



Current research on a shared European, Mediterranean, and Ottoman History. Heidelberg: Exzellenzcluster "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 30.10.2010-31.10.2010.

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Current research on a shared European, Mediterranean, and Ottoman History

On 30 and 31 October 2010 the Karl Jaspers Centre for Advanced Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University, hosted a workshop which gave graduate students the opportunity to present their "Current research on a shared European, Mediterranean, and Ottoman History". Thomas Maissen and Michael Ursinus, coordinators of the research project "Dynamic Asymmetries in Transcultural Flows at the Intersection of Asia and Europe: The Case of the Early Modern Ottoman Empire" (Cluster of Excellence "Asia and Europe in a Global Context", Heidelberg University), which organized the workshop, were happy to welcome a panel of experts consisting of LEJLA DEMIRI (Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin/Institute for Advanced Study), FELIX KONRAD (Kiel University) and WILLIAM O'REILLY (University of Cambridge) as well as interested researchers and students from Heidelberg University and the University of Freiburg. All speakers were graduate students.

In the opening paper, STEFAN IHRIG (University of Cambridge/University of Regensburg) convincingly argued that the newly-created Turkish Republic played a pivotal role in the political discourse of the German right in the 1920s and 30s. Not only do Germans by and large seem to have been aware of the changes brought about by Atatürk due to extensive press coverage, Hitler and others, as Ihrig showed, even consciously referred to Ankara's achievement of overcoming the unfavourable Treaty of Sèvres (the equivalent of the Treaty of Versailles for Germany) and restoring former strength as an example to be emulated by the *Reich*; Turkey's im-

portance in this respect outmatched that of Fascist Italy which many historians today would think of as a model for Hitler. After Hitler had seized power, Turkey and its representatives were therefore treated with special respect by the Nazi government.

In his paper on the French Revolution in Istanbul, PASCAL FIRGES (Heidelberg University) examined how and when influences of the French Revolution had an impact on the daily life of *İstanbul*, for example through the violent clashes between Europeans wearing the French cockade and those opposing the "French mania", or through the dissemination of propaganda, particularly by reading out a translated version of the French bulletin in the coffeehouses of Istanbul. Even though the French Revolution had begun three years earlier, it was only from summer 1792 onwards that its effects gradually became perceivable in the Ottoman capital.

In her presentation GĀLAY TULASOĀLU (Heidelberg University) discussed the influence of the British consul in Salonica, Charles Blunt, during the 1830s on both decision makers in the province and the policy makers in London. Through his depiction of misgovernment in the provincial administration he influenced the governor to dismiss either the office holders or to reform whole offices. Through his reports to the consul general in Istanbul, who forwarded them to London, in which Blunt emphasized his own role in the provincial decision making process, he could also exercise an influence on shaping a certain opinion as administrative reform in

the Ottoman Empire was conducted from the bottom by provincial governors with the assistance of British consuls. Based on her observations in the behaviour of the consul as well as Ottoman officials, Tulasoğlu concluded that foreign consuls must have been accepted by the Ottomans as an integral part of domestic policy making and thus asked how foreign one could consider foreign consuls in the Ottoman provinces at all.

CHRISTIAN ROTH (Heidelberg University) presented a sample of cases from his ongoing research in the eighteenth century court records of Salonica. As a counterpart to his earlier findings concerning the Christian population of the Aegean islands, he showed what legal options creditors had in this urban environment if their debtors defaulted. Besides amicable settlements, the seizure of securities, and lawsuits, a number of records deal with the imprisonment of debtors as a means of coercing them to pay. Written in a compact language and leaving out anything not directly relevant to the legal question, the court records can nevertheless be compared and interpreted to provide an insight into the parties' social backgrounds as well as into the judges' ways of serving justice in the most diverse scenarios.

JOSHUA WHITE (University of Michigan) examined the importance of *fetvas* issued by the sixteenth and seventeenth-century *Âyehâlislams* in Istanbul for the regulation of property conflicts concerning slaves and ships arising in the context of Mediterranean piracy. While *fetvas* were not legally binding, such legal opinions can be regarded as akin to case law, providing detailed solutions to maritime issues which are not explicitly covered by Islamic law. In the course of the discussion it emerged that this procedure thus might have satisfied a judicial need filled by prize courts in other European states. White also underlined the importance of *fetvas* as hitherto unduly neglected sources for historical research.

Still in the planning phase of his research, JOHN GALLAGHER (University of Cambridge), presented preliminary thoughts, ideas, and questions for a study of interlingual interaction in the early modern period. Focusing on the Mediterranean world, such a study would find more than enough examples at sea as well as ashore, in travellers' and merchants' communities and heterogeneous populations. Promising a thorough investigation of inventions from simplified creole languages to polyglot phrasebooks made by these people out of the necessity to communicate effectively, Gallagher faced an encouraging audience in pleasant anticipation of his results.

Based on Faruk Tabak's work *The Waning of the Mediterranean, 1550-1870: A Geohistorical Approach*, ANTONIS HADJIKYRIACOU (SOAS) discussed the era of the *Mediterranean Autumn* with reference to cotton and silk cultivation in Cyprus - two of the most important commodities of the island. Hadjikyriacou posed the question of the sustainability of export-driven agriculture of these water-demanding crops in view of the dry climate of the island. Looking at the continuities and discontinuities between the Venetian and Ottoman period, he also explored sugarcane production, another particularly thirsty crop. Reasons for the shift from sugar to cotton and silk included competition from the Caribbean and the changes in the routes of spice trade, while this transition was closely connected to the Ottoman land regime. But above all he demonstrated that climatic change in the form of the *Little Ice Age* facilitated the cultivation of water-demanding crops like cotton and mulberry trees. Moreover, while increased precipitation explains to some extent the sustainability of these cultivations, irrigation, chains-of-wells, and water rights systems were also important factors.

In her presentation, ANDREA FRÄHLICH (University of Cambridge) discussed the events leading to the writing of the *Confessio Montana* in Hungary and argued that the town councils of three mining towns consciously and successfully worked out a moderate and peaceful reformation. She argued that, although sympathizing with the teachings of Martin Luther, they did not make a move to detach themselves from the Catholic clerical hierarchy; they remained under the Catholic archbishop of Esztergom, provided their reformation could proceed unmolested within their own city walls. The paper drew attention to the conflict that arose with the archbishop on account of the *Confessio Montana*, and to the Ottoman impact on this conflict: The danger of Ottoman attacks was predominating in the area and in 1562 Ottoman forces reached the vicinity of the cities, capturing 400 miners who were supposed to be employed in the war against the Ottomans. Frähllich suggested that the conciliatory manner in which the town authorities approached matters of religion and instructions from the Catholic hierarchy could have something to do with the overall political situation of the time.

ELIF ÂZGEN (Sabancı University, Istanbul) analyzed two Ottoman narratives concerning Christian sacred objects and religious images. *Lami'i Âlebiâs âKitab-i Letaâifâ* relates the story of an Ottoman judge who is shown a painting in a church in an attempt to convert him to Christianity while Talikizade, in his

âEhname-i HÃ¼mayunâ, describes the burning of the relics of St. Sava kept in the MileÅjeva monastery in the Kosovo. In both narratives Muslims looking at images and objects expressed amazement putting them on a par with what they regarded as marvels from India and China. Although Muslims did not reject images and objects univocally, when Christians used them to challenge Ottoman religious and political supremacy they became the subject of contestation in these cross-cultural encounters and thus were turned into objects of Ottoman ridicule and contempt.

In his contribution, TOBIAS GRAF (Heidelberg University) presented his latest findings from a sample of renegades, i.e. non-Ottoman Christian converts to Islam and Ottoman Muslim converts to Christianity, active in the period c. 1580 to 1610. Wary of the significant gaps in the data, he highlighted a number of important themes emerging from his research such as the link between captivity and conversion, the prominence of converts to Islam joining the ranks of the *askeri*, and the predominance of certain professional groups (especially military personnel and craftsmen) among these renegades. Acknowledging that the term renegade seems to privilege a Western Christian point of view, Graf nevertheless defended its continued use as more appropriate than merely speaking of converts on the grounds that the necessary transfer of political loyalties was at least as important â if not more so â than religious conversion itself.

Examining the changes in the Russian Empireâs policies towards the release of prisoners of war taken by the Ottoman Empire over the course of the eighteenth century, WILL SMILEY (University of Cambridge) showed that in response to Russian demands the Ottoman state imposed an increasingly legalistic view of conversion. Beginning with the Treaty of Belgrade in 1739, the Ottomans agreed to release all unconverted Russian prisoners of war without ransom, for the first time shifting the onus of tracking enslaved prisoners and compensating their owners to the Ottoman state. Increasingly, Russian officials became involved in determining whether an individual had indeed converted to Islam, creating the previously unavailable option of renouncing conversion without sanction. This development, Smiley convincingly argued, contributed to the demise of *kul* household slavery and thus initiated a fundamental restructuring of the Ottoman military-administrative elite.

Bringing together historians with diverse educational backgrounds but still pursuing research interests from a âshared worldâ, the workshop was an enriching experience widening the perspectives of all participants. The

organizers would once again like to thank all present for their extremely stimulating contributions and for the very friendly atmosphere of this workshop.

Conference overview:

PANEL 1

STEFAN IHRIG (University of Cambridge/University of Regensburg): AtatÃrkâs Turkey as a role model for National Socialism

PANEL 2

PASCAL FIRGES (Heidelberg University): The French Revolution in Istanbul, 1793â1795

GÃLAY TULASOÄLU (Heidelberg University): How foreign was a foreign consul in the first half of the 19th century Ottoman Empire?

PANEL 3

CHRISTIAN ROTH (Heidelberg University): Dealing with defaulting debtors in 18th century Ottoman Salonica

JOSHUA WHITE (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor): âWhen Zeyd Sailed to the Abode of Warâ: Maritime Raiding and Early Modern Ottoman Islamic Law

PANEL 4

JOHN GALLAGHER (University of Cambridge): A confusion of tongues: notes towards a study of interlingual interaction in early modern travel and trade

ANTONIS HADJIKYRIACOU (University of London): Cyprus in the era of the âMediterranean Autumnâ

PANEL 5

ELÃF ÄZGEN (SabancÄ± University, Ästanbul): Marvelous Idols and Relics on Fire: Sacred Objects in Slavery, Conversion and War

ANDREA FRÄHLICH (University of Cambridge): The Confessio Montana, 1559: working out a confession of faith in sixteenth-century Royal Hungary

PANEL 6

TOBIAS GRAF (Heidelberg University): A Sample of Renegades Active in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1580â1610

WILL SMILEY (University of Cambridge): The Many Meanings of Conversion: Captives, States, and Religious Identity in the Russo-Ottoman Wars, 1735â1812

Concluding discussion

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