



Migration History Seminar

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Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Forced Migration and Modern Refugeedom in the Middle East

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Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, Boğaziçi University,

Viktorya Abrahamyan and Jordi Tejel, University of Neuchâtel

12:30 – 14:00 h

This seminar will be held online on WEBEX: <https://unine.webex.com/meet/jean-thomas.arrighi>

The Migration History Series is co-organized by the History Department of the University of Neuchâtel and the nccr – on the move.

About the Seminar

In this seminar, contributors to the Special Issue of the Journal of Migration History 6(1) (2020) on 'Forced Migration and Modern Refugeedom in the Middle East' will present their main findings. The Special Issue approaches the study of refugees and forcibly displaced persons in the Middle East beyond the analytic bounds dictated by states, nations and regions. By challenging state-centered accounts and instead placing refugees, institutions, and states in a mutually interactive framework, each contributor frames refugees as the driving force behind various historical processes. Likewise, by providing case studies drawn from the Middle East, the issue also marks a step away from the Euro-centrism that so often defines the study of refugees and shows the centrality of the developments in Europe for the Middle East and the developments in the Middle East for Europe. It, therefore, proposes the connected histories of refugeedom as the historiographical way forward in the study of refugees.

Welcome and Introduction to the Journal of Migration History Special Issue

Jordi Tejel, Research Professor, History Department, University of Neuchâtel

Settlement Law of 1934: Turkish Nationalism in the Age of Revisionism

Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, Assistant Professor, Boğaziçi University

There is a strong tendency in Turkish historiography to approach Kemalist policies as purely domestic affairs that emanate from the centre in a top-down manner, reflecting the clear ideological positions of Ankara. The existing scholarship on the Settlement Law (1934), too, has read the development of Kemalist demographic policies in ideological terms, framing them in top-down modernist trajectories that were long in the making since the late Ottoman times. These perspectives often remained analytically singular and nation-centred, failing to engage with the broader transnational developments that were in fact crucial to the making and timing of a range of Kemalist policies. In this presentation, I seek to overcome such limitations by situating the Settlement Law within its due transnational context of heightened interstate rivalries since the 1930s.

[Link to full text](#)

Citizen Strangers: Identity Labelling and Discourse in the French Mandatory Syria, 1920–1932

Viktorya Abrahamyan, PhD candidate, University of Neuchâtel

This presentation explores the roles played by Armenian refugees in the politics of identity in Mandatory Syria by examining how their arrival shaped the discourses of inclusion and exclusion. It does so by analyzing three key events: the Armenians' access to citizenship and voting rights (1924 – 1925), the Great Syrian Revolt (1925–1927), and the arrival of new Armenian refugees (1929 – 1930) – during which a 'Syrian' identity was gradually confirmed against the Armenian newcomers. Making use of discursive narratives by Syrian and Armenian political parties, media outlets and pamphlets, the article demonstrates that the discourse against the Armenian refugees played a decisive role for both hosting and incoming communities to construct mutually excluding national identities.

[Link to full text](#)

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The Migration History Series is co-organized by the History Department of the University of Neuchâtel and the nccr – on the move. For any further information regarding the series, please send an email to jean-thomas.arrighi@unine.ch