

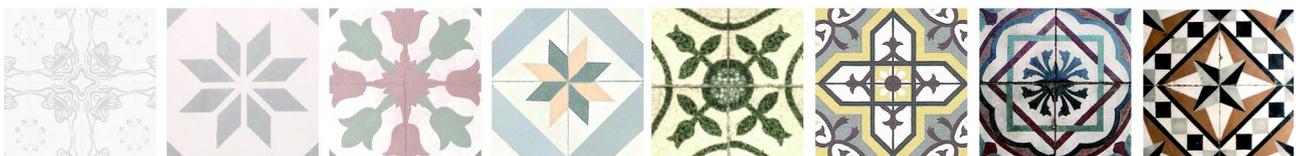


Image: Harvesting grain in late Ottoman Palestine, c. 1900.
Sammlung historischer Palästina-bilder, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Histories of the Rural Middle East 1850-1950

Workshop
Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies
16 June 2023

Venue:
Beckmanns Hof, Room "Tokio"
Contact: islamwissenschaft@rub.de



The historiography about the Middle East's rural pasts is witnessing a new momentum. In the last two decades, the renewal of the history of the late Ottoman and interwar periods, together with the publication of a number of studies on imaginaries of the rural environment and nomadism, have opened up new questions about the relationships between the city and the countryside, between empires and rural groups. In addition, proponents of Borderlands and Subaltern Studies, on the one hand, and Environmental and Global History, on the other, have all challenged established views of rural areas as 'naturally' marginal.

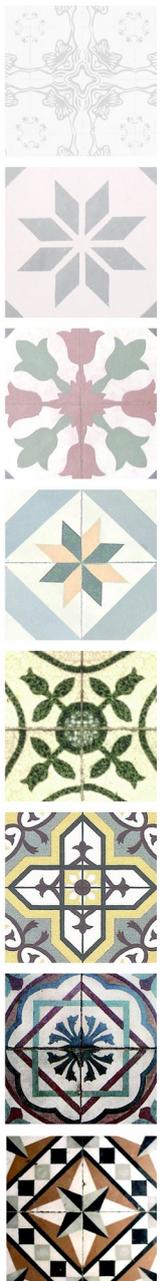
This workshop is a coproduction of researchers from two ERC-funded historical research projects which target rural regions of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Middle East from different perspectives. BORDER, based at the University of Neuchâtel, uses the case of the Turkish-Syrian-Iraqi borders to highlight the centrality of borderlands and their mostly rural populations to state and nation formation across the Middle East. The Bochum-based research project 'Late Ottoman Palestinians', LOOP, uses Digital Humanities tools to explore demographic data and complementary sources on rural communities in late Ottoman Palestine and thereby aims to construct empirically based models of social and cultural dynamics on the eve of the modern Middle East.

The workshop revisits major debates and discusses promising avenues for research in the field, while also unpacking certain obstacles and limits that historians of the rural Middle East still encounter. In doing so, it focuses on the following questions:

- On what scholarly discourses do recent historical studies of the rural Middle East draw, e.g., histories of marginality, territoriality, political economy, human capital formation, social network theory, or actor network theory?
- How might the reinvigorated study of rural pasts change our view of Ottoman and Middle Eastern history as a whole?
- What are the most promising perspectives, sources, and methodologies for the study of rural communities, rural areas, and imaginaries of the rural?

Readings

- Tejel, Jordi. 2023. "Introduction", in idem, *Rethinking State and Border Formation in the Middle East: Turkish-Syrian-Iraqi Borderlands, 1921-46*.
- Baer, Gabriel. 1982. "Village and City in Egypt and Syria, 1500-1914", in idem, *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East. Studies in Social History*, pp. 49-100.
- Michel, Nicolas. 2018. "Le Fellah égyptien : histoire d'un mot et de ses sens" (<https://www.ifao.egnet.net/recherche/manifestations/ma999/>)



Schedule

9.15-09.30 Welcome

09.30-10.45 Panel I: Presentation from the BORDER Project

Jordi Tejel (University of Neuchâtel):

“When the war arrived in the rural Middle East or how borderlanders shaped global and imperial economic policies, 1941-1945”

Discussant: **Astrid Meier (University of Halle)**

10.45-11.00 *Coffee Break*

11.00-13.00 Panel II: Presentations from the LOOP Project

Johann Büssow (Ruhr-University Bochum)

“Ottoman census data as a window on rural communities in late Ottoman Palestine”

Sarah Büssow (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

“Jericho (Ariha): A case of a diverse rural settlement, c. 1900”

Nils Riecken (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

“Historicizing terminologies and conceptual history: the village of Qula as an example”

Discussant: **Astrid Meier (University of Halle)**

13.00-14.00 *Lunch*

14.00-14.30 Walk through the Chinese Garden

14.45-15.45 Panel III: Two case studies

Laura Stocker (University of Neuchâtel; Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

“In-between the rural and the urban: ‘desert notables’ and the making of post-Ottoman Syria”

Michaela Hoffmann-Ruf (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

“Private legal documents as sources for the rural history of Oman”

15.45-16.00 *Coffee Break*

16.00-17.00: Final Discussion

