International Conference, Istanbul

Fighting Under the Same Banner: Memories from the Ottoman Theater of the Great War

6–8 September 2019

underthesamebanner.org

Conference Program
Conference Program

Friday, September 6, 2019
Kaisersaal · German Consulate General in Istanbul
İnönü Caddesi 10 · 34437 Gümüşsuyu-Istanbul
19:00–21:00 h · Conference Opening & Keynote Lecture

Eugene Rogan · Between Loyalty and Disillusion: Arab Memoirs of the Ottoman Great War

Erdem Eldem · The Aesthetics of War: Ottoman Martial Iconography Under German Influence

Coffee Break

Mehmet Beşikçi · War Memories of Ottoman Reserve Officers in World War I
Benjamin C. Fortna · Writing Under the Same Banner? Wartime Memoirs and Their Motivations

Eyal Ginio · Ha-Balkan Ha-Bo’er (The Balkans in Flames): Serving the Adopted Motherland in the Balkan Wars
Charalampos Minasidis · Narratives of War: Rhomioi/Rum Citizen Soldiers’ Memories of the Great War
Yaşar Tolga Cora · From »Our Brigade« to »the Enemy«: What Does an Ottoman-Armenian Officer’s Memoir Tell to Its (Many) Readers?

Coffee Break

Break · During Break: Guided Tour of the Boğaziçi University Campus

14:00–16:00 h

Erol Köroğlu · How is it Possible to Write the History of an Era inside a Life Story? History, Memory, and Configuration in Şevket Süreyya Aydemir’s World War I Memories
Nicole van Os · Living Through Wartime: Female Reminiscences of the Balkan Wars and the Great War in the Ottoman Empire

Coffee Break

Gábor Fodor · Hungarian Accounts from the World War I Ottoman Fronts
Richard Wittmann · A Fortuitous Life Narrative of the Ottoman Home Front: The 1918 Memoirs of a German War Volunteer

16:30–18:30 h · Keynote Lecture
Edhem Eldem · The Aesthetics of War: Ottoman Martial Iconography Under German Influence
Kent Schull · Lt. Robert Hofmann, Austrian Artillery Officer & Artist on the Ottoman Front during World War I

Naz Vardar · Listening to the Sound of the Agents of History: The Uses of the Sound Archives of Humboldt University, Berlin

Johann Strauss · The Great War of the Postcards – Postcards and the Great War

Klaus Wolf · The German Military Cemetery in Tarabya/Istanbul: Testimony to the German-Turkish Coalition in World War I
On the outbreak of the First World War, Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire reacted with fear and resentment to the call for general conscription. From Syria to Mesopotamia, Arab men entered Ottoman military service in their hundreds of thousands, to serve on all fronts of the Ottoman Great War. The experience strained relations between Turks and Arabs. Many Arabs blamed the Young Turk leadership for dragging them into a European war in which the Arab peoples had no stake. Others, who had served in the Balkan Wars in 1912–13, doubted the Ottoman Army could withstand the combined might of the Russians, British and French. Many feared that in the wake of Ottoman defeat the European powers would extend imperial rule over the Levant as they had over North Africa in the years before 1914. These issues came to the fore with the outbreak of the Arab Revolt in the Hijaz in 1916, when Arab soldiers in the Ottoman Army found their loyalties divided between the Sultan and the Sharif of Mecca. The attitudes of Arab subjects are captured in a range of diaries and memoirs that remain important documents on the Arab experience of the Great War and will serve as the primary resource of this lecture.

**Eugene Rogan** is Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History at the University of Oxford. He is Director of the Middle East Centre and a Fellow of St Antony’s College, Oxford. He took his B.A. in economics from Columbia University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern studies from Harvard. He is a Fellow of the British Academy. His most recent book, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East, 1914–20*, received the British Army’s Military Book of the Year award in 2016 and has been translated into twelve languages, including Turkish and Arabic.
Since Jews were first conscripted into a European army in 1788, conscription was understood as a landmark in the Jews’ road to legal equality and full citizenship rights in Europe. The Ottoman Empire was no exception; for Jews it became one of the tools that articulated and offered belonging to the »imagined« Ottoman nation. Most studies, focusing on the military service of Jewish soldiers in the ranks of the Ottoman army, deal with the local Ladino-speaking Jewish communities. The book Ha-Balkan ha-Bo’er, however, offers a different angle that can enrich the current discussion. Published in Hebrew in Tel-Aviv in 1932, this memoir narrates the experiences of Yitshak H. [Halperin], a farmer from the colony of Zichron Ya’akov (near Haifa), while serving in the Ottoman infantry during the Balkan Wars. This text mainly relates to the daily life of the soldiers, the hardships endured by the conscripts during their brief military training, and, the encounters with other Ottoman soldiers coming from different communities, localities and classes among other topics related to the war experience. Yet, Ha-Balkan ha-Bo’er enables us to explore the military and civic service of young Jewish men and women, mostly Ashkenazim, who originated in Eastern Europe. Volunteering to serve in the Ottoman army (many of them were still foreign citizens and therefore not subject to compulsory service) provided them with the opportunity to serve in battle and, hence, to be part and parcel of two new complementing national projects: the creation of the »new« Hebrew man and woman and, in tandem, the shaping of the new Ottoman nation.

Eyal Ginio is Associate Professor in the Department of Islam and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He also serves as the Director of the Forum for Turkish Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University. His research and publications focus on social history of the Ottoman Empire with a particular emphasis on the Balkan Wars (1912–13). His recent publications include The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath. London: Hurst Publications and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016; (ed.) together with Karl Kaser, Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary Mediterranean: The Balkans and the Middle East Compared. Jerusalem: The Forum for European Studies, 2013. He is currently preparing a manuscript about the reshaping of the sultanate under the constitutional regime (1908–18).
The war period between 1914 and 1918 proved to be transformative for the Romioi/Rum, the Ottoman citizens that belonged to the Greek Orthodox church. They needed to balance between Ottoman loyalism and Greek nationalism during a highly fluid period. Romioi/Rum citizen soldiers fought under the Ottoman banner, but few managed to serve under arms. Most were sent to labor battalions, while some served as doctors or office and skilled workers. In these circumstances, many Romioi/Rum continued to prefer draft evasion. They bribed their way out or joined local militias. Others tried to make it to Greece, where they joined the Greek Army, or to a non-belligerent country.

Based on published and unpublished interviews, memoirs, diaries, and letters, the paper examines Romioi/Rum citizen-soldiers’ responses and memories of the war and their mobilization. Romioi/Rum citizen-soldiers proved to be a mobile category that not only moved between the various war fronts and the home front, but also between experiences and ideas. Their accounts offer a candid view of the war from the rank and file as they portray the narratives of the so far voiceless. Their only tools to imagine and reimagine the war and the future were by envisioning and experiencing the war itself. In the end, the unprecedented state intervention during the war and the gradual delegitimization of the Ottoman minority communities abolished any »contract« between the Romioi/Rum citizen soldiers and the state and forced them to seek survival strategies, such as compliance, flight or resistance.

Charalampos Minasidis is a Ph.D. candidate in Modern European and Middle Eastern History at The University of Texas at Austin. His work examines the human landscape of total mobilization via the social category of citizen-soldiers as a way to study Greek and Ottoman society at war during the early 20th century. He holds an M.A. in The History of Warfare (2008) from King’s College London, and an M.A. in Balkan & Turkish History (2013), a B.A. in Political Sciences (2014) and a B.A. in History (2007) from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. Society for Macedonian Studies (Thessaloniki, Greece), where he worked as a research assistant from 2007 to 2012, and Epikentro Publishers published the adaptation and expansion of his second master thesis, Η Πολιτική των Ηνωμένων Πολιτειών στο Μακεδονικό Ζήτημα τη Δεκαετία του 1940 [United States Policy on the Macedonian Question during the 1940s] in 2016.
The paper seeks answers to the central questions of what it meant to be an Armenian officer in the Ottoman Army and how that experience was represented by examining the memoirs of the Second Lieutenant Armenak Melikyan. Through a close reading of the memoirs, first the paper will reconstruct Lieutenant Melikyan’s personal experiences during his military training and his services in the army as a member of the Independent Cavalry Brigade (Bağımsız Süvari Tugayı) which served in Gallipoli and Kut al-Amara. Lieutenant Melikyan deserted in 1916 while he was part of the depo bölümü in Kirmanshah, Iran, when the provisional government which was supported by the Ottoman army fell to the Russians. After providing the details of Lieutenant Melikyan’s life story, the paper will examine his personal experiences as an Armenian officer in the army, particularly by examining his relations with his Turkish superiors and with Armenian and Arab officers. It will deconstruct Melikyan’s narrative by focusing on the ways in which he created various dichotomous but interrelated positions such as a nationalist Armenian and a loyal subject of the empire, being part of the broader officer corps in the army and the much more limited group of Armenian officers in the Ottoman Army, a hard-working serviceman and a potential deserter throughout his narrative – while only on rare occasions, he confessed his loneliness and lamented on the fate of his community. By comparing Lieutenant Melikyan’s narrative with similar life stories of Ottoman Armenian officers, the paper will highlight different strategies which these writers used to deal with an imperial past that was bygone at the time they reconstructed and reproduced their past experiences.

Yaşar Tolga Cora is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Boğaziçi University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 2016 and he was a post-doctoral fellow at the Armenian Studies program, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 2017. His research is on the social and economic history of the late Ottoman Empire, with a particular focus on Armenian communities in Anatolia, and life narratives of Ottoman Armenians. Among his publications are Harbiyeli Bir Osmanlı Ermenisi: Mülâzım-ı Sânî Kalusd Sürmenyan’ın Birinci Dünyâ Savaşı ve Tehcir Anıları (2015) and (co-edited with D. Derderian and A. Sipahi) The Ottoman East in the Nineteenth Century: Societies, Identities and Politics (2016).
This presentation is based on the autobiographical texts of Ottoman reserve officers who served in World War I. Reserve officers were enlisted military personnel, but they served as officers. On the one hand themselves subject to military mobilization, they were also in charge of its implementation. It is this dual character that makes their war experience and memory particularly fascinating, and their memoirs and diaries provide important glimpses of the Ottoman mobilization effort from both the inside and the outside perspective. The first part of the presentation briefly examines the evolution of the Ottoman reserve officer system as an integrated part of Ottoman conscription and examines how it came up as a practical solution to the increasing need for army officers during World War I. Secondly, and more importantly, it analyzes the diaries and memoirs of Ottoman reserve officers to understand to what extent their war memories concur with and diverge from the official and collective memory of World War I in the early Republican era. The presentation seeks to answer if the war memories of reserve officers constitute a critical narrative of World War I, and perhaps evince a sense of disillusionment about the war.

Mehmet Beşikçi is an Associate Professor and he is currently teaching at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Istanbul’s Yıldız Technical University. He received his Ph.D. in History from Boğaziçi University. His main areas of research include war and society in the Late Ottoman Empire, social and military history of World War I, and war and remembrance. He has published widely on these topics in English and Turkish, including the monograph Between Voluntarism and Resistance: The Ottoman Manpower Mobilization in the First World War (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
This presentation explores different approaches to the creation and preservation of ego-documents written by late Ottoman participants in World War I. Focusing on three distinct but linked narratives found among the papers of Kuşçubaşı Eşref, Fortna attempts to draw out the authors’ approaches to and intentions behind the act of writing. What informed the impulse to write ego-documents in this volatile period and among this particular group of individuals? The texts to be analyzed are: 1) Eşref’s own massive but ultimately lost memoir; 2) Eşref’s wife Pervin’s own memoir; and 3) Eşref’s close colleague Süleyman Askerî’s diary of the Trabslusgarb war which was later hand-copied by Eşref. In assessing these three pieces of writing, the presentation attempts to shed light on the different contexts in which memoirs from the war years were conceived, written and the factors contributing to their preservation or being lost. It also considers the motivations, stated or unstated, that informed the task of putting pen to paper. The fact that both the temporal connection between each text and the events it describes and the circumstances of its production is quite different affords the opportunity to consider the motivations behind each effort and subsequent afterlife. Süleyman Askerî’s text stands out as unique in certain respects. It is the only one of the three autobiographical texts to have been written at the time, an actual diary with dated entries and a more telegraphic style. It is also the only text to have been preserved and commented on by another. The other two ego-documents are memoirs, having been written at some remove from the events they describe. While the date of their creation is not always clear – Eşref began writing his memoirs as a POW on Malta but also worked on them in subsequent decades and Pervin’s memoir was clearly written much later, after Eşref had broken with Mustafa Kemal and the »nationalist« movement, gone into exile and become persona non grata in the new Turkish Republic – both Eşref’s and Pervin’s texts thus share the impulse to explain, exonerate, and rationalize Eşref’s wartime actions, even if they use different approaches. What emerges from the discussion is the interlinking of interests but also the tensions between the intentions of the three personalities, the different times of their narratives’ composition, and their attempts to influence both current and future readers.

Benjamin C. Fortna is Professor and Director of the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies at the University of Arizona and formerly Professor of the History of the Middle East, SOAS, University of London. His research focuses on the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. He received his degrees from Yale, Columbia and the University of Chicago; his publications include The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent (Hurst and Oxford University Press, 2016), Childhood in the Late Ottoman Empire and After, ed. (Brill, 2016), Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and Imperial Classroom: Islam, Education and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire (Oxford University Press, 2002).
Well-known Turkish leftist intellectual and historical novelist Kemal Tahir despises the autobiographical publications by famous political figures in Turkey as »documentary novels« in his Notes: Art and Literature I. Atatürk’s Nutuk and contra-memoirs by his opponents such as Rıza Nur, Kazım Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, and Halide Edib are all »docu-novels« according to Tahir. He thinks that although they are seemingly factual, actually they strive to conceal the truth and thus, they turn into fictitious novels. Nevertheless, Kemal Tahir’s accusation turned into a shared characteristic of life-writing texts today. An autobiography or memoir is not accepted as an unproblematic archive room of facts anymore. Narrating the individual lives is not a natural act but a pre-designated and configured narrative project to construct a privileged social position for the author. Famous bureaucrat, historian, and biographer Şevket Süreyya Aydemir’s autobiography Suyu Arayan Adam [The man searching for water] (1959) is a very promising example to think about this issue. Aydemir’s World War I memoirs as a reserve officer in the Eastern Front is a crucial part of this autobiography and it is used by historians as a fertile source on Ottoman World War I studies. Yet Aydemir’s autobiography displays a delicate and curious plot structure as complicated as a good novel. This paper aims at analyzing the oscillation of Aydemir’s autobiography between fact and fiction in order to open more appropriate ways for using and studying life writing texts on Ottoman World War I era.
An important source for scholars working on the social history of the First World War are the ego-documents produced by those who lived through it. Military and civilian, men and women, persons from all layers of society penned down their wartime experiences at the time in their diaries or letters home, or afterwards in memoirs. For some of these groups such sources were relatively abundant. Scholars working on the experiences of German, French, British or, e.g., Australian women during the First World War have had access to a relative extensive number of ego-documents produced by these women: letters home, diaries, and memoirs. Military and social historians studying the Ottoman experience during the Balkan Wars and the Great War were also able to use these kinds of self-narratives. In most cases these were the self-narratives of men. We do have, however, the telegraphs sent from Anatolia by or on behalf of women to the authorities in Istanbul, which have been studied by Nicole van Os and Elif Mahir Metinsoy. Moreover, quite a number of eye-witness accounts of the 1915 events written by Armenian and missionary women are available. Beyond these specific sources, the number of other ego-documents and self-narratives produced by women seems to be limited, though.

In this paper, van Os aims to explore the self-narratives of women living in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. Starting with a purely quantitative survey, »what self-narratives of women living in the Ottoman Empire during the Balkan Wars or the First World War do we have?« she will continue with a more qualitative analysis of the sources available: Who wrote what and what do these sources teach us about the experiences of women in the Ottoman Empire? What are the differences and similarities of these experiences? And how do these experiences differ from the more familiar narratives by men?

Nicole van Os studied anthropology and Middle Eastern studies at Nijmegen University, the Netherlands. She has been working on Ottoman women’s history since the late 1980s. As the articles she published show, her special fields of interest are women’s organisations and women and the military during the late Ottoman Period. In 2013 she received her Ph.D. from Leiden University with a thesis titled »Feminism, Philanthropy & Patriotism: Female Associational Life in the Ottoman Empire.« She is the author of extensive bibliographies on women in the Ottoman Empire available at Academia.nl and recently, she has compiled an »Overview of digital sources for the Study of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey«. She works at Leiden University as a student advisor and is an affiliated researcher of the Leiden Institute of Area Studies.
Even though the occupation of Bosnia by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1908 raised the tension between the monarchy and the Ottomans, Hungaro-Turkish political, economic and cultural relations had been significantly improving from the beginning of the 20th century until the end of World War I. Starting with giving scholarships to several hundred Turkish students to attend specialized Hungarian schools, the opening of a Turkish language school and a branch of the Türk Derneği in Budapest, the appointment of a Turkish imam to the well-known Türbe of Gül Baba and finally the acceptance of Islam as an official religion in 1916 were signs of expanding bilateral relations between the two counterparts. With the eruption of the Great War this friendly relation turned into a war alliance, where suddenly the battlefields became the fields of joint efforts.

In his presentation Fodor will mainly focus on Hungarian accounts of different Ottoman fronts during World War I in light of the wartime alliance. War correspondents like Béla Landauer, István Dobay, and Jenő Heltai from different Hungarian journals, soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army like Dr. Emil Vidéky and Dr. László Király, the painter Géza Maróti and even a military chaplain, Pál Schrotty, left behind detailed memoirs from the picturesque Bay of Izmir to the desert of Palestine. These mostly unknown accounts depict the cruelty of the war, research the health care system of the capital, and provide detailed information on the Berlin Bagdad line, while also raising questions regarding the situation of the Turkish women and historical sites in the Empire.

Gábor Fodor studied at the Departments of Turkish Philology and History of the University of Eötvös Loránd under the eminent Ottomanist Prof. Géza Dávid and Academy member Prof. István Vásáry. In 2009 he spent six months at Istanbul Bilgi University as an Erasmus student. He graduated in 2011 and continued his studies in the doctorate school of the Department of Turkish Philology. In 2018 he defended his Ph.D. thesis under the title of »The Armenian Question in the Light of Hungarian Sources, 1849–1939«. He started his career in the research group of Doyen Prof. György Hazai in 2009 as assistant and worked there until 2014 in the framework of three different research centers of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From 2014–15 he spent one year as an assistant researcher at the Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies under the leadership of Prof. Miklós Maróth. In 2015 he was appointed as the first director of the Hungarian Cultural Center in Istanbul, founded in the previous year by the Hungarian Government, where he is still working.
When in early 1918, straight out of highschool, a young man from a German provincial town enlists to voluntarily serve in the Kaiser’s Asia Corps he did not in all likelihood foresee that he would spend the greater part of his time in the army in just one place: the city of Istanbul. Rather than fighting the enemy in the trenches, Georg Steinbach found himself spending the final months of World War I exploring the Ottoman capital. He incidentally produced a fascinating and rare life narrative of the biggest metropolis of the Empire during the war years. During his travels and residence in Constantinople – as he consistently refers to the city – Steinbach notes his impressions of unfamiliar people and exotic landscapes, written with an endearing boyish excitement of being in the »mysterious« Orient and discovering the endless treasures of the city. Alongside descriptions of Muslim festivals, theaters, and concert performances that continued even in the war years, and visits to the city’s sights, are the more personal observances and experiences of a 19-year old German soldier. The account describes a visit to the German cemetery at Tarabya, where Steinbach pays his respects to Van der Goltz Pasha and other German commanders and soldiers buried there. His comments and observations of the civilian population of Istanbul and returning Ottoman soldiers incidentally afford us with an unusual life narrative of the Ottoman home front written from the rare perspective of a foreign observer.

Richard Wittmann (Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University, 2008) is the Associate Director of the Orient-Institut Istanbul, a German humanities research institute abroad. His research interests focus on Islamic legal history and the social history of the Ottoman Empire. Special attention is given in his work to the consideration of self-narratives as historic sources for the study of the Near East. Richard Wittmann coordinates an international collaborative research project aiming at the study and publication of Ottoman self-narratives (www.istanbulmemories.org). He is the editor of the publication series Memoria. Fontes Minores ad Historiam Imperii Ottomanici Pertinentes (www.perspectivia.net/publikationen/memoria) and (co)editor of the monograph series Life Narratives of the Ottoman Realm: Individual and Empire in the Near East (https://www.routledge.com/Life-Narratives-of-the-Ottoman-Realm-Individual-and-Empire-in-the-Near-East/book-series/LNOR). His latest coedited volume Istanbul – Kushta – Constantinople. Narratives of Identity in the Ottoman Capital, 1830–1930 (Routledge) was released in September 2018.
Throughout the nineteenth century, driven by an urge to catch up with western modernity, the Ottomans experimented with images and symbols for diplomatic, political, and ideological purposes. The Great War would bring this process to a climax, as the Unionists, already trained by the 1908 Revolution and the Balkan Wars, unleashed the power of martial iconography to serve their new cause. Interestingly, much of this imagery was heavily inspired by the Ottoman Empire’s main ally, Germany, whose »grammar of propaganda« was highly influential in the design of Ottoman decorations and illustrated material.

Lt. Robert Hofmann was an Austrian Military Officer who fought with the Ottomans during World War I primarily in the Levant and remained in the region for another decade after the war ended. He was an accomplished artist and assimilated Viennese Jew who traveled around the Middle East and sketched what he saw, primarily scenes of everyday life from a self-consciously NON-Orientalist gaze, including town markets, portraits, landscapes, villages, fields and livestock, various battle scenes, and even caricatures of prominent individuals. Drawing upon Hofmann's art and his oral history, this paper examines his experiences as an Austrian soldier fighting with the Ottomans during World War I, especially his interactions with various Ottoman troops and local populations in Constantinople, Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem. His engagements with and views of these various groups and individuals provide intriguing insights into the development of his own political, philosophical, and personal views that influenced him throughout the rest of his life. Of particular note, were his anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist views, his distaste and disgust for supposed European »civilization«, and his eventual immigration to the United States after his internment in a British »Enemy Alien« camp in Australia during World War II. His experiences during World War I and its aftermath, as demonstrated through his art and oral history, also provide important insights into the visual, cultural, political, and social everyday life of various regions in the Middle East. 1917–28 was a pivotal period for the modern Middle East with the dismantling and replacement of a long-lived empire with new states created through a combination of nationalist wars of independence and imperialist decrees. So little visual evidence remains of this period that Hofmann’s works provide important glimpses into the everyday life of this region and its various peoples and places during this traumatic time of transition and transformation.

Kent F. Schull is Department Chair and Associate Professor of history at Binghamton University, SUNY. He received his doctorate from UCLA (2007) and is a twice Fulbright scholar to Turkey. His publications include Prisons in the Late Ottoman Empire: Microcosms of Modernity (EUP, 2014), two co-edited volumes: Living in the Ottoman Realm: Sultans, Subjects, and Elites (IUP, 2016) and Law and Legality in the Ottoman Empire & Republic of Turkey (IUP, 2016), several articles, and book chapters. He is currently the series editor for Edinburgh Studies on the Ottoman Empire and serves as the consulting editor of the Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (JOTSA). His research and teaching interests include the social and cultural history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Middle East, Comparative Criminal Justice, World War I in the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa.
This presentation is an introduction to and exploration of the sound archives of Humboldt University in Berlin, especially the recordings of the Turkish speaking prisoners of World War I in Germany. Although written forms of personal narratives, like memoirs and diaries, have been used in Ottoman historiography, non-textual forms, such as oral testimonies on World War I, have virtually gone unnoticed. The sound archive of Humboldt University provides a unique resource for the study of the Great War: the 1917 voice recordings of prisoners of war. Although the immediate purpose of these recordings was to document the linguistic and phonological differences in various languages, the recordings include songs, tales, lyrics, narratives, anecdotes and short stories. This presentation explores how these sound recordings can be utilized as sources for history; how they can be approached as life narratives, and, more specifically, how these recordings can contribute to the existing scholarship on the Ottoman Empire and the experience of the World War I.

Naz Vardar is currently a Master of Arts student at the History Department at Boğaziçi University, Istanbul. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from the same department in 2017. Her research focuses on the Greek-Orthodox carnivals in the Ottoman Empire, and modern Turkey. With a keen interest in memory studies, she is currently working on her M.A. thesis on the remembrances of the Greek-Orthodox carnivals in Istanbul during the Republican era.
In the history of this new medium of the postcard, whose rise had begun only in the late 1890s, the years of the Great War hold a special place. Never before were so many postcards sent during such a limited time span. Many soldiers and veterans compiled albums that mainly contained postcards. The actual sending of postcards seems to have been remarkably less common among Ottoman soldiers than among their German and Austro-Hungarian allies. But they were often kept and offered as a souvenir (hâtra), or relic (yadigâr) of the war.

This presentation focuses on postcards related to the war in the Ottoman Lands or involving the Ottoman army in Galicia. Different types of postcards can be distinguished: ordinary post-cards with no bearing on the War (depictions of cities and other places; greetings etc.); post-cards produced in Austria or Germany for the Turkish market; post-cards produced for the German army corps in the Levant (Jildirim); postcards of the Hejaz, including the Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, produced for the Turkish Army; propaganda postcards; humorous postcards; and photographs.

The latter type may sometimes be of considerable documentary value. The conversion of photographs into postcards was relatively simple, as we know from the visits of the German or Austrian Emperor to Istanbul. Favorites were also photographs of German generals or war heroes. Among the Turkish personalities, »Großsultan« Mehmed Reşad and Enver Pasha come in the first place. On the other hand, all sorts of manipulations were possible: photomontages and retouchings, fake views and false captions. New captions allowed for the reuse of older views.

Much to the regret of the historian the strict censorship renders it almost impossible to extract valuable information from the messages on the postcards, which were easier to control than letters. In some cases, not even the locality was indicated (or the caption made invisible). Recurring themes are the sending of parcels, tobacco etc., and, of course, the state of health.

Johann Strauss graduated from the University of Munich where he studied German, Romance languages and Turcology. He earned his Ph. D. in 1987 with a thesis on a 17th century Ottoman chronicler. He taught at the universities of Munich, Birmingham and Freiburg. Between 1988–89, he was a research associate at the Orient-Institut in Istanbul, then operated by the German Oriental Society (DMG). From 1997 until his retirement in 2018, he taught at the Turkish Department of Strasbourg University, among other things, the history of Turkish and Ottoman literature, the history of the Turkish language, and Ottoman Turkish. He has published numerous articles in English, French, and German on a variety of topics, in particular translations from Western languages, history of printing and publishing, and linguistic and cultural contacts between the various communities of the Ottoman Empire.
This lecture will introduce the German cemetery located in the Istanbul neighborhood of Tarabya, situated along the shore of the Bosphorus. Following a brief overview of the historic development of German-Turkish civilian and military relations and the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the First World War, the presentation will focus on the foundation of the cemetery in 1914 and its enlargement over the subsequent decades. Mention will be made of a second German military cemetery in the Skutari (Üsküdar) district of Istanbul, which was transferred to Tarabya in the 1960s. A number of further German war cemeteries that were originally established in and around the Gallipoli peninsula and which are no longer preserved today, have recently become the topic of a number of new research projects, on which some information will be provided.

The lecture will conclude with a closer look at some of the more prominent individuals interred in Tarabya and will inform on the project of a small cemetery exhibition and the introduction of machine-readable labels (qr codes) to ease access to information on the cemetery and individual burial sites.

While assigned to the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps in Istanbul between 2002 and 2006, German Colonel Klaus Wolf began his research into the history of German-Turkish cooperation in the First World War. His principal motivation behind his efforts was the adequate commemoration of the many unknown and forgotten German soldiers, sailors and airmen, and to place their contribution to the Gallipoli campaign in its correct historical perspective. Coupled with a close exchange with Turkish officers and local and international military historians, years of his combined study of academic writings and archival materials resulted in the publication of Wolf’s book Gallipoli 1915: Das deutsch-türkische Militärbündnis im Ersten Weltkrieg [Gallipoli 1915: The German-Turkish Military Alliance in the First World War] in 2008 (Turkish translation: 2015; English translation: forthcoming in 2020). After completing his recent assignment as German Defence Attaché in Pakistan, 2018 has seen him posted back to the NATO Rapid Deployable Corps in Istanbul. As his pastime and personal concern Wolf will continue to further explore German-Turkish cooperation on the First World War with a focus on the vanished German cemeteries in Gallipoli (www.gallipoli1915.de; with a partial translation into English).
What did it mean to individuals of different ethnic and religious backgrounds to participate in World War I under the Ottoman crescent and star banner? By focusing on life narratives left by the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Ottoman soldiers and civilian men and women aiding the war effort, this conference takes this and related fundamental questions as its point of departure in exploring the personal experiences of Ottomans in the Balkan Wars and the Great War. How did these experiences expressed in autobiographical texts such as memoirs, diaries, and written correspondence add to and differ from insights afforded by visual and acoustic testimonies as well as the personal accounts of the Ottoman Empire’s European military allies?

Life narratives have recently begun to attract great interest among military and social historians of the Middle East in their work on the wars from 1912 until 1922. These narratives are essential sources not only to understand Ottoman society and its army at times of conflict, but also and above all because they were for the most part produced by the rank and file rather than the military leadership and give a voice to the otherwise unheard.

With this in mind, the conference brings together scholars working on life narratives on the Ottoman theater of the First World War in order to:

· Examine the politics of loyalty in a multi-ethnic and -religious empire, the impact of the war experience on a multi-ethnic army and the home front;
· Discuss the practices of remembering and the production of life narratives in the war period, and the impact of the post-imperial political and social landscapes on reconstructing the personal experience;
· Transcend narrow genre boundaries of life narratives by including non-textual forms of personal expression and to discuss their heuristic potential for a better understanding of the war experience;
· Reconsider the interplay of individual and collective memories and commemorative practices.

It is the rich multitude of personal experiences of the diverse individuals supporting the Ottoman cause in World War I that this conference sets out to explore.

Conveners:
Richard Wittmann (Orient-Institut Istanbul)
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