Region'.



**SOUAD ETMIMI** is a PhD researcher in Arab and Islamic Studies, at Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sousse, Tunisia, specialised in Contemporary Cultural Studies. The PhD thesis entitled 'The Intellectual as a Subject of Criticism in Contemporary Arab Thought'. Obtained a master's degree in Arabic language, literature and civilisation in the field of modern civilisation at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Sousse (Tunisia). Obtained two student exchange scholarships at two universities. The first one is in Marburg in Germany, at the Center for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) in 2018 and at the second one in 2019 at University of Ca' Foscari in Venice, Italy. She published a book in 2019 with the Arab House of Egypt entitled 'The Pictures of the Imam in the Modern Islamic Discourse, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal as a model' (ARABIC). An article was published in the same year as part of the proceedings of a symposium that took place at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Kairouan (Tunisia), entitled 'The Dialectic of the Estrangement and Communication between the Right Sciences and the Human Sciences'.

# Beirut as a Nodal City in the Age of Anti-Colonialism and Revolution

KANWAL HAMEED

FELLOW

The cover of the May 1971 copy of *Al-Ittihad* (SEE IMAGE), the magazine of the National Union of Kuwait Students, shows three figures seated on the floor looking at some papers, with the magazine of a machine guns interlacing with the papers, and the arms and legs of the students. The cover image of the student/intellectual and the activist/fighter reflects the discussion that runs through the pages of all the issues of *Al-Ittihad*, which explores the role of students, and intellectual and cultural engagement and production in relation to social transformation. In its pages we see how Beirut is a site of encounter for student movements from the region, and how they position themselves and their struggle in relation to the global anti-imperial struggle.

The May 1971 issue of *Al-Ittihad* focusses on the Arabian Gulf Exhibition in Beirut and Cairo organised at and around the American University of Beirut. The event took place in March 1971 and was organised by the NUKS, the Bahraini Students' Union, and the Omani Students Association in Lebanon. It included lectures, featuring speakers from the PFLOAG, GUPS (General Union of Palestinian Students), Students Unions from the Gulf and Jordan, the Bahraini NLF (National Liberation Front), and by academic, activist and founder of Socialist Lebanon, Fawwaz Traboulsi, and cultural events including musical and theatrical performances, and parties.

During my fellowship at OIB Beirut (March–September) I carried out archival research exploring the world reflected in *Al Ittihad*, thinking about 'circulatory practices trans-local projects of anti-imperial solidarity' (Zeina Maasri, 2020, 13) in the lives of Gulf students in Beirut in the late 1960s–early 1970s. I was able to spend time working in various archives in Beirut, including the Institute for Palestine Studies, the American University of Beirut, and the Arab Cultural Club (Nadi al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi). I also participated in a Digital Humanities workshop with Monica Basbous at the OIB, which provided a rich engagement with the theory, methods, tools and practical techniques used to produce visual infographics and mapping for work in social sciences. I also benefited from attending events at the OIB, such as the Cinema Weeks screening, 'Communities of Being-Together Across Filmic Caesuras' organised by Dr Anaïs Farine, and the book launch and conversation with Dr Rima Majed, Dr Jeffrey G. Karam and other contributors to the book 'The Lebanon Uprising of 2019, Voices from the Revolution'.



**KANWAL HAMEED** is an inter-disciplinary historian with a background in Middle East Studies. She completed her PhD at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Affairs (IAIS) University of Exeter, UK, where she was a member of the Gulf Studies department and the European Centre for Palestine Studies (ECPS). Her work is broadly about peoples' histories of the modern Gulf, read through its entanglements with the region at large, and critical methods in historiography. She focusses on mid-20th century national, anti-colonial and leftist movements in the Gulf, working beyond the colonial archive to situate lived experience at the heart of knowledge production on and understandings of the region. Kanwal was a visiting post-doctoral fellow at the OIB, Beirut from March–September, and is currently Research fellow at the Mapping Connections (China-Middle East Relations) at the IAIS, University of Exeter, and a teaching fellow at the SOAS Department of Politics. In April she will join the IASH at Edinburgh University as part of the first cohort of the Stuart Hall foundation RACE-Ed fellows. She has previously worked as a researcher at the Middle East Centre, London School of Economics (LSE), on the social life of climate change in Kuwait, and as a post-graduate teaching assistant and course co-convener in Gender Studies and Politics at IAIS, University of Exeter.

#### **PUBLICATIONS, ARTICLES, MEDIA**

WITH SARA SALEM

Marral Shamshiri and Sorcha Thomson (EDS.) '**Where Are the Revolutionary Women of West Asia and North Africa?**'.

In *She Who Struggles: Revolutionary Women Who Shaped The World*, London, Pluto Press, 2023.

Sorcha Thompson and Pelle Olsen (EDS.) '**One Struggle, Many Fronts: The National Union of Kuwaiti Students and Palestine**'.

In *International Solidarity with the Palestinian Revolution (1965–1982)*, London, IB Tauris 2023.

WITH KATIE NATANEL AND AMAL KHALAF

'**Toward a Liberation Pedagogy**'. In *Kohl Anticolonial Feminisms*, January 2023.

Mai Taha and Sara Salem (EDS.) '**Halwa, Mahyawa and Multiple Registers of Life in the Gulf**'. In *Archive Stories*, July 2023.

<https://archive-stories.com>

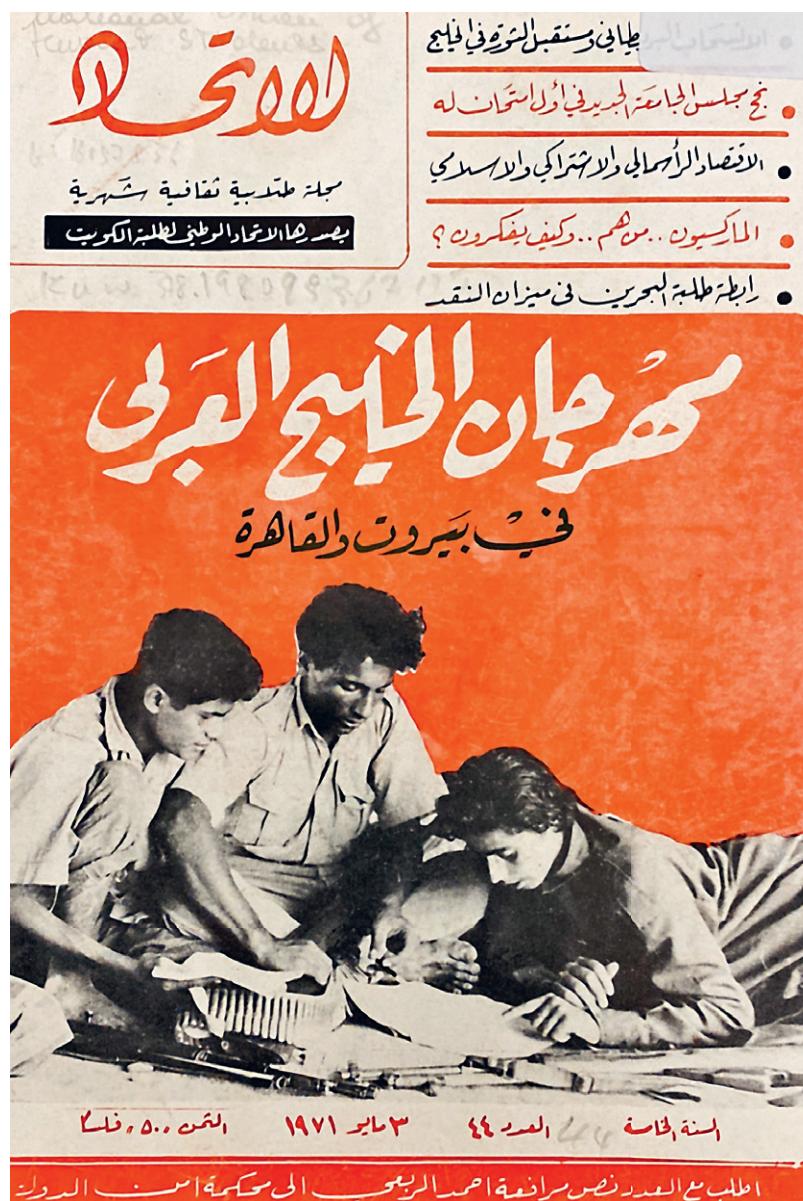
Mohammed Zbeeb and Viviane Akiki (EDS.) '**Tarikh al-'Amal wa Mas'ala-t al-Tabqa: Dirasat Hala-t al-Kuwait**' (Histories of Labour and Questions of Class: Case Study Kuwait). In *Al-Sifr*, 8 August 2023.

<https://alsifr.org/labour-class-history-kuwait>

Mohammed Zbeeb and Viviane Akiki (EDS.) '**Ayna Silah al-Naft al-'Arabi?**' (Where is the Arab Oil Weapon?). In *Al-Sifr*, 11 January 2024.

<https://alsifr.org/gulfstates-normalization-israel>

'**Women in Bahrain and the Liberation of Palestine**'. In *Solidarities Across Borders Series, History Workshop Digital Magazine*, Spring 2024 [FORTHCOMING].



The cover image of  
Al-Ittihad, the magazine  
of the National Union of  
Kuwait Students.

# Women at War, Women in the War Order

FLORIANE SOULIÉ-CARAGUEL  
FELLOW

This research project focuses on the life trajectories of women involved in the Kataeb and the Lebanese Forces during the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990). It examines both the objective and subjective effects of participation in Christian militias, shaped these women, their relationship to self and to politics in the long term. It also studies the 'pathways of accumulation' – or, mostly, of non-accumulation – allowed by their commitments. Hence, this research aims at understanding gender, class, and political mobility in a recomposing socio-political order, shedding light on the production of social differentiations in the war and the post-war periods. Methodologically, this research is based on a microscopic study. As much as possible, I conduct several interviews with the same women in order to explore their life history in detail. This in-depth analysis of a limited number of cases allows me to study the positions that these women negotiate during and after the war within the embedded economic, kinship, religious, and political networks in which they operate.

The OIB doctoral fellowship allowed me to pursue my fieldwork and provided a stimulating environment in which to work on my dissertation.



FLORIANE SOULIÉ-CARAGUEL was a doctoral fellow at OIB from March to November 2023. She is a PhD candidate in the department of Political Science at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, from which she also holds a BA in History and Political Science and an MA in Political Science. Her research focuses on women's engagement in Christian militias during the civil war, and on its biographical consequences. This subject emanates from the little attention given to women in the historiography of the Lebanese civil war and the lack of research on the future of militia men and women in the post-war period.

## PUBLICATIONS

Leyla Dakhli (ED.) 'Faith Ambush. Ethicisation and Politicisation of Religion in the Women's General Staff of the Lebanese Forces during the Civil War'. In *Women in revolt. Mobilizations and political imaginations in the Middle East and North Africa (1950–2020)*, Leyde, Brill, 2024 (FORTHCOMING).

# *Art & Material Culture*

Our cluster 'Art & Material Culture' is occupied with the ways in which artistic and material production is narrated in the writings of history. Our research projects are concerned with bringing to the fore social, religious, political and economic aspects of arts and material culture, and reinstate the people – the maker, the craftsman, the artist and the user – at the center of our studies, including their production and reception of ideas. We strongly believe that our studies become meaningful when we are able to locate artistic and cultural productions in their wider socio-political and economic contexts. Medieval manuscripts, modern artworks and films, for instance, are brought to life when we see them as mirrors of their contexts as much as agents in shaping collective thinking and practices.

In our cluster, we are interested in the materiality of the works of art. As such, we approach them not only as social constructs but also as objects formed by specific elements, such as ink. Our bottom-top approach encourages us to study the object itself, including its circulation during its life and in its afterlife, and to trace people's trajectories and ideas. This facilitates the reconstruction of forgotten archives and of networks of people and movement that often reveal exciting aspects about our world. Our approach is not only characterised by work on the archives but also on counter-archives. Databases are our repositories, they form the basis of our research and become tools to help us identify stylistic trends and aesthetic patterns, as well as trace cross-cultural connections.

Taken together, our projects cover a wide time frame – spanning from the medieval to contemporary times – and geographically covering the whole region of the mashriq. We deal with an array of materials and media from modern paintings and periodicals to medieval Islamic manuscripts. While being rooted in (art) historical methods, our work's interdisciplinary nature benefits from neighboring fields such as anthropology. By contextualising our subjects and objects of study, we hope to build bridges between material culture, art history and different systems of belief. One of our aims is to explore the institutionalisation of (art) history and to question threads that have side-lined regions or marginalised under-represented communities. As such, we reflect on various modern established categories, such as fixed identities, challenge prevailing paradigms and canons in writing history to contest stark dichotomies, such as the purported tensions between center/periphery, local/global, public/private, East/West, or arts/crafts. It is by exposing art systems, power dynamics, educational practices, and hegemonic cultural infrastructures that we aim to build a critical transnational history with wider implications on our present.

# The New Sensibility // Revolution and the Avant-Garde in Beirut, 1967–1982

NATASHA GASPARIAN  
RESEARCHER

My research centers on artistic production in the aftermath of the Arab defeat of the 1967 June War, when newly radicalised painters, playwrights, and poets in Beirut looked to militant models of subjectivity to rearticulate their commitment to socialist revolution and emancipation. Reformulating commitment ('iltizam) within a language of revolutionary mass politics, artists mobilised realism to construct, rather than merely depict, social reality – realism as a method, rather than a style, which incorporated various formal tendencies, including abstraction. As Kamal Boullata noted in 1970, echoing both Fanon and Marcuse, the form of realism deployed did not simply introduce figuration into an otherwise abstract pictorial field or represent a change in iconography; it cultivated an entirely new sensibility (hassassiyya jadida). This New Sensibility (as both the name of militant art and literature after 1967 and the new mode of perception it inspired) took on a multitude of appearances in painting, theater, film, and literature that assumed both demystifying and defamiliarizing functions (the former thought to be a function of realism; the latter, modernism), often prompting encounters in readers and spectators – in little magazines, large-scale paintings, films, and portable works on paper and posters. Challenging the thesis that this new sensibility was a resigned, self-reflexive, (post-)modernist response to the preceding decades' notion of commitment, my research reconsiders the implications of the Arab left's discursive, aesthetic, and ideological shift from a pan-Arab nationalism to an adherence to the Palestinian Revolution.

During my time at the Orient-Institut Beirut, I have focused my research on a slightly earlier period in the 1960s when debates around national culture raged around the Salon d'Automne held annually at the Sursock Museum. Beginning from observations made in 'Je suis inculte!', a recent exhibition I co-curated with Ziad Kiblawi on the history of the museum's salon, I have zeroed in on debates surrounding aesthetic criteria, the abstraction/figuration binary, and the anxieties of backwardness/under-development (takhalluf) signaled in the various scandals that erupted prior to the 1967 war and which ultimately led to the museum's eclipse as a site for the avant-garde.



**NATASHA GASPARIAN** is a PhD candidate in Contemporary Art History and Theory at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. In addition to her art criticism, which has appeared in *Artforum*, *Camera Austria*, and *Texte Zur Kunst*, she is the author of 'Commitment in the Artistic Practice of Aref El-Rayess: The Changing of Horses' (Anthem Press, 2020). With Ziad Kiblawi she co-curated the exhibition, 'Je suis inculte! The Salon d'Automne and The National Canon' at the Sursock Museum in 2023. Gasparian is an organising member of the Beirut Institute for Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR).



above:  
©MANSOUR DIB

below:  
Rafic Charaf, poster  
design for the PFLP,  
c.1973.

©COURTESY OF THE  
PALESTINE POSTER  
PROJECT ARCHIVES

# From Copying to Burning the Qur'an //

## Creating Models and Transposing Sacrality

ALYA KARAME  
RESEARCHER

Her first monograph, to be published by Edinburgh University Press, entitled 'The Forgotten Qur'ans of the Medieval Eastern Iranian World: The Ghaznavids and Ghurids, 11th–12th Centuries CE.', presents the study of a previously unidentified group of Qur'ans from medieval eastern Iran (at the center of which is present-day Afghanistan), to question the pre-dominant view on the relationship of the 'centre' (the lands of dominant dynastic rule) to the 'periphery' (provincial rule). Her book places the history of these Qur'ans at the intersection of local and global histories, and aims to reveal how objects and practices that are deemed 'peripheral' were, in fact, located at the heart of original innovations. As such, the book decentralises the artistic agency of traditional political capitals from which artistic excellency and a purportedly pure visual language is said to have spread and reclaims the frontiers as centers of cultural production. It is by examining medieval artistic production within a global landscape that connected the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and North Africa that studying art becomes relevant today. It is by looking at the social and political significance within works of art, architecture and material culture that Alya makes the study of historical artefacts meaningful today.



ALYA KARAME is currently on leave from her research associate post at OIB. She is the recipient of Paris Région fellowship at the Collège de France where she is finishing her first monograph on Qur'ans from medieval eastern Iran. Before that, she was offered the Aga Khan fellowship at the University of Harvard where she developed her research. Before joining OIB, Alya was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Centre for Arts and Humanities (2019–2020) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) where she had also taught at the Fine Arts & Art History department. Earlier, she held two postdoctoral fellowships: one was in the Khalili Research Centre of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford (2018–2019), and the other was at the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin as part of the research programme Connecting Art Histories in the Museum: Africa, Asia, the Mediterranean and Europe (2016–2018).



Folio from the Sulayhid  
Qur'an, 11th century, the  
Metropolitan Museum  
of Art (40.164.4).

# The Making of Arab Alternative Cinema and its Audiences

ANAÏS FARINE  
FELLOW

The 'Arab Alternative Cinema' emerged in Damascus in 1972. This cinematic movement was characterised by an innovative approach to film forms and narratives and contributed to the political struggles of the global 1968 movement. Many Arab Alternative Cinema productions were screened at the Arab Ciné Club in Beirut, a film-society established in 1973. This initiative plays a central role in my research on the history of film clubs in Beirut. It was one of the only places that screened films affiliated with the alternative cinema movement at that time in Lebanon.

By borrowing from the concerns of New Cinema History, an approach which combines oral history and archival research to study the circulation and consumption of films, my postdoctoral research project reflects on the making of a community through cinema memories. In October 2022, I conducted research in the private archive of Georges El Rassi and I had the chance to discover particularly meaningful documents. Indeed, El Rassi preserved a list of names of the Ciné Club members. Starting from this list to work on an oral history of the film-society, my stay in Lebanon affected the course of my project by allowing me to conduct systematic interviews with 31 Ciné Club members. The Arab Ciné Club in Beirut was launched at the Clémenceau cinema in Hamra. It quickly moved to al-Mazra'a district. The main aim of this move to the Beirut cinema located in Barbir was to open up cinema to other parts of the population, not just to intellectuals used to the Art and Essai cinema theater located in Hamra. In 1977 the Arab Ciné Club re-started its activities at the Clémenceau after a break of almost two years. Previously held at 9pm, screenings now started at 6.30pm, as the war made it particularly difficult to go out in the evenings. My research in the archives of *Al-Akhbar* (preserved at Orient-Institut Beirut Library), *Al-Balagh* (preserved at UMAM: Documentation & Research) and *As-Safir* (available online) from 1973 to 1978 during my fellowship helped me reconstructing this neat timeline. Finally, in 1982, the Arab Ciné Club was extended for a few months at the Strand.

In February 2023, during my stay at OIB, I had the chance to meet with Jaber Suleiman. Suleiman had been a member of the film-society since its inception and worked at the PLO Planning Centre. His memories of the screenings organised by the Arab Ciné Club during the Israeli siege of Beirut constitutes very valuable input to analyse the social life of films and the interaction between cinemagoing and political activism.



**ANAÏS FARINE** has been a postdoctoral fellow at the OIB from October 2022 to June 2023. She is a cinema studies researcher and a film curator. She holds a PhD from the University of La Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III. She is affiliated to the Institut de recherche sur le cinéma et l'audiovisuel (IRCAV) and to the Institut d'études scéniques audiovisuelles et cinématographiques (IESAV). Her PhD thesis focused on the so-called 'Euro-Mediterranean dialogue' and its Filmic Imaginary (1995–2017). As a post-doctoral researcher, Anaïs has been investigating the collective practices in the making and discussion of films of the Arab Alternative Movement with a focus on the history of the Arab Ciné Club in Beirut. Her writings have been published in 'Cinema in the Arab World: New Histories, New Approaches'; *Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research*; *Cinematheque Beirut*; *Trouble dans les collections*; *Ettijahat*; *Débordements*; *The Funambulist Magazine*; and *Aniki*, among others. Since 2016, she is a member of the organising committee of the Festival Ciné-Palestine (Paris-Marseille).



في لايبزيغ... كان كل شعب  
يعرض كفاحه ليتعلم الآخرون  
[In Leipzig...People  
screen their struggles  
so others may learn].  
al-Akhbar, 15 December  
1973. 32-33. OIB Library.

# Arts and Crafts in Late Ottoman Beirut (ca. 1860–1914)

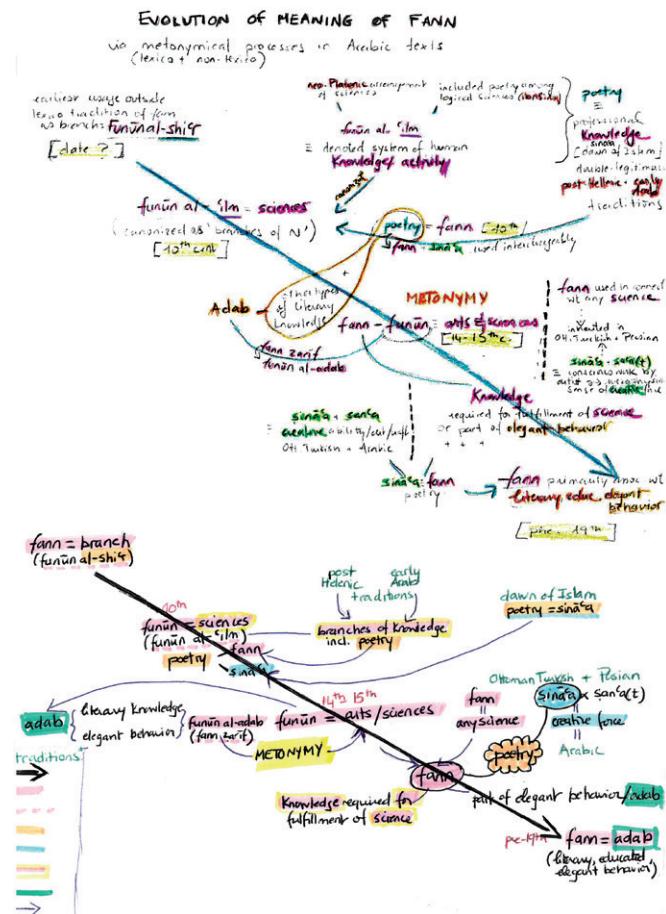
SARAH SABBAN  
FELLOW

My doctoral fellowship at the OIB covered the academic year 2022–2023. Between January and August 2023 my research on the modern history of material culture in the Arab East benefited greatly from my affiliation with the OIB – especially in terms of the workshops and activities organised for the fellows – and took some surprising turns. One aspect of my doctoral project, which explores the history of arts and crafts in late Ottoman Beirut (ca. 1860–1914), focuses on the translation of the modern western episteme into Arabic thought. A digital humanities cartography workshop co-organised by the OIB and the Digital Humanities Institute of Beirut initiated interested fellows into the world of data visualisation and mapping. Applying digital humanities to visualise the semantic development of 'al-ṣanā'i' (crafts) and 'al-funūn' (arts) was a fun exercise and an effective heuristic tool to turn complex and abstract relations into a visually meaningful (and colourful) schema (SEE DIAGRAMS).

Another aspect of my project brings material culture, Islamic art history, and modern Arab intellectual and economic history into interplay. My participation in the PhD student symposium on cross-disciplinary research jointly organised by the OIB and the Lebanese University deepened my understanding and interest in cross-disciplinary research and helped to refine (and complicate) my research topic. I also learned what a critical polylogue is! Last but not least, I consulted archival material and periodicals pertinent to my research on Beirut at the turn of the twentieth century at the OIB library. Interestingly, some of the holdings bear witness to the connections of the OIB with the neighborhood and Beirut's history, namely with Khalil Sarkis (1842–1915), a prominent figure of the 'Nahda' and founder of the periodical 'Lisān al-Ḥāl' (founded 1877), and Maude Farjallah (1909–1995), previous owner of the current OIB mansion.



**SARAH SABBAN** is a doctoral candidate in the Arab and Middle Eastern History programme at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Before that, she earned a Master of Studies in Islamic art and archaeology (University of Oxford) and a Master of Arts in anthropology (AUB). Sarah's research examines the history of arts and crafts and their representation in changing historical spaces from late Ottoman Syria to modern Lebanon. In the process, her work has addressed the formation of the Lebanese 'artisanat' and the role of women in creating a national heritage during the French mandate. She also wrote about the first exhibition of Islamic art in Lebanon, which took place at the Sursock Museum in 1974, on the eve of the Lebanese Civil War. Sarah's doctoral project aims to historicise the emergence of modern categories representing local crafts. Her academic interests include modern Middle Eastern history with a focus on intellectual history and material culture, anthropology of art and museums, and Islamic art and its historiography.



Sarah Sabban's preliminary diagrams mapping semantic relations, based on her reading of Adam Mestyan's article 'Arabic Lexicography and European Aesthetics: The Origin of Fann', *Muqarnas* 28 (2011): 69–100. Cartography Workshop organised by the OIB and the Digital Humanities Institute of Beirut, May–June, at the OIB, Beirut.

# ERC LAWHA

LAWHA – LEBANON'S ART WORLD AT HOME AND ABROAD  
TRAJECTORIES OF ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS IN/FROM LEBANON SINCE 1943  
OCTOBER 2020 – SEPTEMBER 2025

LAWHA examines the forces that have shaped the emergence of a professional field of art in Lebanon in its local, regional and global contexts, against the background that Lebanon is regularly portrayed as a country with weak public institutions but vibrant cultural sector. The project proposes a shift in perspective in approaching Lebanon's art world by focusing on the multi-dimensionality of artists' individual trajectories. LAWHA aims to identify new methods on how to interrelate context and artistic production, to serve as a model for revisiting art histories in contexts where institutionalised local art histories have largely been absent. It investigates (1) the forces that have shaped the emergence of a professional field of art in their local, regional and global contexts; (2) how to rethink the impact of the political, social and economic environment on the art world and its protagonists, including war and migration; (3) how artists are represented in relation to the nation and inscribed in systems of reference, both locally and globally, and (4) how the trajectories of individuals shape the field.

The focus is on artists in and from Lebanon using the forms of painting (Arabic: lawha / لوحة) and sculpture.

This year has seen the LAWHA team work towards the project's objectives, assisted by two interns – Clara Louise Aevermann (February–March) and Sari Shrayteh (June–July). Diana Jeha has joined the team in October as a part-time research assistant, to assist with digitisation and data entry, and to prepare LAWHA's database and digital platform (DDP) for publication. In February, LAWHA received the archives of Joseph Tarrab (b. 1943), one of Lebanon's main art critics who covered the Lebanon's art world from the late 1960s until the early 2000s, which constitutes a treasure-trove for research. His work is currently being digitised and entered into the DDP.

In partnership with the American University of Beirut and the Global (De)Centre, and funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, LAWHA organised a panel discussion and workshop on Curating an Artist's (and Parent's) Biography as the final event of its Moving Biography Summer School. As an outcome of this Summer School, LAWHA produced two podcast series in collaboration with afikra. For the first series, LAWHA partnered with The Institute of Art in the Arab World (IAAW) at the Lebanese American University to produce a series of podcasts under the title 'On Women by Women in Art', conceived and moderated by IAAW's director Yasmine Taan.



In each of the four episodes, a woman artist reflects on another woman artist who has influenced and inspired her practice. The second series, 'Moving Biographies', is a direct outcome of the discussions held at the Summer School. Each of the three episodes is moderated by one of the co-organisers of the Summer School, and focuses on curating an artist's (and parent's) biography, biography as material matter, and Lebanese heritage and early nation-building. The episodes are available on Afikra's Youtube channel and Apple Podcasts. In September, a workshop was held to examine the role of cultural clubs and centres in promoting visual arts in Lebanon. The first day of the workshop, organised in collaboration with the Lebanese University and held in Tripoli, focused on cultural and artistic initiatives in and from Tripoli and Antelias, while the second day, organised in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut, looked at the role of foreign cultural centres and the Goethe-Institut in particular.

In June, LAWHA organised a panel at the conference 'Decentring Art and Design History' at the University of Nicosia, which allowed the team to draw interesting parallels between the art worlds of the post-Ottoman world. In July, LAWHA partnered with the Sursock Museum in a public talk on Chronologies and the Question of Periodisation. Further conference and workshop participations include a conversation in the context of Etel Adnan's retrospective at the Lenbachhaus (Lenbachhaus and Institut français Munich, January), 'Etel Adnan Symposium' (American University of Beirut, February), 'Abiding Present' (Warburg Institute London, May), 'The Intellectual Histories of Art and the Archive' (Paul Mellon Centre London, May), and 'A Driving Force: On the Rhetoric of Images and Power' (Università Ca' Foscari, October). A panel on artistic hubs in the Arab Region planned for MESA in November had to be cancelled last-minute due to personal circumstances resulting from the volatile security situation following 7 October.

YOU CAN FOLLOW ALL LAWHA NEWS ON THE BLOG:  
[HTTPS://LWHA.HYPOTHESES.ORG](https://lwha.hypotheses.org)

'MOVING BIOGRAPHIES' PODCASTS:



# Lebanon's Art World at Home and Abroad

NADIA VON MALTZAHN  
RESEARCHER

Within LAWHA, one aspect that I explore is the institutionalisation of art education in Lebanon, looking at how art was taught in the main formal art departments established in the post-independence period. Art education was conceived and established within a colonial and post-colonial framework, at a moment of nation-building, in which Western models of art education were adapted to each institution's mission and most artists continued to spend at least part of their formative years abroad. To understand how artists positioned themselves in a post-colonial setting, the reflections of some of the main protagonists of Lebanon's art world are insightful. The artist Jean Khalifé (1923–1978) is a case in point. After teaching at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux-Arts (ALBA) upon his return from Paris, where he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts in the early 1950s (SEE FIGURE), in 1966 he became a professor of painting at the newly established Institute of Fine Arts of the Lebanese University, a position he held until his death in 1978. In an undated handwritten open letter or lecture preserved at the Sursock Museum archive, entitled 'A Question', Khalifé asks:

*I leave for Paris like all other artists of my generation; some have stayed there... In Paris I discover the artistic heritage of Europe [...] and in Paris I also discover the Orient. [...] In Lebanon one does not discover an artist, one compares to Paris or New York (superiority complex!) and when one wants a personality from us, one popularises (national art, folklore, oriental art etc...). Can one here discover an artist 'de recherche' who resembles himself and does not belong to any school?*

I find his letter very insightful in the context of LAWHA. Paris is clearly a centre of art for him, which he does not question as such, but which he sees as a place to learn about European traditions and about himself. The artistic heritage of Europe does not belong to him, he does not have to adhere to it but is free. At the same time, he criticises how artists from Lebanon are not taken for what they are, but rather set within a framework (by whom is left open). This was one of the starting points of LAWHA, that in the absence of an institutionalised local art history artists are often stereotyped according to the agendas of labelling institutions and put into boxes. Here artists' trajectories come in. Artists' biographies are an important indicator of the socio-political currents, influences and values of their time and place, and show the entanglement and flow of networks. By bringing to light the artists' careers, ideas and networks, we aim to make the artists' agency more visible and take them out of easily labelled boxes. In order to allow for a decentring of art history, we need to look at how the protagonists themselves are articulating their time.

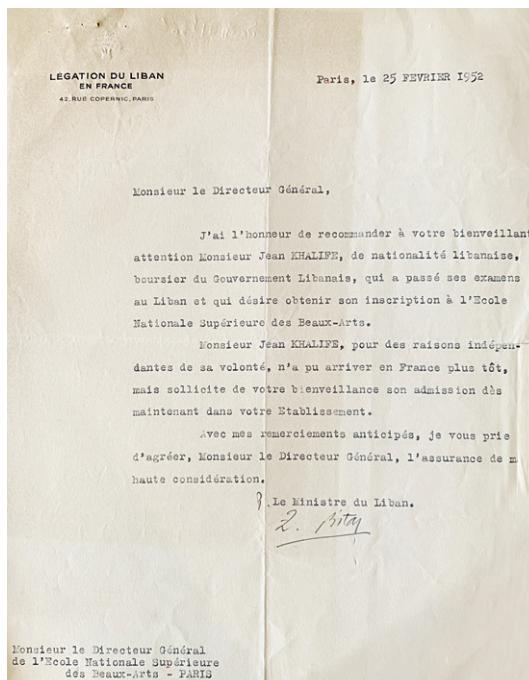


**NADIA VON MALTZAHN** is the Principal Investigator of the European Research Council-funded project 'Lebanon's Art World at Home and Abroad' (LAWHA), which started in October 2020. She joined the OIB in 2013, first as a research associate (2013–2018) before being appointed deputy director (2018–2020, partly on parental leave). She holds a DPhil and an MSt in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from St Antony's College, Oxford, and a BA Honours in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from King's College, Cambridge. Her research interests include cultural policies, artistic practices and the circulation of knowledge. Nadia is the author of 'The Syria-Iran Axis: Cultural diplomacy and international relations in the Middle East' (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013/2015), and a number of edited volumes such as 'The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of taste-making' (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2018), co-edited with Monique Bellan. Her works have been widely published in journals including *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *Quaderni storici*, *Manazir*, *Middle East Topics & Arguments*, and the *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*.

#### PUBLICATIONS

**'Dear Tutu: A Letter by Palestinian Artist Vladimir Tamari on Exile, Friendship and Globalisation'.** In *Static: Thoughts and Research from Global dis:Connect 2* (1). Munich, pp. 59–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.5282/static/39>.

Letter by the Lebanese legation in Paris to the Director of the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in support of Jean Khalifé's application to study there, 25 February 1952.  
Archives de l'École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, Ref. AJ/52/ 960.



# Ruptures and Continuities //

## Galerie DAMO during the 1980s

MONIQUE BELLAN  
RESEARCHER

Galerie Damo in Antelias, north of Beirut, was one of the first new art galleries that opened in November 1977 after the supposed end of the war, also known as the 'two-year war' (1975–77). Founded by Brahim Zod (b.1942), a sculptor and furniture designer, the gallery not only organised art exhibitions but also hosted theatrical performances, poetry readings, book signings, discussions, and musical events with many well-known artists and writers. Brahim Zod also maintained close relations with the art critics of the time, most of whom regularly covered the events. The gallery opened with a group exhibition of painters and sculptors from Lebanon who had previously participated in a group exhibition during the Lebanese Cultural Week in Rome in October 1977.

Despite certain similarities with pre-war galleries such as Gallery One and Contact Art Gallery in terms of the repertoire of artists and the intention to create a space for exchange beyond that of a mere exhibition space, Galerie Damo operated in a very different cultural, social, and political context that lacked the former prosperity on both the economic and creative levels, as well as the cosmopolitan fabric of Beirut, especially Ras Beirut. The founding of the gallery in 1977 and the inaugural exhibition were therefore perceived as a return to normality and 'hope for national unity', as an entry in the guest book of Galerie Damo on November 25, 1977, put it. This impression was reinforced by the group of artists who participated in this first exhibition with paintings and sculptures on the theme of Saint Charbel and Lebanon, its nature and traditions. Thus, continuity rather than experimentation and a focus on established artists expressing themselves mainly in painting and sculpture became the main concern of the gallery and its profile.

Although the gallery's exhibition record was limited in number and irregular due to the highly volatile political situation, it remained true to its principle of exhibiting established artists. The active years of the Galerie Damo were between 1977 and 1986, with a two-year break between 1984 and 1985. Several exhibitions were cancelled or postponed, especially in 1982 and 1983. Among the artists were Amine El-Bacha, Rafic Charaf, Guv, Maroun Tomb, Souleima Zod, Elie Kanaan, Amin Sfeir, Halim Jurdak, Wajih Nahlé, Alfons Philipps, Michel and Alfred Basbous, and others. The gallery became a regular meeting place for these artists, as well as for playwrights, actors, composers, writers, poets, and art critics who were connected to the gallery through Brahim Zod. As such, it provided a vital space to keep intellectual exchange alive in those challenging times.



**MONIQUE BELLAN** is senior researcher in LAWHA since 2021. She previously worked as a research associate at the Orient-Institut Beirut (2013–2019) before joining the Arab-German Young Academy in Berlin. She also worked at the collaborative research centre Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits at Freie Universität Berlin and the Performing Arts Section of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. She holds a PhD in Arabic Studies from Freie Universität Berlin, an MA in Islamic Studies, Sociology and Political Science from the University of Bonn, and an MA in Library and Information Science from Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Within LAWHA she focuses in particular on exhibition practices, art critique and the database and digital platform (DDP). Monique is the author of 'Dismember Remember: Das anatomische Theater von Lina Saneh und Rabih Mroué' (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2013), and has co-edited 'The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of taste-making' (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut 2018), together with Nadia von Maltzahn, and the volume 'Surrealism in North Africa and Western Asia: Crossings and Encounters' (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut 2021), together with Julia Drost.



At the opening of Michel Basbous' posthumous exhibition at Galerie Damo (11–25 November 1986). From left to right: César Nammour, Georgette Gebara, Brahim Zod, Amine El Bacha, unknown, Joseph Tarrab. Front: Alfred Basbous.

©BRAHIM ZOD ARCHIVE

# The Golden Age of Janine The Red //

## The Shaping of a Lebanese Identity at Dar el Fan in Beirut

FLAVIA ELENA MALUSARDI  
RESEARCHER

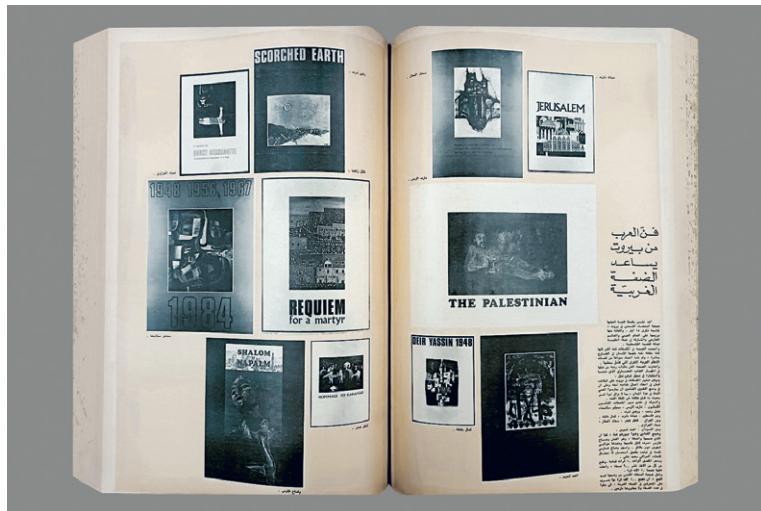
My doctoral research delves into the extensive study and analysis of the cultural centre Dar el Fan in Beirut (1967 to 1975). The primary objective is to illuminate the impact of Dar el Fan on the politics of culture during this pivotal era. A central aspect of my investigation revolves around the centre's political engagement and its nuanced interpretation of the concept of 'iltizam', exploring how these factors evolved over the course of its existence.

During 2023, my research has concentrated on delving deeper into Dar el Fan's political commitment, particularly against the backdrop of the emergence of the post-1967 New Arab Left, the burgeoning Third Worldist solidarity movements, and the intricate dynamics of the Cold War. The geopolitical context of this period significantly shaped Dar el Fan's trajectory and its role as a cultural institution.

Throughout its eight years of activity, Dar el Fan manifested its political commitment through diverse initiatives, spanning from an exhibition of posters in support of the Palestinian Cause to the screening of Algerian movies critical of colonialism, from concerts of revolutionary music to debates on the roots and reasons of sectarianism. To enrich my analysis, I spent a six-month research stay at the Orient-Institut Beirut. This allowed me to access and consult important archival material preserved across various institutions in Lebanon. The OIB library, with its extensive collections of newspapers and magazines, emerged as a particularly valuable resource, providing unique insights into the cultural and political milieu of Beirut during the specified timeframe. By analysing the centre's activities, I aim to contribute a comprehensive understanding of Dar el Fan's role in shaping cultural and political narratives in Beirut during a period of significant regional and global transformations, within the context of the changing socio-political landscape of the Arab world.



**FLAVIA ELENA MALUSARDI** is a PhD candidate in History of Art as part of the LAWHA project, with an international position between Università Cà Foscari (Venice) and OIB Orient-Institut Beirut (Beirut). Her project investigates the role of gallerist Janine Rubeiz and her informal space Dar Al Fann (1967–1976) within the Lebanese cultural panorama. She holds a Master's degree in History of Art and Architecture of the Islamic Middle East from SOAS School of Oriental and African Studies (London) and an MFA in Visual Cultures and Curatorial Practice from Accademia di Brera (Milan). Her work focuses on the modern and contemporary arts and visual culture of the Middle East and North Africa, with an interest in archival and collecting practices within post-colonial contexts.



Article 'Arab Art from Beirut helps the West Bank', on the exhibitions of posters in support of the Occupied Palestinian Territories held at Dar el Fan. *Mulhaq en-Nahar*, 19 Ayar 1968, vol.1.

# The Art Production of Lebanon's Civil War Period

ÇİĞDEM İVREN  
RESEARCHER

In my research, which focuses on art production during the civil war era, the reconstruction of the cultural infrastructure stands out as a critical undertaking. A substantial part of my investigation is dedicated to examining the exhibition landscape in Beirut, aiming to discern the artists, artistic mediums, and venues that frequently featured art exhibitions. The division of Beirut into East and West had profound socio-cultural consequences, which are reflected in the landscape of exhibition platforms. Numerous galleries were forced to close their doors in West Beirut due to intense conflicts. Some found a solution by relocating to the East, while others, prompted by shifting demographics, migrated farther from the capital, settling in coastal areas towards Antelias and Jounieh. In their new locations, they were able to re-establish themselves, catering to a more affluent clientele. Within this context, the exhibitions held at the Goethe-Institut caught my attention, particularly because it was not a commercial art gallery but a foreign cultural centre. Nonetheless, some artists gained recognition by showcasing their works there. Despite the increasing loss of galleries, the Goethe-Institut remained operational, serving as a vital platform in West Beirut. By sustaining its activities, it solidified its status as an indispensable cultural space in the area. By the mid-1980s, the institute evolved into a platform for experimental art, displaying a growing interest in local mixed media art under the curatorial guidance of Barbara Qassir, the institute's librarian. In times of conflict, the role of community and collaboration became even more crucial. The Goethe-Institut did more than provide a physical space for artists; it became a crucible for new ideas, styles, and socio-political dialogues. Artists found not only a venue but a network that shared a collective interest in pushing the boundaries of conventional art. This exciting perspective on the constraints and opportunities of art production during wartime, exemplified by the Goethe-Institut's active involvement served as the focal point of my presentation at LAWHA's workshop 'Spaces and Places – Art Exhibitions in Lebanon (1940s–1990s)', held in September 2023 in Beirut.



**ÇİĞDEM İVREN** joined LAWHA from October 2022 to June and is a PhD candidate at the Freie Universität Berlin. She is also a research assistant at the chair of Islamic Art and Archaeology at the Otto-Friedrich University, Bamberg, where she obtained her Master's degree. Her dissertation investigates the cultural infrastructure and art production during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90) with a focus on artists and institutions outside established narratives. Within the LAWHA project she focused on certain artistic media in the context of their exhibition locations and platforms. Further, she assisted in the maintenance of the database and digital platform.

She co-organised the LAWHA workshop 'Spaces and Places – Art Exhibitions in Lebanon (1940s–1990s)' in September. İvren has taught courses in Islamic art, modern and contemporary Middle Eastern art as well as representation and curatorial practices of art from the SWANA region. She is the co-editor of 'Encompassing the Sacred in Islamic Art and Architecture' ('Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie 6', 2020). She has presented her research outcomes at various international conferences.



Naser Soumi, 'Sad Memories: Engravings and Designs' Exhibition at the Goethe Institut, Rue Bliss, 3–12 April 1979.

# Life Otherwise //

## The (Hi)story of Art in (Spite of) Lebanon

ASHRAF OSMAN

RESEARCHER

One of Lebanon's main (post)colonial legacies has been its weak state characterised by a chronically delicate inter-communal balance of power and a fragile state of affairs.

The lack of a strong institutional framework, however, may have allowed certain historically disadvantaged groups to be relatively well represented in the Lebanese art scene.

Within this scene, the Sursock Museum has arguably emerged as the most canon-making establishment in the history of modern Lebanese art in the second half of the twentieth century. As such, my doctoral research explores the representation of women and (sectarian, ethnic, and sexual) minorities at the museum during this time period.

I had the opportunity to jumpstart my research by researching and writing the timeline of the museum for one of its reopening exhibitions, 'Beyond Ruptures, a Tentative Chronology', curated by its new director, Karina El Helou. The exhibition delved into three interconnected chronologies, presenting a historical narrative encompassing the museum, its exhibitions, and major local socio-political events. By drawing parallels with the artistic production of the country, the exhibition shed light on the interplay between these timelines. It explored the various historical ruptures that the museum has experienced and how they intersect with the cultural landscape. Drawing from the Sursock Museum's archival materials and documentation of the rehabilitation efforts, the exhibition specifically focused on six significant interruptions that have occurred throughout its sixty-two years of existence. These interruptions ranged from the initial rupture of the legal battle to transform Nicolas Ibrahim Sursock's residence into a museum, to the most recent devastating Beirut Port blast of 4 August 2020. By highlighting these key moments, the exhibition offered insights into the museum's journey and its resilience in the face of challenges. Following this, my focus will be on artists who collaborated with the museum, with the goal of comprehending the museum's significance and its influence on their artistic paths and professional careers.



**ASHRAF OSMAN** is a PhD candidate in History of Art as part of the LAWHA project, with an international position between Università Ca' Foscari (Venice) and Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB). He holds a Master of Advanced Studies in Curating from the Zurich University of the Arts (Switzerland) and a Master of Architecture from Syracuse University (New York). His diverse background and practice encompass olfactory art, socially-engaged art, and the architectural and urbanistic memory of the Lebanese War. Ashraf has curated several scent art projects at international biennales and museums, and lectured on the cultural history of smell at universities in Europe. He is also a registered architect in the US, where he practiced architecture at award-winning firms, and taught design at Philadelphia University. He is on the scientific committee of experts for a current exhibition, 'Parfums d'Orient', at the Institut du monde arabe in Paris.



Exhibition view 'Beyond Ruptures, a Tentative Chronology', curated by Karina El Helou. Photo by Wafiq Rashid.

©COURTESY OF SURSOCK MUSEUM

# *Activities of LAWHA*

10 JANUARY '**Beirut klebt an mir wie heißes Wachs: Arbeits- und Sehnsuchtsorte im Werk der Künstlerin Etel Adnan**'. Conversation between Nadia von Maltzahn and Burcu Dogramaci, Lenbachhaus and Institut français, Munich.

23–24 FEBRUARY '**Journalism, Painting and Friendship: Etel Adnan in Lebanon's Art World of the 1970s**' (NADIA VON MALTZAHN). Etel Adnan Symposium, American University of Beirut.

15 MARCH '**Contested (In)visibilities and Memorial Cultures: Towards a Critical Reading of Cultural Heritage and Conflict**'. Workshop, OIB, Beirut.

4 MAY '**Digital Tools in Art Historical Research**' (NADIA VON MALTZAHN AND MONIQUE BELLAN). Seminar for Art History PhD students, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia.

10 MAY '**The Role of Archives in Reconstructing Lebanon's Art World**' (NADIA VON MALTZAHN). Workshop on 'The Intellectual Histories of Art and the Archive', Paul Mellon Centre, London.

11–12 MAY '**Rethinking Periodisation in Lebanon's Post-Independence Art History**' (NADIA VON MALTZAHN). 'Abiding Present: Challenging Time in Art History' Symposium, The Warburg Institute, London.

25 MAY '**Curating an Artist's (and Parent's) Biography**'. Panel discussion and workshop, OIB, Beirut.

15–17 JUNE '**Revisiting Art Histories in the Absence of Institutionalisation: Lebanon as a Case Study**'. Panel at the conference 'Decentering art and design history', University of Nicosia.

PRESENTATIONS

**Art Education in Independent Lebanon** (NADIA VON MALTZAHN)

**Revealing and Concealing in Beirut's Sursock Museum Archives** (ASHRAF OSMAN)

**Cultural Regeneration and Decolonial Shift: The Algerian War of Independence as a unifying force in postcolonial Lebanon** (FLAVIA MALUSARDI)

6 JULY '**Chronologies and the Question of Periodisation**'. Sursock Museum, Beirut. Presentations by Ashraf Osman, Pierre France and Nadia von Maltzahn.

13–14 SEPTEMBER '**Spaces and Places – Art Exhibitions in Lebanon (1940s–1990s): (Re)assessing the Role of Cultural Clubs and foreign Cultural Centres**'. Workshop, Lebanese University, Faculty of Fine Arts and Architecture, Tripoli and OIB, Beirut.

4–6 OCTOBER '**Print Matters at the Sursock Museum: The Power of the Image to Create an Image of Power**' (ASHRAF OSMAN). 5th Postgraduate International Conference 'A Driving Force: On the Rhetoric of Images and Power', Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Venice.

2–5 NOVEMBER '**Cultural Hubs in the Arab Region**'. Panel at the annual MESA Meeting, Montreal. (CANCELLED)

# *Affiliated Researchers & their Projects*

**SANA BOU ANTOUN** Sorbonne Université, Paris

*Epistemological Perspectives on the Genesis of the Qur'an: Contributions from 19th and 20th Century German, French, and English Qur'anic Studies* // OCTOBER 2022 – OCTOBER

**LAURE GUIRGUIS** Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO)

*Arab Leftist Trends in the 1960s and 1970s: A Cross-Regional Perspective* //

NOVEMBER 2022 – DECEMBER 2024

**STEPHANIE DORNSCHNEIDER-ELKINK** University College Dublin

*Women and Religion in Post-Conflict Societies* // MAY – DECEMBER

**LAYLA BARTELDI** Charles University in Prague

*The Role of Development Aid Practices in Shaping the Lebanese Agriculture Sector, with a Primary Focus on Avocado Production* // JUNE – JUNE 2024

**LAVINIA PARSI** Università degli Studi di Milano

*Relevance Under International Criminal Law of Acts of Forced Displacement Perpetrated in Furtherance of a State Policy, and Their Possible Relevance vis-à-vis Anti-Migration Policies* // OCTOBER – MARCH 2024

**JAN ALTANER** University of Cambridge

*The Political Economy of Beirut's Urban Space, 1943–1975* // SEPTEMBER – AUGUST 2024

**CYMA FARAH** American University of Beirut

*From the Grand Serail to the Great Revolt: Constitutionalism and Revolution in Lebanon, 1925–1927* // SEPTEMBER – SEPTEMBER 2024

**CHARLOTTE GAUDREAU-MAJEAU** McGill University, Montreal

*The Cycles of Trans-Communal Contentious Politics in Deeply Divided Societies* //

OCTOBER – SEPTEMBER 2024

**ROSY AZAR BEYHOM** Conservatoire Libanais

*From Arabic to Latin: Moving Sciences of Music Around the Mediterranean* //

NOVEMBER 2022 – NOVEMBER 2024

# *Cooperations & Third-Party Funding*

20–21 MARCH // BEIRUT

**OPEN SCIENCE – CONCEPTS, PUBLISHING PRACTICES AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

A workshop jointly organised by Open Access Office Berlin (Free University Berlin), The Doctoral School of Literature, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Lebanese University, Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society Berlin, and Orient-Institut Beirut.

18 AUGUST–2 SEPTEMBER // BEIRUT, BEQAA, SAIDA

**FILM FESTIVAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND MIGRATION – OUR ROOTED RIGHTS**

Organised by Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Beirut, in Partnership with the Orient-Institut Beirut.

The film festival, titled 'Our Rooted Rights', is focused on human rights and migration, with a particular emphasis on environmental justice. The festival acknowledges that discussions on environmental justice should be conducted at a local level, taking into account the unique circumstances of each country or region.





# Publications

**Bibliotheca Islamica** 92

**Beiruter Texte und Studien** 96



# *Bibliotheca Islamica*



'Bibliotheca Islamica' (BI) is the OIB's platform for the critical edition of mainly Arabic (but also Persian and Turkish) manuscripts. The series dates back to 1929 when Hellmut Ritter edited the 'Kitāb maqālāt al-islamiyyīn wa-iḥtilāf al-muṣallīn of Abū I-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Aš'arī', a seminal text on dogmatic positions in the early Islamic period. Since then, the OIB has published close to sixty titles in this series. Among the most prominent are the thirty-volume biographical lexicon 'Kitāb al-wāfi bi-l-wafayāt' (BI 6) by Ṣalāh al-Dīn Ḥalīl b. Aibak al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) and the monumental history of Egypt and the Syrian lands entitled 'Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr' by Ibn Iyās (d. 1448/1524) (BI 5). Both editions have recently been completed with the publication of extensive and detailed indexes.

The OIB is adopting an open-access policy. New publications of the BI series are made available in electronic format (PDF), without an embargo period. All published titles of the series (even those that are out of print) can be displayed page per page or downloaded in their entirety in PDF format from the OIB's website via the links to the MENAdoc repository, hosted by the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle.

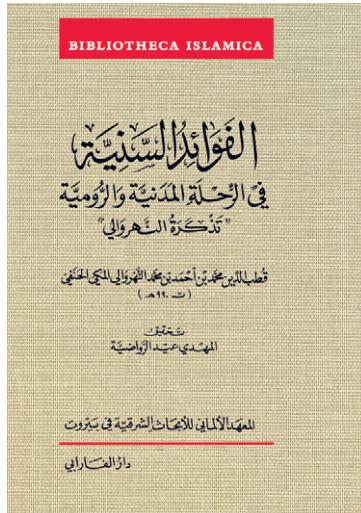
In 2023 we published 'Al-Fawā'id al-saniyyah fi l-riḥla al-Madaniyya wa-l-Rūmiyya' (BI 56) of Qutb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Nahrawālī al-Makkī al-Hanafī (died 1582), edited by Al-Madī 'īd al-Rawāḍya.

The book BI 56 had to be published in 2022, but it is issued in 2023.

Kitāb Ḥall mushkilāt al-Shudhūr (BI 62), in the transmission of Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Anṣārī al-Andalusī (died 1197), edited by Juliane Müller. And Maqāmāt al-barbīr (BI 50) of Aḥmad bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin Muḥammad al-Barbīr (1747–1811), edited by Max Robert Shmookler and Mohammad Diaa Eddin Alaswad.

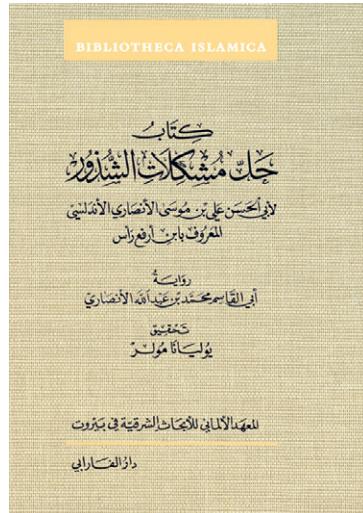
The BI publication team 2023 consisted of Arabic Lecturer Barraq Zakariya, publication assistant Micheline Kachar Hani and series editor Dr Ahmed M. F. Abd-Elsalam.

Edited by Al-Madī 'Id al-Rawādya



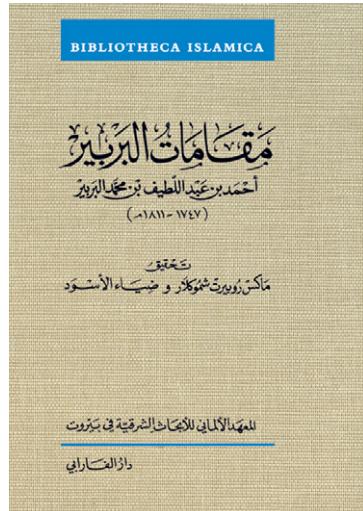
Beirut, De Gruyter Verlag / Dār al-Farābī, 2023  
 ISBN: 9786144851890

'Al-Fawā'id al-saniyyah fī al-riħlah al-Madaniyah wa al-Rūmiyah' by Quṭb al-Dīn Al-Nahrawālī (d. 990/1582) is a unique book in its content and story and has been long awaited to be seen in an edited publication. The present edition is based on one unique manuscript in Velieddin Efendi's collection of Beyazit Umumi Kütüphanesi in Istanbul. This manuscript is the author's own draft of which he was unable to make a fair copy for public readership. This has rendered the task of the editor much more challenging requiring him to consult a significant historical, geographical and literary material to come up with the best of the present edition. The book includes historical and literary material, chronicling some events in the Hijaz in the mid-tenth century/sixteenth century. The book also contains the author's many voyages that he made within the Hijaz region, as well as his trip to Istanbul as an envoy carrying a letter from the Sheriff of Mecca to Sultan Suleiman in which he complains about the Ottoman leader of Medina, Delū Piri. For Al-Nahrawālī, the book was so important that he used to take it with him on all his travels. In fact, he expressed sorrow and discomfort when he lost it, but luckily found it with the help of Bayezid, son of Sultan Suleiman. While the German Institute realised the value of this work publishing the author's voyage to Istanbul in English in 2005 under the editorship of Richard Blackburn, it also recognises the importance of introducing the complete work of Al-Nahrawālī to scholars and researchers.



Beirut, De Gruyter Verlag / Dār al-Farābī, 2023  
ISBN: 9786144851654

The alchemist Abū I-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Müsā al-Anṣārī al-Andalusī, known as Ibn Arfa' Ra's (fl. 6th/12th century) is the author of 'Shudhūr al-dhahab' (The Splinters of Gold), one of the most famous poetry collections of Arabic alchemy, which has been the object of no less than thirteen commentaries. The numerous manuscripts of 'Shudhūr al-dhahab' and its commentaries have been read and copied for more than 700 years in various parts of the Islamic world, from Morocco to India. The very first commentary on 'Shudhūr al-dhahab' was composed by the author Ibn Arfa' Ra's himself. It was transmitted by his disciple Abū I-Qāsim Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣārī under the title 'Kitāb ḥall mushkilāt al-Shudhūr' (The Unraveling of the Difficulties of 'The Splinters') and is extant in at least 31 manuscripts, of which 27 have been taken into account for this critical edition. This book provides the first edition of 'Kitāb ḥall mushkilāt al-Shudhūr', along with an Arabic-English glossary of its alchemical terminology.



Beirut, De Gruyter Verlag / Dār al-Farābī, 2023  
ISBN: 9786144851883

Aḥmad bin 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin Muḥammad al-Barbīr (1747–1811) was a late eighteenth century *adīb*, poet, critic, and muftī of Beirut. Born and educated in Egypt of Levantine parents, he travelled to Beirut as a young man and subsequently settled in Damascus, where he composed the lengthy *maqāma* presented here in print for the first time. This work, entitled 'Maqāmāt al-Barbīr', is edited based on MS Dāral-Kutub 480 *Adab*. The scribe of this unique 50-folio manuscript is unknown. This work not only provides a rich portrait of social and cultural life in late-eighteenth-century Ottoman Damascus, but also offers a different and fascinating understanding of the *maqāma* as a literary form in a historical moment centuries after the classical masters of the genre and just a generation before the transformations of the *Nahḍa*.

# *Beiruter Texte und Studien*

BTS

'Beiruter Texte und Studien' (BTS) is the OIB's peer-reviewed book series for research on the historic and contemporary Middle East. Since its inception in 1964, the series has published around 140 books and has served as a platform for innovative studies. With an established focus on Arabic language and literature, history, society and geography of the Levant, and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, BTS covers a broad spectrum of themes, methods and periods within the wider region.

It documents the rich and diverse history of Middle Eastern Studies and encourages advancements in the field. The series publishes monograph studies, OIB conference proceedings, and other collective volumes in German, English, Arabic and French.

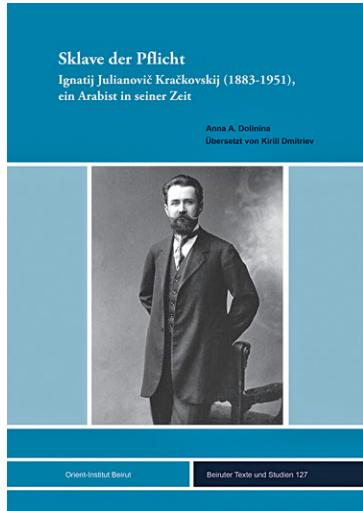
BTS 127

## Sklave der Pflicht

Ignatij Julianovič Kračkovskij (1883–1951), ein Arabist in seiner Zeit

Edited by Anna A. Dolinina

Translated by Kirill Dmitriev



Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2023  
ISBN: 9783987400582

Ignaty J. Krachkovsky (1883–1951) is one of the most important Oriental scholars of the 20th century and is considered the founder of modern Arabic studies in Russia. The German edition of his biography by Anna A. Dolinina (1923–2017) presents his eventful life and exciting academic career to the German-speaking readership. Numerous documents from the archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, including Kračkovskij's letters and diaries, form the basis of the study alongside the personal memories of the biographer. The book sheds light on the historical, political, and intellectual history of the development of Arabic studies in Russia in the first half of the 20th century.





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# *Workshops & Conferences*

# Contested (In)visibilities and Memorial Cultures // Towards a Critical Reading of Cultural Heritage and Conflict

15 MARCH, BEIRUT

ORGANISERS: LILIANA GÓMEZ (DOCUMENTA INSTITUT KASSEL) AND NADIA VON MALTZAHN

In this workshop, we explored memorial cultures and considered critical readings of heritage and the impact of conflict on arts and cultural production. Starting with short presentations by scholars and artists including Gregory Buchakjian, Çiğdem İvren, Liliana Gómez, Yasmine Nachabe Taan, Nadia von Maltzahn, Paul Lowe and Nela Milic, the following interdisciplinary exchange allowed us to think further about sites of tangible and intangible heritage, and engage with visual arts and design practice. The aim was to unpack in/visibility, un/official narratives, in/formal memorial practices as reference points for conflict captured in Lebanon, Colombia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Demarcated by its diversity and complexity, contested heritage is a global issue for tourism, politics, urbanisation and education and we approached it from the lens of philosophy, cultural history, archaeology, museology, design and the arts. It was supported and organised by the Peace and Conflict Culture Network and the documenta Institut Kassel, in cooperation with the Orient-Institut Beirut (LAWHA).



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# The Religious Other in Qur'anic Tafsîr

19–21 MAY, CAIRO (IDEO)

ORGANISERS: THOMAS WÜRTZ, WALID SALEH (UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO),  
EMMANUEL PISANI AND YASMIN AMIN

The conference surprised all its participants with the wide range of angles from which the topic of religious Other and Qur'anic Commentary can be addressed. What is the religious Other? When and how is it addressed? Are commonalities or differences emphasised? These questions served as a common thread throughout the diverse presentations, and soon it became clear that it is not only classical Tafsîr texts that comment on the religious Other.

Angelika Neuwirth's keynote set the tone for three days of engaging discussions and academic exchange among leading scholars of Qur'anic Studies hosted by the Institut Dominicaine des Études Orientales in Cairo. She presented her understanding of the Qur'ân in its relations to the epistemological space of late antiquity. In this sense, the Qur'ân can be seen as a commentary of its time – reflecting biblical methods and traditions, echoes of Jewish and Christian lore and pre-Islamic writers.

Johanna Pink's and Mykhaylo Yakubovych's presentations made the argument to further regard translations as a form of commentary. Pink illustrated how not only Muhammad Ali's Qur'ân translation reflects his values as member of the Ahmadiyya. Yakubovych focused on translations of Ibn Taimîya's Tafsîr, clarifying that it was not only Taimîya who commented on the Qur'ân and the religious Other. By (not) translating particular parts, Tafsîr translators commented on the commentary, so that Taimîya becomes a symbolic reference rather than a real source for modern commentaries.

Thomas Würtz's thoughts on Bible quotes in al-Biqâ'î Qur'anic commentary demonstrated how the commentator engages with the Bible. For instance, when biblical elements contradict the commentator's Islamic interpretation, such as the crucifixion of Jesus, seen in Islam as prophet, he excludes those parts from the commentary.

Similarly, Emmanuel Pisani's talk shed light on a Sufi commentary attributed to al-Qušairî: the 'Laṭā'if al-Isārāt'. While he remains relatively silent with regards to other religions, when Christianity is mentioned, al-Qušairî clearly distinguishes it from Islam, questioning the divinity of Jesus and his crucifixion. This dichotomy between the religious Other and Islam is deployed to create inner-Islamic unity.

Asma Helali discussed the portrayal of Dağgāl in the Qur'ān and Hadith. She showed how examining both sources can reveal patterns of anti-Jewish and anti-Shi'i sentiments in the depiction and identification of the religious Other. Holger Zellentin provided a new reading of the Israelites as religious Other in the Qur'ān. He examined the frequency and contexts in which the three terms 'Children of Israel', 'Scripture People', and 'Jews and Christians' occur. Only seldomly, Jews and Christians appear separate from each other, which also reflects their common Israelite identities in late antique discourse.

Jerusha Rhodes elevated the discussion by showcasing how the application of a fundamental ethical concept of Qur'ān (Kufr) by today's Muslims – be it theological scholars or youth on social media – becomes an impactful commentary of the Qur'ān. Walid Saleh explained how the term 'Muhibbin' came to embody the sum-total of the powers of Qur'ān. Its ambiguous meaning has found many interpretations in Tafsīr tradition. Hosn Abboud performed an intertextual analysis of how Mary is portrayed in Qur'ān and the Gospels, focussing on specific motives such as the 'riħla ila miṣr'.

The intensive 3-day programme culminated with an insightful tour led by Noha Abou Khatwa. Her meticulous exploration of Sultan Hassan and Ibn Tulun mosques, along with the Madrasa of Sirghatmish, revealed fascinating details narrating a history of architectural exchange. Moreover, these monumental structures served as a testament to the pivotal role of architecture in facilitating religious dialogue.

All participants are looking forward to publishing the essence of the conference in a special edition of MIDEO next year. (REPORT: DOROTHEA GÜNTHER)



Conference at  
the IDEO in Cairo.

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# Curating an Artist's (and Parent's) Biography

25 MAY, BEIRUT

ORGANISER: NADIA VON MALTZAHN

FUNDED BY THE VOLKSWAGEN FOUNDATION

LAWHA organised a public panel followed by a closed workshop on 'Curating an Artist's (and Parent's) Biography'. This was the final event around the Summer School 'Moving Biography', which principally took place in 2022 and brought together different perspectives to question disciplinary assumptions and decentre life writing.

It was organised in collaboration with the American University of Beirut and the Global (De)Centre, generously funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. In the public panel, the daughters of Amine El Bacha (1932–2019), Paul Guiragossian (1926–1993) and Saloua Raouda Choucair (1916–2017) – leading artists of Lebanon's art world – talked about the responsibility of taking care of their parent's legacy, what challenges they face in organising an artist estate in Lebanon and what it means to curate a biography that is intrinsically linked to their own. You can listen to an edited version of the presentations on afikra's Youtube or Apple Podcast channel. In the closed workshop that followed, the presenters were joined by other artists' children who are managing their parent's estates. The group came together for an open exchange about their experiences, to define joint challenges and shared needs. The workshop was a first step to (re)connect the families to each other.



Nadia von Maltzahn introduces Mahita El Bacha Urieta, Manuella Guiragossian and Hala Schoukair (from right to left).

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# Alpinism Worldwide // Mountains and Society

15–16 JUNE, BEIRUT

ORGANISER: THOMAS WÜRTZ

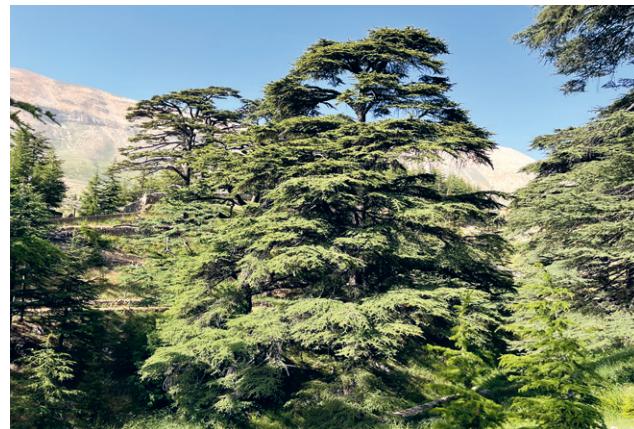
In mid-June, a German writer and biographer, a mountaineer and later politician from Pakistan and a female mountaineer from Lebanon discussed the history and symbolism of alpinism with scientists at the OIB.

Dr Bernhard Viel asked in his talk 'From the Bible to the Screen. A short history of European Alpinism and the Genre of 'Bergfilm'' about the first mountaineer in history. The answer he gave himself was: the prophet Moses. The religious meaning and the mysticism of this summit experience later gave way to a rational exploration of the mountain world. When Francesco Petrarca climbed Mont Ventoux, with its height of 1909 meters in April of the year 1336, this event can be understood as the first step into modern mountaineering. Much later, in the 19th century, scientific interest prevailed. Climbing mountains, once feared, became fashionable to gain insights into the Earth's history and to be enchanted by the newfound beauty of the mountain landscapes. However, this fascination soon gave rise to a heroic and national ethos, with men and women driven by the ambition to demonstrate courage, manliness, and the ability to rise to challenges. Bernhard Viel illustrated this transformation through the example of Luis Trenker, a South Tyrolean mountaineer born in 1892, who contributed to the international acclaim of the revolutionary 'mountain film' genre with movies like 'Berge in Flammen' (1932) [English title: 'The Doomed Battalion']. This genre has since influenced the aesthetics of war, adventure, and sports films.

Top sporting achievements could then be lively experienced in the two following talks. Nazir Sabir from Pakistan gave a vivid account of the obstacles lurking on the way to K2 (8611 m) under the title 'Mountaineering in Pakistan – A personal challenge and its Symbolic Impact'. Climbing K2 in 1986, which is considered one of the most dangerous peaks in the world, gave him important experience about the limits of human capabilities. At the same time, however, it earned him recognition and support in society. He was elected by the people of the Hunza Valley, his home region, as a member of parliament in Islamabad. Here he started providing aid and support to mountaineers in distress, promoting environmental conservation in the Himalayas, and nurturing young locals through mentorship and guidance.

Anyone who listened to Joyce Azzam, when she spoke about 'The Transformative Power of Lebanese Mountains: A Strategy for Rural Tourism Development and Youth Empowerment in Lebanon', could feel that reaching the peak is not the ultimate goal

of mountaineering. The first Lebanese woman to climb the seven highest peaks on all continents focused on the challenges in preparing for the endeavour of climbing and overcoming also personal disadvantages, turning them into a positive spirit. The central message of her experiences on all the mountains and her reflection on it was very clear: People who have made it to the top help others with their experience. When it comes to connecting people or motivating the next generation, only the sky is the limit. The embedding of the two personal testimonies in the general history of mountaineering and the changed patterns of interpretation of what can be gained for people from the mountains, made similarities clear. The Alps, the Karakoram Mountains, the Himalayas and the other high peaks of the world, but also Lebanon, inspire all those who go up and those who hear about it later.



# Spaces and Places – Art Exhibitions in Lebanon (1940s–1990s) // (Re)assessing the Role of Cultural Clubs and foreign Cultural Centres

13 SEPTEMBER, TRIPOLI (LEBANESE UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE)

14 SEPTEMBER, BEIRUT (OIB)

ORGANISERS: MONIQUE BELLAN AND ÇİĞDEM İVREN

This workshop organised by LAWHA/Orient-Institut Beirut in collaboration with the Lebanese University in Tripoli (day one) and the Goethe-Institut Libanon (day two) took place in Tripoli and Beirut on 13 and 14 September. While the first day focused on cultural and artistic initiatives in and from Tripoli and Antelias highlighting the 'Groupe des dix' (founded in Tripoli in 1974) and the Cultural Movement Antelias (founded in 1978), the second day examined the role of foreign cultural centres and the Goethe-Institut Libanon in particular. The workshop brought together scholars, artists and practitioners working in the field of arts and culture, namely Fadl Ziadeh, Adnan Khouja, Diana Jeha, Brahim Zod, Juliette Rassi, Greta Naufal, Çiğdem İvren and Anne Eberhard, who shared and discussed their different perspectives, experiences, and analyses. While the focus was on the period between the 1970s and 1990s, the participants also gave insight into present-day exhibition policies and practices. The workshop's objective was to examine the role of cultural clubs and foreign cultural centres in promoting visual arts in Lebanon, a perspective that has largely been neglected so far. It discussed questions such as whether art exhibitions were a priority of certain clubs or centres rather than others? Did they focus on specific art forms, styles or media, and who were the artists exhibiting there? The workshop also questioned the conceptual and structural frameworks associated with these cultural centres and clubs and the category of 'alternative space'. It became clear during the workshop that the promotion of visual arts was not intrinsic to those institutions but something that varied strongly depending on the initiatives and interests of individuals working in these institutions, as well as on a certain degree of liberty allowing for those initiatives.



Participants of the first workshop day at the Lebanese University in Tripoli.

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# *Film Screenings*

# Cinema Weeks of the Orient-Institut Beirut //

## Communities of Being-Together across Filmic Caesuras

7/21 JUNE AND 5 JULY, BEIRUT

ORGANISERS: ALI JABER AND ANAÏS FARINE

Looking back and confronting the different blind spots that shape the histories of Cinema and communities in Lebanon, this film and talk programme organised by Ali Jaber and Anaïs Farine intended to explore the concept of being-with the unfinished in various ways. It aimed to discuss the caesuras that shape cinematic language and respond to the erasure of a community of specters – the specters of a community-to-come, of the missing-other-to-come-back, and of the concept of living-together amongst the living-on in 'post-post' civil wars Lebanon.

Curated by Anaïs Farine, the first screening proposed to narrate the life and spirit of the Arab Ciné Club in Beirut (1973–1982) by retrieving, watching, and discussing three short films made by some board committee members of this film-society ('Ghassan Kanafani, A Word...A Gun', Kassem Hawal), as well as short films that have been seen and debated in the context of the Arab Ciné Club. The talk introducing the cinema weeks underlined how films have participated in the struggle for social and political transformations by examining the links between student uprisings and the creation of the Arab Ciné Club in Beirut ('Alors', Jean Chamoun). It examined the caesuras in the history of the Arab Ciné Club, as well as the looting of a great number of Palestinian documents during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon (among those, the original copy of 'Glow Of Memories' by Ismail Shammout).

Curated by Ali Jaber, the second week of the Festival consisted in the screening of 'A Perfect Day' (2005). Discussing this film made by Joanna Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, Jaber argued that Derrida's visor-effect can be engaged productively against Lacan's anamorphosis, as that which forces an adjustment in spectatorial 'ways of seeing' and 'unknowing' of 'unacknowledged histories'. In the film, Jaber explained, every cinematic spectral visitation brings the disadusting – spacing, delaying, deferring – of the times of death and mourning, and thus disrupting the state's active 'manipulation of mourning'. Claudia, the film's protagonist, remains without a sepulcher. In her 'impossible-mourning' however, she welcomes a liaison with a 'faceless' visitor whose 'untimely returns' disjoint the present – our present – rendering it indefinitely out-of-sync.

Building on his previous talk, Ali Jaber selected Eliane Raheb's documentary 'Sleepless Nights' (2012) for the last event of the OIB Cinema Weeks. If mourning, as Derrida contends, is an 'experiential structure', a figure of the impossible, then what happens if the perpetrator 'engages me to the death of the other' without ever issuing any truth, Jaber asked? What happens if the other's murder is denied as having ever occurred and mourning purposefully made impossible? The probing of an impossible-mourning welcomes a deconstruction of the scenes of forgiveness and 'reconciliation' in the 'time after time', when a 'slew' of perpetrators sought forgiveness for crimes without content. In his presentation, Jaber argued that the concept of testimony, in 'Sleepless Nights' remains in the hands of the 'torturer', 'once and for all'. The torturer testifies and confesses for crimes without truths nor corpses. Worse: when avowal comes with a demand for forgiveness, we ask, in every instance, who is addressed in this demand, and doesn't it commit the crime anew.

The screenings took place in the garden of the Orient-Institut Beirut. The Cinema Weeks constituted an important space to watch and discuss films between the OIB affiliated researchers and fellows, and to meet with an audience specifically reaching the institute to attend these events. Each talk and screening has been followed by Q&A with the two curators.



# *Summer Schools*

# BICAR Summer School //

## Is there a Revolutionary Subject?

19–30 JUNE, BEIRUT (BICAR/OIB)

ORGANISERS: SAMI KHATIB AND SARAH EL BULBEISI

In June, the Beirut Institute for Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR) organised parts of its yearly Summer School at OIB. Around 80 international and local postgraduate students from the fields of Critical Theory, broadly construed, convened for the opening and closing event as well as the PhD colloquium in the library and garden spaces. BICAR was established in 2015 and aims to promote critical thought and analysis with a special focus on studying manifestations of modernity in Lebanon and the Middle East. As a public research and educational institute, it seeks to cultivate a space for rigorous research, debate, and dialogue. In 2023, the BICAR Summer School focused on the question 'Is There a Revolutionary Subject?', and was organised in cooperation with the OIB, the American University of Beirut and the Barzakh Bookshop. Thematically, the Summer School comprised four main courses, engaging with the question of revolutionary subjectivity in the region and beyond. As an interdisciplinary event, the Summer School invited perspectives and theoretical angles from philosophy, psychoanalysis, history, anthropology, art history and contemporary art.

Despite their different approaches, most courses and accompanying lectures started from the diagnoses of an absence of a revolutionary subject within the realm of politics. However, this absence was discussed in various ways. With regard to continental philosophy, the critique of the subject – Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian or otherwise – is the cornerstone of the Nietzschean and Heideggerian critiques of modernity (and of their reactionary politics). As it was pointed out throughout the event, this critique of the subject was subsequently given an emancipatory cast not only by Nietzschean thinkers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze but also by Marxists like Adorno, for whom the primacy of the subject forms the crux of the logic of domination. From this vantage, Lukács' theory of the revolutionary subject, which centers the proletariat as self-conscious commodity, is supposedly tainted not just by residual Hegelianism but by a logic of domination culminating in Stalinism.

In line with its interdisciplinary approach, the Summer School also invited psychoanalytical accounts. Psychoanalysis, for its part, develops a more nuanced critique of the subject. Where poststructuralism reduces the subject to an effect of impersonal forces – substantialising the unconscious – psychoanalysis conceives it as an irreparable tear in the fabric of being.

The subject is the gap manifesting the unconscious as 'not-fully-being'. In this regard, psychoanalysis renovates the Hegelian concept of the subject as self-relating negativity. Subjective destitution, as conceived by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, is only possible via the discourse of psychoanalysis, which paves the way for a transformative act. But the destitution of the subject in contemporary critical discourse continues to be conceived in poststructuralist terms.

Modern history also seems to confirm the destitution of the revolutionary subject. The European working class's post-war accommodation with capitalism (not to mention its embrace of fascism in the 1930s) casts doubt on attempts to invest it with revolutionary agency. In the fifty years since the end of the post-war boom, capital's renewed onslaught against labour has not reconsolidated the working class into a revolutionary subject. Thus communists have reaffirmed the distinction between proletariat and working class to challenge the latter's revolutionary credentials together with the assumption that revolution requires a unitary subject. However, if proletarianisation is an ongoing process that consists of homogenising and commodifying subjective experience, what are the concrete mechanisms through which it occurs?

The Summer School departed from this historical-political question by inviting different approaches that also focused on capitalist ecologies, the privatisation and individualisation of psychological symptoms of the individual by the therapy and wellness industries, as well as the ongoing co-optation of all potential sites of radical enunciation by the discourses of neo-liberal capitalism. How might a revolutionary subject withstand this slow emptying out of social experience? Can it be sustained against such mechanisms? Can psychoanalysis help resist this process of psychic hollowing? Could it help reconstruct a theory of the revolutionary subject? In the final analysis, the Summer School concluded with an open discussion on these questions and referred to the experience and political defeat of the Lebanese revolution in 2019, which precisely lacked a revolutionary subject.

# ISTANBUL Summer Academy //

## Entangled Histories of Concepts in the Bengal to Balkans Complex

4–15 SEPTEMBER, ORIENT-INSTITUT ISTANBUL

ORGANISERS: JENS HANSSEN AND CHRISTOPH NEUMANN (ORIENT-INSTITUT ISTANBUL)

Conceptual history is an interdisciplinary approach to historical research that focuses on the study of how concepts change on one hand throughout the centuries, and on the other hand through different civilisations and cultures, and gain new meanings or lose some of their contents. It emerged in the mid-20th century, particularly associated with the works of German historian Reinhart Koselleck. The central idea of conceptual history is to understand the development of ideas and concepts within their historical context. Scholars in this field analyse the meanings of key terms and concepts in different historical periods, examining how their usage evolves, adapts, or transforms over time. This approach recognises that language is not static, and the meanings of words and concepts can be deeply influenced by historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. By studying the evolution of concepts, conceptual history provides insights into broader historical processes, ideological changes, and shifts in societal values. It helps historians to grasp the complexities of how ideas are shaped by historical developments. Conceptual history goes beyond a simple linguistic analysis and seeks to uncover the underlying structures of thought that shape the conceptual framework of a given historical period. Conceptual history is often in close contact with other sub-fields of history like history of ideas, intellectual history or cultural history. While these other subfields tend to deal with a wider range of intellectual trends and movements and cultural phenomena, conceptual history tends to be more methodologically rigorous in its analysis of specific terms and concepts, often delving deeply into linguistic and contextual nuances.

Referring to the scope of this 'Summer Academy from Bengal to Balkans', it is also worth to contemplate on the advantages and limits of applying European concepts in the Islamic world, which have several breaking points. Most important of these breaking points may be linguistic and cultural aspects. Differences in language can lead to variations in the understanding and translation of European concepts into Islamic languages. Additionally, the Islamic worldview and theological principles can influence how European concepts are received. These and subsequent questions were examined by 35 researchers who met 10 days long in September 2023 at the Orient Institute Istanbul (OII) for Bengal to Balkans (B2B) Summer Academy, the concept of which was developed between the three institutes of the Max Weber Foundation i.e. the OII, the Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) and the Max Weber Forum for South Asian Studies (MWF Delhi).

Several European universities were also co-organisers of this event. It has been highlighted in the Summer Academy that the B2B perspective delivers a suitable umbrella framework to analyse intellectual entanglements and to follow the journey of ideas and concepts in this vast geography. Throughout two intensive weeks many aspects of conceptual history have been discussed with reference to historians like Reinhart Koselleck, Quentin Skinner and Shahab Ahmed. Social history, history of language, change of concepts through time and space, 'Sattelzeit', historical time, universals of anthropological concepts, the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous, conceptualisation of history through 'taraqqī' (progress), contextualising the sources were only some of the topics and key concepts, which have been discussed.

A Summer Academy to conceptual history opened new dimensions with regard to my running project, which is an analysis of Қınālīzāde 'Alī Çelebī's (1510–1572) *'Akhlāk-i 'Alā'l'* (The Sublime Ethics). Қınālīzāde's professional rotation as a judge between the cities Bursa, Edirne, Damascus, Cairo and Istanbul is a good example of such entanglements and intellectual interaction. His *'Akhlāk-i 'Alā'l'* combines various elements including the shari'a, Greek philosophy, Persian adab literature, taṣawwuf, poetry, storytelling etc. More concretely, I can mention the following three points, which were in direct association with my research project.

First aspect is the relationship between language and historical reality. It has been discussed in the Summer Academy whether there is an interaction between the wording of historical theories and historical reality. For example, did sectarianism exist in Lebanon before anybody talked about it? If the reality was named in another fashion, would it still be sectarianism today? Қınālīzāde argues in his book that the main aim in writing this book is to lead first himself and then other people to virtues. In other words, in order that the virtues can be instilled in the society, they need to be formulated in words first. A side project within my main project is translation of *'Akhlāk-i 'Alā'l'* into Arabic. The discussions in the Summer Academy around the problems of translations showed me that other researchers also encountered similar difficulties in their academic translations. One of the most important hazards in such translations is that sometimes the same word gains different meanings in different milieus. The concept of 'dīn' (religion), for example, may not denote to the same conceptual set of associations in India and or Egypt or Iran. In my translation project too, I encountered numerous examples of the fact that I had to find other words in the translation than used by Қınālīzāde, although the word he used was an Arabic word. I realised that the same Arabic word gained different meaning in Ottoman Turkish than in the Arabic language. The third aspect is the Koselleckian concept of historical time. The idea to differentiate historical time from natural time is a core approach, since history has always to do with time. From this perspective, historical time permits the past to be seen anew.

For Koselleck, historical time denotes to periods associated with the course of inter-subjective action during which natural time is suspended. Disconnecting historical time from natural time allows historical research to consider different time conceptions.

For Kınâlîzâde and for the tradition to which he belonged, the flow of time was circular contrary to the modern conception of time as linear. Like drawing a circle is only completed when it reaches to the starting point, everything in the flow of time returns to its origin, and in this way each circle becomes completed. Time was conceived as the articulation of these simultaneously functioning circles. Behind the famous idea of circle of justice was the same circular conception of time.

Studies on intellectual history cannot ignore the change of concepts through time and space. This Summer Academy gave opportunity to all participants to reflect on these aspects from the perspective of their own research projects. After successful completion of this first Summer Academy, it is agreed that the academy will be repeated in a biennial rhythm. (REPORT: FATIH ERMIŞ)



Group Picture  
of the Summer  
Academy,  
7 September.

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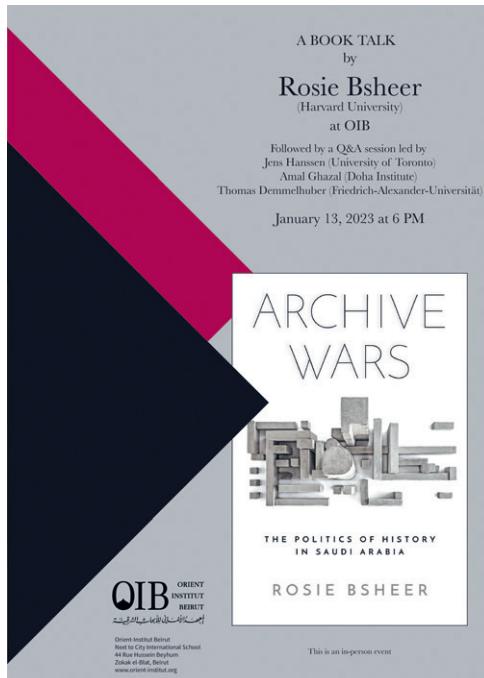
# *Public Research Seminars*

# A Book Talk by Rosie Bsheer//

## Archive Wars

ROSIE BSHEER  
13 JANUARY, BEIRUT

The production of history is premised on the selective erasure of certain pasts and the artifacts that stand witness to them. From the elision of archival documents to the demolition of sacred and secular spaces, each act of destruction is also an act of state building. Following the 1991 Gulf War, political elites in Saudi Arabia pursued these dual projects of historical commemoration and state formation with greater fervour to enforce their postwar vision for state, nation, and economy. Seeing Islamist movements as the leading threat to state power, they sought to de-center religion from educational, cultural, and spatial policies. This book talk explored the increasing secularisation of the postwar Saudi state and how it manifested in assembling a national archive and reordering urban space in Riyadh and Mecca.



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# Waving the Mantle of the Prophet //

## The Journey of Umm Salama's Narration of Hadith Al-Kisā over Ten Centuries

YASMIN AMIN

25 JANUARY, BEIRUT

Hadith compilations went through a complex evolution from *şahīfa*, *juz'*, *risāla*, *sunan*, *musannaf*, *jāmi'*, *musnad*, *mu'jam*, *mustadrak* and *mustakhraj*, each reflecting choices and different methodologies of their compilers/collectors. To illustrate this evolution, this study looks at the journey of one particular Hadith, narrated by Umm Salama, Mother of the Believers, tracing its 135 different versions found in Sunnī collections and the 185 versions found in the Shi'ite collections. The oldest Sunnī one was collected by Affān b. Muslim (d. 219AH/834AD) and the last one was collected by Ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī (d. 852AH/1449AD) covering almost six centuries. The oldest Shi'ite version was collected by Salīm b. Qays (d. 80/699) and the last one was collected by Allāma al-Majlisī (d. 1111/1627) covering almost ten centuries. The different versions of the narration reveal seven distinct storylines or plots. Though the variations differ considerably in details, certain characteristics remain, namely a fairly constant frame story and a relatively variable enclosed content, with the main characters staying the same and some new characters being added. Furthermore, there are some noticeable common themes regarding the additions or omissions from the main body of the narration. This study attempts to answer several questions: why are there so many different versions of a narration by one person? Do these differences reflect the choices of the compilers/editors as well as their interference with the material? What do these differences reflect? Was the Hadith manipulated to reflect sectarian ideologies, political developments, and theological frameworks or are the differences merely dramatic tools used for the benefit of the different audiences or both? Do compilers/editors of hadith collections have certain personal agendas?

# At the Arab Film Club in Beirut //

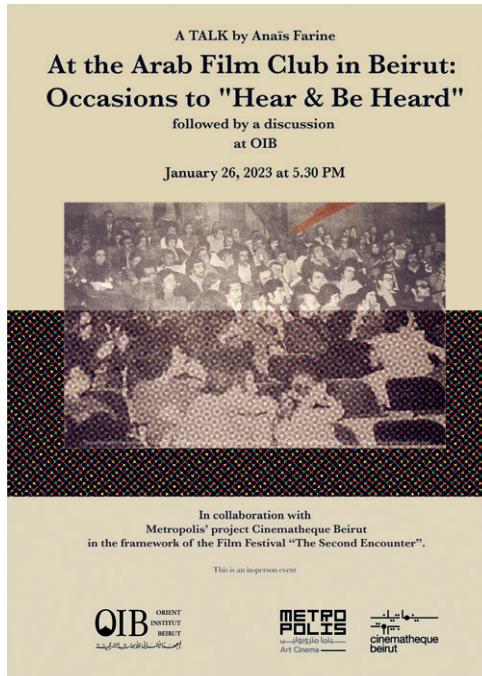
## Occasions to 'Hear and be Heard'

ANAÏS FARINE

26 JANUARY, BEIRUT

ORGANISED IN COLLABORATION WITH METROPOLIS' PROJECT CINEMATHEQUE BEIRUT  
IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FILM FESTIVAL 'THE SECOND ENCOUNTER'

This talk traced the history of the Arab Film Club in Beirut, a film-society established in 1973 that testifies to the growing importance of alternative Arab cinema of the times. This cinematic movement started in Damascus in 1972 and was characterised by an innovative approach to film forms and narratives while participating in the political struggles of the global 68. The talk aimed at documenting the activation practices around films that were part of the alternative cinema movement and explored specifically this little-known history of cinema in Lebanon by questioning the politicisation of 'cinephilia' in the early 1970s in the country, as well as the current patrimonialisation of some films made and/or screened by members of this initiative.



# Occidentalist Mapping // Arab Spring and Self Subversive Representation of the Other

EID MOHAMED

9 FEBRUARY, BEIRUT

This talk addressed Occidentalism, not only as a means of deconstructing Orientalist misconception about the East or even of writing back to the empire, but also within the process of regaining self-assertion or retrieving an autonomous agency that allows for proper and independent construction of eastern Arab identity. No wonder there are multiple threads or undertones within the current of Occidentalism, or rather Occidentalisms. The talk thus addressed the subversive tone in selected Arabic literary/filmic material that, enlightened by the disillusionary moment of Arab Spring, rework the narrative of identity construction, free from any sense of inferiority or impotence that might have been instilled through the common thread of the orientalist discourse. In its quest for conscious self-representation, this native – and indirectly – Occidentalist narrative both displaces and/or decentralises the largely homogenised West as a mere variable in process of local identity construction and underscores a subversive sense of agency, where the west is at times ignored and at others appropriated, and even at other times misconceived and/or misrepresented.

# Reverberations of Interconnected Crises //

## Solidarity, Agency & Identity after the Arab Spring

MAHA YAHYA  
21 FEBRUARY, BEIRUT

Conflicts, authoritarian resurgence, mass forced displacement, and economic crisis are impacting countries across the Middle East and North Africa. These have led many to depict this as the onset of an Arab Winter. This talk unpacked some of the political and socioeconomic challenges facing different countries in the region and questioned prospective trajectories, including patterns of solidarity evident in the first wave of uprisings? It asked, how do we engage with politicised identities and their political repercussions across the regional landscape and is there room for new forms of radical politics?

# Beyond the Lines //

## Social Networks and Palestinian Militant Organisations in Wartime Lebanon

SARAH E. PARKINSON

16 MARCH, BEIRUT

'Beyond the Lines' explores the social underpinnings of rebel adaptation and resilience. How do rebel groups cope with crises such as repression, displacement, and fragmentation? What explains changes in militant organisations' structures and behaviours over time?

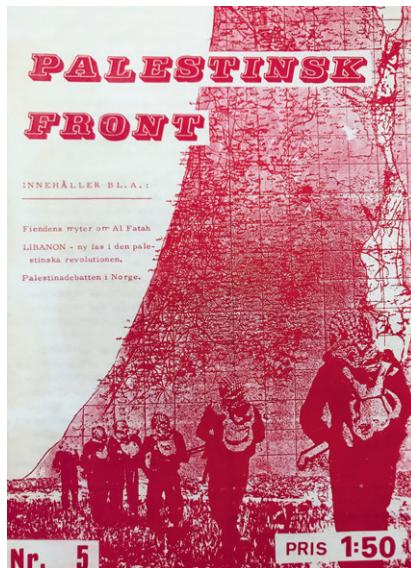
Drawing on nearly two years of ethnographic research, Sarah E. Parkinson traces shifts in Palestinian militant groups' internal structures and practices during the civil war of 1975 to 1990, and foreign occupations of Lebanon. She shows that most militants approach asymmetrical warfare as a series of challenges centered around information and logistics, characterised by problems such as supplying constantly mobile forces, identifying collaborators, disrupting rival belligerents' operations, and providing essential services like healthcare. Effective negotiation of these challenges contributes to militant organisations' resilience and survival. In this context, the foundation of rebel resilience lies with militants' ability to repurpose their everyday social networks to organisational ends. In the Lebanese setting, 'Beyond the Lines' demonstrates how regionalised differences in Israeli, Syrian, and Lebanese deployment of violence triggered distinct social network responses that led to divergent organisational outcomes for Palestinian militants.

# The Globalisation of Palestine Reconsidered //

## Solidarity Movements and Entangled Revolutions of the 1970s

SUNE HAUGBØLLE  
23 MARCH, BEIRUT

From the late 1960s, Palestine solidarity developed as an 'entangled' project aligning the energies and ambitions of the Palestinian liberation movement with various progressive, revolutionary forces around the world. This presentation showed new evidence from archives, private papers, and interviews that show how Palestine was 'globalised' as a central cause for the Left. The material gives new insight into alliances and partnerships, and the exchange of ideas and resources between solidarity activists and Palestinian organisations in Beirut. A careful reconstruction of these connections, which included militant, as well as artistic networks, raises broader historiographic questions about the globalisation of the Palestinian cause, such as: Who curated the struggle? How did these collectives and networks of global solidarity develop? And how should we write histories of Palestine solidarity today?



Cover of the  
issue of *Palestinsk  
Front*, Nr. 5, 1971.

# Anthropological Trajectory, Theoretical and Ethnographic Issues

HASSAN RACHIK  
25 APRIL, BEIRUT

In the early 1980s, on the threshold of my path as a scholar, speaking about oneself was considered inappropriate and unscientific, since it contradicted the requirements of objectivity. From the 1990s onward, it has become almost normal for a researcher to include himself in the text; the use of 'I' has almost become a mandatory ritual. The dogmatism of objectivism was abandoned in favour of another dogmatism that made commitment, the 'disease of the diary', and narcissistic presentation the dogma of the postmodern scholar. When writing about my path as a scholar, I am subject and object at the same time; yet this does not mean that I am in a process of direct confrontation with myself. To create a distance to myself, I used two types of mediation. The first is empirical. My experience as a researcher left traces and archives: my field notebooks, my recorded interviews with informants, summaries of my theoretical readings, my publications, etc. The second mediation is theoretical: in analysing, my path I applied the same method that I used in my studies of the work of my predecessors and colleagues, which I summarized in the concept of ethnographic positivism. The 'I' that I used to describe my path is not abstract but rather time-bound, variable: the agile novice, the learner, imbued with structural analysis, then with theories of collective action and microscopic ethnography, the agile researcher, counsellor, etc. I also tried to locate the 'I' in a series of contexts and networks of academic relationships. Where did I start my path story? I confined myself to the period before acquiring a position as a young researcher, explaining the effects of my Marxist readings, my activity in a movie club, and my university studies on my choice of the research profession, as well as my shift from legal studies to sociology and anthropology. The path of the researcher is mainly filled with theoretical questions and issues. I propose three questions related to the idea of decolonising anthropology, the totalitarian approaches to Moroccan society, and my status as an anthropologist in his own country. Finally, I talked about fieldwork, which occupied a central place in my path. I confined myself to raising two questions relating, respectively, to writing and the spirit of the field. I wanted to stress that it is not only about recounting my experience, but also about achieving a degree of abstraction that allows comparison with other experiences.

# Anthropology 'Out of Place' //

## Towards a New Ethnographic Praxis

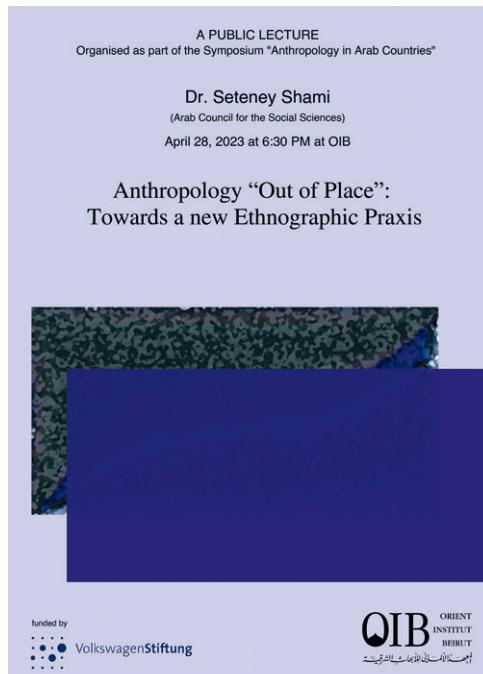
SETENEY SHAMI

28 APRIL, BEIRUT

ORGANISED AS PART OF THE SYMPOSIUM 'ANTHROPOLOGY IN ARAB COUNTRIES'

FUNDED BY THE VOLKSWAGEN FOUNDATION

Across academia in the Arab region, there is a resurgence of interest in anthropology as a discipline and ethnography as a method. How are we to understand this interest, and what kinds of advancements might it promise for university disciplines on the one hand and for social research on the other? This question takes on additional complexity given the political and social upheavals that the region is experiencing. The long-term promise of a new or renewed engagement with anthropology should be evaluated through its capacity to reflect and interpret the dismemberment of states and societies and its ability to apprehend visions of alternative futures.

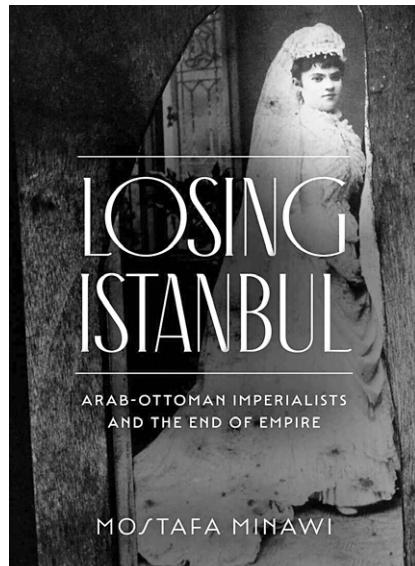


# Losing Istanbul // Arab-Ottoman Imperialists and the End of the Empire

MOSTAFA MINAWI

24 MAY, BEIRUT

'Losing Istanbul' offers an intimate history of empire, following the rise and fall of a generation of Arab-Ottoman imperialists living in Istanbul. Mostafa Minawi shows how these men and women negotiated their loyalties and guarded their privileges through a microhistorical study of the changing social, political, and cultural currents between 1878 and the First World War. He narrates lives lived in these turbulent times – the joys and fears, triumphs and losses, pride and prejudices – while focusing on the complex dynamics of ethnicity and race in an increasingly Turco-centric imperial capital.



Book cover 'Losing Istanbul', published by Stanford University Press, 2022.

# Charles Malik, On Being and Time //

## The Division on Heidegger from the 1937 Harvard Thesis

NADER EL-BIZRI  
13 JUNE, BEIRUT

This freshly published volume contains the first printed edition with notes and commentaries of the section on Martin Heidegger's 'Sein und Zeit' in Charles Malik's 1937 philosophy doctoral thesis at Harvard University. This stands as a pioneering Anglo-phone engagement with Heidegger's thinking in treating themes like death, existence, hermeneutics, history, humanism, metaphysics, modernity, ontology, phenomenology, and time, which are of interest to Heidegger Studies and Malik Studies, and to investigating the modern confluences of German and Lebanese thought, as embodied in Heidegger's standing as a towering philosopher, and in Malik's attributes as a notable thinker, educator, and diplomat. The theme of the book contributes, thus, to a growing interest in this line of research in philosophy. It has been edited and annotated within the framework of the OIB's in-house series 'Beirut Texts and Studies' (BTS) by Prof Nader El-Bizri.

# The Lebanon Uprising of 2019 //

## Voices from the Revolution

RIMA MAJED

21 SEPTEMBER, BEIRUT

In October 2019, hundreds of thousands took to the streets of Lebanon to protest austerity measures in what became known as the 'tawra'. These were the largest mass protests seen in the country's modern history.

The Lebanon Uprising of 2019 puts the revolution in its historical and regional context, and also follows the huge transformations that have been unraveling in Lebanon ever since. The book is a unique source of testimonies that brings to the fore the voices of those scholars, activists, researchers, and journalists who took part in the protests or were closely involved in the unfolding events. These accounts include stories about specific events and struggles, views of the uprising from various regions of the country, and reflections on topics such as the labour struggle, disability, the student movement, foreign interventions, the struggle for preserving environmental spaces, the role of refugees and non-Lebanese within the movement, and women and queer participation. The book situates the protests within the historical, political, economic, social, and environmental foundations of the Lebanese polity, as well as in the broader context of a 'second wave' of Arab uprisings and a global wave of upheavals in 2019, making this book a testament to the rich history of protests and activism in the country. It features some primary documents, including photos and other materials that were disseminated in the streets and over social media platforms, making this book an important resource of first-hand knowledge.

# A Culture of Building //

## Courtyard Houses in the Old City of Aleppo

DIMA DAYOUB / ANNE MOLLENHAUER

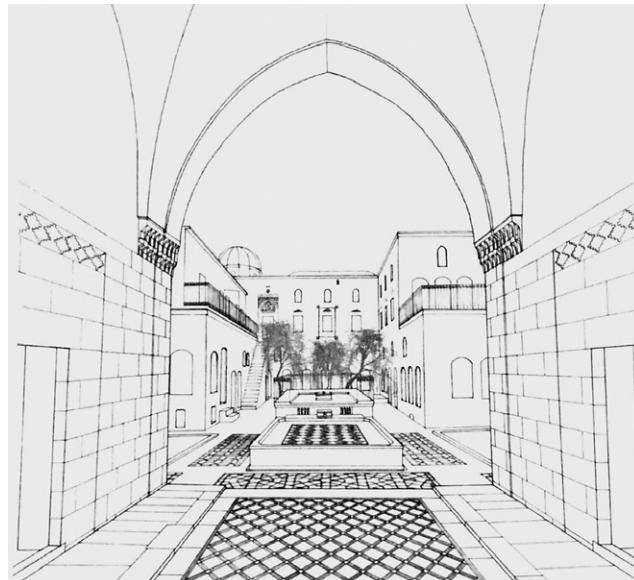
4 OCTOBER, BEIRUT

SUPPORTED BY THE ASSOCIATION 'FRIENDS OF THE MUSEUM FOR ISLAMIC ART AT PERGAMON-MUSEUM'  
FUNDED BY THE GERMAN FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE

Book launch of the new publication of the Syrian Heritage Archive Project, published in English in Beirut by AL-AYN Editions, 2023.

The book documents the local knowledge behind what constitutes a courtyard house in Aleppo, and how that corresponds to local building materials and techniques.

Broadly informative, the study draws upon unique documentation, sharing hands-on experience of local and international scholars and professionals across a variety of disciplines – including geography, art history, architecture, archaeology, structural engineering, landscape architecture, stone masonry, and carpentry.



Book cover  
illustration by  
Jean-Claude David,  
Thierry Grandin,  
Mohammad  
Fakhry Halabieh.

# First Josef van Ess Memorial Lecture at the OIB //

## Thinking through Smell. Olfaction in Early Modern Near and Middle Eastern Intellectual History

CHRISTIAN LANGE / MAHER JARRAR  
7 OCTOBER, BEIRUT

Pleasant smells and olfactory connoisseurship form an important theme in the literary and religious cultures of the early modern Near and Middle East. Nurtured by a centuries-old tradition of celebrating the human ability to appreciate aromatic scents, knowledge of how olfaction works and of what it says about the human condition was a staple among the educated elite. However, olfactory sensibilities differed significantly along aesthetic, epistemological, and religious lines. While poets continued to deploy sophisticated olfactory conceits, philosophers were involved in debates about the materiality or immateriality of smell; mystics speculated about the nexus between olfaction, divine immanence, and salvation; and legally-minded individuals worried about the ethical and theological implications of perfume. Examining the works of a number of philosophers, mystics, and legal scholars, this lecture aimed to reveal the intricate layers of meaning that undergirded olfactory thought across *falsafa*, *taṣawwuf* and *fiqh* in the 11th/17th century.



John Singer Sargent,  
'Fumée d'ambre gris'  
(*'Smoke of Ambergris'*),  
1880, oil on canvas.  
Clark Art Institute,  
1955.15 (detail).

# **Before Solidere // The Urban History and Planned Erasure of Downtown Beirut's Ghalghoul Neighbourhood, 1958–1975**

JAN ALTANER  
11 OCTOBER, BEIRUT

Employing approaches of urban, social, and economic history, my dissertation examines Lebanon's political economy following the country's independence in 1943 until the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. It explores the ways in which the Greater Beirut area developed and transformed during this time by drawing on Arabic, French, and English sources found in Lebanese, European, and American archives and on oral history interviews. The pivotal role of urban space for Lebanon's political economy, visible in real estate investments, social housing projects, or the development of informal neighbourhoods, but also in landlord-renter relations, lies at the centre of this project. Moreover, the dissertation presents a history of Beirut deeply embedded in and shaped by regional and global flows of capital and ideas and attempts to historicise the financialisation of Beirut's urban space and the ensuing shortages of affordable housing.

# Conflicting Values //

## The Global South and the West

THOMAS WÜRTZ

27 NOVEMBER, KATHOLISCHE AKADEMIE IN BERLIN

After a successful event in 2022, the Orient-Institut Beirut, together with its partners, the Maecenata-Stiftung, the Freunde des Leibniz-Zentrums Moderner Orient e.V., and the Katholische Akademie in Berlin, invited to another discussion round in autumn 2023. The topic of the evening: 'Conflicting values. The Global South and the West'. A highly controversial, multi-layered topic – and in view of the current world situation – one that is as acute as it is important.

'Is Europe in a lost position?' said Prof Dr Udo Steinbach in his introductory speech. The dualism between a 'rules-based' international order demanded by the West on the one hand, and a changed power constellation on the other, is intrinsic to the current debate on the reorganisation of the global system. The times in which the problems of the West were perceived as those of the world are a thing of the past, at the latest since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the demand for a rules-based international order is all too often understood as a cliché for Western hegemonic claims.

In addition to discussing this initial question, the panelists looked at the central aspects of this conflict, as well as the scope and limits of a global consensus on values. Appropriate to the topic, it was approached from multiple perspectives and across disciplines; in their short presentations and in the subsequent discussion, the experts were able to present different points of view and perspectives on different values, such as human rights, democracy and refugee rights, and bring in different regional perspectives. The complementary approaches thus offered a comprehensive, holistic perspective and profound, interesting insights.

Prof em. Dr Philipp Sarasin was Professor of Modern General and Swiss History at the Department of History at the University of Zurich until 2022. His main areas of research include the history of knowledge and the history of the Cold War. In his lecture, he placed a historical focus on the genesis of human rights and important milestones: starting with the *Droits de l'Homme*, which saw the first formulation of human rights after the French Revolution, through the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, to the events of 1977. For Sarasin, this was a historic and, above all, future-defining year in general and for human rights in particular. In his inaugural address that year, US President Jimmy Carter formulated for the first time an absolute claim to the enforcement of human rights – even beyond the borders of state sovereignty. This change of direction proved to be groundbreaking and has shaped the foreign policy and self-image of

the USA and Western states to this day. It also laid the foundation for the debate on interventionist wars and the Responsibility to Protect in recent decades. At the same time, Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in the same year. This was symptomatic of the grassroots character of the demand for and implementation of human rights, which – contrary to all preconceptions of human rights as a supposedly Western construct – were demanded for the first time on a broad scale in the 1970s, especially by citizens of the so-called 'second world'.

Katja Drinhausen is Programme Director at the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) in Berlin. In her research, the sinologist focuses on the development of China's legal system and governance, including digital government, in particular human rights and state minority policy. In her lecture, she shed light on the Chinese official-state perspective. Following an overview of the Chinese cosmos of values, which is characterised by a collectivist understanding of democracy, whose telos is material benefits and security and in which participatory elements play a subordinate role, she discussed points of contact and differences, as well as how Europe could potentially deal with these. For example, the Western-influenced concept of a rule-based order is seen by China as serving only an end in itself. However, contrary to the concerns often expressed, China has no intention of abolishing or undermining this order, but rather has the ambition to shape the rules of this order itself in a new and sustainable way. To achieve this, China is pursuing a variety of projects, founding organisations, and confidently claiming to speak for the world. At the same time, China represents a new security actor that – in contrast to the West – is unencumbered for many states, which harbors both opportunities and risks. In the process of China's rewriting of the global order, which the world is currently witnessing, Europe must now become aware, according to Dirnhausen, of which fundamental principles it is willing and able to stand up for in the competition of values.

Dr Jochen Lingelbach is an African historian and geographer in the Department of History at the University of Bayreuth and a member of the Cluster of Excellence 'Africa multiple. Reconfiguring African Studies'. His research focuses on migration history, refugee camps and refugee aid in East Africa since the colonial era. He began his lecture with a historical comparison of refugee movements between Greece and Turkey. He drew parallels between the experiences of Greek refugees in the early 1940s, who fled from fascism and war towards the Middle East, and the Syrian refugees who embarked on the same arduous journey almost 80 years later for very similar reasons. The key difference here is not the experiences, but the direction or origin: As Europeans, the Greek refugees were treated significantly better than their contemporary fellow refugees. A situation with a history; Lingelbach emphasises that the Geneva Refugee Convention – just like the UNHCR and its predecessor organisations – only protected European refugees for a long time. The universalisation of rights for all refugees only followed later. The reason for this was the colonial world order, which led the colonial powers, some former and some still active, to see UN intervention as interference in internal affairs. It was only at the insistence of the post-colonial states that particular

refugee rights became universal. After the end of the Cold War, refugee rights became increasingly restrictive, particularly in the West, while most refugees and the most progressive refugee rights are to be found in the Global South. Lingelbach thus notes that although universal refugee law certainly has its origins in the West, it is nevertheless shaped and formed by non-Western ideas. Historical observation also makes it clear that the West's own values are often not taken into account, especially when it comes to refugee protection.

The subsequent discussion was moderated by Prof Dr Udo Steinbach. He was Director of the German Orient Institute in Hamburg until 2007. Since 2019, he has been responsible for the MENA Study Centre programme at the Maecenata Foundation. The panelists focused on the role of the UN and its transformation, including that driven by China. They discussed the new semantic concepts and the creation of new ones by non-Western states. The role of the West in terms of its credibility in relation to its own values was also critically examined and the tension between historical guilt, realpolitik and value-based politics was discussed. Before the discussion was opened up to the audience, possible starting points for a global synthesis of values were discussed, which Sarasin sees particularly in the preservation and enforcement of the dignity of the individual. (REPORT: PAUL NAWRATH)



Discussion round  
with Udo Steinbach.  
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# *Cairo Office*

# Living in a Digital Age // Technology and its Effects on Religion and Popular Culture

11-13 MARCH

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NILE UNIVERSITY

ORGANISERS: AHMED ABD-ELSALAM, YASMIN AMIN AND EID MOHAMED

The theme of the conference discussed culture, as it is not simple to understand and indeed a difficult term to define. Culture can be defined as the accumulation of values, underlying assumptions and orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures, and codes of conduct. These are shared by a group of people that affect their behaviour and the way they lead their life. The conference explored how the digital era can improve the current performance with regard to understanding cultural and social change and how to implement behavioural change or transformation more smoothly. Today we can say that our digital environment has almost become a second nature. In this sense, it also fits into the overall framework of the Cairo Office conferences.

The conference focused on issues and challenges pretraining to the practice of Digital Humanities (DH) in diverse geographical contexts, countries, and cultures, especially, though without being limited to, Arabic. The presentations given at 'Living in a Digital Age' were very multidisciplinary by nature, bringing together world-renowned experts with the unique expertise and skills in the field of Digital Humanities with the aim of advancing the current state of knowledge for Arab researchers in literature, culture, media, arts, history, and sociology. OIB's conference included over 30 researchers from Albania, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, UAE, and Yemen, fulfilling its mission to connect researchers in the Arab world and Europe.



Participants  
of the conference  
'Living in a  
Digital Age'.

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# OIB-COSIMENA Research Colloquium

In 2023, the OIB Cairo Office revived the former OIB-COSIMENA Research Seminar at the DAAD Cairo with a lecture series titled 'Islamic Ethical Approaches for the Present and the Future: Gender – Environmental Ethics – Biomedical Ethics'. The series will run for a whole year until April 2024.

In the current Islamic discourse, new areas of ethics were developed in recent decades as a result of modern scientific discoveries and investigations, as well as climatic changes. Gender ethics, environmental ethics and biomedical ethics are among other new areas of knowledge for Muslims that are not yet established in Muslim societies. The individual speakers and their contributions will present the current state of research. This will not only realise knowledge transfer, but also link Islamic and Western religious studies and concepts as a sign of intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

# What is an Ethical Tafsīr of Gender?

OMAIMA ABOU-BAKR

25 MAY, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The series was inaugurated, starting the gender cluster with a lecture aimed to provide an answer to that question, attempted through a review of a number of Qur'anic exegetes' commentaries on the subject of ethics in gender relations, as an analysis of these various exegetical discourses can help in both assessing past interpretations and generating/theorising new reading perspectives. The goal would be to explore whether the exegetes made hermeneutical links between the two groups of 'equality verses' and the ruling verses in marriage and divorce, and to what extent did they engage in ethical reasoning.

Dr Omaima Abou-Bakr is Professor at Cairo University.



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ELPHOTOGRAPHATIA

# Living Al-insān al-kāmil, perfect or complete? Why are Female Humans excluded from being an Insān Kāmil?

YASMIN AMIN

22 JUNE, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The second lecture, which discussed God's representative on earth as described in Verse [2:30], generated many discourses, from designating the Prophet as the most perfect human, all the way to Sufis who aspired to become an insān al-kāmil.

Before gender equality took root even in academia, the term 'al-insān al-kāmil' was usually translated to English as 'the perfect man', replacing the umbrella term human, thereby excluding half the human race from achieving or aspiring to perfection. Consequently, the preservation and protection of divine creation on earth, rational reflection and judgement, legislative and scholarly privileges and interactions became exclusive to male humans rather than all humans. This was also reflected in the hadith corpus and supported by the exegetical tradition in circular arguments, describing female humans as deficient in mind and intellect. However, looking at the women described in the Qur'an, a different picture emerges. Women's voices and actions change the course of history many times. Some receive divine inspiration, others preserve and protect divine creation and prophets, most serve God in many ways, and all are capable of rational reflection and sound judgement. This lecture analyses the ethical inclusive Qur'anic messages and argues that the Qur'an designates them as entitled to being among others aspiring to being 'al-insān al-kāmil'.

# Women in Shari'a Courts //

## A True History

WAFYA HAMOUDA

27 JULY, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The third lecture in the gender cluster introduced new concepts related to the legal systems of the Arab world and the rights of women in Islamic civilisation and Arab societies by selecting samples of cases expressive of these systems, their history, culture, and politics. Also, the presence of women in courts, as a party to litigation, expressing themselves is revealed. The discussion of the selected cases raises awareness of controversial issues and helps in engaging in contemporary social and legal debates, placing them within the context of Islamic legal theory. Using computational methods ensures the appreciation of diverse perspectives and modes implemented by courts to secure individual and social interests.

Dr Wafya Hamouda is Assistant Professor at Tanta University.

# Woman, Life, Freedom //

## What is this all about?

KATAJUN AMIRPUR

31 AUGUST, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The final lecture in the gender cluster dealt with the ongoing revolutionary process in Iran and discussed when it started, what its goal was, and its main ideas. It dealt with the obstacles and looked at the potential. It also shed light on the meaning of this protest or revolution – if successful – to the rest of the Islamic world.

Dr Katajun Amirpur is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Cologne.



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ELPHOTOGRAPHATIA

# Islamic Environmental Ethics from Discourse to Identity

AHMED ABD-ELSALAM

26 SEPTEMBER, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The first lecture in the second cluster discusses the perspective of an Iranian philosopher who, in the 60s of the last century, wrote an article defending religions against the blame for environmental destruction caused by industrial progress in the West. This article had far-reaching consequences, spreading across America, Europe, and South and East Asia. Now, the environmental discourse of Islam is targeting Muslim youth in Europe and spreading rapidly. Programmes are even being developed to raise children and young adults in accordance with the principles of 'environmental Islam'. However, this approach raises the question of whether this discourse and its human approach pose any risks. This lecture presents an analytical presentation of the environmental discourse of Islam, including its emergence, development, opportunities, and associated risks.



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ELPHOTOGRAPHATIA

# The Cornucopia of Environmental Islamic Studies

BIRGIT KRAWIETZ

31 OCTOBER, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The second lecture looked at the state of the art in wider environmental Islamic Studies and at the variety of its approaches. Despite the already advanced stage of certain green discourses concerning Muslim societies and cultures, Krawietz pled for more emphasis beyond mere intellectual history. Her main topic was on the interface between consumer culture, urban settings, and material culture. Such recent developments should not be left to geographers and the like, but provide an invitation to a reinvented and significantly enlarged Islamic Studies, in sync with globally informed Area Studies. Instead of automatically first seeking refuge in the holy sources of Islam, Krawietz proposed to step back and look at some current global environments. Such a trajectory may help to widen the Islamic ethical horizon and ensuing research agendas.

Dr Birgit Krawietz is Professor of Islamic Studies at Freie Universität Berlin.



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# Environmental Ethics in Christian-Muslim Dialogue

CHRISTIAN STRÖBELE

21 NOVEMBER, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The third lecture took as a starting point the ethical methodology of Alfons Auer, the Catholic theologian (1915–2005), who influentially advocated for an approach in theological ethics which takes as its starting points not specific religious motives and concepts. Rather, he suggested starting from philosophical and interdisciplinary ethics and then reintegrating ethical norms, values and insights into a theological context. He also was a pioneer in Christian environmental ethics: Already in 1984, he brought this framework to fruition in a monograph on the then current ecological discussions on the scarcity, exploitation and pollution of natural resources, the limits and ecological transformations of economic growth, and socio-economic inequalities. It surveyed recent Christian contributions on environmental issues, and traced topics, connecting lines and mutual stimuli from the emergent field of Islamic Environmental Ethics among German Muslim Theologians, as well as recently ensuing interreligious cooperation in Theology.

Dr Christian Ströbele is Director of the Interreligious Dialogue Department at the Academy of the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart.



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# Human Image in the Age of the Anthropocene // Approaching Sura 2:30–38 from the Perspective of Islamic Practical Theology

MAHMOUD ABDALLAH

6 DECEMBER, DAAD REGIONAL OFFICE CAIRO, EGYPT

The fourth and final lecture in the cluster dealt with the image of human beings. It is the most discussed topic, whether in religions or in cultures. Classical or postmodern issues such as human rights, migration, interreligious dialogue, bioethics, climate change or gender equality cannot hope to produce new results without a discussion of the topic. In Islam, the discourse is often normatively charged. As a still open to design field the Islamic Practical Theology (IPT) has taken up the topic from new perspectives.

The lecture introduced what IPT means and what challenges or enrichment it brings to the study of Islamic theology. In the second part, the lecture considered the topic of human beings considering the challenges of the Anthropocene, showing that for a better understanding in this regard, it is important to differentiate the discourse into three categories: philosophical, anthropological and legal-ethical. Finally, some (new) theological, organisational and socio-political consequences were discussed.

Dr Mahmoud Abdallah is Senior Scientist at the Center for Islamic Theology at the University of Tübingen and a visiting lecturer at the Universities of Vienna, Innsbruck and St Andrews.



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# *Internal Colloquia*

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19 JANUARY Lucia Admiraal (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Histories and Historiography of Jews and Judaism in the Middle East (1880s–1940s): Intellectual Encounters and Colonial Entanglements*

16 MARCH Elena Fellner (OIB VISITING DOCTORAL FELLOW): *Heroisation and Demonisation Discourses in Protest Movements in the Middle East*

23 MARCH Liliana Gómez (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Beyond the Courtroom: On Dust, Haunting, and the Archive*

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11 MAY Camillo Stubenberg (OIB VISITING DOCTORAL FELLOW): *Under the Patronage of the Sun? The Techno-Politics of Lebanon's 2021 Solar Energy Boom*

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1 JUNE Markus Schmitz (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Refugee Imaginaries: On the Inclination and Illusion of Making Fiction real in Critical Forced Migration Studies*

6 JUNE M. Fariduddin Attar (OIB VISITING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW): *Classical Islamic/Arabic Philosophy and the 'Wretched' Disciplines of Magic, Astrology, and Alchemy: An Introduction to a Controversial Subfield*

20 JUNE Kanwal Tareq Hameed Abdulhameed (OIB VISITING DOCTORAL FELLOW): *Radical Entanglements, Beirut as a 'Nodal City' (Ma'asri: 2020) in the Age of Anti-Colonialism and Revolution, 1950s–1970s*

6 JULY Stephanie Dornschneider-Elkink (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Hot Contention, Cool Abstention. Positive Emotions and Protest Behaviour in the Arab Spring*

28 SEPTEMBER Amy Fallas (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Becoming Sectarian in Egypt: Charitable Societies and the Politics of Religious Difference in the Twentieth Century*

12 DECEMBER Sara Farhan (OIB AFFILIATED RESEARCHER): *Heroic Argot: A Microhistory of a Medical Nahdawi*



# Library



The library of the OIB is a specialised research and reference library for Near and Middle Eastern Studies and is, upon registration, open to researchers and all users who are interested in research.

The rich collections of the library cover mainly the scholarly disciplines in the broad field of Near and Middle Eastern Studies, particularly the history, culture, geography, anthropology, sociology, and the lingual and religious pluralism of the region. The predominant language of our acquisitions is Arabic, followed by English, French and German, as well as other European and Middle Eastern languages. The library has included in recent years increasingly publications with a broader interdisciplinary scope within the field of humanities.

The holdings of the library include a special collection about Lebanon and the Levant, as well as a growing section in Armenian culture in the Middle East. Arabic literature, history of the Near and Middle East, history of religions, cultural history, Arabic and Islamic intellectual history, particularly theology and philosophy as well as Eastern Christianity, Christian Arabic literature, Judaism and Semitic philology, are special foci of the library since its foundation in 1961. In response to the cultural, lingual and religious pluralism of the region, the institute cultivates a collection policy that pays particular attention to this unique diversity. A large part of the library collection is printed Levantine and regional journals from the broader MENA region.

In tradition and support of the OIB publication series 'Bibliotheca Islamica', the library continues to enrich its substantial collection of critical editions of classical Arabic literature and also holds some treatises in Persian, Hebrew and Syriac. A collection of more than five hundred maps and several architectural and topographical plans from Beirut, Lebanon and the Levant as well as a collection of rare books are also a part of the library's holdings. Some of these materials have undergone preparational steps for digitalisation as well as for conservation.

The library provides three reading rooms that are equipped with wireless access to the internet and offers a microfilm reader and a book scanner. 21 study desks are available and are equipped with daylight reading lamps and electric outlets. Our reading rooms and their entrance beside the OIB's garden offer an inviting atmosphere for our scholarly events and support the exchange of scholars and researchers on these occasions. Since 2023 the library became accessible for wheelchairs as well.

The library acquired around 1400 titles in 2023, including an increasing number of electronic resources. It could increase its physical holdings to more than 140.000 volumes and an additional 75.000 online accessible resources, among which a large number of titles are available through open access. A large part of our journals were shifted into an online subscription. On behalf of the Max Weber Foundation, we have also made progress in establishing a shared digital library and optimising the range of electronic materials, which include journals and databases with an interdisciplinary scope. In this field, the library also arranged becoming a participant of several publish&read journal packages, particularly De Gruyter, Cambridge Core and DEAL.

The library continued and intensified its close collaborations with the German Special Information Service Middle East, North Africa and Islamic Studies (FID) in Halle, Germany, to offer access to the MENALIB Middle East Virtual Library and to discuss strategies within the growing field of research data management.

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*The Orient-Institut (OIB) is an academic hub in central Beirut. It was designed to foster German research on and throughout the region. The OIB has come to benefit from the advantages of Lebanon's unique position as an intellectual centre in the Arab world. As the only German research institute devoted to Arabic and Islamic Studies based in the Arab Middle East, the OIB has helped to train generations of German scholars who specialised in the region. Since 2010 the OIB maintains an office in Cairo to strengthen academic collaboration and research across the MENA region.*

*In 1961 the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft), an academic association founded in 1845 to promote the study of the languages and cultures of the 'Orient', established the OIB as a base for German oriental studies abroad. The institute gained legal recognition from the Lebanese government in 1963 and moved to its present premises in the former Villa Maud Farajallah, in the Zokak al-Blat quarter, near downtown Beirut. Even during the most turbulent periods of Lebanese history academic activities at the institute continued, although in 1987 the German staff were evacuated to Istanbul temporarily. The directorate and some of the research staff returned to Beirut in 1994, but as a result of the evacuation the institute developed into a bilocal entity, with branches in both Istanbul (OII) and Beirut (OIB).*

*The Istanbul branch became an independent institute in 2009. In 2003 the OIB joined the other German Humanities Institutes Abroad in a foundation named Max Weber Foundation in 2012. The Max Weber Foundation is a publicly regulated body funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)..*

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