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NAHOSTUDIEN  
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دراسات الشرق الأوسط

MUBIT Inter-University Doctoral Cooperation in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies Basel/Zurich  
&  
Middle Eastern Studies  
The Graduate School of Social Sciences (GSS)  
University of Basel

## Call for Applications

*5<sup>th</sup> Annual MUBIT Doctoral Workshop in Late- and Post-Ottoman Studies in Basel*

# From Unionism to Kemalism: Social and Political Transformation of Turkey

A Workshop with  
Prof. Dr. M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu (Boğaziçi University)  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kuyaş (Galatasaray University)

October 27-28, 2017



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Organized and hosted by

Prof. Dr. Maurus Reinkowski  
Dr. Selen Etingü  
Murat Kaya, M.A.



MUBIT  
SUK-Doktoratskooperation Islamwissenschaft  
Inter-University Doctoral Cooperation in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies  
Basel | Zürich



## From Unionism to Kemalism: Social and Political Transformation of Turkey

This workshop intends to shed light on specific historiographical questions emerging from the interactions of political developments, demographic realities and social mobilization in Turkey from the Unionist through the Kemalist era (1908-1945). By examining such interactions, we aim to reassess and rethink some of the dominant viewpoints and paradigms relating to the general contours of Turkish history.

The workshop will include four sessions:

### 1. *Social Dynamics during the Unionist Era*

From the return to constitutional rule in 1908 to the foundation of the Republic, Turkey went through catastrophic and colossal diplomatic, social and political developments. Despite the existence of many social dynamics, particularly with regards to the population politics of the Unionists and massive social mobilization, the political history of the era was almost exclusively elaborated on the basis of intellectual currents, political affiliations and elite achievements. Problematising the concept of “social generations,” we aim to portray the social background of the Young Turk generation, their obsession with population politics and their top-down attempt in mobilizing the Muslims while indeed challenged by the bottom-up social mobilization of local populations, as evidenced by the so-called “Boycott movements.” Likewise, by using the Unionists’ social mobilization of elites and masses in matters of family, fertility, marriage and women, we attempt to problematize the dominant historiographical approaches based on one-sided, top-down elite undertakings in the face of the existence of the from-below social dynamics. Our aim is to reassess the role of elites and social dynamics in the making of the new Republic.

### 2. *Revolution and Counter-Revolution (1908-1922)*

Starting with the very first day of the Second Constitutional Period, a multi-faceted power struggle began between two groups. These groups can be best described, on the one hand, as radical constitutionalists, that is, partisans of the sovereignty of the Parliament, and on the other, the conservatives who consisted of a mixture of anti-constitutionalists and moderates. The latter preferred a German type of constitutionalism in which the sultan would possess significant constitutional prerogatives. The new electoral process and the subsequent constitutional amendments had been the first grounds of contention, and the constitutional amendments were the very issue on the occasion of which the counter-revolutionary March 31<sup>st</sup> Event occurred in 1909. We believe that it is through developments such as the latter, the gradual transformation of the Liberal Entente Party into a reactionary group, and the military rising of 1912 that the Unionist opted for the dictatorship, which was established in June 1913. We are also of the opinion that the struggle between the nationalist resistance fighters in Anatolia and Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdettin during the period after the Armistice of Mudros is none other than a continuation of this dialectical process eventually ending with the abolition of the sultanate.

### 3. *How the Social Affects the Political? Population and Political Mobilization in Kemalist Turkey*

The formation of the Kemalist regime in Turkey was not simply a consequence of elite projections, historical contingency and day-to-day politics. Underlying all of these were indeed a demographic earthquake Turkey faced after the eleven years war period. In this sense, the social fabric of the country changed as the ethnic, urban and social composition of the population changed. It was in this context that the new regime was involved in pro-natalist policies to increase the quantity of the population while ideologically the peasants were declared as the master of the nation and a staunch Turkification policy were introduced. These challenging goals required a political mobilization to be successful, yet new propaganda sources and institutions such as the People’s Houses were insufficient to carry out these sometimes daunting and certainly difficult goals. This insufficiency coupled with the necessity to accomplish so many things in a short period of time determined the Kemalist regime’s evolutionary trajectory.





#### 4. *The Rise and the Waning of Kemalist Jacobinism, 1923-1939*

The Kemalists have to be considered as the majority faction that emerged from the split which occurred within the radical constitutionalist circles in response to the absolutist bid of Mehmed VI Vahdettin. The developments such as the proclamation of the Republic or the abolition of the Caliphate deepened this rift. It is hard to imagine what form would the Kemalist reforms would have taken had the Sheikh Said Rebellion not happened and not provided the regime with the opportunity to suppress the equally nationalistic opposition. The ensuing single-party period, we argue, was actually established in 1927. We therefore accept the Free Party episode as significant only in so far as it constituted a warning, a statement by the electorate, which meant that the unprecedented political legitimacy conferred upon the regime by the victory in 1922 could not go on forever. It is a well known fact that the regime was not able to produce wealth for its constituency in the 1930s either and that it indulged in producing nationalistic mythology as a palliative measure. The clouds of war gathering on top of Europe in the mid-1930s, we believe, have been a life saver for this stagnant Turkey. The negative Soviet response to the Straits Convention of 1936 was balanced by Ernest Jackh's unofficial visit to Ankara the same year and the subsequent Anglo-Turkish loan contract for the construction of the Karabük steel industries. The pro-fascist Minister of the Interior Recep Peker was ousted from office the same year, followed by the dismissal of the staunchly neutral Premier İsmet İnönü, the year after. A proponent of market economy, Celal Bayar, then occupied the office of prime minister, while the process through which Alexandretta was to become Turkish had commenced. Turkey, once more, had started to look "westwards."

#### Guest Lecturers:

##### Prof. Dr. M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu (Boğaziçi University)

Dr. M. Asım Karaömerlioğlu is a professor of history at Boğaziçi University's the Atatürk Institute for Modern Turkish History, one of the most eminent graduate programs in late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey. He graduated from the Electric-Electronic Engineering Department of Boğaziçi University, after which he got his MA at the same university's History Department. He later received his Ph. D. from the Ohio State University with his dissertation entitled "The Cult of Peasant in Turkey." He is the author of *Orada bir Köy Var Uzakta: Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Köycü Söylem* (Agrarian Discourse During the Early Republican Turkey) (İstanbul: 2006) and several articles and book chapters including "The Forgotten People: Turkey's Artisans in the 1950s," (with Dr. Emre Balıkçı) *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2013), "The Role of Religion and Geography in Turkish Nationalism: The Case of Nurettin Topçu," in *Spatial Conceptions of the Nation: Modernizing Geographies in Greece and Turkey* (New York: 2010), "Turkey's "Return" to Multi-party Politics: A Social Interpretation," *East European Quarterly* (2006), "Alexander Helphand-Parvus and His Impact on Turkish Intellectual Life," *Middle Eastern Studies* (2004), "The Peasants in Early Turkish Literature," *East European Quarterly* (2002), "Agrarian Populism as an Ideological Discourse of Interwar Europe," *New Perspectives on Turkey* (Spring 2002), "Elite Perceptions of Land Reform in Turkey," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* (2000), "The People's Houses and the Cult of the Peasant in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* (1998), "The Village Institute Experience in Turkey," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (1998). Dr. Karaömerlioğlu is currently working on demography and eugenics in modern Turkey where he attempts to incorporate evolutionary studies into the social sciences. He also focuses on a book project about historical generations where he studies the 68 generation in Turkey from a generation-based historiographical viewpoint. He also extensively published on the Gezi uprising of 2013.





## Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmet Kuyaş (Galatasaray University)

Ahmet Kuyaş was born in Istanbul in 1952. He graduated from Université de Haute-Bretagne and completed his PhD in history at McGill University. He has been a lecturer at Princeton University and assistant professor at Mount Holyoke College. He is currently Associate Professor of History at Galatasaray University, Department of Political Science. He is also a member of the editorial board of the monthly *#tarih*, a popular history journal based in Istanbul. Dr. Kuyaş's area of interest is late Ottoman and modern Turkish history (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), with a special emphasis on the revolutionary period (1908-1940) on which he edited two textbooks and published various articles. His latest article, "Le Califat illusoire qui cache la République: la fin de la monarchie constitutionnelle en Turquie" was published in France in 2015.

## Organization

The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual MUBIT Doctoral Workshop in Late- and Post-Ottoman Studies in Basel, "From Unionism to Kemalism: Social and Political Transformation of Turkey", is a two-day intensive seminar (from October 27, 12:30 pm to October 28, 12:30 pm, 2017) organized by Prof. Dr. Maurus Reinkowski, Dr. Selen Etingü and Murat Kaya, M.A. at the Middle Eastern Studies of Department of Social Sciences at the University of Basel.

The doctoral workshop is funded by MUBIT Inter-University Doctoral Cooperation in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies Basel/Zurich and is a part of the curriculum of the Graduate School of Social Sciences (G3S), University of Basel. For previous MUBIT Doctoral Workshops in Late- and Post-Ottoman Studies in Basel, please see:

- 2013: *Turkish Nationalism: Approaching Ottoman and Islamic Legacies beyond Ethnicity, Secularism, and Westernism*, with Prof. Dr. Erik J. Zürcher (University of Leiden) and Prof. Dr. M. Hakan Yavuz (University of Utah), report written by Alexander E. Balistreri (Princeton University): <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Turk&month=1310&week=d&msg=QNj9%2BG13sCevwyrQQMkKXQ>
- 2014: *Arab Nationalism: From Ottoman Empire to Colonial Mandates*, with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hasan Kayali and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Michael Provence (University of California, San Diego), report written by Nova Robinson (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey): <https://networks.h-net.org/node/11419/discussions/46669/workshop-report-arab-nationalism-ottoman-empire-colonial-mandates>
- 2015: *A Modern World in Flux: Studying Migration, Refugees, and Settlement Regimes from the Middle East and Beyond*, with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Isa Blumi (Georgia State University), for the program of the workshop see: [https://nahoststudien.unibas.ch/fileadmin/orientsem/user\\_upload/redaktion/Dokumente\\_MUBIT/Booklet\\_1.0.pdf](https://nahoststudien.unibas.ch/fileadmin/orientsem/user_upload/redaktion/Dokumente_MUBIT/Booklet_1.0.pdf)
- 2016: *The Main Intellectual Currents in the Late Ottoman Empire*, with Prof. Dr. M. Şükrü Hanioglu (Princeton University), for the program of the workshop see: [https://nahoststudien.unibas.ch/fileadmin/orientsem/user\\_upload/redaktion/Dokumente\\_MUBIT/Plakat\\_Hanioglu\\_160520\\_Workshop.pdf](https://nahoststudien.unibas.ch/fileadmin/orientsem/user_upload/redaktion/Dokumente_MUBIT/Plakat_Hanioglu_160520_Workshop.pdf)

Unfortunately, the organizers cannot assume any travel and accommodation costs. However, a limited number of cheaper accommodation options will be available, which include staying with local undergraduate and graduate students. There is no attendance fee for the workshop. Please contact Dr. Selen Etingü for information and questions regarding organizational matters at: [g.etingue@unibas.ch](mailto:g.etingue@unibas.ch).







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## Application Procedure

PhD students who wish to attend the workshop are asked to write an email to Dr. Selen Etingü ([g.etingue@unibas.ch](mailto:g.etingue@unibas.ch)), with a biographical abstract explaining their research interests and projects as well as their academic background (max. 400 words, in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, in English). *The deadline for the application is August 1, 2017.* Applicants will receive an answer regarding their participation on August 10.

## Requirements for Successful Participation

Participants are entitled to 2 ECTS points for successful participation. Participants will receive a list of required readings from the guest lecturers by August 15, 2017. Successful participation at the workshop is subject to the mandatory completion of the required readings in advance and active participation in the workshop discussions.

## Contact

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