

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



ORIENT INSTITUT  
BEIRUT  
المعهد الألماني  
للأبحاث الشرقية



**The Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB)** is an independent academic research institute, part of the Max Weber Foundation and mainly funded through the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. It conducts interdisciplinary research on the Arab world and the region of the Middle East and North Africa at large. Its research community comprises long-term research associates and short-term visiting fellows from all over the world, who represent the major disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, including Islamic and Arab studies, history and anthropology of West Asia, as well as sociology and political sciences. The OIB is a long-standing partner of academic institutions in Lebanon and the region at large. It aims to foster academic relations across the MENA region and increasingly conducts its research in transregional perspectives. One of the great academic treasures of the OIB is its public research library, which holds important collections of books, journals and newspapers. It comprises around 130.000 volumes relating to Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the broad sense. The OIB publishes two major book series and additional titles through extra series. The institute engages with a larger academic community through regular research seminars, lecture series, international conferences and workshops. Local and international partnerships are crucial in designing and funding the institute's projects. In particular, the OIB is at the forefront of facilitating research collaborations between institutions in the Arab world and institutions in Germany and Europe. It thereby seeks to encourage innovative academic perspectives on the region.

# Contents

<b>OIB in Numbers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Director's Address</b>	<b>5-15</b>
<b>1) Research Clusters and Researchers</b>	<b>16</b>
Intellectual History and Literary Studies	16
Art and Material Culture	34
LAWHA, ERC project hosted at the OIB	36
Social Sciences	48
Islamic Studies	64
<b>2) Affiliated Researchers and their Projects</b>	<b>78</b>
Hans Robert Roemer Fellows	80
Fellows-at-Large	83
<b>3) Cooperations and Third-Party Funding</b>	<b>84</b>
Scientific Partnerships and Cooperations	85
<b>4) OIB Publications</b>	<b>86</b>
Bibliotheca Islamica (BI)	87
Beiruter Texte und Studien (BTS)	88
Orient-Institut Studies (OIS)	90
<b>5) Events</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>6) Library</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>7) Team</b>	<b>122</b>

## OIB in Numbers

# Research

24

Research Projects

# Support

10

Research Associates

2

Postdoctoral Visiting Fellows

9

Doctoral Visiting Fellows

3

Hans Robert Roemer Fellows

2

Fellows-at-Large

13

Interns

# Publications

7

Institute

28

Researchers

# Library

140,000

Volumes

# Events

2

Conferences

2

Workshops

2

Panel Discussions

3

Seminars

1

Public Lecture

6

Lectures

2

Book Fairs

21

Colloquia

# Social Media

5900+

Facebook Followers

2300+

Instagram Followers

## Vorwort

Am Abend des 26. Novembers letzten Jahres klingelte gegen 19 Uhr in Berlin mein Telefon. Am anderen Ende der Leitung war der Sicherheitsbeamte der deutschen Botschaft in Beirut. „Herr Hanssen, befinden sich bei Ihnen im Institut noch Mitarbeiter?“ „Ja, unser Pförtner und möglicherweise weitere Hausangestellte.“

„Holen Sie sie sofort da raus!“

Was war diesem Anruf in den letzten elf Monaten vorausgegangen?

Mit verhaltener Zuversicht, dass der israelische Vergeltungskrieg gegen das palästinensische Volk im Gazastreifen drei Monate nach dem Hamas-Massaker bald ein Ende finden würde, kehrten wir Anfang Januar 2024 nach Beirut zurück. Obschon es gleich am 2. Januar ein israelisches Attentat auf eine Hamas Zelle in den südlichen Vororten von Beirut gegeben hatte, waren wir hoffnungsvoll, dass die Waffenruhe und der Gefangenenaustausch bald kommen würden.

Doch diese Hoffnungen wurden nicht erfüllt. Ende März griff Israel Ziele in Aleppo an, dann das iranische Konsulat in Damaskus. Es wurde immer deutlicher, dass die Hizbollah ihre Abschreckungsfähigkeit und die Biden-Regierung ihre Deeskalationsfähigkeit verloren hatten. Der Libanon war im Verlauf des Jahres massiven israelischen Militärangriffen ausgesetzt.

Wir mussten Veranstaltungen an Orte außerhalb Beiruts legen, z.B. in unsere Außenstelle in Kairo, um die Sicherheit der teilnehmenden KollegInnen zu garantieren bzw. eine Teilnahme an Veranstaltungen auch für Kolleg:innen zu ermöglichen, die wegen der Sicherheitslage nicht nach Beirut einreisen konnten oder durften. Durch wissenschaftliche Kooperationen konnten wir Veranstaltungen in Berlin, Kassel, München, Istanbul, Paris, Rom, Fez, Princeton und Toronto durchführen. Auch war das OIB in den deutschsprachigen Medien sehr präsent, insbesondere durch Dr. Sarah el-Bulbeisis zahlreiche öffentliche Auftritte und die Zeitungsartikel unseres Stipendiaten Jan Altaner.

Am Institut selbst kümmerten wir uns um den Ausbau der IT- und Solarinfrastruktur, Reparaturen und Renovierungen. Auf der hinteren Terrasse im Garten finden nun siebzig Zuhörer:innen Platz. Ebenso trafen wir Sicherheitsvorkehrungen für unsere Kolleg:innen; wir bauten einen Notfallausgang aus dem Schutzraum im Keller; und boten einen Erste-Hilfe-Kurs an. Die Botschaft führte ein Sicherheitstraining durch, um Evakuierungsszenarien zu besprechen und die „Befehlskette“ in Bezug auf das Satellitentelefon zu proben. Immer wieder gab es Ansagen, man solle eine Art „Notfallkoffer“ mit dem Nötigsten parat haben, es wurde nach Ausweichunterkünften in den Bergen gesucht, die von Kolleg:innen auch genutzt wurden, deren Gebäude von der israelischen Bombardierung beschädigt wurden.

In dieser ungewissen Zeit konnten unsere Stipendiat:innen leider nur einen einzigen unseres beliebten „Open Garden“ organisieren, und zwar am 27. Juni. Einen Monat später trat das ein, was wir mittlerweile immer mehr befürchteten. Am 27. Juli traf eine fehlgeleitete Hizbollah Rakete einen Sportplatz in Majdal al-Shams im annektierten Golangebiet und tötete zwölf Jugendliche und weitere drusische Anwohner. Diese Tat überschritt alle Grenzen für die israelische Regierung, die daraufhin beschloss, die Führung der Hizbollah überall dort anzugreifen, wo sie sich gerade bewegten – Kollateralschäden hinnehmend. Israelische Drohnen kreiste 24-Stunden lang über unseren Köpfen. Die ausländischen Organisationen wurden nervöser.

Dann verübte Israel die alles verändernden Pager-Attacken am 17. September 2024. An dem Tag waren wir mit libanesischen, syrischen und palästinensischen Freund:innen and Kolleg:innen in der Saydeh al-Dukhul Kirche in Achrafieh, um von einem kürzlich verstorbenen Freund, dem arabischen Schriftsteller und Intellektuellen Elias Khoury, Abschied zu nehmen. Auf dem Rückweg von der Kirche war überall Panik. Wir sahen Krankenwagen und Menschen, die versuchten, Verletzte, quer über ihren Beinen liegend, auf ihren Motorrollern in Krankenhäuser zu bringen. Die Stadt, das Land, die Menschen standen unter Schock. Das war eine neue, nie dagewesene Form der Kriegsführung.

Zehn Tage nach diesen Attacken trafen rund ein Dutzend Clusterbomben die unterirdische Kommandozentrale von Hasan Nasrallah und der Hizbollah Führungsriege in der Dahiyeh. Die ganze Stadt bebte, und auch das Institut zitterte.

Der wissenschaftliche Beirat und der Geschäftsführer der Max Weber Stiftung, Herr Rosenbach, schalteten sich mehrmals zu unseren wöchentlichen Krisensitzungen, um zu hören, wie es uns geht und gegebenenfalls zu helfen. Im Institut gab es eine Freigabe zum Homeoffice und zugleich die Bitte, bei Aufhalten im Institut kein System nach außen erkennen zu lassen, wer sich wann vor Ort aufhält.

Schließlich erhöhte das Auswärtige Amt die Sicherheitsstufe auf 3a und forderte alle Mittlerorganisationen auf, dem Beispiel der Botschaft zu folgen und alle nicht-essenziellen Entsandten aus dem Libanon abzuziehen. Am OIB entschieden wir uns, alle ausländischen Mitarbeiter:innen zur Ausreise aufzufordern. Einige taten dies auf den Bundeswehrmaschinen, die das Auswärtige Amt zur Verfügung stellte, und ein Referent fuhr mit Familie per Schiff von Tripoli in die Türkei. Das Institut wurde ab dem 1. Oktober 2024 für den „Besucherbetrieb“ geschlossen. Zu keinem Zeitpunkt allerdings stand das OIB leer. Unsere lokalen Kolleg:innen vom Direktorat, der Verwaltung und der IT-Abteilung schauten regelmäßig nach dem Rechten. Und auch unser Hausmeister war immer wieder vor Ort.

Die israelischen Raketen schlugen immer näher und näher ein. In der Nacht zum 3. Oktober 2024 dann wurde ein Gebäude im institutsnahen Viertel Bashura dem Erdboden gleich gemacht. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt waren wir gerade nach Kairo gereist, um dort mit Kolleg:innen alternative Veranstaltungsorte für gewisse Kooperationsprojekte zu sondieren. Hilflös mussten wir von dort mit ansehen, was in Beirut und dem Libanon geschah. Ein Artikel in der F.A.Z. vom 16. Oktober 2024 beschreibt dies recht eindringlich.

Über zwei unendlich lange Monate hinweg, in den Dezember hinein, wurden viele Dörfer im Südlibanon förmlich von der Bildfläche radiert; in Baalbek entging der Jupitertempel nur knapp (um ein paar Meter) einem israelischen Raketenbeschuss; und mit jedem Tag nahm die Verwüstung der Dahiyeh zu. Überall im Land machte die israelische Luftwaffe Jagd auf vermeintliche Hizbollahmitglieder. Nur zu oft trafen sie Unbeteiligte. Viele Angriffe wurden auf sogenannten „Gebäude-Hit-Lists“ auf einem Social-Media-Kanal der israelischen Armee angekündigt. Manchmal wurden genau diese Ziele auch tatsächlich getroffen, meistens aber auch andere in der Nähe; immer jedoch lösten die „Hit-Lists“ Panik in der Bevölkerung aus. Es herrschte Angst und Schrecken in der Stadt, wer konnte, ging in die Berge, doch selbst da fühlte niemand sich wirklich sicher. Die Zukunft war ungewiss. Die Stadt war voller Vertriebener, die notdürftig auf den Straßen und Plätzen campierten oder in Schulen untergebracht wurden, so auch in der Schule neben dem OIB. Wir mussten uns besser schützen, da die Flüchtlingshilfe der Hizbollah das Institut zunächst auch für eine Schule hielt, und weil später

Unbekannte unsere Solar-Strom-Versorgung anzapften und andere Personen versuchten, über den Zaun auf unser Gelände zu gelangen.

Das war die prekäre Lage, in der sich das Land und das Institut befanden, als der besagte Anruf in Berlin am Vorabend der Waffenruhe zwischen Israel und dem Libanon einging. Warum diese Dringlichkeit? War das Institut etwa auf einer der Hit-Lists?

Und tatsächlich: der Bundespolizist am Telefon hatte glaubhafte Informationen darüber erhalten, dass das OIB direkt getroffen werden könnte. In aller Eile wiesen wir die noch Anwesenden an, das Gelände umgehend zu verlassen oder in unserem neuen Schutzbunker Unterschlupf zu suchen. Es war eine lange und angstvolle Nacht für alle. Am Ende blieb das Institut, bis auf sechs ramponierte Solarzellen auf dem Dach verschont.

Kaum hatten wir uns von diesem Schrecken erholt, überschlugen sich ganz unverhofft die Ereignisse in Syrien. Innerhalb weniger Tage überrannten HTS-Milizionäre Aleppo, Hama, Homs und Damaskus. Bashar al-Assad floh in einer Nacht- und Nebel Aktion am 8. Dezember 2024 nach Moskau. Wir konnten es alle kaum fassen. Das Assad-Regime, auf Ewigkeit angelegt, war wie ein Kartenhaus zusammengefallen. Die Bilder aus Saydnaya und anderen Gefängnissen, die Wiedersehensszenen von Familien, die seit Jahren und Jahrzehnten voneinander getrennt waren und nicht wussten, ob ihre Verwandten überlebt hatten, gingen vielen von uns unter die Haut. Die Möglichkeit, dass wir wieder nach Syrien reisen können, dort forschen und wissenschaftliche Kooperationen anvisieren können, hat uns in den letzten Tagen des Jahres 2024 positiv gestimmt.

Und auch im Libanon kam nach dem militärischen Zusammenbruch der Hizbollah zum Jahreswechsel Bewegung in den über zwei Jahre andauernden parlamentarischen Stillstand. Die Wahl von Joseph Aoun zum libanesischen Präsidenten am 9. Januar 2025 und die Ernennung von Dr. Nawaf Salam zum neuen Premierminister würde in einer stabilen Weltlage zu Rekonvaleszenz und Reform im Land führen. Leider verheißen die Gespenster des Völkermords und der konfessionalistischen Gewalt in der Region, des Faschismus und Rassismus in Europa und den USA, sowie des wirtschaftlichen und ökologischen Zusammenbruchs nichts Gutes für unseren Planeten.

Trotz alledem dürfen wir am OIB stolz auf das sein, was wir gemeinsam inmitten solcher Widrigkeiten letztes Jahr geschafft haben. Besonders hervorheben möchte ich die Vielzahl von erfolgreichen Veranstaltungen, die wir trotz allem in Beirut abgehalten haben. Wir haben im OIB eine weitere LAWHA-Konferenz durchgeführt; eine internationale Podiumsdiskussion mit unseren Partnern vom Arab Council for the Social Sciences und dem Finnischen Institut im Nahen Osten abgehalten; zwei Abendvorträge mit dem Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Beirut; sowie zwölf internationale Forschungskolloquien in Kairo und zwölf Theorie & Methoden Seminare für unsere zehn Stipendiat:innen in Beirut. Insgesamt fünfzehn Gastwissenschaftler:innen und vier Hans-Robert Roemer Fellows kamen im letzten Jahr ins OIB. Dr. Zeina Halabi, die seit Januar 2024 eine OIB-Referentenstelle inne hat, hat die Betreuung unserer neuen Kohorten von Stipendiat:innen übernommen und ein großartiges Programm zur Professionalisierung unserer Nachwuchswissenschaftler:innen entwickelt.

Ende 2024 haben drei Kolleg:innen nach acht turbulenten Dienstjahren unseren wissenschaftlichen Beirat verlassen. Ich bedanke mich herzlich bei Claudia Derichs (Beiratsvorsitzende), Christian Lange (stellvertretender Beiratsvorsitzender) und Beatrice Gründler für ihre Aufopferungsbereitschaft für das Institut. Gleichzeitig heiße ich fünf neue Beiratsmitglieder

willkommen: Nadia al-Bagdadi von der Central European University in Wien, Sebastian Günther von der Universität Göttingen, Isabel Toral von der Freien Universität Berlin, Dietrich Jung von der University of Southern Denmark in Odense, und Maher Jarrar von der American University of Beirut.

Lassen Sie mich mit weiteren erfreulichen Institutsnachrichten abschließen, denn wir sind hocherfreut, dass drei unserer Mitarbeitenden Anschlussstellen bekommen haben: Dr. Hans-Peter Pökel wird uns in Richtung Bonn verlassen, wo er Bibliothekar für die Kommission für Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen des Deutschen Archäologisches Institut wird. Dr. Sarah el-Bulbeisi tritt am 1. April 2025 eine akademische Ratsstelle an der LMU in München an. Und Dr. Sami Khatib hat einen Ruf an die Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe erhalten. Dort ist er ab 1. April 2025 Professor für Kunstwissenschaft und Medienphilosophie.

Zu guter Letzt freut es mich, Ihnen mitteilen zu können, dass wir am 16. Dezember 2024 einen eingetragenen Verein für OIB-Ehemalige und Freund:innen in Berlin gegründet haben. Es gab eine sehr rege Teilnahme mit 22 Präsenzteilnehmer:innen und 16 Online-Teilnehmer:innen. Nach drei Stunden positiv gestimmter Sitzung konnten wir in der Katholischen Akademie zu Berlin auf die Vereinssatzung, die Beitragsordnung und den Gründungsvorstand anstoßen (Foto).

Ich möchte mich von Herzen für die Beteiligung an dieser ersten Mitglieder-Versammlung bedanken. Herzlich gratulieren möchte ich hier unserem neuen Vorstand um Dr. Yvonne Albers, wissenschaftliche Koordinatorin im FU-Exzellenzcluster „Temporal Communities“ und Autorin der rezenten Monografie Beirut und die Zeitschrift Mawaqif: Eine arabische Intellektuellengeschichte, 1968-1994; Dr. Torsten Wollina, Akquisitionsredakteur Islamwissenschaft bei de Gruyter; Dr. Carsten Walbiner, bis Anfang Dezember Direktor des DAAD-Büros in Kairo, und Dr. Sara Binay, Referentin des Präsidenten der Hochschule Anhalt in Köthen. Wenn Sie Mitglied werden möchten, schreiben Sie bitte an Sara: [sara.binay@web.de](mailto:sara.binay@web.de).

Allen OIB-Mitarbeitenden gebührt für ihre hervorragende Arbeit und unsere Zusammenarbeit in diesem Jahr großer Dank. Wir alle haben auch in diesem letzten Jahr ein enormes Gemeinschaftsgefühl und einen wunderbaren Teamgeist bewiesen und gezeigt, was wir auch in sehr schwierigen Zeiten zu leisten in der Lage sind. Ein besonderes Dankeschön möchte ich an dieser Stelle meiner Frau Andrea Kazzar aussprechen. Ohne sie hätte ich weder die Krisen des letzten Jahres meistern noch dieses Vorwort den geduldigen Herausgeber:innen rechtzeitig liefern können.

Ich wünsche, dass das OIB weiterhin ein Ort für Wissenschaftsfreiheit und offen für kritische Auseinandersetzungen mit historischen und aktuellen Themen bleibt.

Acrylic on canvas by  
Diana Jeha



## Director's Address

Jens Hanssen



On the evening of November 26, 2024, my phone in Berlin rang at around 7pm. On the other end of the line was the security officer from the German embassy in Beirut.

“Mr. Hanssen, do you still have any employees at the Institute?”

I replied, “Yes, the porter and possibly housekeeping.”

“Get them out of there, now!”

What had preceded this call for over eleven months?

We returned to Beirut at the beginning of January 2024 with cautious confidence that the Israeli war of retaliation against Palestinians of Gaza would come to an end three months after the Hamas massacre. Although there had been an Israeli attack on a Hamas cell in the southern suburbs of Beirut on January 2, we were hopeful that the ceasefire and prisoner exchange would happen soon.

But our hopes were dashed. At the end of March, Israel attacked targets in Aleppo, then the Iranian consulate in Damascus. It became increasingly clear that Hezbollah had lost deterrence capabilities while the Biden administration had no ability to de-escalate. As the year progressed, Lebanon became increasingly at the mercy of massive Israeli military attacks.

As a result, we had to organize events outside Lebanon to guarantee the safety of participating colleagues and to enable those who were restricted from traveling to Beirut due to the security situation to take part in events. We were able to hold events in our branch office in Cairo, and thanks to new academic partnerships, we also held events in Berlin, Kassel, Munich, Istanbul, Paris, Rome, Fez, Princeton, and Toronto. The OIB was also very active in the German-speaking media, particularly thanks to Dr. Sarah El-Bulbeisi’s tireless interventions in the press as well as our fellow-in-residence Jan Altaner who wrote numerous newspaper articles.

In the meantime, we also carried out repairs and renovations as well as expanded the IT and solar infrastructure at the Institute. The rear terrace in the garden now seats seventy people. To ensure the safety of our colleagues, we constructed an emergency exit from the shelter in the basement and offered a first aid training course. Additionally, the embassy held a safety training session to review evacuation scenarios and rehearse the “chain of command” regarding satellite-phone communication. We urged everyone to have an “emergency kit” with essential supplies while emergency accommodation was supported for colleagues whose buildings were damaged by the Israeli bombings.

During this uncertain time, our fellows-in-residence were only able to organize one of the popular “Open Garden” events, on June 27. One month later, what we increasingly feared happened. On July 27, a misguided Hezbollah rocket hit an athletics field in Majdal al-Shams in the annexed Golan region, killing twelve children and many more Druze residents. This action crossed all red lines for the Israeli government, prompting them to target Hezbollah’s leadership wherever they operated—even if it meant exacting collateral damage. Israeli drones came to circle over our heads 24/7. Foreign organizations became more anxious.

On September 17, 2024, Israel launched the unprecedented pager attacks, which dramatically altered the course of events. On that day we were at Saydet al-Dukhul Church in Achrafieh with Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian friends and colleagues to bid our last farewell to a

recently deceased friend, the Arab writer and intellectual Elias Khoury. On the way back from the church, we witnessed mass panic: ambulances rushing by, and people desperately trying to transport the injured—some lying across their laps—to hospitals on scooters. The city, the country, and its people were in shock. This was a new, unprecedented form of warfare.

Ten days after these attacks, around a dozen cluster bombs hit the underground command center of Hasan Nasrallah and the Hezbollah leadership in the southern suburbs. The whole city shook. The Institute trembled.

The OIB-Advisory Board and the Managing Director of the Max Weber Foundation, Mr. Rosenbach, participated in our weekly crisis meetings on several occasions to check on our well-being and offer assistance if needed. At the Institute, we were given permission to work from home and asked to be discreet.

Finally, the German Foreign Office raised the security level to 3a and called on all organizations to follow the embassy's example and withdraw all non-essential expatriates from Lebanon. At the OIB, we decided to ask all German employees to leave, some of them on air force planes provided by the Foreign Office, and one research associate and his family left by ship from Tripoli to Turkey. The Institute was closed to visitors from October 1, 2024. However, the OIB was never empty. Our local colleagues from the directorate, administration, and IT department regularly came to check on things. Our building caretaker was also always on site.

The Israeli rockets hit closer and closer. Then, on the night of October 3, 2024, a building in the Bashura district near the Institute was razed to the ground. At that time, we had just traveled to Cairo to explore alternative venues for certain cooperation projects with colleagues there. Helplessly, we watched the events in Lebanon. An article in the F.A.Z. of October 16, 2024 describes this quite vividly.

For two interminable months into December, many villages in southern Lebanon were destroyed; in Baalbek, the Temple of Jupiter narrowly escaped (by a few meters) an Israeli missile strike; and with each passing day, the devastation of the southern suburbs increased. Throughout the country, the Israeli air force targeted suspected Hezbollah members. All too often they hit innocent bystanders. Many attacks were announced on so-called "building hit lists" on an Israeli army social media channel. Sometimes the intended targets were hit, but usually others in the vicinity were destroyed; the "hit lists" always caused panic among residents. There was great fear in the city. Some residents went to the mountains, but even there nobody really felt safe. The future was uncertain. The city was full of displaced people who camped out in the streets and squares or were housed in schools, like the one next to the OIB where several hundred found temporary shelter. We needed to provide better protection for the Institute, as Hezbollah's refugee aid initially thought we were a school too, and because unknown persons tapped into our solar power supply; twice trespassers tried to get over the fence onto our premises.

This was the precarious situation when I received a call from the embassy on the eve of the Israeli-Lebanese ceasefire. Why this urgency? Was the Institute on one of the hit lists?

And indeed, the embassy's security officer was on the phone, and he had received credible information that the OIB could take a direct hit. We quickly instructed those still present to leave the premises immediately or to take refuge in our newly built shelter. It was a long and tense night for everyone. In the end, the Institute was spared, apart from six battered solar cells on the roof.

We had barely recovered from this horror when events in Syria suddenly came thick and fast. Within a few days, HTS militiamen overran Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus. Bashar al-Assad fled to Moscow in a cloak-and-dagger operation on December 8, 2024. We could hardly believe it. The Assad regime, designed to last forever, had collapsed like a house of cards. The images from Saydnaya and other prisons, the reunion scenes of families who had been separated from each other for years and decades and didn't know whether their relatives had survived, got under the skin of many of us. The possibility that we would be able to travel to Syria again, conduct research there, and establish academic partnerships gave us a sense of optimism again in the final days of 2024.

In Lebanon, the military collapse of Hezbollah at the turn of the year broke the parliamentary deadlock that had lasted for over two years. The election of Joseph Aoun as Lebanese President on January 9, 2025, and the appointment of Dr. Nawaf Salam as the new Prime Minister could pave the way to national convalescence and political reform—in a stable world. Alas, specters of genocide and sectarianism in the region, the rise of fascism and racism in Europe and the US, and the looming threats of economic and ecological collapse do not bode well for the planet.

Nevertheless, at the OIB we are proud of what we have achieved together amidst such adversity. I would particularly like to highlight the large number of critical events that we have held in Beirut despite everything. We held another LAWHA conference at the OIB; an international panel discussion with our partners from the Arab Council for the Social Sciences and the Finnish Institute in the Middle East; two evening lectures with the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies in Beirut; twelve international research colloquia in Cairo and twelve theory & methods seminars for our ten fellows-in-residence, fifteen visiting scholars, and four Hans-Robert Roemer Fellows. Dr. Zeina G. Halabi, who joined our team as research associate in January 2024, oversees the mentorship of our new cohorts of fellows and developed an excellent program to offer advice on professionalization to our early career researchers.

At the end of 2024, three colleagues left our academic Advisory Board after eight turbulent years of service. I would like to thank Claudia Derichs (Chair of the Advisory Board), Christian Lange (Deputy Chair of the Advisory Board), and Beatrice Gründler for their dedication to the Institute. At the same time, I would like to welcome five new Advisory Board members: Nadia Bagdadi from the Central European University in Vienna, Sebastian Günther from the University of Göttingen, Isabel Toral from the Free University of Berlin, Dietrich Jung from the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, and Maher Jarrar from the American University of Beirut.

Let me conclude with some more good news from the Institute, for we are delighted that three of our current employees have been offered new positions: Dr. Hans-Peter Pökel will be leaving us for Bonn, where he will become a librarian for the Commission for the Archaeology of Non-European Cultures at the German Archaeological Institute; Dr. Sarah El-Bulbeisi will take up an academic position at the LMU in Munich on April 1, 2025; And Dr. Sami Khatib has been appointed to the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe. He will be Professor of Art Studies and Media Philosophy there starting April 1, 2025.

Finally, I am pleased to inform the readers of this annual report that we established an association for OIB alumni and friends in Berlin on December 16, 2024. There was a very lively attendance with twenty-two face-to-face participants and sixteen online participants. After a long and positive meeting, we were able to toast the association's statutes and the newly

elected board at the Catholic Academy in Berlin. I would like to thank everyone from the bottom of my heart for their participation in this first general meeting.

I would like to warmly congratulate our new board members Dr. Yvonne Albers, academic coordinator of the FU Cluster of Excellence "Temporal Communities" and author of the recent monograph Beirut and the Journal Mawaqif: An Arab Intellectual History, 1968-1994; Dr. Torsten Wollina, acquisitions editor for Islamic Studies at de Gruyter; Dr. Carsten Walbiner, director of the DAAD office in Cairo until the beginning of December; and Dr. Sara Binay, advisor to the president of the Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Köthen. If you would like to become a member, please write to Sara via email at [sara.binay@web.de](mailto:sara.binay@web.de).

Finally, I would like to thank all current OIB employees for their outstanding work and our camaraderie this year. We have all demonstrated a great sense of community and a wonderful team spirit again this past year and shown what we can achieve even in the most difficult of times. I would like to take this opportunity to give a special thank you to my wife Andrea Kazzer. Without her, I would not have been able to overcome the crises of the past year.

I hope that the OIB will always remain a beacon of academic freedom and critical debate on historical and current issues.



Friends and alumni toast the founding of our new OIB-association in Berlin, December 16, 2024.

# Research Clusters and Researchers

## Intellectual History and Literary Studies

How can we methodologically and conceptually approach Arab intellectual history and literature as writers reckon with ideologies of emancipation? What are the sources and impulses of producing knowledge and making theory? What are the intellectual relations between the region and its diasporas? What does the aesthetics-politics nexus in the works of modern Arab writers tell us about the ways they imagine their peers and themselves in the wake of critical historical junctures? And how does the present reconfigure the writers' recollection of the past and visions of the future? These overarching questions inform research in this cluster of Arab intellectual history and Arabic literature, scholarship that is enriched by a multidisciplinary approach that touches on philosophy, comparative literature, visual studies, sociology, and traveling theories.

The cluster's concerns are threefold: First, it examines the legacy of Arab writers and intellectuals as it was imagined in twentieth century Arabic literature and philosophy; second, it explores literary excavation and archival practices that reveal the ways in which the past and the future have been conceptualized in the modern literary tradition; and third, the cluster is grounded in a deep appreciation of the (counter-)archive and, indeed, the genealogy of Arabic thought. Of particular interest is the Nahda. Depending on one's interpretation, it represents the beginning of a still "unfinished" Arab drive for enlightenment and emancipation, or it marks the colonial end of an independent cultural development. Either way, the Nahda represents a cultural filter of the Arab past as well as a kind of Archimedean point for Arab modernity on which truth claims about the future have been balanced ever since.

The cluster is equally concerned with the uncharted category that is the Arab contemporary. In identifying and elucidating the political critique embedded in a presumed post-political aesthetic moment, the cluster renders the hitherto opaque contemporary era legible. Specifically, it counters the available critical corpus that reads late-twentieth-century Arabic literature, particularly of noncanonical authors and genres, as an apolitical and fragmented discourse insofar as it transgresses the ethos of political commitment and the archetype of the modernist intellectual that channels it. Research on the manifestation of the contemporary in the literary not only points to their political nature, but it also reveals the ways in which the political emerges in the interstices of the literary.

The cluster of research addresses a palimpsest of texts that have been circulating—with varied frequency—or have been blocked from traveling. The sources vary from the written to the oral to the aural and the visual; it considers high- and low-brow and everything in between; "ephemera," "documents," and "classics"; essays, philosophical treatises, fiction, poetry, films and songs from the Maghreb, the Mashriq, and the Gulf. By exploring alternatives to ahistorical and presentist scholarly approaches that have all too often governed research on the Arab world, the intellectual history and literary studies cluster reveals the ways in which modern Arabic literature and thought have answered ontological and epistemological questions at critical historical junctures.

## Researchers

Jens Hanssen, Director

### Academic Bio



Jens Hanssen studied Arabic and Islam at Tübingen University, the University of Alexandria, and Durham University, where he graduated with distinction in 1993. He completed his MPhil in Oriental Studies (1993-95) and his PhD in Modern History at St. Antony's College, Oxford University (1995-2001). As a doctoral student, he held junior research fellowships at the Institut de Recherches et d'Études sur les Mondes Arabes et Musulmans (IREMAM), Aix-en-Provence, France; the American University of Beirut; and the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft in Istanbul. He also served on the academic advisory committee at the Lebanese Ministry of Culture and Higher Education to host Beirut as the cultural capital of the Arab world in 1999. He held a Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Erlangen to conduct research on the Arab renaissance before he started teaching at the University of Toronto. Jens Hanssen has been at the University of Toronto since 2002, where he teaches in the department of History, Near & Middle Eastern Civilisations, and the department of Historical Studies on the Mississauga campus. From 2017 to 2018, he was visiting Chair of Arabic Studies at the University of Göttingen, and from January 2020 to June 2023 he held a visiting fellowship in Global Intellectual History at the Freie Universität Berlin. His publications include *Fin de Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital* (2005), *A Clarion for Syria: A Patriot's Call Against the Civil War of 1860* (2019), and *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (2016), and *Handbook of Contemporary Middle Eastern and North African History* (2021). His other writings have appeared in *The New Cambridge History of Islam*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Arab Studies Journal*, *the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* and [www.hannaharendt.net](http://www.hannaharendt.net) - Zeitschrift für Politisches Denken.

### Research

Hanssen's research explores the intellectual entanglements between Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East since the late 19th century as well as the afterlives of Abbasid and Andalusian philosophy in German, Jewish, and Arabic intellectual debates of the 20th century. He is interested in the connection between intellectual trends and urban culture, the rationalities of late Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces as well as diffraction, translation, and traveling theory.

### Newspaper/Blog Publications

- Hanssen, Jens. "Er hat seinen Traumjob." Westfälische Nachrichten. January 27, 2024.
- Hanssen, Jens. "في مفهوم التضامن" ("On the Concept of Solidarity"). With Barraaq Zakariyya and Somer Almir Mahmud. OIB Hypotheses (blog). January 31, 2024. <https://oib.hypotheses.org/1586>.
- Hanssen, Jens. "Häuserkampf um das kulturelle Gedächtnis Jerusalems." Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. July 2, 2024.

- Hanssen, Jens and Andrea Kazzar. "Bis auf weiteres zersprengt: Ein kurzer Bericht zur Lage des Orient-Instituts Beirut." Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. October 16, 2024.
- Hanssen, Jens. "Arbeiten unter Kriegsbedingungen: Prof. Jens Hanssen hat Beirut verlassen." Westfälische Nachrichten. November 5, 2024.

### Translation

- Atassi, Mohammad Ali. "Farajallah al-Hilu and Riyadh al-Turk On Dignity, Prisons, and Loyalty." Al-Quds al-'Arabi. February 28, 2024. Translated by Jens Hanssen. OIB Hypotheses (blog). April 23, 2024. <https://oib.hypotheses.org/1611>.

### Radio & Podcast Interviews

- "Wie geht es den Menschen im Libanon?" Radio Berlin Brandenburg. September 27, 2024.
- "Im Gespräch mit Prof. Dr. Jens Hanssen." Der Divan Podcast. November 8, 2024.

### Scholarly Lectures

- "What is the Nahda?" and "The Arabic Nietzsche from Farah Antun to Edward Said." Conference at Divan – The Arabic House of Culture Berlin. January 25–26, 2024.
- "Albert Hourani and the American University of Beirut, 1937–1939." OIB Director's Inaugural Lecture. American University of Beirut. March 12, 2024.
- "Before Solidarity: Reflections on the Quiddity of a Concept." OIB-MECAM Special Panel. MWS Harmful Entanglements Conference. May 15, 2024.
- "Lebanon: The Imbalance of Terror." Princeton University. October 21, 2024.
- "Muruwah and Bloch Encounter Ibn Sina: On Marxist Discoveries of Arab-Islamic Philosophy." University of Toronto. October 24, 2024.
- "Lebanon: The Imbalance of War." University of Toronto. October 25, 2024.
- "On Marxist Discoveries of Ibn Sina around 1952." Conference on Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU), Munich. November 17, 2024.
- "Eurocentrism in a Time of War: A Perspective from the Orient-Institut in Beirut." Konstanz University. November 18, 2024.
- "Notes from the Orient-Institut Beirut: Managing the Contact Zone in Genocidal Times." Workshop on Meeting the Enemy at the Border. Heidelberg University. December 12, 2024.

### Summer Academies, Workshops, Conferences and Lectures

- Conference: "Global Weimar – Global Nahda." Divan – The Arabic House of Culture Berlin. January 25–27, 2024.
- Conference: "Harmful Entanglements." Orient-Institut Istanbul. May 14–15, 2024. (Organized two panels with MECAM colleagues for the Max Weber Foundation Annual Conference.)
- Book Talk: Avi Shlaim, Three Worlds: Memoirs of an Arab-Jew. May 21, 2024.

- Conference: "War and Civilizationist Horizons." Co-organized with ACSS. Orient-Institut Beirut. May 30, 2024.
- Book Talk: Sonja Mejcher, An Impossible Friendship: Group Portrait, Jerusalem Before and After 1948. Freie Universität Berlin. June 11, 2024.
- Conference: "Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions: An International Workshop." Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. November 15–17, 2024.

### New Partnerships and Institution-building

- OIB-DIVAN:
  - Event: Conference Global Weimar – Global Nahda
  - Date: January 25–27, 2024
- OIB-LAfOS (Lebanese Association for Ottoman History) 1st Annual Lecture:
  - Speaker: Prof. Stefan Winter (UQAM & Koç University)
  - Title: The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule Revisited
  - Date: May 27, 2024
- AUB-CHLA (Center for Humanities and Literary Arts):
  - Event: Kant and the Non-European Lecture Series (2024–2025)
  - Lecture: Why Are We Moving in the Opposite Direction of Perpetual Peace? by Dr. Oxana Timofeeva in Divan
  - Date: September 5, 2024
- OIB-ICLAA (Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies):
  - Event: Signing of the Understanding of Scientific Cooperation
  - Date: November 11, 2024
- Friends & Alumni Association:
  - Event: Founding Meeting
  - Date: December 18, 2024
- OIB-University of Konstanz Collaboration:
  - Project: Graduate School Post-Eurocentric Europe: Narratives of a World Province in Transformation
- OIB-ACSS (Arab Council for the Social Sciences):
  - Collaboration: Ongoing partnership
- OIB-FIME (Forum for International Middle Eastern Studies):
  - Collaboration: Ongoing partnership

## Zeina G. Halabi, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Zeina G. Halabi is a writer, editor, and scholar of modern Arabic literature. Her research explores the contemporary legacy of 20th century emancipatory traditions, texts, and figures, with a regional focus on Egypt and the Levant. She is the author of *The Unmaking of the Arab Intellectual: Prophecy, Exile, and the Nation* (EUP, 2017), and refereed articles in journals, edited volumes and anthologies including *The Arab Renaissance: A Bilingual Anthology of the Nahda* (2018) and *Commitment and Beyond: Reflections On/Of the Political in Arabic Literature Since the 1940s* (2015). Her research has been supported by the Forum Transregionale Studien (2012-13), DAAD (21), and the Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship for Experienced Researchers (2018-21). Her essays and translations have appeared in Arabic and English in pan-Arab and international media platforms on topics ranging from literature to contemporary music and visual culture. She currently serves as the Arabic Editor of *Rusted Radishes: Beirut Literary and Art Journal*.

### At the OIB

As the convener of the Theory and Method Seminar, which aims to give OIB Stipendiat fellows the space to discuss work in progress—be it a thesis chapter, a book proposal, a dissertation prospectus, or an article they are preparing for publication—fellows receive thorough and detailed feedback on their drafts that are accessible to all participants so they can benefit from the conversation. Throughout the academic year 2024, fellows presented on topics ranging between Arab intellectual history, literary studies, art history, visual studies, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, philology, and history of music. On the day assigned to them, participants have ten to fifteen minutes to present their works, which initiates discussion about ways in which they can hone their theoretical framework and methodological approach. Fellows, whose attendance of the seminar is mandatory, are asked to comment on their colleagues' papers and prepare questions that can advance their colleague's argument, method, or theoretical framework. The Seminar will sustain its activities throughout 2025 with incoming fellows.

### Publications

- زينة الحلبي. «قصص أحمد وائل أو التوحش على أنقاض العناية». قَم: مجلة بيروت الأدبية والفنية. 23 شباط/فبراير 2024.
- زينة الحلبي وعدنية شبلي. «الكتابة تلعثماً: حوارٌ بين عدنية شبلي وزينة الحلبي». قَم: مجلة بيروت الأدبية والفنية. 3 أيار/مايو 2024.
- زينة الحلبي. «الرائي الأخير: إلياس خوري وسياسة الرثاء». مجلة الدراسات الفلسطينية. خريف 2024 (141) 41-65.
- زينة الحلبي. «ديوك وكناكيت: نائل الطوخي ملاعباً الرداءة». قَم: مجلة بيروت الأدبية والفنية. آب 2024.
- زينة الحلبي. «تقويض المثقف العربي: النبوءة والمنفى والوطنية». محمود درويش: سردية الماضي والحاضر. فلسطين: مؤسسة القطان. 2024: 13-44.

- Halabi, Zeina and Adania Shibli. "When Writing Stutters: Adania Shibli and Zeina Halabi in Conversation". Translated by Sara Mourad. *Rusted Radishes: Beirut Literary and Art Journal*. Sept. 9, 2024. Co-published with TRAF0: Blog for Transregional Research. <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/52589>.

### Events

- a) Participant at the Gabes International Film Festival (April, 2024): The Gabe's Film Festival (or Festival International de Film de Gabès) is an annual event held in Gabès, a coastal city in southern Tunisia. It's one of the more significant cultural and artistic festivals in the country, particularly focusing on independent and experimental cinema. The festival aims to highlight innovative and alternative voices in filmmaking, often showcasing films that challenge traditional forms of storytelling.

In this 2024 edition, the Festival focused on Palestinian cinema and thematically related films from the global south and countercultural movements in Europe and the US. In addition to film screenings, the festival featured workshops, masterclasses, and discussions with filmmakers, critics, and industry professionals, making it an important event for aspiring filmmakers in the region. Halabi was invited to participate among a group of scholars, curators, and film directors to discuss the politics of cinematic production and the significance of the moving image following the events of October 7, 2023.

- b) Interviewer in conversation with Adania Shibli (March, 2024): Halabi was invited to an AUB-Rusted Radishes sponsored conversation with the Palestinian writer Adania Shibli who spoke about the craft of writing, focusing on her notion of minor detail both as a method and an epistemological model. The conversation was published in Arabic and subsequently translated to English and re-published by TRAF0: Blog for Transregional Research.

## Sami Khatib, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Sami Khatib holds an MA degree in Media Studies and Philosophy (2004) and a PhD in Media Studies (2013) from Freie Universität Berlin. He specializes in Critical Theory with interdisciplinary research interests in Philosophy, Aesthetic Theory, Visual Arts, Media Theory, and Cultural Studies. He joined OIB from October 2023 to November 2024 as a research associate. In 2025, he is co-organizing the lecture series “Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice and Freedom” and the international conference “Catastrophe, Memory and Critique,” scheduled at the OIB for June 3-5, 2025.

Prior appointments include guest professorships at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (2021-23) and the Institute of Philosophy and Sciences of Art at Leuphana Universität Lüneburg (2020-21); a professorship of Visual Arts at the American University in Cairo (2019-20); a postdoctoral fellowship at the DFG research training group “Cultures of Critique” at Leuphana University Lüneburg (2017-18); a visiting professorship of philosophy and aesthetics at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (2017); a visiting professorship at the Department of Fine Arts and Art History at the American University of Beirut (2016-17);, and a Mellon postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Arts and Humanities at the American University of Beirut (2015-16).

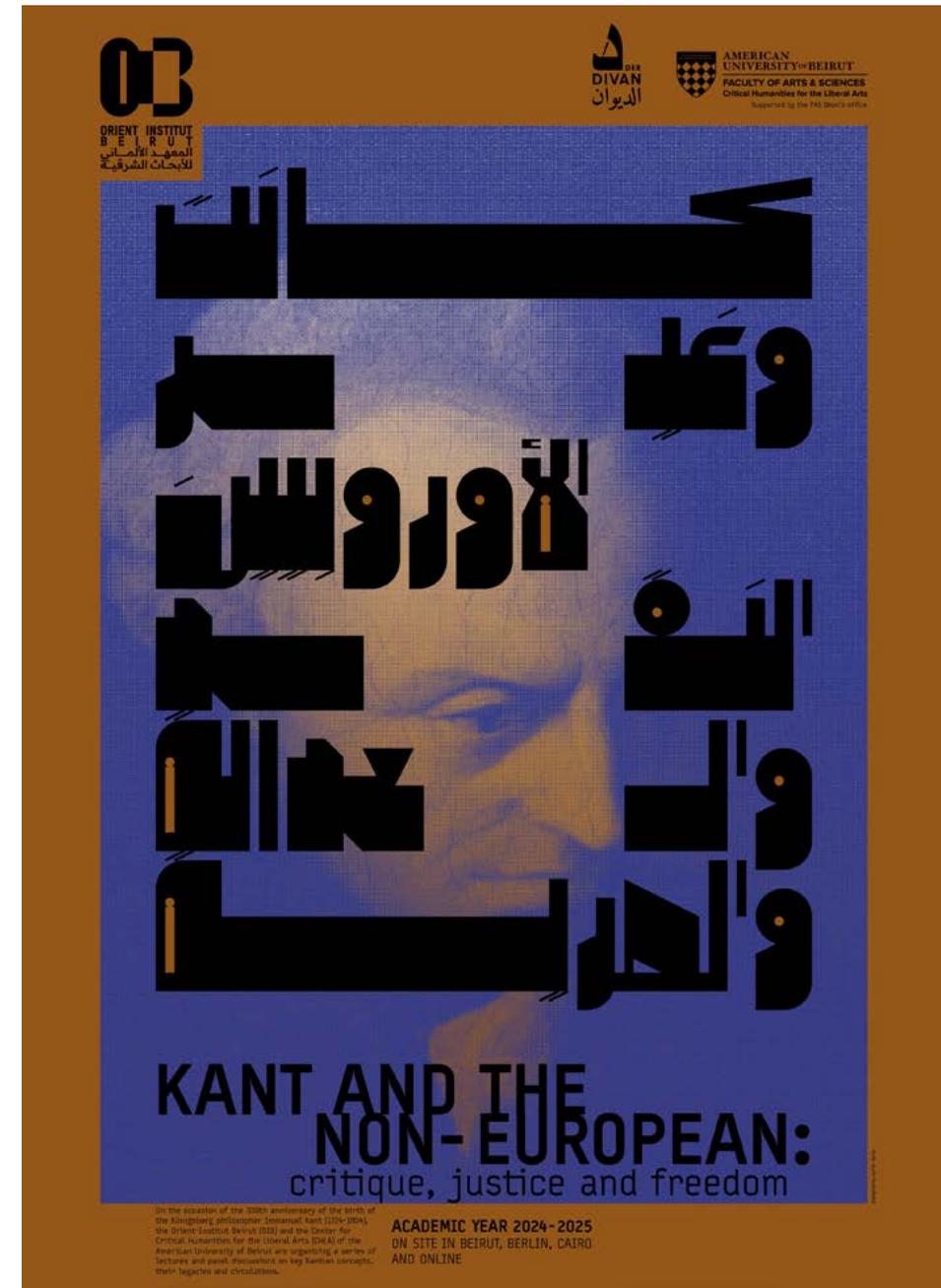
### Research

In recent years, there has been a new interest in research and education in Critical Theory in and from the Global South. At a time when the notion of critique came under attack in Western academia (Anker and Felski 2017; Asad et al. 2009, Latour 2004) —be it for its European Enlightenment legacy, anthropocentric agency, or its turn towards a neoliberal logic of self-improvement and self-care—the perspective and scope of Critical Theory has broadened.

The globalization of Critical Theory transcends the binary of Western/non-Western thought. As theory, practice, and stance, it challenges the concepts of critique, criticism, subjectivity, and universalism, revealing that what is “Western” cannot be reduced to a culturalist question. Critique, as a relational concept, is intrinsically tied to its intended audience. By critiquing power in the name of truth, we uncover the inextricable link between knowledge, power and historical modes of knowing (Foucault 1978). From this perspective, critique is implied in, complicit with, and opposed to modernity’s colonial, imperialist, and capitalist legacies and actualities. “Critique,” however, is not an exclusively Western term.

### At the OIB

While most postcolonial critiques of Marx and Frankfurt School Critical Theory (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas et al.) have focused on the normative and/or teleological foundations of the idea of “universal history” and progress (Allen 2024), my time in Beirut, revealed how the current crisis of this school of thought came more starkly than anticipated. The various (non)reactions of critical theorists globally in the aftermath of the Hamas attacks on October 7-8, 2023—which Israel used as a pretext to launch a genocidal campaign against the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip (current death toll exceeds 46,000 as of January



“Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice and Freedom,” OIB lecture series from September 2024 until April 2025 in collaboration with the American University of Beirut (AUB). Poster credits: Karim Farah.

2025)—highlighted the stakes of the constitutive intertwinement of perspectives on critique and standpoints of critique.

Arguably, a historical low-point of Western Critical Theory was reached on November 13, 2023, a month and a half into my stay at OIB, when the current generation of Frankfurt School critical theorists Nicole Deitelhoff, Rainer Forst, and Klaus Günther alongside the most senior representative of its second generation, Jürgen Habermas, published a statement, titled “Principles of Solidarity,” on the website of the Frankfurt-based “Normative Orders” research center. In the statement, the authors conflate “solidarity with Israel” with “solidarity with Jews in Germany” and claim Israel’s actions are “justified in principle.” In addition, the statement categorically claims that “the standards of judgement slip completely when genocidal intentions are attributed to Israel’s actions.” Palestinian deaths were relegated to a sub-clause as a “concern,” deemed unworthy of changing the invoked “standards of judgment.” To date, this statement has not been amended, edited, or revoked.

For my research project, the perspective of Beirut—and, more broadly, the Middle East—not only offered a more nuanced approach to the role of Critical Theory in times of crisis, catastrophe, and genocide, but also enabled me to formulate a radical critique of the Frankfurt School’s contemporary Critical Theory, its colonial implications, and its racist assumptions.

This process of rethinking led to my lecture at the annual conference of the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS) on May 20, 2024, titled “Germany and its Palestinian Discontent.” Subsequently, in June 2024, I co-organized a multi-day online event in collaboration with the Beirut Institute for Critical Analysis and Research (BICAR), titled “Palestine as Symptom and Cause,” which featured lectures by internationally acclaimed critical theorists including Brenna Bhandar, Alberto Toscano, Nadia Bou Ali, A. Dirk Moses, Jamil Khader, Françoise Vergès, Jessica Whyte, Sai Englert, Jodi Dean, and Robert Meister. It also informed the (re)conceptualization of the events that I organized, hosted, or conceptualized at OIB including the conference “Crisis, Memory and Critique” and the lecture series “Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice and Freedom.”

During the process of formulating a critique of Western (primarily Frankfurt School) Critical Theory, through the epistemological and political lens of Palestine, OIB offered me a platform to think, rethink, and discuss new approaches to and within Critical Theory grounded in Beirut. Since Lebanon’s independence in 1943, Beirut has been a capital and site of rich, contested histories of critique—whether as social practice or political movement—from the 2019 October Revolution to the Palestinian revolutions of the 1970s and the class struggles of the 1950s and 1960s. This written, unwritten, and repressed history informed, destabilized, and shaped the framework of my research on Critical Theory in and from Beirut.

### Events & Publications

- (a) **Lecture Series: *Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice, and Freedom*.** September 2024–April 2025.

On the 300th anniversary of the birth of the Königsberg philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the Orient-Institut Beirut (organizers Sami Khatib and Jens Hanssen) and the Center for Critical Humanities for the Liberal Arts (CHLA) of the American University of Beirut are organizing a series of lectures and panel discussions on key Kantian concepts, their legacies, and circulations. The purpose of the event series is two-fold: (1) investigating the legacy and contemporary relevance of Kantian key-concepts such as

critique, enlightenment, justice, reason, and freedom today in Europe, the MENA region, and beyond; (2) exploring the question of circulation, translation, and reconceptualization of Kantian and cognate philosophical concepts within the MENA region.

The organizers were interested in more recent accounts of Kant’s limited, i.e. Eurocentric, notion of universality and how historical and epistemic limitations of his age are ingrained in his notions of anthropology, history, and teleological progress. At the same time, the organizers and guests discuss the radical potentials of some of his key concepts (e.g. *sensus communis*, public use of reason, aim of nature, radical evil), which resist their full historicization within the context of Enlightenment thought and early German Idealism.

Overall, this series of lectures and panels also attempted to bring the Kantian legacy of continental philosophy in conversation with modern Arabic intellectual history. Of particular interest is the Nahda, the period and project of cultural effervescence from the beginning of the nineteenth to the middle of the twentieth century. Depending on one’s interpretation, it represents the beginning of a still “unfinished” Arab drive for enlightenment and emancipation, or it marks the colonial end of an independent cultural development. Either way, the Nahda represents an Archimedean point for Arab modernity, a fulcrum on which truth claims about the Arab past and future have been balanced ever since.

- (b) **Lecture (hosting and organizing)**

In the inaugural lecture of the series “Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice and Freedom” on September 5, 2024, Dr. Oxana Timofeeva (Institute for Global Reconstitution, Berlin) spoke on “Why are we moving in the opposite direction of the regulative idea of perpetual peace?” The hybrid event took place in person at Der Divan—das arabische Kulturhaus in Berlin and was live streamed to the Center for Critical Humanities for the Liberal Arts (CHLA) of the American University of Beirut. Dr. Timofeeva was introduced by the OIB organizers Jens Hanssen and Sami Khatib.

- (c) **Conference: *Catastrophe, Memory, and Critique*.** Organized by the Orient-Institut Beirut. Scheduled for June 3–5, 2025.

The event was originally planned for May 20–22, 2024, under the title “Crisis, Memory and Critique,” conceptualized and organized by Jens Hanssen and Sami Khatib, and subsequently postponed and reconceptualized due to the genocide in Gaza. For this international conference, German Research Foundation (DFG) for third-party funding were granted in the sum of 17,600 euros.

Thematically, “Catastrophe, Memory and Critique” takes stock of how the field of memory studies has metamorphosed and expanded internationally since the landmark event “Crisis and Memory,” held at the OIB in 1998. In 2025, in times of genocide, war, and terror, our conference aims to interrogate the place of critique in relation to three contested fields of research: (1) European memory politics and Germany’s once celebrated “Erinnerungskultur” in particular; (2) the figures of catastrophe, crisis, and critique in the Arab intellectual tradition; (3) the painful afterlives of war, resistance, and revolution in Lebanon, Syria, and Algeria.

Regardless of the final verdict of the International Court of Justice, Israel's ongoing genocidal campaign against the population of Gaza has not only undermined international law but also challenges the historicity of memory and the discursive implications of memory studies. How will this unprecedented act of destruction, annihilation, and expulsion be remembered? In terms of scale, impact and duration, talk of a "second catastrophe (Nakba)" is hauntingly apposite. How could the memory of two different but related catastrophes, the Holocaust and Nakba, put the unfolding genocide into perspective? What continuities and ruptures will come to the fore? Ultimately, is memory still a meaningful category at all when thinking with, through, and against the negativity of the present? What kind of memory is yet to come, written in the grammatical tense of "future past"?

- (d) **Chair and Paper:** *Session Decolonizing the Study of Palestine in Germany* (co-speakers: Hanan Toukan and Sarah El Bulbeisi). Part of the annual conference *75 Years of an Ongoing Nakba: The Question of Knowledge Production*. Organized by the Institute for Palestine Studies. Beirut. May 20, 2024.

This paper, titled "Germany and its Palestinian Discontent," addresses the current crackdown on free speech regarding Palestine and Palestine solidarity movements in Germany after October 7, 2023. In this context, the paper discusses the wider political framing of Palestine and Palestinians in post-reunification Germany, and showed how a disavowed reality (Palestine) became the symptom of a repressed (German) past. As a result, from a German perspective of unconditional support of the politics of the state of Israel, even the academic study of Palestine could be perceived as a distortion of a desired reality that mainstream German political discourse has constructed of Germany and post-war German identity ("Wiedergutmachung," "having dealt with one's past"). The paper concludes by showcasing how such distortions, projective identifications, and disavowed realities affect the study of Palestine in German academia.

- (e) **Lecture:** *After Unreason: Global Injustice and the Legacy of Enlightenment—A Philosophical Contribution to Kantian Ideas in the Context of Capitalism and Colonialism*. Brussels. October 2024.

The lecture was integrated in the event series "After Reason – Productive Undoing is a Difficult Task," organized by the Goethe-Institut Belgium, and took place on October 19, 2024, at Beursschouwburg in Brussels. Originally, the lecture was conceived as part of the lecture series "Kant and the Non-European: Critique, Justice and Freedom" (see above). Due to the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon and particularly its capital Beirut, the continuation of the lecture series was postponed. Thematically, the lecture in Brussels addressed the legacy of Kantian concepts such as teleology, perpetual peace, and reason in an age of global capital, coloniality, and necropolitical "population management" ranging from incarceration to genocide.

## Fellows

David Höhn, Residential Doctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



David Höhn is a lecturer and research associate at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he teaches Intellectual History. He studied Philosophy and History in Munich, Tehran, Jerusalem, Beirut, and Berlin. His research explores intellectual homologies and syncretisms between Europe and the Middle East in the modern era. He is particularly interested in the theoretical and philosophical dimensions of historical inquiry.

### Research

David Höhn's research project, *Doing Theory in Beirut: Geschichte einer epistemischen Praxis (1950–2007)*, examines the intellectual history of Beirut by investigating how institutions shape styles of thought. At the heart of this study is Dar al-Tali'a, a publishing house and intellectual hub that played a crucial role in structuring intellectual discourse. Through an in-depth analysis of Dar al-Tali'a, its journal, *Dirasat Arabiya*, and unpublished sources, the project explores how intellectual infrastructures enabled the emergence of new ideas, shaped public debates, and influenced modes of critique.

### At the OIB

The project benefited from the fellowship in Beirut through numerous encounters with authors from the publishing house and researchers, which helped to better grasp and define the significance and role of Dar al-Tali'a and its founders, Bashir al-Dawouk and Ghada al-Samman. A deeper insight into Beirut's current intellectual landscape, its key actors, and institutions facilitated an assessment of the contextual similarities and differences between past and present. In particular, the focus on war and violence as determinants of intellectual work has had a decisive impact on the project's direction.

## Angela Haddad, Residential Doctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



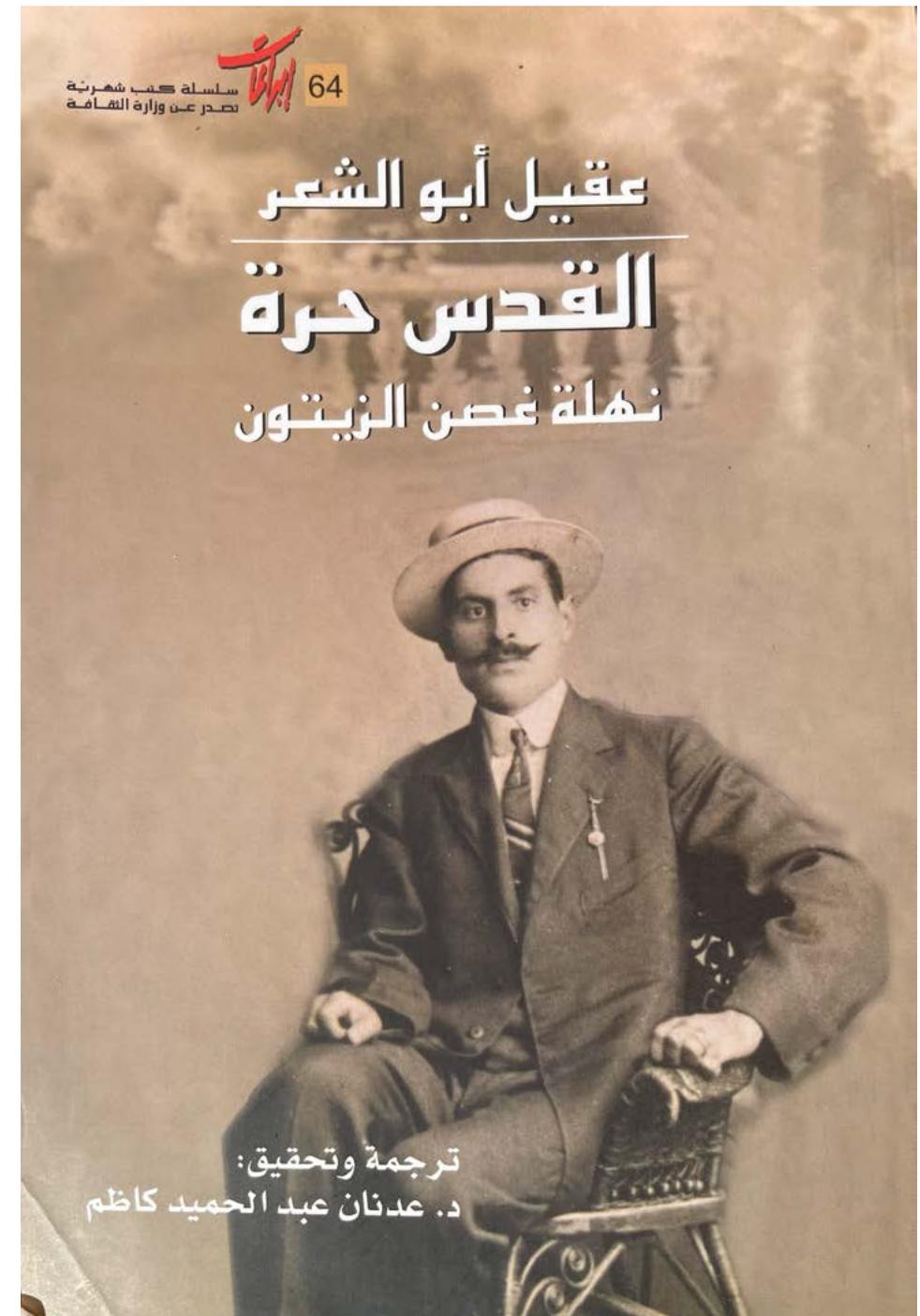
Angela Haddad is a PhD candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at New York University. She will defend her dissertation in summer of 2025. She is author of “Chronicling ‘the Death of the Arab’ in Colombian Literature” (2022) in the Routledge volume *Twenty-First Century Arab and African Diasporas in Spain, Portugal and Latin America*, edited by Cristián Ricci. She is also a literary translator from Arabic into English, and her work has appeared in *Absinthe: World Literature in Translation*.

### Research

As a Residential Doctoral Fellow (September 2024–June 2025), Angela Haddad is currently working toward completing her dissertation “Migration, Representation, and Social Formation between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caribbean Basin, 1870-1950.” This project argues that Arab migration to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti created ethno-racial and social imaginaries that emerged outside the violence of direct colonialism but across and within disparate empires, nationalisms, and transregional connections. Through close rhetorical analysis of travelogs, novels, cultural journals, newspapers, and lectures from 1870 to 1950, the project traces the ways in which migrants mobilized translational practices emerging from the Nahda and civilizational tropes circulating in Beirut- and Cairo-based journals as well as in Arab and Arabic print productions in the Americas to engage with local Caribbean thought.

### At the OIB

In the Theory and Method Seminar at the OIB, I have received unparalleled feedback on a chapter of the dissertation that analyzes the translations of Salim Aun (Salim ‘Awn), a migrant author from Beirut to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The insights gained from senior and peer researchers have allowed me to better analyze the tropes appearing in his strategic renditions of Syro-Lebanese diasporic and Egyptian texts as permutations on discourses of *aṣāla* (authenticity) in the late Nahda period that tapped into the language of Haitian Indigenism. Due to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, I temporarily relocated to Jordan and used my time in Amman to obtain recent Arabic translations of two Spanish novels by the author and journalist Aquiles Nimer (‘Aqil Sulayman abu al-Sha’r al-Nimri), who was born in Irbid in what was then part of Greater Syria but migrated to the Dominican Republic in the early 1900s. Now back in Beirut, I plan on using the remainder of my fellowship to conduct research on émigré writings that appeared in this city’s newspapers and magazines.



Front cover of an Arabic translation of one of Aquiles Nimer's Spanish novels.

## Susan Abraham, Residential Doctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



Susan Abraham is an advanced Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese at the University of Virginia (U.S.A). She is a scholar of the history and culture of early modern Spain in connection with North Africa and the wide Mediterranean, focusing on the textual production of exiled Moriscos—Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity—in Tunisia. Her research is animated by a concern with how literature, language, and translation capture movement and displacement across the Mediterranean. With this point of inquiry at the center of her work, she explores how ideas travel from one shore of the Mediterranean to another, how they are adapted and transformed in the process, and their impact once they reach new domains.

In 2024, her dissertation project, “Narrating Faith Across the Straits: Morisco Manuals of Faith in Tunis and the Early Modern Mediterranean,” was awarded a Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for ground-breaking work addressing questions of ethical and religious values in the humanities and social sciences.

### Research

Abraham’s work is dedicated to broadening the scope of early modern Spanish literature by underscoring the textual interventions and contributions of Moriscos—Iberian Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity—in sixteenth- to seventeenth-century Tunisia. In her research, she examines the discursive constructions of religious, racial, and ethnic identities in early modern Spain and North Africa, specifically analyzing how Moriscos narrated the experience of displacement to cultivate community and cultural continuity in diaspora. To do so, I examine Morisco didactic miscellanies, doctrinal treatises, and polemical poetry written in Arabic and Spanish that are archived in Spain and Tunisia. Further, I put these understudied texts into conversation with early modern Spanish literature and Arabic writings like qasida poetry, hagiographies, Qur’anic and exegetical (tafsīr) sources, and Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh). This multi-lingual framework puts into relief how early modern Morisco writing in diaspora was shaped by experiences of connectivity and interaction and, therefore, critically responds to scholarship that has subsumed this corpus under the rubric of Spanish literature while portraying its authors as passive recipients of a European literary canon. She argues that Moriscos creatively engaged classical Arabic and North African Islamic traditions while strategically adapting literary forms and tropes rooted in Christian Europe to forge a narrative ethics reflecting their diaspora experience in the Mediterranean.

### At the OIB

One of the most valuable aspects of the residential doctoral fellowship has been participating in the OIB’s Theory and Methods Seminar. The level of intellectual engagement, thoughtful readership, and feedback has not only helped level up my scholarship and writing, but also my engagement as a reader of my colleagues’ work. As convenor of the workshop, Zeina G. Halabi’s incisive feedback and ability to draw out the structural potential, undergirding questions, and argumentative stakes of our work is unparalleled. I experienced this firsthand in my first workshop. Her engagement with my work helped me draw out connections between the primary texts of my dissertation and the tradition of Andalusian qasida poetry (multi-the-

matic ode). Her feedback encouraged me to pursue a constellation of latent connections that I had yet to put together. While I’ve started to flesh out these connections with qasida poetry in my dissertation, I plan to further pursue their implications and potential in a future stand-alone journal article.

While in residence at the OIB, I was invited to present my research at two international symposia, one in April 2024 which was organized by the Iberian History Seminar at Exeter College at Oxford and a second in November 2024 which was organized by the Mediterranean Seminar and hosted in Tunis at the Harvard Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Feedback from these two symposia helped me expand my research into a full chapter draft for my dissertation. In Spring 2025, I will workshop this draft as part of my second engagement with the Theory and Methods Seminar.

Outside of our Theory and Methods Seminar, I’ve spent most of my time at the OIB in its library. I am most grateful for its serene garden views, generous staff, and the quiet company of fellow researchers-in-residence. The library’s robust collection of scholarship and resources in Islamic studies has been especially important for my research as I’ve been able to access titles that were unavailable to me at my university library. Finally, in the early weeks of this most recent Israeli bombardment of Lebanon and South Beirut, the OIB library and garden provided a necessary space of refuge, consistency, and familiarity amid the unceasing sound of drones and the intensifying bombings.

While in residency at the OIB, I completed two chapters and drafted parts of the introduction and conclusion of my dissertation, which I will defend in late May 2025. I also started work on a forthcoming article that is slated for publication in fall 2025. I credit a lot of this progress to the encouraging support I received at the Theory and Methods seminar and among my colleagues, especially those whose company in the library made writing, reading, and thinking a less solitary endeavor.

Ziad Kiblawi, Residential Doctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



Ziad Kiblawi is a doctoral student in history at St Antony's College, University of Oxford, where he is writing an intellectual history of modern Arab social and political thought. His research centers on Arabic social theory, and the logico-historical conditions necessitated by the formation of various theoretical discourses. Mainly, he looks at the transformations of the analytic categories of critique between the 1950s and 1980s—from Arab Existentialism and culturalism in Arab Nationalism to the Marxist and psychoanalytic tendencies in historical thought and critique. He completed his Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts at the American University of Beirut, where he wrote his graduate dissertation, "Reading, Repeating, and Working Through: On Mahdi Amil's Theoretical Practice." Ziad has published several articles on and translations of Arab Marxism, and he recently co-curated (with Natasha Gasparian) an art exhibition titled "Je suis inculte! The Salon d'Automne and the National Canon" at the Sursock Museum.

### Research

Kiblawi's doctoral research explores Arabic social and political thought in the mid-twentieth century Eastern Mediterranean. His dissertation investigates the social and historical forms that contributed to the formation of the analytic categories of critique in Arabic social theory. The research aims to historicize Arabic social theory by situating its dominant theoretical discourses within a reimagined Arab intellectual history, while simultaneously elaborating their conceptual terrains (their specificity) and theorizing their place as part of global intellectual history (their generality). The re-commitment of the Arab intellectual post-1967 to the question of national liberation mandated rethinking the epistemological conjuncture of science, philosophy, and politics in Arab thought. The task of Arabizing critical theoretical concepts raised the Arab intellectual's concern with the status of the concept in Arabic, but these categories remained overdetermined by claims pertaining to the relevance of the Nahda's ideological formation. Kiblawi studies the status of enlightenment in modern Arab philosophy and thought and the specificities of the Nahda debate, both in the latter's early advent during the nineteenth century and its referential significance in intellectual and cultural production following the 1967 crisis.

### At the OIB

The Orient-Institut Beirut was an intellectually productive space, due in no small part to its lively academic community. The war on Lebanon impacted the country on a fundamental level, crippling its private and public educational sector. OIB's library served as a refuge when many libraries were not accessible this past year.

## طريقنا... الى «تغيير الانسان العربي»!

بقلم حسين مروءة

حضاري ، وهو بذاته ارتداء في «الهزيمة الحضارية» التي يرمون بها الانسان العربي .. وفي هذه الموجة الطاغية من الشك والتشكيك بالقيم العربية وبالانسان العربي يتحدثون عن التغيير الجذري لهذه القيم ولهذا الانسان ..

ان الحديث عن ضرورة التغيير في القيم العربية او في الانسان العربي ، بعد تجربة المواجهة الاخيرة للعدوان ، حديث سليم بذاته يدفعنا اليه عنف التجربة دفعا قويا يوقف فينا من الاعماق جملة من الحواجز الوطنية والثورية لرؤية كل شيء في حياتنا العربية رؤية جديدة ذات اضواء جديدة ..

فليس من خلاف ، اذن ، على ضرورة التغيير ، لانه لا خلاف على ان كثيرا من القيم التي كانت مرتكزا للعرب في معركتهم الدائرة منذ حقب عدة بينهم وبين اعداء قضايهم المصيرية - لم يكن معظمها بالقيم الصالحة لهذا الارتكاز اما لنقص في الرؤية اليها ، واما لميوعة في حدودها ومقوماتها ، واما لاعتمادها مفاهيم ومنطلقات غريبة عن حقائق قضايهم تلك وعن اهداف نضالهم الموصول في طلب الحلول العملية الايجابية لهذه القضايا ، وفي صلبها قضية فلسطين ..

وليس من خلاف كذلك على ان حركة التغيير يجب ان تتناول الانسان العربي بقدر ما تتناول قيم حياته ومعركته ، لانه ليس من خلاف هنا ايضا على ان الانسان العربي كان يواجه قضاي مصيره الكبرى ، احيانا ، بنوع من المواقف لا يرقى الى مستوى التحديات المتهمة امامه في كل جبهة من جبهات المعركة ، معركة المصير .. ولكن الخلاف قائم على تحديد طريقنا الجديدة الى هذا التغيير المطلوب .. فاماذا الخلاف هنا ؟ ما مصدره ؟ ان الخلاف مع امثال هؤلاء المشككين ، يصمد عن الامور الاتية :

اولا - ان الشك او التشكيك عندهم يقع ، اما عن قصد او غير قصد ، في سلبية تبلغ ، باتباعها الطسوق المسدودة ، حدود الهدم الى غير قرار يصاح - بعد - البناء .. وهذا ، فضلا عن كونه مناقضا كل المناقضة للروح الحضارية التي يدعونها لانفسهم ، يلقي بالانسان العربي - وهم يزعمون الاشفاق على مصيره - قسي مهاوي الياس القاتل والانهازمية الميته .. ويبعدو ان بعضهم يرى في ذلك طريقا الى النجاة من المأساة ، بدليل قوله ان المطلوب للعرب انما « نطلبه من الياسيين الغاضبين المشمزين الهاربين التائهين المصلوبين » .. وهذا رأي

التجربة العربية الجديدة في مواجهة التحالف العدواني الطبيعي للامبريالية والصهيونية العالمية ووليدهما اسرائيل ، كانت تجربة عنيفة عميقة قاسية لم تقتصر آثارها في حياتنا القومية على كونها فتحت جراح المأساة التي انخت بها الامة العربية عام ١٩٤٨ ، او كونها زادت هذه الجراح نزفا وابلاما وعمقا ، بل تجاوزت ذلك الى كونها احدثت بعض الاهتزاز في كثير من القيم والمفاهيم والمناهج الفكرية وغير الفكرية التي كانت ، قبل الخامس من حزيران الماضي ، تؤلف عسدا من المنطلقات الشائعة عند الكثيرين منا في فهم قضايانا العربية الراهنة ، وفي تحليل الاحداث المتصلة بها ، وفي تحديد المواقف الايجابية او السلبية حيالها ..

لقد فتحت هذه التجربة الدامية ابوابا عريضة للشك او التشكيك بتلك القيم والمفاهيم والمناهج ، ولإعادة النظر بها في ضوء ما سمي بالنكسة او الهزيمة التي انحسرت عنها التجربة ، او في ضوء ما خيل لهذا وذاك من الكتاب والمثقفين ولهذه الفئة وتلك من سائر المواطنين انه السبب الظاهر او الخفي وراء النكسة او الهزيمة ..

وقد نال قيم الثقافة العربية قديمها وحديثها ، وقيم الادب العربي ماضيه وحاضره ، ومواقف المثقفين والادباء العرب حيال المعركة المصيرية كلها ، وحيال الجولة الاخيرة منها بالخصوص ، نصيب وافسر من الشك والتشكيك معا ..

ثم نال الانسان العربي ، بنوعيته ، مثل هذا النصيب من الشك والتشكيك .. فقالوا انه انسان يعيش خارج الزمان ، متخلف ، مملوك .. وقالوا ان خسارة العرب الحرب التي واجهوا بها العدوان الاستعماري الاسرائيلي الاخير نشأت عن كونهم متخلفين حضاريا ، مع قولهم ان التخلف الحضاري هو « تأخر العقل والروح والخيال والنفس والجسد » .. ومعنى ذلك ان الانسان العربي متأخر عقلا وروحا وخيالا ونفسا وجسدا .. وبنسباء على هذا الراي بالانسان العربي فسروا النكسة الحربية بيد الخامس من حزيران الماضي بانها « هزيمة حضارية لا عسكرية » ..

لقد قيل وكتب الشيء الكثير من امثال هذا الكلام اثناء الغمرة الانفعالية الغامرة التي اعقبت النكسة ، ولا يزال هذا يتردد على اللسنة والاقلام ، دون التفكير بالحلول العملية الايجابية ، ودون النظر الى ان الامعان في مثل هذا الموقف السلبي المطلق هو بذاته موقف غير

## Art and Material Culture

The Orient-Institut Beirut's Art and Material Culture cluster is occupied with the ways in which artistic and material production is narrated in the writings of history. These research projects are concerned with bringing to the fore social, religious, political, and economic aspects of arts and material culture, and reinstate the people – the maker, the craftsman, the artist and the user – at the center of our studies, including their production and reception of ideas. We strongly believe that studies become meaningful when artistic and cultural productions can be located in their wider socio-political and economic contexts. Medieval manuscripts, modern artworks and films, for instance, are brought to life when seen as mirrors of their contexts as much as agents in shaping collective thinking and practices.

In this cluster, the researchers are interested in the materiality of the works of art. As such, they are approached not only as social constructs but also as objects formed by specific elements, such as ink. Our bottom-top approach encourages study of the object itself, including its circulation during its life and in its afterlife, and to trace people's trajectories and ideas. This facilitates the reconstruction of forgotten archives and of networks of people and movement that often reveal exciting aspects about our world. The approach of this cluster is not only characterized by work on the archives but also on counter-archives. Databases are repositories as they form the basis of the research of this cluster and become tools to help identify stylistic trends and aesthetic patterns, as well as trace cross-cultural connections.

Taken together, the cluster's researchers' projects cover a wide time frame – spanning from the medieval to contemporary times – and geographically covering the whole region of the mashriq. They deal with an array of materials and media from modern paintings and periodicals to medieval Islamic manuscripts. While being rooted in (art) historical methods, the works' interdisciplinary nature benefits from neighboring fields such as anthropology. And it is by contextualizing the cluster's subjects and objects of study that there is hope to bridge between material culture, art history, and various systems of beliefs.

One of the aims is to explore the institutionalization of (art) history and to question threads that have side-lined regions or marginalized under-represented communities. As such, the cluster reflects on various modern established categories, such as fixed identities, challenging prevailing paradigms and canons in writing history to contest stark dichotomies, such as the purported tensions between center/periphery, local/global, public/private, East/West, or arts/crafts. It is by exposing art systems, power dynamics, educational practices, and hegemonic cultural infrastructures that a critical transnational history with wider implications on our present can be built.

## Researchers

**Alya Karame**, Research Associate

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(on leave 2023–2024)

### Academic Bio



Alya Karame joined the Orient-Institut Beirut as a research associate in 2022. She specializes in Islamic Art and material culture. She took a two-year leave from the OIB and re-joined us in 2025. In 2023, she was a fellow of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University to be later supported by the Paris Region award to pursue her research at the Institut des civilisations at the Collège de France (2023-2024). Central to her research are notions related to the Qur'an manuscript such as its biography and afterlife and the cultural materiality of manuscripts, often shifting the view from the center to the frontiers of the Islamic world.

**Nadia von Maltzahn**, Research Associate & Coordinator "LAHWA"

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### Academic Bio



Nadia von Maltzahn is the Principal Investigator of the European Research Council-funded project *Lebanon's Art World at Home and Abroad* (LAWHA), which started in October 2020. She joined the OIB in 2013, first as a research associate (2013–2018) before being appointed deputy director (2018–2020, partly on parental leave). She holds a DPhil and an MSt in Modern Middle Eastern Studies from St Antony's College, Oxford, and a BA Honours in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from King's College, Cambridge. Her research interests include cultural policies, artistic practices and the circulation of knowledge. von Maltzahn is the author of *The Syria-Iran Axis: Cultural diplomacy and international relations in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013/2015), and several edited volumes such as *The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of taste-making* (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut, 2018), co-edited with Monique Bellan. Her work has been widely published in journals including *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *Quaderni storici*, *Manazir*, *Middle East Topics & Arguments*, and the *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*. In October, she started a six-month fellowship at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg Global dis:connect in Munich.

## LAWHA, ERC project hosted at the OIB



LAWHA Team lunch at Ashgalouna, May 31, from left to right: Diana Jeha, Monique Bellan, Ashraf Osman, Çiğdem İvren, Flavia Malusardi, Nadia von Maltzahn and Zoé Lunven.

## Description of LAWHA

**LAWHA – LEBANON'S ART WORLD AT HOME AND ABROAD // TRAJECTORIES OF ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS IN/FROM LEBANON SINCE 1943**

October 2020 – September 2025

LAWHA examines the forces that have shaped the emergence of a professional field of art in Lebanon within its local, regional, and global contexts, against the background that Lebanon is regularly portrayed as a country with weak public institutions but a vibrant cultural sector. The project proposes a shift of perspective in approaching Lebanon's art world by focusing on the multi-dimensionality of artists' individual trajectories. LAWHA aims to identify new methods on how to interrelate context and artistic production, to serve as a model for revisiting art histories in contexts where institutionalized local art histories have largely been absent. It investigates (1) the forces that have shaped the emergence of a professional field of art in their local, regional, and global contexts; (2) how to rethink the impact of the political, social, and economic environment on the art world and its protagonists, including war and migration; (3) how artists are represented in relation to the nation and inscribed into systems of reference, both locally and globally, and (4) how the trajectories of individuals shape the field. The focus is on artists in and from Lebanon using the forms of painting (Arabic: lawha/لوحة) and sculpture.

This past year was a challenging year for LAWHA, as it was for everybody in Lebanon. The LAWHA team continued working as well as possible depending on the state of the war. It advanced with data entry on LAWHA's database, in which Diana Jeha assisted the team in entering exhibitions and their reviews (January – June). The highlight of the year was LAWHA's international conference on Artistic Hubs in and of the Arab Region, which miraculously took place in early June with a nearly full in-presence participation. Only three participants had to join us virtually. It was a very fruitful exchange at a moment when Beirut was buzzing with artistic energy in a momentary lull of tensions with Israel. This of course was not to last, and the increasing threat of escalation and then full out aggression on Lebanon starting in September deeply affected the team. Once the team could start focusing again on intellectual work, each at their own pace, thinking about war-time cultural production in the 1980s through work on a special issue for the Swiss journal *Manazir* brought home the different realities of living through war.

LAWHA was assisted by two interns this year, Zoé Lunven (May-June) and Arda Khashkhashian (June). Arda's internship was cut short and will be continued in 2025. You can follow all LAWHA news on the blog <https://lawha.hypotheses.org>.

## Research

### LEBANON'S ART WORLD AT HOME AND ABROAD

The LAWHA project aims to rethink the conventional periodization of Lebanon's history into a "golden age" leading up to the civil war, a war period, and a post-war period starting in the 1990s. Whereas the so-called post-war generation of artists engaged extensively with the aftermath and memory of the war, artists had different approaches to their work amid war. War does not emerge from nowhere; underlying social and political tensions had been present since the foundation of modern Lebanon. Within LAWHA, wartime artistic production is situated within the larger trajectory of artists and institutions. In the process, we break down the idea of a monolithic bloc of wartime cultural production or even a shared experience of conflict, investigating transnational experiences, how artists and institutions adapt to an unpredictable environment, how artists relate back to their home country in case of exile or migration, and to what extent the use of diverse media can be linked to the socio-political context of production.

Lebanese artist Fadi Barrage (1939-1988) reflects on his experience during the civil war when he moved into a studio in Beirut's commercial center Bab Idriss in 1968 after spending some time in Chicago and Paris. In October 1975, the fighting that had started in different locations in Lebanon earlier that year reached the center. Barrage had to leave and after he came back was evacuated in the second round of fighting later that year. When he revisited Bab Idriss briefly in spring 1976, he found his studio pillaged and destroyed. The violence he witnessed did not leave him indifferent. On December 30, 1975 he wrote in his diary:

*The only way to paint all, throat-slitting in Bab-Edriss & all. What I have to say, what has to be said, what has to come through one day before it chokes, the horror of a sunny afternoon in Bab-Edriss when three young men rang my downstairs bell asking who lives here.*

*The boy in the hands of a sick man, a maniac, who had lowered him naked into an empty bathtub, his hands tied behind his back.*

*Kill something not only sentient, but aware & responsive. Kill your own kind.*

*Their war is bloodier than they realize. What has to come through itself makes the idiom, modifies the language well-rehearsed to the message. Colour tempera, transparent & opaque, colour not line.*

War motifs preoccupied him for a couple of years, not continuously but periodically. One of the themes he explored while living in Athens – where he settled for a few years after the destruction of his Beirut studio – was the 1976 massacre of Tell al-Za'tar. Among his notes are reflections such as:

*Woman running forward, screaming, two children in her arms, one of them looking straight at me, terrified, photograph Tall al-Zaatar, how to paint this without sentimentality, or bravura, or too much detail, merely a hint of horror and tragedy. (22 September 1979)*

While Barrage thus processed some of the tragedies he witnessed in Lebanon through his sketches, he always returned to his conviction that life, art, and goodness would prevail over

destruction. In 1978, he writes that "the affirmation of life [was] more important than anything else. No attempt at all sorts of massacres, it is not necessary to destroy in this way, rather by stating the opposite, life, love, sleep." This is reflected in his works, of which only very few dealt explicitly with wartime realities. His notes raise questions about how experiences of conflict are processed, and what role specific places play in the imagination.



Fadi Barrage sketch in his diary, December 30, 1975.

Monique Bellan, Affiliated Researcher

Academic Bio



Monique Bellan is a senior researcher in LAWHA. She previously worked as a research associate at the Orient-Institut Beirut (2013-2019) before joining the Arab-German Young Academy in Berlin. She also worked at the collaborative research centre *Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits* at Freie Universität Berlin and the Performing Arts Section of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. She holds a PhD in Arabic Studies from Freie Universität Berlin, an MA in Islamic Studies, Sociology and Political Science from the University of Bonn, and an MA in Library and Information Science from Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Within LAWHA she focuses on exhibition practices, art critique, and the database and digital platform (DDP). Monique is the author of *dismember remember: Das anatomische Theater von Lina Saneh und Rabih Mroué* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2013), and has co-edited *The Art Salon in the Arab Region: Politics of taste-making* (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut 2018), together with Nadia von Maltzahn, and the volume *Surrealism in North Africa and Western Asia: Crossings and Encounters* (Beirut: Orient-Institut Beirut 2021), together with Julia Drost.

Research

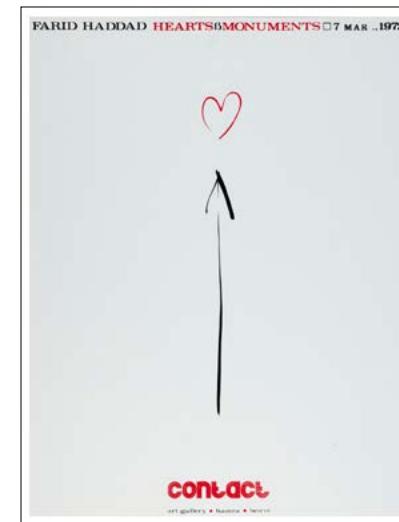
WHAT MAKES AN ARTISTIC CENTER? FARID HADDAD'S "HEARTS AND MONUMENTS" AT CONTACT ART GALLERY IN BEIRUT

When Contact Art Gallery opened its doors in February 1972 in the small cul-de-sac opposite the Saroulla cinema on Hamra Street, it was the beginning of an enterprise that promised to be unconventional from the start, as the gallery "defies any restrictive name or label. It is not based on sure-fire, pre-tested formulae, offering a certain king of painting to a certain public [...]."<sup>1</sup> In March 1972, Waddah Faris (1940-2024), the gallery's co-founder, organized the exhibition "Hearts and Monuments" with works by Farid Haddad (b. 1945). While the exhibition featured works from various series, all abstract, it was built around the Anatomy of a Heart series, from which Faris chose a gouache painting for the exhibition poster (Fig. 1), and the Monument series. The paintings and drawings defied common ideas about art, artistic creation and labels, posing questions rather than providing answers. The exhibition was a challenge for many in Beirut's art community as it left "safe territory". The drawing Monument, depicting a black rectangular hatched in graphite pencil, was particularly challenging. Not that abstract art was anything new, but the conceptual and minimalist approach and the seemingly nonchalant attitude of the artist were unusual and underlined the experimental side of the exhibition. It also revealed a refreshing sense of humour.

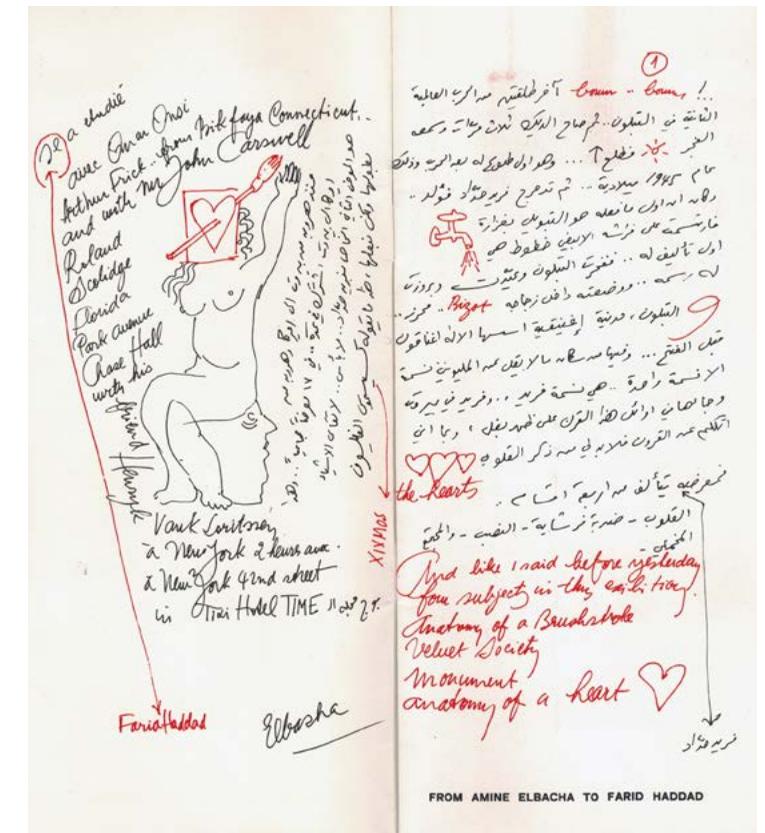
Some art critics praised the experimental exhibition, while others were puzzled by the "emptiness" of the surface and the unfinished appearance of the pieces, which bore the artist's signature that typically marks a finished work. In this kind of conceptual work, the actual work takes place in the background, in the research and development of the idea, rather than in its execution. Doubts arose about the seriousness of the exhibition. What further added to this impression, was the exhibition booklet which included an unconventional, humorous

biographical introduction by the artist Amine El Bacha. His disorderly and sketchy arrangements added to the impression of the unfinished nature of the pieces, adding to its "lack of seriousness" (Fig. 2). The booklet also included excerpts from an interview between Haddad and the journalist Mirèse Akar, selected by Waddah Faris. In the interview, Haddad gives an insight into his artistic principles and approaches as well as his thoughts on artistic labels and styles, of which he says: "I've run through a good many and every time it was a pleasure to give them up."

It was an important exhibition in that it provided an insight into the artist's research process and can be seen as an early example of a conceptual art exhibition in Lebanon. Haddad's works invited visitors to engage with ideas that required intellectual engagement to unravel their multiple dimensions and interpret their meanings. Waddah Faris was particularly interested in expanding the definition of art in Lebanon by showing works that challenged conventional expectations. Recognizing the artistic and intellectual potential of Farid Haddad's work, Faris sought to establish the gallery as an experimental space that encourages debate about art. By challenging the conventional boundaries of artistic reflection and expression, the gallery contributed to Beirut's status as a vibrant hub for artistic experimentation. This underscores the central role of individuals and their vision in the development of artistic centers. It also highlights the importance of recognizing artistic potential and the right moment to move things forward. As Fitchett predicted in Contact magazine, "[...] some of the artists who achieve most in the coming Arab visual renaissance will come through Contact [gallery]."



Left: Poster of Farid Haddad's exhibition "Hearts and Monuments," March 7-20, 1972. Farid Haddad archive.



Right: Exhibition booklet "Hearts and Monuments" with introduction by Amine El Bacha. Courtesy of Nadia von Maltzahn.

1 Joseph Fitchett, "Contact. Contact with what?" In Contact magazine, September 1972.

## Flavia Elena Malusardi, Affiliated Researcher

### Academic Bio



Flavia Elena Malusardi is a PhD candidate in History of Art as part of the LAWHA project, with an international position between Università Ca' Foscari (Venice) and the Orient-Institut Beirut. Her project investigates the role of gallerist Janine Rubeiz and her informal space Dar Al Fan (1967-1976) within the Lebanese cultural panorama. She holds a master's degree in history of art and architecture of the Islamic Middle East from SOAS School of Oriental and African Studies (London) and an MFA in Visual Cultures and Curatorial Practice from Accademia di Brera (Milan). Her work focuses on the modern and contemporary arts and visual culture of the Middle East and North Africa, with an interest in archival and collecting practices within post-colonial contexts.

### Research

#### COLD WAR ENTANGLEMENTS AT DAR AL FAN

This research examines a series of events sponsored by the USSR such as art exhibitions, movie screenings, and music concerts held at Dar Al Fan. Central to the exploration were the experiences of two Lebanese artists, Wahib Bteddini (1929-2011) and Nazem Irani (1930-2016), who studied in the USSR and later exhibited their works and, in the case of Irani, held lectures on Russian art at Dar Al Fan. By analyzing their artistic output and their trajectories alongside other Soviet-sponsored events within the context of the center, I explored threads of cultural transmission between the Soviet Union and Lebanon. Considering the intersections of art, politics, and diplomacy, the research explores the interplay between a superpower and a cultural institution, questioning implications and limits of some tropes of the Cold War discourse. The research illuminated the multifaceted influence of Soviet cultural diplomacy and ideological projection on the Lebanese cultural landscape, while acknowledging the agency of the cultural actors involved. In this sense, Dar Al Fan constituted both a meeting point and a battleground for different conceptions of culture produced by “competing” sides. This part of the research aims to situate Dar Al Fan within a global perspective and contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of cultural actors and institutions. Regarded as a microcosm of Lebanon, Dar Al Fan and its actors found themselves in a larger political, diplomatic, and cultural twine where antagonistic tensions were at play and generated the diverse and attractive artistic and cultural panorama of Beirut.

#### At the OIB

In 2024, I continued my doctoral research on Dar Al Fan, a cultural center active in Beirut between 1967 and 1975. Although my research spans across different aspects, I focused on the relation between Dar Al Fan and the Soviet Union. The results of my research were presented in Beirut at the LAWHA International Conference “Artistic Hubs in and of the Arab Region,” for which I examined a series of events sponsored by the USSR such as art exhibitions, movie screenings, and music concerts held at Dar Al Fan.



The Soviet Ambassador to Lebanon (left) with Janine Rubeiz (second left) at Mukhtara, 1977. Image courtesy of Janine Rubeiz Gallery.

## Ashraf Osman, Affiliated Researcher

### Academic Bio



Ashraf Osman is a PhD candidate in History of Art as part of the LAWHA project, with an international position between Università Cà Foscari (Venice) and the Orient-Institut Beirut. His project investigates the history of the Sursock Museum in the second half of the twentieth century, with a focus on artistic coexistence and representation there. He holds a Master of Advanced Studies in Curating from the Zurich University of the Arts (Switzerland) and a Master of Architecture from Syracuse University (New York). His diverse background and practice encompass olfactory art, socially engaged art, and the architectural and urbanistic memory of the Lebanese War. Ashraf researched and wrote the timeline of the reopening exhibition at the Sursock Museum, “Beyond Ruptures, A Tentative Chronology.”

### Research

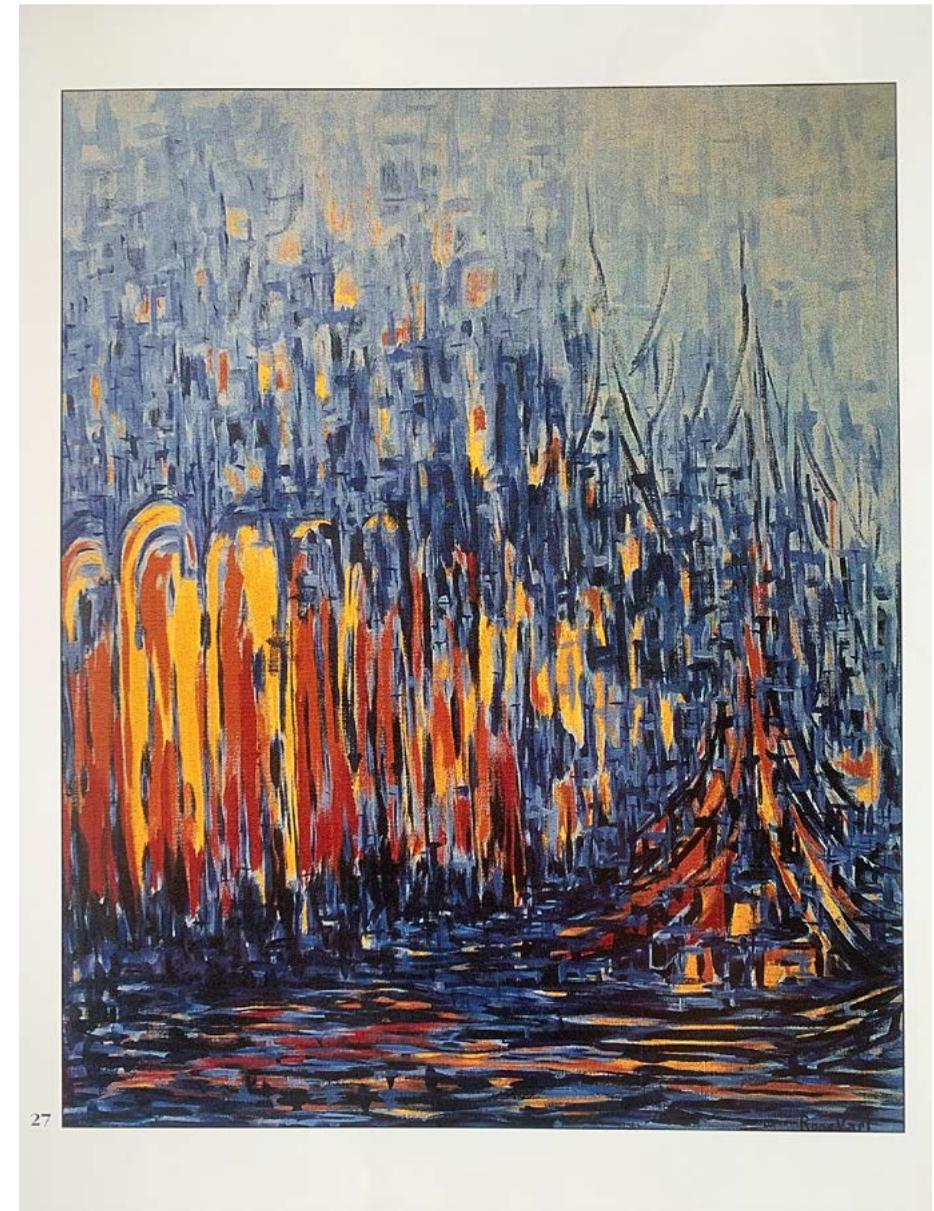
#### “THE ONLY TRULY LIVING MUSEUM IN BEIRUT”: ARTISTIC COEXISTENCE AND REPRESENTATION AT THE SURSOCK MUSEUM

This doctoral thesis examines the Sursock Museum in Beirut as a cultural institution shaping artistic coexistence and representation. By delving into its historical trajectory in the second half of the twentieth century, the research explores the museum’s role in reflecting post-colonial identity, navigating the challenges of civil conflict, and positioning Beirut as a hub of artistic activity. Through archival analysis and critical reflection, the study investigates how the museum’s curatorial practices and exhibition strategies reveal broader socio-political dynamics and cultural intersections.

### At the OIB

This year’s work concentrated on examining the museum’s role during three pivotal decades—the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s—by analyzing its exhibition practices and their implications for cultural and artistic identity. A presentation at the LAWHA Conference at the OIB in June focused on the 1960s, a decade of unparalleled productivity for the museum. The presentation highlighted how its extensive international exhibitions positioned it as a global artistic hub, while also interrogating post-colonial power dynamics reflected in its operations, particularly through the influence of its first curator, Camille Aboussouan. In October 2024, a paper presented at the Postgraduate Conference at Cà Foscari University of Venice explored the museum’s activities during the 1970s. This period saw a dramatic decline in exhibitions due to the Lebanese Civil War, yet also marked a turning point as the museum embraced a more explicit role in preserving national heritage. The presentation shed light on the museum’s efforts in archiving artistic output and its simultaneous struggles with inclusivity during a time of division.

Finally, a journal article, currently under peer review, examined the museum’s practices in the 1980s, focusing on inclusion and exclusion during a decade of ongoing conflict. This study analyzed shifts in the museum’s curatorial decisions, including its emphasis on local and European art, while critiquing its limitations in representing a cohesive national identity. These findings illustrate the intricate interplay between cultural production and socio-political realities, furthering the project’s exploration of the Sursock Museum’s historical significance.



RoseVart (Rosine Vartouhi)  
Sissérian, Beyrouth ville  
martyre (Beirut, the Martyr  
City). 1986. Oil on canvas.  
100 x 80 cm.

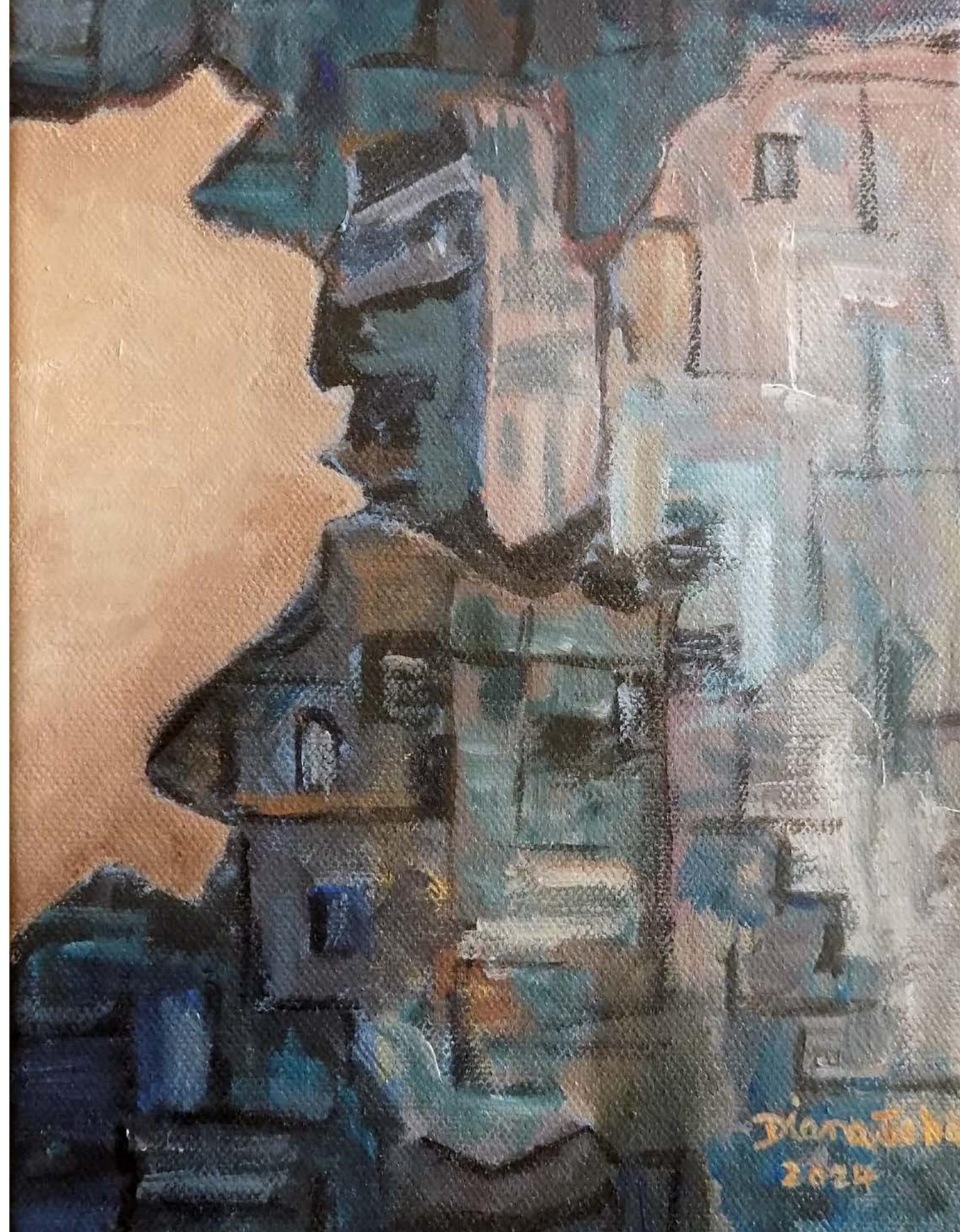
Image courtesy of the  
RoseVart Collection.  
*RoseVart applied to the  
Salon d'Automne three  
times in the 1980s, only to  
be repeatedly rejected. This  
was one of the submitted  
paintings.*

## ACTIVITIES OF LAWHA

- **February 14:** *Artist Associations and Professionalizing the Arts* (Nadia von Maltzahn), LAWHA Panel at the College Arts Association Annual Conference, Hilton Hotel, Chicago.
- **May 11-12:** *Taswir through Paint-Feeling in Fadi Barrage's Work* (Nadia von Maltzahn), "On Taswir or the Inherently Incomplete" Conference, American University of Beirut (AUB), Beirut.
- **May 14-15:** *Validation and Labeling in an Entangled Art World: The Case of Lebanon* (Nadia von Maltzahn), MWS Stiftungskonferenz on Harmful Entanglements, Orient-Institut Istanbul (OI Istanbul), Istanbul.
- **June 3-5:** *Artistic Hubs in and of the Arab Region*, International Conference, Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) and Sursock Museum, Beirut.
- **October 9:** *End Is Where We Start From: The Sursock Museum and Beirut in the Seventies* (Ashraf Osman)

*Image of Crisis or Crisis of the Image? Reflections on the Exhibition Beirut Tab'an ["Beirut, of course"]* (Flavia Malusardi)  
6th Postgraduate International Conference, PhD Programme in the History of Arts, Ca' Foscari University of Venice: *"In My End Is My Beginning: Dialectical Images in Times of Crisis,"* Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Venice.

Acrylic on canvas by  
Diana Jeha



## Social Sciences

Drawing on a variety of approaches (quantitative and qualitative) and using different means of collecting material (oral history, discourse analysis, digital humanities, participant observation, ethnographic fieldwork, etc.), the social sciences cluster is engaged with the social as a contested field of relations.

Conceiving social sciences as a reconstructive approach, the cluster tries to understand the epistemologies of those participating in these relations, their specific practices, representations, and the structures they are embedded in. It explores the social mobilizations underlying them, societal cooperation, conflicts, hermeneutics as well as the transnational dimensions that allow us to engage with comparative approaches and theoretical conceptualizations.

The cluster members' interdisciplinary background includes Middle East studies, political science, sociology, economy, political sociology, social and cultural anthropology, social and economic history, oral history, cultural studies, gender studies, critical race studies, psychoanalysis, urban studies, geography, and others.

Studying the Middle East with the Middle East and not just in it, we aim for social science as a non-asymmetric practice, reinforcing the ties with the local research community. This includes critical scholarly self-reflection.

## Researchers

**Sarah El Bulbeisi**, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Sarah El Bulbeisi joined the Orient-Institut Beirut in November 2019 where her postdoc research project revolved around the interrelations between systemic violence and family & intimate relations in Lebanon. She completed her PhD at the Institute for Near and Middle East Studies at the LMU Munich, Germany where she previously worked as a lecturer and research associate. Before joining the OIB, she led the DAAD project "Violence, Forced Migration and Exile: Trauma in the Arab World and in Germany," a Higher Education Dialogue between Palestinian and Lebanese universities as well as with the LMU Munich. Her PhD thesis *Taboo, Trauma and Identity: Subject Constructions of Palestinians in Germany and Switzerland, 1960 to 2015 (Tabu, Trauma und Identität: Subjektkonstruktionen von PalästinenserInnen in Deutschland und der Schweiz, 1960-2015)* was published in German in 2020. Her comparative focus on Palestinians of different migration periods and generations reveals distinct dimensions of the Palestinian experience in Germany, providing insights into the ways that violence and anti-Palestinian discrimination has deeply affected Palestinians' subjectivities and relationships across generations.

### Research

#### LIVING IN LIMBO

Based on narrative-biographical interviews, conversations, and psychoanalytically informed anthropology/ethno-psychoanalytic approaches, El Bulbeisi explores issues such as violence and trauma, relationships and subjectivities, and their mutual interdependencies in the context of contemporary Lebanon. Her research project particularly revolves around the nexus between intimacy and violence in the context of different types of relationships, among them family/intergenerational relationships, romantic relationships, and relationships to confessional groups. Unbearable suffering causes various forms of psychological wounds which affect the entire network of relationships within which the individual lives. Trauma threatens the psychological structure that regulates the relationship between the Own and the Other.

The war and displacement experiences of the Lebanese (post-) civil war generations have left visible traces. People's attitude towards life is still characterized by distrust, alienation, and uncertainty. The 15-year Lebanese civil war was, among other things, a legacy of European colonial policy. During the war, various denominations fought each other bitterly with the support of foreign states. People were expelled and killed because of their religious affiliation or their political beliefs. The war has left a deeply divided society in Lebanon. At the same time, its story has not been processed, and leading militia leaders have not been held accountable. On the contrary: They occupy the most prominent political positions and control large sections of the population through a finely meshed patronage and clientelist system. Confessional identity and the fear of the "other" play an important role here. In addition, various wars with Israel followed the civil war, so that Lebanese people have had multiple

expulsions and war experiences and an attitude toward a life of constant uncertainty. This has been compounded since the financial crisis and port explosion of 2020. Both war and post war generation share a sense of alienation from home and face the challenge of making sense of an unresolved past.

In addition, the post-war generation seems to have been denied both the present and the future in Lebanon. Life only begins, so to speak, with emigration. For many, the October 2019 protests presented the first opportunity to feel a sense of belonging to their country. The legacy of the civil war and its impact on public discourse and family dynamics suddenly became topics of more intense discussion. The denominational "other" was replaced by the state as the new "other," which opened up the possibility of recognizing and evaluating social differences from scratch. This new narrative was reinforced by the August 2020 port explosion. Precisely because violence plays such a key role in the past and present, it makes sense to bring the concept of trauma out of the clinical into the historical and socio-political realm.

Drawing on psychoanalytic theories and methods, as well as conversations exploring the desires, fears, conflicts, and self-interpretations of Lebanese urban middle- and working-class interlocutors, this research aims to contribute to understanding how systemic and subjective violence influence familial relationships. Specifically, it seeks to examine how these dynamics shape libidinal economies and (gendered) subjectivities, with a focus on the axes along which ruptures and continuities in traditional gender roles emerge.

#### Presentations and Workshops

- **April 26–28, 2024:**  
*Witnessing Atrocities: Dissent in the Wake of Gaza* (Presentation and Panel Discussion)  
Bard College, Spore Initiative, Berlin.
- **May 20–23, 2024:**  
*Taboo and Trauma: Palestinians in Germany* (Panel Discussion: *Decolonizing Palestine Studies in Germany*)  
Conference: *75 Years of an Ongoing Nakba: The Question of Knowledge Production*  
Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut/Ramallah/Washington.
- **June 13, 2024:**  
*Tabu und Trauma: PalästinenserInnen in Deutschland und der Schweiz*  
Lecture Series: *Arabisches Leben in Deutschland*  
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Institut für Orientalistik, Jena.
- **June 18, 2024:**  
*Trauma, Tabu, Identität*  
Institut für Sprachen und Kulturen der islamisch geprägten Welt  
Universität zu Köln, Cologne.
- **June 20, 2024:**  
*Tabu und Trauma*  
Seminar: *Erinnerungskulturen*  
Universität der Künste, Berlin.
- **June 27–30, 2024:**  
*Tabu and Trauma: First- and Second-Generation Palestinians in German-speaking Post-Holocaust Countries*

RUTA Inaugural Conference: *Re(kn)own Region(s) from Within*  
Carpathian Mountains, Ukraine.

- **July 10, 2024:**  
*Tabu and Trauma: First- and Second-Generation Palestinians in German-speaking Post-Holocaust Countries*  
Lecture Series: *Palestinianness: Gewalterfahrung zuhause, die Ausgrenzung der Diaspora - und die großen Symbole. Die Zukunft: Besatzung, zwei Staaten, ein Staat?*  
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Institut für den Nahen und Mittleren Osten, Munich.
- **August 26–30, 2024:**  
*Trauma and Taboo among Palestinians in German-speaking Post-Holocaust States*  
NOISE (Network of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies in Europe) Summer School 2024  
Utrecht University, Utrecht.
- **December 10, 2024:**  
*Tabu, Trauma und Identität: Palästinensische Erfahrungen in Deutschland*  
Lecture Series: *100 Jahre Nahostkonflikt: Tabu, Trauma und Identität*  
Asien-Afrika-Institut, Universität Hamburg, Hamburg.
- **December 13, 2024:**  
*Tabu und Trauma: Palästinenser in Deutschland und der Schweiz*  
Lecture Series: *Der Nahostkonflikt im Kontext veränderter globaler Dynamiken*  
Institut für Ethnologie, Universität Leipzig, Leipzig.

#### Articles in Scientific Journals/Magazines/Blogs

- **Newspaper Article:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. "Gaza Krieg – der Westen will das Leid der Palästinenser nicht sehen." *Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ)*, January 5, 2024. <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/gaza-krieg-westen-will-das-leid-der-palaestinenser-nicht-sehen-ld.1772777>.
- **Blog Post:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. "Das Tabu systematischer palästinensischer Vertreibungserfahrung und seine Folgen für PalästinenserInnen in Deutschland." *FluchtforschungsBlog/Forced Migration Studies Blog*, April 16, 2024. <https://fluchtforschung.net/das-tabu-systematischer-palaestinensischer-vertreibungserfahrung-und-seine-folgen-fuer-palaestinerinnen-in-deutschland/>.
- **Journal Article:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. "Consequences of Germany's Moral Support for Israel's Military Offensive on Gaza for Palestinians Living in Germany." *Perspectives on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ORIENT I (2024).
- **Magazine Article:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. "Oblivion Culture: Countering the German Taboo on Palestinian Trauma." *Cabinet Magazine*, August 8, 2024. [https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/kiosk/el\\_bulbeisi\\_sarah\\_08\\_august\\_2024.php](https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/kiosk/el_bulbeisi_sarah_08_august_2024.php).

## Publications for Political Foundations and Organizations

- El Bulbeisi, Sarah. "Palästinenser\*innen in Deutschland: Tabus brechen und Traumata thematisieren." Heinrich Böll Stiftung, July 1, 2024. <https://www.boell.de/de/2024/07/01/palaestinenserinnen-deutschland-tabus-brechen-und-traumata-thematisieren>.

## Podcast and Radio Interviews

- **Radio Interview:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. Interview by [Interviewer Name, if available]. *Alles Geschichte – History von Radiowissen*. BR Radio, May 10, 2024. Audio, [duration if available]. <https://www.br.de/mediathek/podcast/alles-geschichte-history-von-radiowissen/hintergruende-na-hostkonflikt-palaestinenser-und-die-nakba/2093277>.
- **Podcast Interview:**  
El Bulbeisi, Sarah. Interview by Sari Hanafi. *Science & Society Podcast*. American University of Beirut, June 27, 2024. Video, 59:22. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GabEPbMjLPc>.

## Carol Hakim, Research Associate

### Academic Bio

Carol Hakim joined the Orient-Institut Beirut as a Research Associate in September 2023. Before joining the Institute, she worked on Lebanon and the Middle East in several capacities. She has been a faculty member of the History Department at the University of Minnesota where she taught Modern Middle Eastern History and Politics. Prior, she was a research associate at the Center for Arab Middle East Studies (CAMES) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) where she developed and taught in a multidisciplinary MA program in Modern Middle Eastern Studies. Hakim has also worked as a reporter journalist at AFP where she covered the Lebanese civil war; as an analyst on Lebanese and Middle Eastern affairs at Oxford Analytica; as a consultant at the United Nations Economic and Social Council for Western Asia (ESCWA); and as research analyst for Middle Eastern affairs at the Fiches du Monde Arabe (FMA).

### Research

#### DECOLONIZATION, COLD WAR, AND THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIANISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The project deals with the rise of durable authoritarian regimes in the Middle East by the middle of the twentieth century against the backdrop of three interrelated processes: (1) the accession to political independence of most countries in the region following national liberation struggles; (2) the establishment of a new contentious regional Arab order; and (3) the extension of superpower rivalries to the Middle East in the early decades of the Cold War. The project focuses on two countries that played a central role in the unfolding of political and socio-economic developments of the region at that time, namely Egypt and Syria. It retraces the trajectories of both countries in this period focusing on the reasons behind their parallel yet divergent development.

## Events

- Organized four seminars in the context of the Lebanese and Syrian Studies Program.

## Christian Thuselt, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Christian Thuselt joined the Orient-Institut Beirut in October 2021 as a research associate and is responsible for the in-house production of the "Beiruter Texte und Studien" (BTS). He holds an MA from Tübingen University and a PhD in Social Sciences from Roskilde University with a study on Lebanese political parties as expressions of global modernity. From 2009 till 2021, he worked at Erlangen University, most recently as an assistant professor. His research at the OIB focuses on Iraqi statehood as part of a discourse on legitimacy.

### Research

Drawing on Fanar Haddad's notion of the "Cultural Ownership of Iraq," this project examines how Muqtada al-Sadr, a rather low-ranking Shiite cleric who won the last two Iraqi elections, attempts to outline an Iraqi nation. Through an analysis of his electronic and televised discourse, the project seeks to understand how al-Sadr portrays the Iraqi state and society and how he invokes symbolic representations of "Iraqiness." These representations have three functions: (1) They allow for sociocultural differentiations, or a separation between "us" and "others" and (2) In many cases, this differentiation is naturalized through, among other means, the demarcation of spaces by locating supposedly pre-existing boundaries rooted in these practices. Finally, (3) they connect these two dimensions with the conception of a "polity," understood as the formal constitution of societies. By focusing on "polity," this research preserves its importance while avoiding the constraints of limiting research to formal statehood. Instead of focusing on statehood as a legal entity or as a presumed actor, this project aims to treat statehood as a discursive entity and a performance, revitalizing the concept of representation for studies on the MENA region.

While in 2021 and 2022, the project focused on al-Sadr's emphasis on the importance of the regional and international level as an imagined Westphalian society, in 2023 the research shifted its focus to the paradox of representation as a process that is simultaneously accessible and inaccessible. This raised the question of how Iraqis are symbolically evoked and mobilized as a collective, as well as how transcendental references are rendered inaccessible. Inaccessibility here refers to that which generates reality through symbols and transcends individual life situations so that orders can be constituted. This is assumed to express the rules of these orders, thereby allowing a multitude to become a collective entity, without necessarily implying that these meanings were originally generated or that their validity depends on their regular articulation.

It is through this contentious and paradoxical process of representation that the explicit or implicit rules of what can be shared and accomplished in common—the rules which give form to the life of the polity—are established.

## At the OIB

While the populist element, with its obvious links to typical themes of international populist discourse, initially stood in the foreground of researching how al-Sadr generates and contests rules, my research on this project in 2024 increasingly shifted toward the structural conditions of this populist style. The adaptation of an Islamist actor with a clerical background to the structural necessity of mobilizing by evoking a nation-state of Iraq was interpreted both as al-Sadr's political strategy and, theoretically, as a process of secularization closely tied to the practice of politics.

The interplay of the conflicting and often paradoxical logics of (1) statehood as representation, (2) populism and (3) a transcendental reference of meaning as the basis for al-Sadr's understanding of order should become the focus of this research in the next year.

## Publications

- **Journal Article:**  
Thuselt, Christian. 2024. "Digital Populism in Iraq: The Case of Muqtada al-Sadr." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 25, no. 4: 605–630. <https://doi.org/>.
- **Report:**  
Thuselt, Christian. 2024. *Libanon: Politökonomische Kurzanalyse 2025 (PÖK)*. Report for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).
- **Report:**  
Thuselt, Christian. 2024. *Eskalationspotenzialanalyse Libanon 2025*. Report for the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg.



Muqtada al-Sadr attending an 'Ashūra-ceremony at Teheran together with Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and General Qasim Soleimani. 2019. Image by Khamenei. 16 September 2019. <http://farsi.khamenei.ir/photo-index?year=1398> (Creative Commons)

## Fellows Doctoral Fellows

Jan Altaner, Residential Doctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



Jan Altaner is a PhD candidate in History at St John's College, University of Cambridge. He holds an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from the American University of Beirut and a BA in History from the University of Freiburg. His doctoral research lies at the intersection of urban, social, economic, and global history and political economy. Altaner is part of the Global Urban History Project's 2024-25 cohort of Emerging Scholars. His research has been supported by the University of Cambridge's Faculty of History, the Council for British Research in the Levant, the Joint Centre for History and Economics at Cambridge/Harvard University, St. John's College, Studienstiftung des Deutschen Volkes, DAAD, and the OIB, among others. In addition to his academic research, Altaner combines scholarly rigor with public outreach by organizing political-historical study tours in Lebanon and writing for international and German media outlets, among them *Berlin Review*, *Jacobin*, *Zeit Online*, *Qantara*, *taz*, *Übermedien*, *der Freitag*, *bauwelt*, and *disorient*.

### Research

His dissertation project, tentatively titled the "Political Economy of Beirut's Urban Space, 1920-1975," is situated at the intersection of economic, social, urban, and global history. The project investigates how the Lebanese capital Beirut and its larger metropolitan region developed; the role the interlinked phenomena of real estate, financial capital, and urban and social transformations played in this process; and how this process, in turn, shaped the lives of the city's inhabitants. To that end, the dissertation historicizes the role of real estate – by way of urban planning, state regulations, speculation, public discourse, and social practice – and explores how it fundamentally shaped Greater Beirut and the emerging Lebanese state, until the outbreak of the civil war. It draws on archival research conducted over several years in six countries. Large construction sites, the demolitions of urban heritage, and the glass-clad façades of the next glitzy-yet-empty sky-rise are common sites to Beirutis and visitors to the city alike since the end of the civil war. During the writing of his MA thesis at the American University of Beirut on the capital's urban history, Altaner discovered that the construction boom and its accompanying features have shaped the country's history for much longer than the onset of global neoliberalism.

### At the OIB

The undertaking of doctoral research in Beirut allowed me to trace various aspects of the pivotal role real estate played for the country's political economy since the founding of the Lebanese state: from speculative real estate investments to (failed) social housing projects and global flows of capital. Hopefully, my dissertation's attempt at historicizing real estate will be useful not only for historians, but for urban researchers and policy makers who are striving to develop more equitable visions for this great city and its people.

## Mona Khneisser, Residential Doctoral Fellow

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### Academic Bio



Mona Khneisser is a PhD Student in Sociology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests broadly include social movements, everyday politics, and political economy. Her current doctoral research theorizes the politics of class through close ethnographic attention to middle-class subjectivities and everyday life amidst the financial and economic collapse in Lebanon. Her previous works included an analysis of Lebanon's 2015 garbage crisis and the challenges facing alternative forms of collective mobilization and organization (MA research in Sociology at AUB) and was published in the *Journal of Critical Sociology* and awarded the Erik Olin Wright Distinguished Article Award (2020). More recently, her research examined the collective contention surrounding the World Bank-funded Bisri Dam project, offering a material hydro-geological lens on post-colonial state-building, and the political economy of infrastructural failure in Lebanon (MA research in Sociology at UIUC), and was published in the *Journal Development & Change* and awarded the MESA Graduate Student Paper Prize (2022).

### Research

#### CRISES & EVERYDAY COLLAPSE IN LEBANON

Situated in the aftermath of Lebanon's devastating financial and economic collapse, Khneisser's research traces an ethnography of everyday crisis attentive to the politics of class and middle-class subjectivities. It examines how Lebanon's middle class, both a product and a cornerstone of the now-defunct political economic model, renegotiate and reconstruct meaning, attachments and identities, and recover place amidst chronic dislocation and uncertainty. Lebanon's post-war national mythology long promoted the illusion that the financial sector could continually fuel the economy and promote the living standards of Lebanon's ballooning middle class, promising ludicrous interest rates, easy credit, subsidized homeownership and endless consumption opportunities.

The consequences of the collapse of this longstanding national myth are paramount. While the material implications of this collapse have gained increased attention, much less attention has been given to the impacts of this collapse on subjectivities, particularly the subjectivities of members of the middle class, once a cornerstone of the model's fraught (in)/stability. The research analyzes the constitution and expansion of Lebanon's middle class in the past thirty years since the end of the civil war (1975-1990), a highly contradictory period in which an amplified consumeristic lifestyle was being promoted, even as the structural conditions undergirding the economic model, and middle-class lifestyle it promoted, were being eroded. How have middle-class subjectivities and affective structures been shaped by Lebanon's post-war economic and financial model, and its contrived last-ditch attempt in the decade leading up to the collapse? What has become of the aspirations, yearnings, and expectations of the Lebanese middle class, whose consumption habits, class anxieties, and lifestyle have been fueled and deeply shaped by the now imploded post-war economic model? What agentive tactics, adaptative strategies, and coping mechanisms have emerged under these conditions of class dislocation and dramatic collapse? How do these modalities ultimately affect political subjectivities, relationship to the state, and the capacity of political economic regimes

to reproduce themselves—through the minutiae of everyday practices within which people maneuver and adapt?

### At the OIB

The conception of this project and its foundational fieldwork has benefited immensely from the support, both financial and academic, provided by my six-month doctoral fellowship at OIB, and the rich collegial environment and intellectual conversations that accompanied it.

### Publications:

- **Journal Article:** Khneisser, Mona. 2024. "Rethinking Failure: Speculative Infrastructure, Recalcitrant Hydrogeologies, and Popular Contention Against the Bisri Dam in Lebanon." *Development & Change* 55, no. 3: 351–374.

## Janina Santer, Residential Doctoral Fellow

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### Academic Bio



Janina S. Santer is a Ph.D. candidate and Richard Hofstadter Fellow in the Department of History at Columbia University, where she focuses on the modern Middle East. Before moving to New York, she earned an MA in Middle Eastern Studies from the American University of Beirut, where her graduate work received the Salim Ali Salam Award. She also holds a BA in Political Science from the Universität Hamburg. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Tourism History* and the Arabic-language intellectual and cultural quarterly *Bidayat*.

### Research

#### "AL-DUNYĀ, YĀ ḤABĪBĪ, FLŪS // THE WORLD, MY FRIEND, IS MONEY" – ABDALLAH AL-MUDARESS' SOCIAL CRITICISM IN 1940S-BEIRUT

Though largely forgotten today, Abdallah al-Mudaress (1917-1958) was once a celebrated monologist, performing in Beirut's renowned cabarets such as *Salah Mansour*, *Teatro Faruq*, and *Salah Ajram*. His rhyming soliloquies in colloquial Arabic (*'ammiya*), often set to upbeat orchestral melodies and rich with irony and humour, captivated audiences across the city. With the rise of radio in the 1930s, his performances reached even further, transporting monologues into coffee houses and living rooms across the Middle East. While historians have recognized the significance of monologists like Omar al-Z'inni and Sayyid Darwish, the broader landscape of this genre remains largely unexplored.

### At the OIB

My time as a fellow at the Orient-Institut Beirut in 2024–2025 has provided an opportunity to engage with the rich cultural history of my research. Though my dissertation focuses on social politics in Lebanon from the 1930s to the 1950s, with an emphasis on conceptions of

welfare and the state, the constraints on archival research in recent months have led me to explore new avenues into my period of study. In the case of al-Mudaress' oeuvre, this intellectual detour has uncovered a wealth of previously overlooked social criticism. His monologues—capturing both excitement of an emerging consumerist culture and unease surrounding changing gender roles and shifting social hierarchies—offer a window into popular aspirations and anxieties, particularly those of a self-fashioned middle class shaped by postwar social mobility. In pursuing these lines of inquiry, the OIB, under its current directorship, has been an invaluable intellectual home, a unique forum, and an exceptional source of professional support for fellows like me. Led by Dr. Zeina G. Halabi, institutions such as the *Theory and Methods Seminar*, bring together the expertise and mentorship of OIB faculty and fellows, providing an exceptional space for refining ideas, sharpening arguments, and workshoping scholarly writing. At a time when archival access is limited, the OIB fosters an environment where scholarship thrives despite political and social disruptions through dialogue, collaboration, and a strong intellectual community.

### Publications

- **Journal Article:**  
Santer, Janina S. 2024. "Open Your Eyes onto These Unexploited Treasures' – The Société d'Encouragement Au Tourisme and the Making of a Lebanese Nation in the 1930s." *Journal of Tourism History* 16, no. 2: 170–90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1755182X.2024.2331497>.
- **Public Talk:**  
Santer, Janina S. Nov. 21, 2024. "Abdallah al-Mudaress—Performing Social Criticism in 1940s Beirut."

## Postdoctoral Fellows

### Jeremy Randall, Residential Postdoctoral Fellow

#### Academic Bio



Jeremy Randall was a postdoctoral fellow at the Orient-Institut Beirut. He earned his PhD in History from The Graduate Center, City University of New York. His dissertation focuses on the discourses of sectarianism and capitalism in the First and Second republics in Lebanon in contrast to the leftist critique of those concepts during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) as levied in cultural and philosophical productions. He seeks to shift attention to other potential readings of the nation-state, its peoples, and histories that have not been foreclosed by the dominant framings of the country more recently. By focusing on the rich discursive space of the Lebanese left and their readings of their present and possible futures, he historicizes now subsumed temporalities of revolution and a socialist future as vibrant concurrent histories that challenge the centrality of sectarianism in ordering Lebanese history in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Randall's current project, "Revolutionary Palestine" engages with the revolutionary era of the Palestinian movement (1960s-1980s). Randall is currently the Associate Director of the Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center at The Graduate Center, City University of New York

#### Research

### REVOLUTIONARY PALESTINE AND ITS INTERNATIONAL ALLIES // THE LEFT AND ITS GLOBALIZING THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION

Randall's current project, "Revolutionary Palestine" engages with the revolutionary era of the Palestinian movement (1960s-1980s). It looks at the rise of various concurrent Palestinian movements such as Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to excavate the revolutionary politics that they embraced and promulgated. He then pivots to looking at the internationalist alliances that these groups formed with movements and individuals in Europe, the Americas, and East Asia. Based on archival research in Lebanon, the United States, and Europe, it demonstrates how Palestinian leftism, rather than being an iterative copy of Western models, proved to be a revolutionary project that influenced the theory and praxis of European and other regions' movements and their struggles against inequality in its varying forms. The novelty of the Palestinian revolutionary project made it attractive to European leftists disenchanted with traditional left-wing parties and the strictures of the Soviet model that failed to enact the social justice changes they sought. In addition, a notable component of the PFLP, the JRA, the German Red Army Faction (RAF), and other groups was the strong presence of women leading the revolutionary cause to fight economic, political, and gendered injustices. The vital role that women played in leading these groups and engaging in militant operations challenged the patriarchal orientations of similar groups.

This project deals with several concurrent threads of research interwoven together. The first is the rise of the Palestinian left as a national project rather than a subset of wider Pan-Ara-

bism. The dissolution of the United Arab Republic in 1961 and the subsequent Naksa in 1967 compelled the Palestinian liberation movement to rethink its project. There was an awareness that liberation would not come from neighboring countries but rather from the Palestinians themselves. Secondly, it understood that part of this struggle necessitated that the Palestinians conceive of themselves as a national body distinct from pan-Arabism, while remaining part of a wider Arab national identity. Growing from these two strands of thought was also a repudiation of the politics of yore. The bourgeois national identities of surrounding nations did not have the revolutionary zeal to enact a revolutionary project that could result in liberation per their understanding. Instead, the Palestinian leaders embraced a set of politics broadly informed by Marxism to argue to a new proletarian struggle for freedom.

The second avenue of research was excavating the role of women in the Palestinian revolution. Women such as Shigenobu Fusako of the Japanese Red Army, Ulrike Meinhof of the Red Army Faction, and Leila Khaled of the PFLP, among others, had major roles in their groups. Likewise, these groups talked of women's liberation, often contrasted with Western and capitalist feminism, as a model for liberation. Looking at the role that women had in fighting against colonialism and occupation alongside how such fights were part and parcel with the liberation of women from oppression was a hallmark of these groups.

#### At the OIB

During my residency at the OIB, I worked on the relations between various Palestinian movements and their leftist counterparts from across the globe. I primarily looked at the internationalist engagements that Fatah, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine had with groups in East Asia, Europe, and the Americas. The Palestine left underwent a major shift in the 1960s towards the left and at that time forged numerous alliances with groups abroad. Part of this was to situate the Palestinian liberation movement within the pantheon of anticolonial struggles happening abroad such as Algeria and Vietnam as well as to find allies beyond the Middle East who could help popularize their struggle amongst sympathetic audiences. The concurrent global student movement of 1968 fostered a sense of shared solidarity that helped ensure that Palestine became the forefront of many global struggles. The project shifts the focus away from how most studies forefront the contributions of the global left to the Palestinian struggle to demonstrate instead how it was the Palestinian movement that informed others in terms of praxis and ideology.

Through the OIB, I spent extensive time in several significant archives that enabled me to collect materials needed for my argument. I spent time in the archives of the American University of Beirut, the Institute for Palestine Studies, the Arab Image Foundation, and UMAM. The research results from this came out in presentations given at AUB and at BRISMES as well as a cancelled talk at SeSaMo. An article is currently under preparation for a special issue of *Middle East Critique* as well as work on a monograph that several publishers have expressed interest in.



## Benjamin Raßbach, Residential Postdoctoral Fellow

### Academic Bio



Benjamin Raßbach studied Religion and Anthropology with a particular focus on religious minorities, political movements and material religion in the Middle East at the Philipps University of Marburg and Leipzig University. In April 2023, he defended his PhD thesis at the Institute for Religious Studies, Leipzig University. Throughout his PhD, he worked on narratives around sacred places in Sinjar (Iraq) and Dersim (Turkey) in the aftermaths of genocide. His studies included extensive courses in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish as well as long-term fieldwork periods in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Lebanon. In Egypt, he taught at the Cairo Institute for Liberal Arts and Sciences (CILAS) about Religion in Kurdistan. His dissertation was published by De Gruyter Brill in 2024. At the Orient-Institut Beirut, he has been working on a paper about religion and secularity within the Druze community and on dynamics around sacred places in Lebanon in the context of the recent large-scale Israeli attacks on the country.

### At the OIB

During the first months of my fellowship at the OIB, I worked on concepts of distinction between the religious and the secular within the Druze community in Lebanon today. I discovered that while all my Druze interlocutors defined themselves as “secular” and regarded the community’s religious elite with contempt, they did not understand narratives about reincarnation as religious. On the contrary, these well-known stories were seen as very much in line with globalized, secularized forms of spirituality and, importantly, standing up to scientific scrutiny. It seems likely that the urban, secular Druze will continue to play a crucial role within the development of a more horizontal form of communal identity questioning traditional hierarchies and taboos. I presented my preliminary findings at the OIB’s colloquium in June 2024. During the summer, I concentrated my empirical work on a specific Druze family in the Chouf area, conducting several interviews and approaching the topic from a more localized and biographical point of view.

During the escalation of the Israeli attacks on Hezbollah and Lebanon at large, I decided to put my research on the Druze on hold. From September to December 2024, I volunteered with the local initiative Nation Station for food distribution to the refugees coming to Beirut from other parts of Lebanon. At the same time, I began an inquiry into the ongoing damage and destruction of religious cultural heritage in the ongoing war. Several fieldwork visits in the Beqaa Valley and continuous research about the unfolding events in the South of Lebanon sparked the decision to develop a larger project about the country’s sacred places in the context of war. I specifically focus on Lebanon’s southern and eastern peripheries where non-state actors have taken over much of the public sector, including the maintenance of religious architectural heritage. Currently I am working on an application for a DFG-funded project which I also discuss in the OIB’s colloquium in February 2025.

In Lebanon, where comparatively little has been done to preserve architectural heritage, shrines are often seen as the material remains of an authentic past that reflects rights to land ownership. In such imaginaries, sacred places are often shaped as monolithic expressions of communal identities apparent in the architectural forms employed in their reconstruction and renovation. However, in Lebanon today we find examples of how these places are sites

of complex arrangements of sharing and co-usage centered around their perceived healing powers. These dynamics, while charged with political tension themselves, provide an alternative image less easily integrated into sectarian and nationalist ideologies. Sharing of sacred places was even more common in the past, until the establishment of nation state borders in the Levant restricted the pilgrims’ movement, and political ideologies laid claim to architectural heritage to bolster claims on territory. Interreligiosity and the complex political dynamics in Lebanon’s war-torn peripheries crystallize in narratives and practices around local shrines. I was particularly intrigued by my fieldwork observations at a small Marian shrine in the Beqaa Valley where local Shi’a Muslims had built a shrine within the remains of an old church. The shrine was still dedicated to Mary of whom a small sculpture was present in the inner chamber. My interlocutors told me diverging stories about the shrine and its history through which political tensions in the area but also the complex arrangement of shrine sharing with the Christians became apparent.

In the highly fruitful academic environment of the OIB the ongoing discussions with my colleagues have provided me with useful insights regarding my own work. Especially the fellows’ Theory and Method Seminar proved to be an important space for the improvement of my writing-in-progress and the engagement with other scholars’ ongoing research has opened new academic perspectives to me.

## Islamic Studies

Islamic studies at the Orient-Institut Beirut pertains to Islamic civilization, past and present. This cluster is specialized in theology, history and historiography, Qur'an exegesis, Hadith, law, philosophy, ethics, and Sufism. The cluster's projects are interdisciplinary and often focus on the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge both within and beyond Islamic civilization.

The interdisciplinarity of the research in this cluster can be detected in the ways in which, for instance, Islamic law is studied by incorporating exegetical traditions and Hadith, and by intertwining Islamic and Muslim Feminism. The transfer of knowledge can be demonstrated in the case of Greek philosophy and its reception in the framework of Islamic ethics. The cluster's interest in interreligious and intra-religious interdependency is highlighted best in the study of the way humans of different faiths perceive each other, or how the "religious other" is described in Qur'anic commentaries. The intersection between Islamic Studies and the arts is another of the cluster's interests, specifically the study of the Qur'an as a material object. In as much as there is focus on the past, the cluster is also interested in modern Muslim theology and how it endeavors within the challenges of our age.

Regarding ethics, the interdisciplinary character of this cluster ranges from Law to Sufism and intersects with gender issues, specifically regarding Islamic law, which claims to be based on the Qur'an and Sunna, and therefore incorporates exegetical traditions, Hadith and literature such as the *Shahnāme* and *1001 Nights*. Modern approaches aimed at producing more gender-egalitarian readings and women-friendly interpretations are also incorporated. In this process, stereotypical and generalized images—particularly regarding the role of women—are challenged.

The Islamic Studies cluster also examines the environment from a religious perspective, aiming at studying the legal regulations and recommendations impacting the environment. Naturally, this is also tied to ethics, again in terms of use and abuse of resources, treatment of animals, methods of food production (*ḥalāl* versus *ṭayyib*), among other issues. In an upcoming project, the cluster plans to work on court documents, dealing with marriage, divorce, and child custody. The lived reality can then be reconstructed and compared to the theoretical law books and manuals to determine whether a discrepancy exists between ideals and real-life practices or not. It also investigates the autonomy of judges versus the perceived hegemony of legal theories. Taken together, the projects cover a vast geographical area as well as a wide timeframe—from Morocco to India and from early Islam to contemporary times.

One of the aims of Islamic Studies at the OIB is to create bridges between different religions and religious interpretations. A significant aspect of this vision is to offer critical readings and alternative interpretations, by providing those distinct from the rich literature of Islamic history.

Islamic studies are pursued through a dual analytical framework: first, by examining the historical genesis and doctrinal differentiation of Islamic thought; second, by engaging with modern Islamic theology's constructive intellectual contributions to contemporary societal and environmental discourses. This approach reflects our commitment to both critical analysis and forward-looking theological engagement.

## Researchers

Thomas Würtz, Deputy Director

### Academic Bio



Thomas Würtz joined the Orient-Institut Beirut in May 2021. His research interests lie primarily in the areas of the Qur'an and Qur'anic exegesis, Qur'anic translations and the history of theology, and in the Muslim view of the Crusades. He wrote his doctoral thesis on the history of Islamic theology at the University of Zurich. The thesis is published under the title "Islamic Theology in the 14th Century. Doctrine of Resurrection, Theory of Action and Conceptions of Creation in the Work of Sa'd ad-Din at-Taftâzânî." He holds a master's degree in Islamic studies from Universität Bamberg. In 2015, he taught as a guest lecturer at Freie Universität Berlin on the history of ideas in Islam, and prior to that he was a research assistant at the universities of Bern and Aarhus. Between 2006 and 2014, he completed several research trips to al-Azhar University in Egypt and to several religious and cultural institutions in Pakistan. For several years, he worked as an academic advisor at the Catholic Academy in Berlin in the fields of Islam and the Middle East as well as Christian-Muslim dialogue where he was in charge of the reconciliation project "Recalled Future" ([www.erinnerte-zukunft.de](http://www.erinnerte-zukunft.de)).

### Research

#### THE INFLUENCE OF MULTIPLE REVELATIONS AND PHILOSOPHICAL RECEPTION IN IBRAHIM AL-BIQĀ'ĪS (D. 1480) COMMENTARY ON THE QUR'AN

During 2024 my research focused on the connection between the two Qur'anic commentators Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī and Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī (d. 606 / 1210). The great theologian, philosopher, and Quran commentator Fakhr ad-Dīn Muhammad b. 'Umar ar-Rāzī shaped philosophical exegesis in the period after Avicenna for a long time with his theological works and mainly with his Qur'anic commentary. He attempted to synthesize ancient Greek philosophy and the interpretation of Avicenna's Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy on the one hand and the dogmas of Asharite theology on the other. As his commentary, *at-Tafsīr al-kabīr. Mafātiḥ al-ghayb* (The large commentary. Keys of the Unseen), can be regarded as the standard commentary for the next generations of scholars, this work was central to the dissemination of philosophical concepts in theological circles. Even to this day, it remains one of the central classical references in the Islamic Qur'anic commentary tradition.

In the framework of this research, it appeared to be worth placing Razi's commentary in relation to Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī who was born in 1406 in the Bekaa Valley in present-day Lebanon and moved to Cairo in 1431, where he soon became a respected scholar. In Cairo, he worked on his Qur'an commentary *Naẓm ad-durar fī tanāsub al-ayāt wa-l-suwar* ("Arrangement of the pearls in the context of the verses and suras") from 1456 until his death in 1480. Here, he inserts quotations from the four Christian Gospels in 29 places to explain passages from the Qur'an that refer to Jesus or other earlier prophets, combining them into a new narrative.

This may be seen as quite understandable, as Christians have received a revelation from God (Arabic: *ingil*), which makes them together with Jews as People of the Book (Arabic: *Ahl al-kitāb*) clearly distinguishable from other non-Muslims. Over the centuries, however, both religious books have been accused of falsifying divine revelation and of no longer being trustworthy (theory of *tahrīf*). It no longer seemed permissible to examine the scriptures used by Christians and Jews to interpret the Quran. Al-Biqāʿī challenged that unwritten rule. The central result relates explanations for Qurʾanic verses which were given in an abstract theological philosophical language like *wajib al-wujud*, (“the necessary existing”) as a synonym for God by *ar-Rāzī* to narratives, where *al Biqāʿī* considered the Bible indispensable.

### At the OIB

The project at the OIB focuses on the Biblical quotations in the Qurʾanic commentary of Ibrahīm al-Biqāʿī.

### Publication

- Amin, Yasmin and Ahmed Abd El-Salam, eds. 2024. “Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics.” Fourth Conference of the OIB Research and Conferences Program: Discussing Interdependences: Humans, Religion, and Environment. Cairo.

### Conference Openings and Greetings

- Opening Address. 2024. “Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics.” Conference in partnership with Al Akhawayn University (Ifrane), the Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad (CCME), and the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Migration Studies. Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco, May 4–5.
- Welcoming Address. 2024. “El Alamein: Perspectives from Egyptian and German Memory.” Cooperation with Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, documenta Institut, and Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (Hessen). Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany, October 31.

### Presentations

- “La foi islamique et son intégration dans la société moderne – selon l'exemple des départements de théologie islamique nouvellement créés en Allemagne.” 2024. Intervention at the book talk on *Le Besoin De Croire* by Marguerite El Asmar Bou Aoun. Université Saint-Joseph (USJ), Beirut, April 18.
- “Ibrahim al-Biqai: Tafsīr between Multiple Revelations and Philosophical Reception.” 2024. Presented at the conference *Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions*. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU), Munich, Germany, November 15–17.
- “Falsafa wa Tafsir.” 2024. Presented at the Annual International Conference for Islamic Philosophy, organized by the Egyptian Philosophical Society. Dar al-Ifta', Cairo, Egypt, December 8.

### Radio and Web Contributions

- Radio Interview. 2024. “Zur Lage im Libanon und Sicherheitsmaßnahmen des OIB.” *SWR Kultur*, July 31.

- Web Talk. 2024. “Die Lage in Libanon und Nahost.” Wissenschaftliches Forum Internationale Sicherheit (WIFIS), Universität Halle-Wittenberg, October 11.

### Participation

- Observer. 2024. Forum on *Quellenhermeneutik im digitalen Zeitalter*. Theological Forum on *Alles berechnet? Christliche und islamische Theologie angesichts digitaler Transformation*. Stuttgart, Germany, March 4.

### Fatih Ermiş, Research Associate

#### Academic Bio



Fatih Ermiş joined the Orient-Institut Beirut in 2018. He received a doctorate from the University of Erfurt with a thesis titled “Ottoman Economic Thinking before the 19th Century.” He holds an MA in economic history from Marmara University and a BA in economics from Boğaziçi University, both in Istanbul. Before joining the OIB, he worked as a research assistant for the Chair of History of West Asia at the University of Erfurt and, most recently, as a post-doctoral associate at the Centre for Islamic Theology, University of Tübingen. His main research interest is pre-modern Islamic intellectual history, with a particular focus on intellectual endeavors in Ottoman lands. His work is also concerned with economic, social, religious and literary writing as well as with Sufi thought.

#### READING ECONOMIC THOUGHT FROM ETHICS BOOKS

Ermiş’ research at the OIB focuses on a famous book of ethics, *Ahlāk-ı ‘Alāʿī*, written in Damascus by the Ottoman scholar Kınālīzāde ‘Alī Çelebī (1510 – 1572). In the Ottoman context, as in every pre-modern civilization, the economic sphere was an integral part of all social life and therefore cannot be evaluated in isolation. On the other hand, reading economic thought from pre-modern texts harbors a contradiction, which becomes even more apparent when starting from a narrow understanding of economics as “the endeavor to meet unlimited needs with scarce resources.”

Although it is possible to find elements of economic thought in all parts of a typical ethics book, these are mostly found in the section on *‘ilm tadbīr al-manzil* (household management). However, there is an important point to keep in mind while looking at *‘ilm tadbīr al-manzil* with these lenses: Since there was no separate branch of science called economics in the Ottoman Empire (at least before the 19th century), when searching for elements of economic thought in ethics books or other texts, it should be kept in mind that these elements are part of a holistic understanding of existence. So, trying to understand these ideas in isolation from this framework can lead to serious mistakes. These endeavors may carry risks.

First, contrary to the current trend of specialization, a holistic understanding prevailed in the pre-modern period. Therefore, elements of economic thought in ethics books or other texts are part of a holistic understanding of existence. Secondly, it is misleading to look at the pre-modern period with a linear understanding of time and the idea of progress not existing in this period. The conception of time was rather cyclical. The third danger that can be faced

in the attempt to analyze economic thought from ethical texts is the attempt to dress these texts in the clothes of modern economic theories. In other words, the danger lies in projecting modern economic theories onto the past.

Research on economic thought, which is aware of these risks, provides the opportunity to comprehend the economic mentality in every pre-modern society and civilization from an insider's perspective. Specifically in the Ottoman context, economic thought can be analyzed via considering the centrality of the concept of justice (*ʿadālat*) like in *Ahlāk-ı ʿAlāʾī* by *Ḳinālizāde ʿAlī ʿÇelebī's* (1510-1572). In fact, the entire *Ahlāk-ı ʿAlāʾī* is a work based on how to realize justice at three levels: individual ethic, family ethic, and social ethic.

When analyzing economic thought based on ethics books, it should be noted that the approach to economics before the modern period found a place for itself within a conception of justice that should be understood primarily from the perspective of balance. Whether at the family level or at the state level, the basic understanding that directs economic activities is to maintain a balanced path. These balancing endeavors can be seen, for example, between the time allocated for subsistence and the time to be allocated for activities such as worship and charity; between the price that is affordable for the *reʿaya* and the price that will not cause losses to the producer or the merchant when determining price ceilings; and in tax collection, in the operation of tax mechanisms that will not crush the *reʿaya* but will be sufficient to run the state.

#### Publication

- Ermis, Faith. 2024. "Ahlak Metinleri Üzerinden İktisadi Düşünceyi Okumak." In: *Osmanlı'da İlm-i Ahlak*. Edited by Elmin Aliyev, Ömer Türker, 383-400. Istanbul: İSAR Yayınlar.



The gravestone of *Ḳinālizāde* in the city of Edirne in the district Nazır Çesmesi. The Persian script on the gravestone can be translated into English as follows: *The unique of his time ʿAlī ʿÇelebī*  
*May his precious soul be in the eternal paradise*  
*Passed away in the year nine hundred seventy nine*  
*In the city of Edirne, 5th of the month of Ramaḍān*  
*Who was known as Ḥan-nālizāde.*  
 ©Fatih Ermiş

## Dr. Berenike Metzler, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Berenike Metzler is a habilitated Islamic Studies researcher, currently working at the OIB on a DFG-funded project on Arabic letter semiotics (see "projects") and based at the German Historical Institute in Washington D.C. She worked in the fields of Qurʾānic studies and early Islamic theology and mysticism and published her dissertation titled "Den Koran verstehen. Das Kitāb Fahm al-Qurʾān des Ḥārīt b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī" in 2016. Afterward, she tried to approach art historical objects of investigation from a terminological perspective and joined a DFG-funded project on text-image relationships in Islamic art at the University of Bamberg (with Prof. Lorenz Korn, 2017-2021). She has recently published her habilitation on concepts of visuality in Islamic cultures at the Chair of Oriental Philology and Islamic Studies in Erlangen, titled *Kulturen des Sehens. Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Visualität im Islam*.

### THE ABC OF ABŪ BAKR AL-SHANAWĀNĪ (D. 1610). ARABIC LETTER SEMIOTICS ON THE THRESHOLD OF MODERN TIMES (BERENIKE METZLER)

The study of the semiotics of Arabic letters is an entirely new field of research. So far, various aspects of Arabic letters in Islamic cultural history have been worked on, but an overall survey of how these letters function has yet to be done. With the still unedited *Ḥilyat ahl al-kamāl bi-ajwibat asʿilat al-Jalāl* by Abū Bakr al-Shanawānī (d. 1610), a work has been discovered based on which the semiotics of Arabic letters found there can be compared with modern letter semiotics. Moreover, since this work is also the answer to seven questions set about half a century earlier by the Mamluk polyhistor Jalāl ad-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) as a touchstone for true scholarship, the *Ḥilya* is another important source for the study of Arabic scholarship in early Ottoman Egypt. Thus, this project aims to address three sub-areas: first, the editing and translation of the *Ḥilyat ahl al-kamāl bi-ajwibat asʿilat al-Jalāl*. Second, the analysis of the letter conception presented in the work against the background of current letter semiotic research. Third, the work's contextualization in the historical development of pre-modern Arabic scholarship, i.e. with the aid of intratextual, paratextual, and extratextual information. The "ABC" metaphor used in the title thus refers not only in a literal sense to Shanawānī's presentation of Arabic letter semiotics, but at the same time to his location in the intellectual history of his time, that is, to Shanawānī's very personal "ABC" of scholarship.

#### Publication

- Metzler, Berenike. 2024. *Kulturen des Sehens. Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Visualität im Islam*, Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.

## Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, Research Associate

### Academic Bio



Ahmed Abd-Elsalam joined the Orient-Institut Beirut in October 2021 as a research associate. He received his PhD in Islamic Studies from the Martin-Luther University Halle-Wittenberg with a dissertation titled “Das Verhältnis des beduinischen zum islamischen Recht in sozialem und historischem Kontext” (“The relationship between Bedouin and Islamic law in a social and historical context”).

### Research

Abd-Elsalam’s analysis of Islamic marital norms—particularly their historical traces and Jewish influences—reached a turning point in the spring of 2024. Research unveiled three key factors shaping the development of Islamic marriage law as it originated from divine revelations and prophetic traditions, effectively reforming ethical marriage practices.

Islamic marriage law originated from the customary law of ancient Arab tribes during the time of the Prophet Muhammad’s revelation. The Qur’an guided and structured the fundamental reforms. The innovative role of women in the early Muslim community, as envisioned by Prophet Muhammad, is reflected in his traditions.

The Qur’an and common law share a connection to Jewish legal precedents, customary law as local customs, and Qur’an as debates on Jewish legal issues. Samuel Bialoblocki explains that the Arab tribes near Hijaz were Jews long before Islam. They then left Judaism and the monotheistic doctrine to paganism. However, they preserved some Jewish legal norms as moral ethical concepts. The Qur’an dealt in several passages with debates and discussions that originated from the Talmud or the Torah.

### At the OIB

At the OIB, I studied social and theological issues of Abrahamic interdependence concerning marriage and divorce as recorded in the human production of theological and religious knowledge. My research focuses on social and legal transformations in Muslim societies, past and present.

My project “Abrahamic Interdependence: The Relations of Jewish to Islamic concerning Marriage and Divorce” and the project on the “Emergence and Development of Islamic Environmental Theology” have both reached their final phases. In addition, I am responsible for the academic program of the Cairo Office and the editorial management of Bibliotheca Islamica (BI) and Orient-Institut Studies (OIS). In spring 2023, the OIB research staff elected me to the staff council, and they confirmed my duty in May 2024.

### Publications

#### Edited Books

- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**, ed. 2024. *Discussing Interdependencies – Religion, Religiosity, and Society*. Orient-Institut Studies 8. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00011>.

- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**, ed. 2024. *Discussing Interdependencies – Theology of Coexistence*. Orient-Institut Studies 7. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00003>.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed** and **Abdallah, Mahmoud**, eds. 2024. *Religiöse Institutionen in Krisenzeiten: Anfragen und Erträge aus Ethik, Theologie und Religionsgemeinschaften*, (Theologie des Zusammenlebens). Ostfildern: Gründwald Verlag.

#### Articles

- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. “Religiöse Institutionen in Krisenzeiten – Politisches Handeln religiöser Institutionen im Zeichen gegenwärtiger Umbrüche”, in Ahmed Abd-Elsalam und Mahmoud Abdallah (eds.) *Religiöse Institutionen in Krisenzeiten: anfragen und Erträge aus Ethik, Theologie und Religionsgemeinschaften*, (Theologie des Zusammenlebens). Ostfildern: Grünwald Verlag (2024), 91-101.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. “Al-‘Urf wa-trābutiyyat al-mujtama’ wa-l-tashrī fī ‘alam mutaghayyir” in Ahmed Abd-Elsalam (ed.) *Discussing Interdependencies – Religion, Religiosity and Society*, (OIS 8). Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications (October 2024), 150-168. DOI:10.25360/01-2024-00011.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. “Muqaddimah: trābutiyyat al-dīn wa-l-mujtama’” in Ahmed Abd-Elsalam (ed.) *Discussing Interdependencies – Religion, Religiosity and Society*, (OIS 8). Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications (October 2024), 9-11. DOI:10.25360/01-2024-00011.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. “Causes and Occasions: An Introduction” in Ahmed Abd-Elsalam (ed.) *Discussing Interdependencies – Religion, Religiosity and Society*, (OIS 8). Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications (October 2024), 150-168. DOI:10.25360/01-2024-00011.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed** and **Binay, Sara**. 2024. “Sustainable Development in Islamic Theology: From Occasion-Driven Approaches to a Comprehensive Understanding of Sustainability Using the Example of (Water-) Fatwas.” In *Religions Journal*, vol. 5, no. 12, edited by Bernhard Bleyer and René M. Micallef. Special Issue: *Sustainable Development: The Normative Contribution of Theology*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121487>.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. 2024. “Ehe als Ansatz frühislamischer theologischer (Re)Form: Ehe, Eheschließung, Ehe in Nahbeziehungen – besonders rechtliche Regelungen der Eheschließung in Nahverhältnissen in frühislamischen Rechtsquellen / Marriage as an Approach to Early Islamic Theological (Re)Form: Marriage, Marriage in Close Relations – Especially Legal Regulations for Marriage in Affinity Relationships in Early Islamic Legal Sources.” In *Ancilla Iuris*, edited by Britta Müller-Schauenburg. Special Issue: *Marriage in Close Relations*, 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.26031/2024.044>.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. 2024. “Introduction: The Theology of Coexistence, and What Next?” In *Discussing Interdependencies – Theology of Coexistence*, edited by Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, 249–252. Orient-Institut Studies 7. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00003>.
- **Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed**. 2024. “Theology of Coexistence in Islam: From Ummah to Muwātana.” In *Discussing Interdependencies – Theology of Coexistence*, edited by Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, 309–323. Orient-Institut Studies 7. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00003>.

## Conferences, Workshops, and Panels:

May 4–5, 2024

**Conference:** *Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics*

**Partners:** Al Akhawayn University (Ifrane), Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad (CCME), and Ibn Khaldoun Center for Migration Studies.

**Location:** Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco.

June 10, 2024

**Workshop:** *Daily Lives in the Mamluk Era*

**Partners:** Marburg University, Islamic Museum in Cairo, and DAAD.

**Project:** Part of the *Ta'ziz* initiative: *Dealing with Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean Between Excavation and Digitization*.

August 19–23, 2024

**Panel:** *Islamic Environmental and Ecological Ethics: Past and Present*

**Event:** European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) Conference.

**Location:** Gothenburg, Sweden.

**Organizers:** Ahmed Abd-Elsalam and Yasmin Amin (OIB).

**Contributions:**

- Dr. Ahmed Abd-Elsalam's lecture: *Eco-Islam, Eco-Muslims: A Critical Approach*.
- Three additional lectures by OIB members.

September 26–28, 2024

**Panel:** *Islamische Rechtswirklichkeit im Kontext säkularer und religiöser Ordnungen*

**Event:** *30th International DAVO Congress: Societies in Transition—Law, Culture, and Politics in the Middle East*.

**Location:** Göttingen, Germany.

**Organizers:** Ahmed Abd-Elsalam and Yasmin Amin (OIB).

**Contributions:**

- Dr. Abd-Elsalam's lecture: *Urf, die säkulare Quelle islamischer Scharia*.

December 7–9, 2024

**Conference:** *Annual International Conference for Islamic Philosophy*.

**Organizer:** Egyptian Philosophical Society.

**Location:** Dar al-Ifta', Cairo.

**OIB Contribution:** Panel featuring four lectures, including Dr. Ahmed Abd-Elsalam's *Issues from the Theology of Coexistence*.



Participants of the conference "Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics" in Ifrane, Morocco in May 2024

**Yasmin Amin**, Representative at the OIB in Cairo

**Academic Bio**



Since May 2022, Yasmin Amin has been working at the Orient-Institut Beirut as a Representative in Cairo. She is an Egyptian German who holds a BA in Business Administration, a PGD and an MA in Islamic Studies, all three obtained from the American University in Cairo. She has received her PhD in Islamic Studies from Exeter University's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, researching "Humour and Laughter in the Ḥadīth." Her research covers various aspects of gender issues, early Muslim society and culture as well as the original texts of Islamic history, law and Hadith, and gender issues in Islam. She is co-translator (with Nesrin Amin) of "The Sorrowful Muslim's Guide," and co-editor (with Nevin Reda) of Islamic Interpretive Tradition and Gender Justice: Processes of Canonization, Subversion and Change (2020). She has published extensively, and her forthcoming book is a translation of Nazira Zeineddine which is to be published by Edinburgh University Press in the Series Muslim Thinkers in Translation.

**Research**

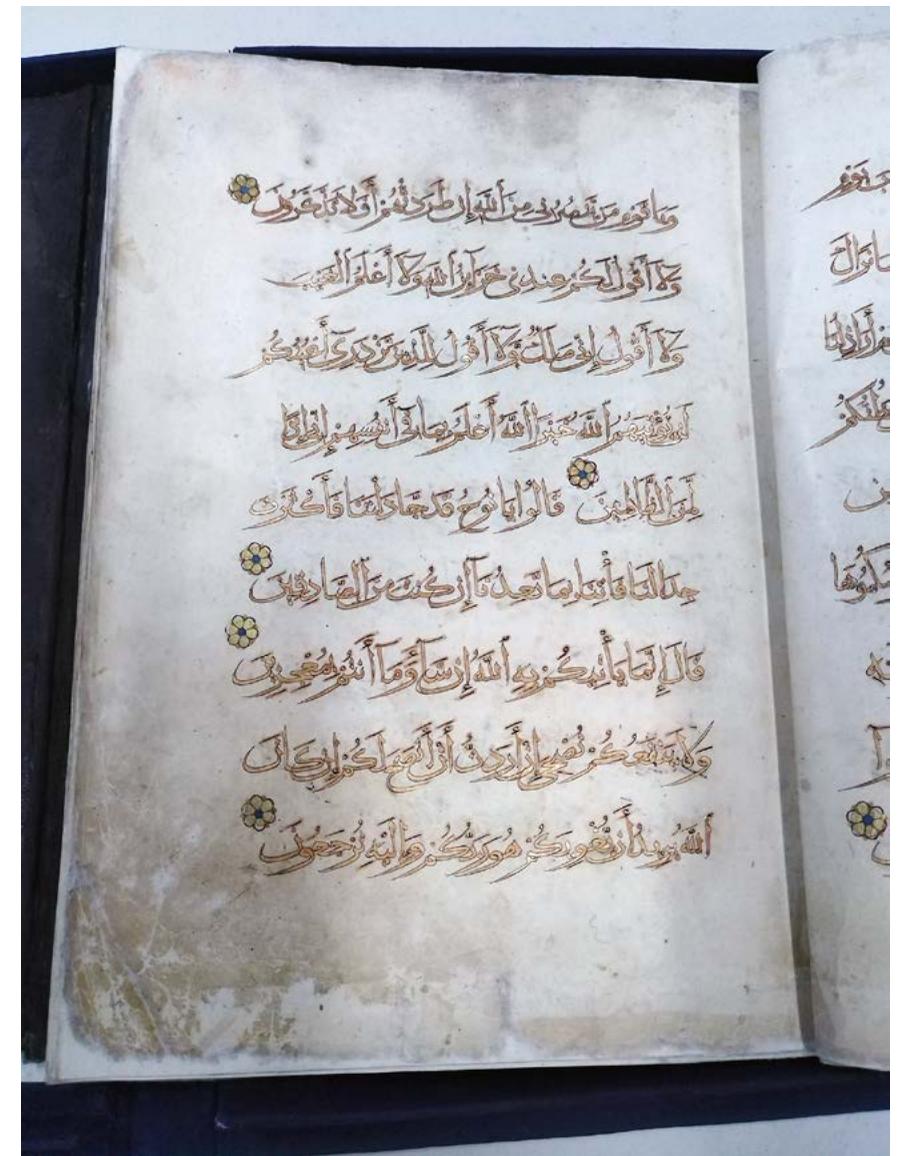
**QUR'ANIC STORIES: RICH ETHICAL SOURCES OF PRACTICAL RELEVANCE**

Qur'anic stories are rich narratives that amount to about a quarter of the Qur'anic text. However, this Qur'anic genre has been neglected in two major scholarly areas. It has not yet received its due literary analysis, nor its proper ethical analysis. Moreover, despite the explicit mentioning in verses [12:3] and [12:111] the preeminent status of Qur'anic stories and their capacity to impart lessons to individuals of discernment, and understanding, these narratives have not yet been used to establish any precedents or any legal rulings in *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Instead, the ethical and moral subtexts and suggestions inherent within these narratives have mostly been ignored and subverted in and by the *tafsīr* works, often based on weak or fabricated *ḥadīth* reports. The ethical potential of Qur'anic stories and narrative texts has largely been neglected, most likely because the stories seldomly include moral instruction in a clear imperative form. Some of the Qur'anic narratives seem to imply that many moral claims should not be viewed as absolute but leave room for nuance. Fred Donner argues:

*[T]he only judgement about a person that really matters, in the Qur'anic view, is whether he/she is good or evil, and most characters presented in the Qur'anic narratives fall squarely on one side or another of that great divide. Often, it gives us "ideal types," with little suggestion that a single personality might be a mixture of good and evil impulses in constant tension.*

This assumption is erroneous, as it often results in the projection of "archetypes" with minimal acknowledgement of the possibility that a single personality may comprise a combination of good and evil impulses frequently in tension. This statement glosses over the tension within the characters themselves, being uniquely human. The statement also ignores the human moral struggle in its own right. Donner further argues that "there is only concern for its outcome. Hence, one finds in the Qur'an no sympathy for the sinner as someone succumbing, against his own best interest in the long run, to all-too-human impulses in the face of overwhelming temptation, despite the valiant efforts to resist temptation. Rather the Qur'an portrays humanity in a strictly polarized way." Yet, the characters in the Qur'anic stories are

never one-dimensional and the sinner can receive not only sympathy, but an opportunity for repentance and moral growth. The characters' ethical and moral struggles are real and should be analyzed to ascertain their ethical value in fostering a critical moral imagination in the minds and souls of the readers of the Qur'anic text—a moral imagination that encourages a moral transformation and growth. This research looks at the characters individually, thematically, and holistically as a group, and then extrapolates to other verses not in the stories, that translate the moral and ethical struggle of the characters to recommendations and factual statements for humankind.



A page of a Quran manuscript, penned by Zaynab bint Ahmad al-Maqdisiyya, from the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo

## Lectures

March 1, 2024:

Lecture at the Syrian Women's Network: *Al-insān al-kāmil: rajul am imra'a?*

May 6, 2024:

Lecture at Mohamed Ben Abd Allah University, Fez: *Women in the Qur'an*.

November 13, 2024:

Lecture at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Islamische Theologie: *Weibliche Rezitatorinnen des Korans* (Zoom).

December 3, 2024:

Lecture at Universität zu Köln: *Frauen im Koran*.

## Book Launch Discussant

March 5, 2024:

Discussant for the book *Al-khitāb al-nasawī fī al-'ālam al-thālith*.

## Panel Organization

May 4–5, 2024:

Conference: *Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics*. Organized in partnership with Al Akhawayn University (Ifrane), the Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad (CCME), and the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Migration Studies.

August 19–23, 2024:

Panel at the European Association for the Study of Religions Conference, Gothenburg, Sweden.

September 26–28, 2024:

Panel at the 30th International DAVO Congress, Göttingen. Lecture: *Religiöse Praxis in einem säkularen rechtspluralistischen Umfeld*.

## Conference Participation

March 11–13, 2024:

Keynote lecture at UNICEF Malaysia Capacity-Building Workshop: *Child Marriages*.

April 29–30, 2024:

Lecture at Aga Khan University, London, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations: *Pay It Forward – Educationally or How to Procure Jihadists for Reform*.

July 15–18, 2024:

Lecture at the International Qur'anic Studies Association Conference, London: *An Ethical Reading of Some of the Qur'anic Stories*.

October 10–11, 2023:

Lecture at the International Workshop *Women's Knowledge Production in Qur'anic Exegesis*, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin: *Qur'an Copies and Qur'an Parts Penned by Women*.

October 18–19, 2023:

Lecture: *The Case of Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: Environmentalism in 10th-Century Baghdad*.

December 7–9, 2024:

Lecture at the International Conference for Islamic Philosophy, organized by the Egyptian Philosophical Society, Dar al-Ifta', Cairo: *New Approaches to Islamic Ethics*.

## Workshop Participation

November 6–7, 2024:

Workshop: *Arabic Manuscripts and How to Read Them*, led by Olly Akkerman and Petra Sijpesteijn. Netherlands-Flemish Institute Cairo (NVIC).

## Organization of Conferences and Workshops

May 4–5, 2024:

Conference: *Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics*. Organized in partnership with Al Akhawayn University (Ifrane), the Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad (CCME), and the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Migration Studies.

June 10, 2024:

Workshop: *Daily Lives in the Mamluk Era*. Organized in partnership with Marburg University, the Islamic Museum in Cairo, and the DAAD within the Ta'ziz Project: *Dealing with Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean Between Excavation and Digitization*.

## Publications

- **Amin, Yasmin**. Fall 2023. "Critical Studies of Hadith and of Islamic Masculinity: Two Important Frontiers for Future Qur'anic Scholarship." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 39, no. 2: 75–77. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfs.2023.a908300>.
- **Decker, Doris, and Yasmin Amin**. 2024. "Islam." In *Religion und Geschlecht*, edited by Birgit Heller and Edith Franke, 221–242. Berlin: De Gruyter.

## Affiliated Researchers and their Projects

- **Abdullah Musab Şahin** (Istanbul Medipol University)  
*Post-Ottoman Constitutional Developments in the Middle East*  
August – October 2024
- **Arpan Roy** (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)  
*Theological Innovations Emerging from the Christian/Muslim Missionary Encounter*  
1 September – 15 October 2024
- **Carine Chelhot Lemyre** (University of St Andrews)  
*The Works of the Prominent Nineteenth-Century Photography Studio Maison Bonfils*  
June 2023 – July 2024
- **Charlotte Gaudreau-Majeau** (McGill University, Montreal)  
*The Cycles of Trans-Communal Contentious Politics in Deeply Divided Societies*  
October 2023 – September 2024
- **Christin Sander** (Freie Universität Berlin)  
*Communist Perspectives on Syrian Unrest, 1976–1982*  
February – October 2024
- **Cyma Farah** (American University of Beirut)  
*From the Grand Serail to the Great Revolt: Constitutionalism and Revolution in Lebanon, 1925–1927*  
September 2023 – September 2024
- **Fatima Al-Bazzal** (Lebanese University)  
*Archiving Absence and Loss: Amili Manuscripts in Libraries Worldwide*  
January 2024 – January 2026
- **Iman Ali** (Cornell University)  
*Armed in the Name of Peace: Everyday Militant Peacekeeping in South Lebanon*  
July 2024 – June 2025
- **Jakub Jajcay** (American University of Beirut)  
*The Social and Political History of Saida, 1958–1975*  
December 2023 – September 2024
- **Jeremy Randall** (University of New York)  
*Theological Innovations Emerging from the Christian/Muslim Missionary Encounter*  
1 September – 15 October 2024
- **Karim Safieddine** (University of Pittsburgh)  
*How Is Knowledge of “Big Political Moments” Categorized and Formulated from a Bottom-Up Social Movement Perspective?*  
June – August 2024
- **Laure Guirguis** (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)  
*Arab Leftist Trends in the 1960s and 1970s: A Cross-Regional Perspective*  
November 2022 – December 2024
- **Lavinia Parsi** (Università degli Studi di Milano)  
*Forced Displacement in International Criminal Law*  
October 2023 – May 2024
- **Layla Bartheldi** (Charles University in Prague)  
*What Can Avocado Production in Lebanon Say About Neocolonial Influences and Forms of Global Dependency?*  
June 2023 – July 2024
- **Marija Nemčenko** (Anglia Ruskin University)  
*In Search of Allies: Cross-Regional Links Between CEE and SWANA Through Moving Image – Past, Present, and Future*  
March – May 2024
- **Martin Greve** (Orient-Institut Istanbul)  
*Migration, Memory, and Musical Expression*  
January 2024 – December 2025
- **Nour Hachem** (University of Pittsburgh)  
*Buds and Borders: Cannabis, Prohibition, and Identity Formation in Lebanon*  
July 2024 – August 2025
- **Philipp Widmann** (Universität Zürich)  
*In and Out of Circulation – The Making and Loss of “A First National Film”*  
October 2024
- **Rosy Azar Beyhom** (Conservatoire Libanais)  
*From Arab to Latin: Moving Sciences of Music Around the Mediterranean*  
November 2022 – November 2024

## Hans Robert Roemer Fellows

**Elizabeth Bishop, Texas State University** (now American University in Baghdad)  
Project: Spaces of the Higher Dam

### Spring 2024

#### Affiliations and Roles

- Orient-Institut Beirut. Hans-Robert Roemer Fellow. January–December 2024.
- Elected, Inaugural President of the Texas State University Chapter, American Association of University Professors. 2024.
- Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. Gilman Selection Panelist. 2024.
- *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Pure Life*. Editorial Board Member. 2024.

#### Recommendations and Statements

- Recommendation by Lauren Goodley, Senior Librarian, Alkek Library, Texas State University. 2024.
- Society of American Archivists. "Statement on Israel-Hamas War." March 2024.

#### Newsletters and Media Coverage

- *Al-Halal Newsletter*. Model Arab League, Texas State University. March 2024.
- Fawaz, Maya. "Texas State Students Hold Pro-Palestinian Protest Inspired by UT Austin Peers." *KUT-90.5 FM*, University of Texas at Austin. April 29, 2024.
- Shaheen, Nichaela. "Community Gathers for Pro-Palestine Sit-In." *The University Star*. April 29, 2024.
- "After UT Austin Arrests, Texas State Students Also Participate in Pro-Palestine Sit-In." *KVUE*. April 30, 2024.
- "A Postcard from the World of Print: Algeria's Place in the Digital Humanities." *Digital Orientalist*. May 14, 2024.
- Choueiry, Lucciana. "Texas State University Offers the 'Problem' of Palestine Class." *The University Star*. June 7, 2024.
- Claycamp, Ryan. "TXST Changes Free Speech Policy for Antisemitism." *The University Star*. July 11, 2024.

- Basco, Isabella. "It's Impossible: Some Texas State Students Worry About Ability to Protest After University Changes Free Speech Policy." *KVUE*. July 22, 2024.
- "Texas State University Students Question New Free Speech Policy Amid Concerns of Pro-Palestinian Demonstrations." *The Davidsonian*. July 22, 2024.
- Choueiry, Lucciana. "Texas State Has a New Free Speech Policy; Some Students Have Concerns Over How It Will Be Policed." *KUT-90.5 FM*, University of Texas at Austin. July 22, 2024.
- "Texas State's Unannounced Free Speech Policy Changes." *Reform Austin*. July 22, 2024.
- "Texas State University Addresses New Free Speech Policy." *KVUE*. July 22, 2024.
- Moore, Jamie-Linn. "San Marcos Residents Hold Pro-Palestine Protest." *The University Star*. July 25, 2024.

#### Testimonies and Conference Participation

- Written Testimony. Interim Hearing on Issues of Free Speech, Antisemitism, and DEI. Senate Subcommittee on Higher Education, State of Texas. May 16, 2024.
- "Chahine's *The Blazing Sun: An Egyptian Family Story*." Agricultural History Society Conference. June 5–8, 2024.
- "Local and Global Impacts of the War in Ukraine." European Academy of Sciences Ukraine Conference. June 6–7, 2024.
- American Evaluation Association. Summer Institute. June 26–28, 2024.
- "Texas AAUP-AFT Welcomes New Chapters at 12 Universities Across Texas." June 27, 2024.

### Fall 2024 Activities

- American Society for Environmental History (ASEH). George Perkins Marsh Prize Committee Member. Fall 2024.
- "Steadfast and Rejectionist Front of Arab States: Iraq's 14 July 1958 Coup and the Unraveling of the Arab Union." *مجلة الرسالة للدراسات والبحوث الإنسانية* 9, no. 2 (2024).
- "Is CREE the Same as DEI Under Erasure?" *American Evaluation Association AEA* 365. September 3, 2024.
- "16 Days of Activism; UNITE to End Violence Against Women." AUIB American Space. December 8, 2024.
- Historians for Peace and Democracy (H-PAD). Resolution to Oppose Scholasticide in Gaza. October–December 2024.

### Pelin Tan, University of Batman

Project: "Landscapes as Archives" (research project and video essay)

#### Articles

- Tan, P. 2024. "Decoloniser L'Enseignement De L'Architecture." *LIBRE Architecture Magazine*. Paris. <https://planlibre.eu>.
- Tan, P. 2024. "Sömürgesizleştirme Mimarlığı: Onarım, Pedagoji, Eylem." *YAPI Architecture Magazine*. Istanbul. DAAI (Design and Applied Arts Index).

#### Book Chapters

- Tan, P. 2024. "The Silent University as an Institutent Practice." In *Art As Policies for Care: Socially Engaged Art 2010–2024*, edited by Marina Pugliese. Rome: Nero Editions. Produced by Fondazione Zegna, with special support from Andrea Zegna and Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto.
- Tan, P. 2024. "Afterwords: Commoning / Archiving." In *Archiving the Commons: Looking Through the Lens of bak.ma*, edited by [Editor Name]. Barcelona: dpr-barcelona.
- Tan, P. 2024. "The Ghost of Urban Debris." In *Metropolitan Voids Agency*, edited by Zasha Colah and Francesca Verga. Berlin: Archive Books. Commissioned by Ar/Ge Kunst Bozen-Bolzano.
- Tan, P. 2024. "Batman Bölgesi Kadın El Sanatlarına Dair İkonografik Bir Analiz Denemesi: Yerellik Kozmolojileri." In *Nymphaeus'tan Batman'a*. Batman, Turkey: Batman University Publishing. ISBN 978-625-95451-1-0.
- Tan, P. 2024. "Archiving the Commons: Struggle of Anti-Gentrification and Anti-Eviction (Theories and Experience in/from Asia)." In *The (Im)possibility of Art Archives*, edited by Lu Pan. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tan, P. 2024. "On Horizontal Alliances: Scales of Threshold Infrastructures." In *Agonistic Assemblies*, edited by Markus Miessen. Berlin: Sternberg Press. ISBN 9781915609144.

### Sara Binay, Hochschule Anhalt

Project: Sustainable Development: The Normative Contribution of Islamic Theology

## Fellows-at-Large

### Max Weiss, Princeton University

Max Weiss is Associate Professor of History and associated faculty in Comparative Literature at Princeton University and a literary translator of Arabic into English. He is the author of *Revolutions Aesthetic: A Cultural History of Ba'thist Syria* (Stanford UP, 2022), and *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Harvard UP, 2010). He is co-editor (with Jens Hanssen) of *Arabic Thought Beyond the Liberal Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Nahda* (Cambridge UP, 2016) and *Arabic Thought Against the Authoritarian Age: Towards an Intellectual History of the Present* (Cambridge UP, 2018). His translations include Alawiya Sobh's *This Thing Called Love* (Calcutta, 2022), Dunya Mikhail's *The Beekeeper: Rescuing the Stolen Women of Iraq* (New York, 2018), and Nihad Sirees' *States of Passion* (London, 2018).

### Claudia Derichs, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Claudia Derichs is a scholar in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies with a focus on cross-regional relations in the Department of Asian and African Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Her research foci include Islam in Southeast Asia, transregional (political) Islam, social movements and networks, and women living under Muslim law(s). Key research themes include "Middle East-Asian" political activism since the 1960s; examining Japanese and Lebanese connections and Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern organized cooperation; Asian solidarity activism in support of the Palestinian liberation struggle; and transregional Islamic networks (featured in her publications).

## Cooperations and Third-Party Funding

### Scientific Partnerships and Cooperations

#### Lebanon

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##### **OIB-LAfOS (Lebanese Association for Ottoman History)**

- *Annual Lecture Series:*  
Prof. Stefan Winter (UQAM & Koç University), *"The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule Revisited"* (27 May 2024)
- *FIME Speaker:*  
Dr. Hoda Elsadda (ACSS Report Lead Author)

##### **American University of Beirut (AUB)**

- *"Kant and the Non-European" Lecture Series* (2024–2025)

#### Germany

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##### **Uni Konstanz**

- Collaboration in Graduate School *"Post-Eurocentric Europe: Narratives of a World Province in Transformation"*

##### **DIVAN**

- Project: *"Global Weimar – Global Nahda"*

##### **ZMO (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)**

- Project: Coordinated event at the Katholische Akademie in Berlin

#### Morocco

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- **International Center for Social Sciences (ICSS)**
- **Al-Akawayn University, Ifrane**
- **Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdallah University, Fez**
- **Centre Khaldoun pour les études de Migration (ICSMC AUI EEC)**

#### Canada

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##### **OIB-ICLAA (Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa)**

- *Tokyo University of Foreign Studies*
- *Understanding of Scientific Cooperation* (Agreement signed 11 November 2024)

## Bibliotheca Islamica

BI 63 Schäbler, Birgit. *“Muslimūn Ḥadāṭiyyūn Afghānī wa-Nāmiq Kamāl wa-Bajazitov yaruddūn ‘alā Rinān.”* Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 2024. ISBN 978-614-485-208-8.

In March 1883, the French theologian Ernest Renan delivered a lecture in Paris titled “Islam and Science.” He made negative remarks about the historicity of Islam, claiming that Islam and modernity are incompatible and contradictory, and that Muslims hate science. As a result, intellectuals across the Muslim world refuted his arguments, sparking a resounding debate about Islam in a cross-cultural context, the effects of which are still felt today.

In this book, historian and orientalist Birgit Schaebler tells the story of this controversy, tracing its development and trajectory to the present day. The book presents Renan’s three most essential opponents and their texts for the first time. This means that, for the first time, Arab readers will have access to the full texts of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Namik Kamal, and Atallah Bayazitov’s responses to Ernest Renan, offering a fresh perspective on this historical controversy.

Birgit Schaebler is a Professor of West Asian History at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Erfurt, Germany. She was also the director of the Orient-Institut in Beirut 2017-2022.

BI 64 Dirbas, Hekmat, ed. *Rasā’il Nisā’iyyah min al-Sharq al-Qadīm / Women’s Letters from the Ancient Near East: An Anthology of the Mari Archives.* Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 2024. ISBN 978-614-485-285-9.

The book provides an Arabic edition of a selection of Old Babylonian letters from the Mari Archives (Tell Hariri, Syria) known among Assyriologists as “women’s letters” or “feminine correspondence.” In these letters, which are written on cuneiform tablets, court and elite women from Mari and other neighboring areas act as receivers, senders, or both. Some of the letters are dated to the time of Shamshi-Adad I (1792-1775 BCE) while the majority are dated to the time of Zimri-Lim of Mari (1775-1762 BCE). The texts, ca. 188, appeared in three volumes of the series “Archives royales de mari” (“ARM”). A revised edition of them has been provided by Jean-Marie Durand (in French). So far, no complete edition is available in English, yet one finds some samples in anthologies.

These letters are remarkable in that they highlight a range of women as authors relaying news: queens, princesses, priestesses, musicians and singers, slave-girls, female prophets and cultic-players, etc. They write about their personal stories (marriage, divorce, etc.) and express their concerns and emotions, and deliver information on political, cultural, religious, and social aspects of life in ancient Mesopotamia and Syria. Of special interest in the letters is the information they contain on oracles and prophethood.

BI 66 al-Yamanī, al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī ‘Aqamah. *Ġawāhir al-akhbār wa-mulaḥ al-ash‘ār / Gems of the Tales and Anecdotes of poetry.* Edited by Nūhā ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥifnāwī. Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 2024. ISBN 978-614-485-262-0.

This book by al-Ḥasan Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abī ‘Aqamah al-Yamanī, a judge who died about 480 AH, covers several historical epochs and topics and is on literary lectures and

anecdotes. It is not limited to the aspect of literary tales alone, but also contains theological, jurisprudential and linguistic issues.

The author divided his book into two parts, which included a hundred authentically transmitted stories, including eloquent poetry. The first part of the work ends with story number 63, while the second part lasts from story number 64 to story number 100. Afterwards, he added twenty popular aphorisms and proverbs. The author further collected and compared how they were explained by various authors who preceded him.

This is the first book written by a Yemeni author on the art of aphorisms and proverbs, and several of its texts and prose were unknown before their publication. In addition, its remarkability lies in its effort to reference its stories following the style of the Hadith. This is one of a few instances in literature which allows to verify their authenticity.

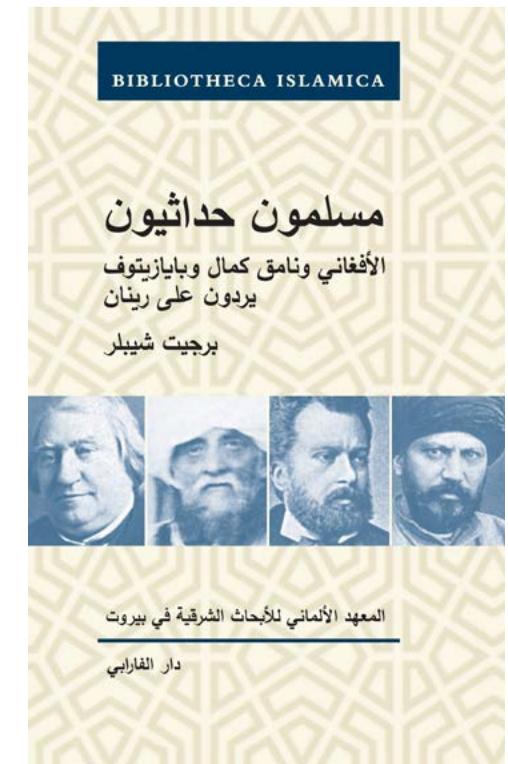
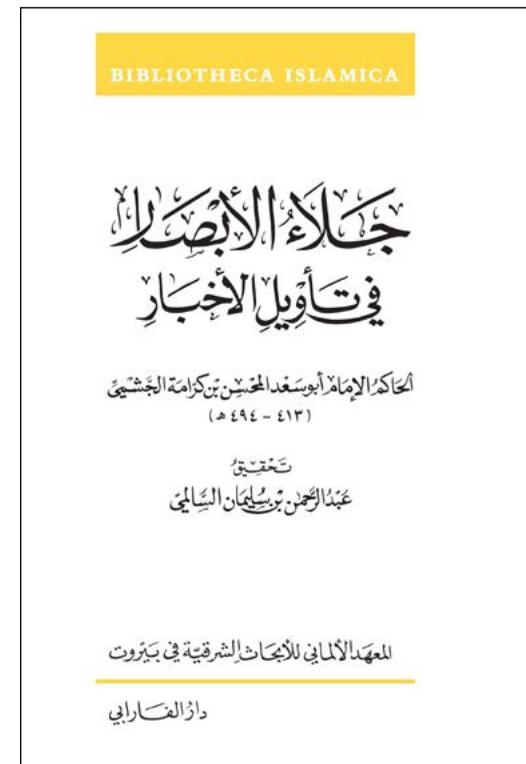
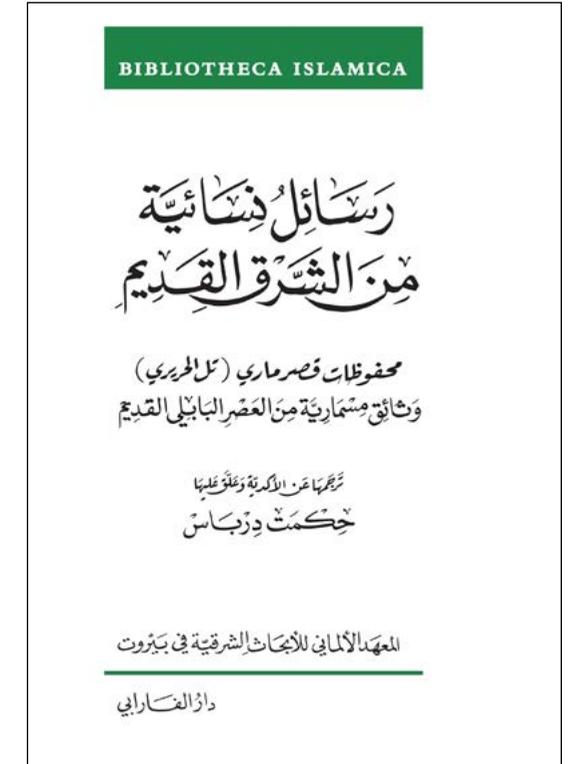
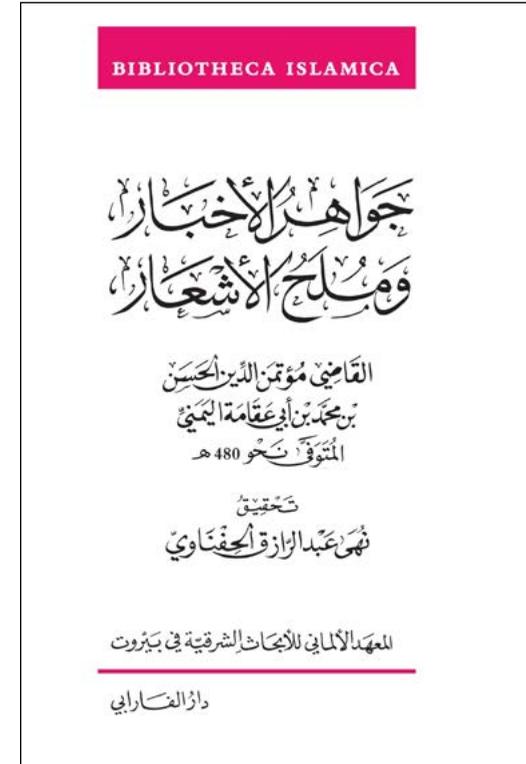
BI 67 al-Jashamī, Abī Sa‘d al-Moḥsin b. Muḥammad b. Karrāmah. *Jalā’ al-abṣār fī ta’wīl al-akhbār / The Clear-Sightedness*. Edited by Abdul Rahman al-Salimi. Beirut: Dār al-Farābī, 2024. ISBN 978-614-485-284-2.

This book is a collection of texts dictated by al-Jushamī (413-494/1022-1101), comprising the lessons he gave at the Qaṣabat Jusham Mosque (central mosque) after Friday prayers over a period of three years from Ramadan 478/Dec-Jan 1086 to Ramadan 481/Dec 1088. The lessons were held over sixty sessions, though they were suspended for a year from Rajab 480/Oct 1087 until his return in Ramadan 481/Nov 1088 so that he could go to ḥajj.

When giving his lessons, the shaykh would recline against a pillar in the mosque and his students, and others, would gather around him to listen and take notes. The lectures would cover the topics discussed in the scholarly debates that were taking place at the time. Al-Jushamī, who was then in his mid- to late-sixties, was passionate about learning and education, and therefore he simplified his teaching methods and presented his views in a way that all the members of his audience could understand. His lessons were arranged in an orderly manner, which suggests that they were probably edited and reorganized after their first drafts were written. Moreover, were it not for the sign of the copier who took down the dictation, the reader would not be able to tell the difference between the final written version and the way in which the lessons were presented in their oral form. Al-Jushamī begins his lesson with a narration of some Prophetic ḥadīths, before turning to the topic of the discourse, which might be on *‘ilm al-kalām* (scholastic theology), *fiqh* or history. He concludes with some poetic couplets.

## Beiruter Texte und Studien (BTS)

“Beiruter Texte und Studien” (BTS) is the OIB’s peer-reviewed book series for research on the historic and contemporary Middle East. Since its inception in 1964, the series has published around 140 books and has served as a platform for innovative studies. With an established focus on Arabic language and literature, history, society, and geography of the Levant, and the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, BTS covers a broad spectrum of themes, methods, and periods within the wider region. It documents the rich and diverse history of Middle Eastern Studies and encourages advancements in the field. The series publishes monograph studies, OIB conference proceedings, and other collective volumes in German, English, Arabic and French.



## Orient-Institut Studies (OIS)

At the Orient-Institut Beirut, Cairo Office, we have organized a series of conferences under the title “Interdependent Relationships” to examine the phenomenon of interdependence in the relationship between humans, religion, and the environment. Humans are linked to their religion and are also influenced by their environment, which in turn affects their religion and the formation and reshaping of their value systems and practical judgments. Humans, religion, and the environment together form interdependent interconnected relationships.

The research project “Interdependent Relationships,” was explored in four conferences distributed between Cairo, Alexandria, Sheikh Zayed, and Ifrane, between 2022 and 2024. It addressed the dynamics of influence from several aspects, including nature, methods, and aspects of influence as well as political, sociological, theological, anthropological comparative religions influences, without prejudice to the contexts. The temporal and spatial elements also allowed studying the phenomenon from a historical perspective. To discuss the phenomenon, it was appropriate to identify the social institutions in which the phenomenon manifests itself, such as marriage, for example. Other issues could also be modeled, such as education, environmental conservation, and social history writing.

We borrowed the concept of “interdependencies” from sociology, where the term means mutual dependence. Social interdependence means that people live together harmoniously and are dependent on each other for their existence. In economic theory, interdependence occurs when economic variables affect each other. Therefore, mutual dependence is the secret of coexistence and the interconnectedness of societies. The three OIS volumes 7, 8 and 9 are anthologies to the research program Discussing Interdependencies and the conferences “Coexistence Theology” (OIS7), “Religion, Religiosity, and Society” (OIS8) and “Women and Families across Religions” (OIS9).

### OIS 7

Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed. *Discussing Interdependencies: Theology of Coexistence – An Initiative of the Working Group on Coexistence Theology: Various Methods and Theoretical Approaches*. Cairo, 2024. ISBN 978-977-8836-00-4, open access.

### OIS 8

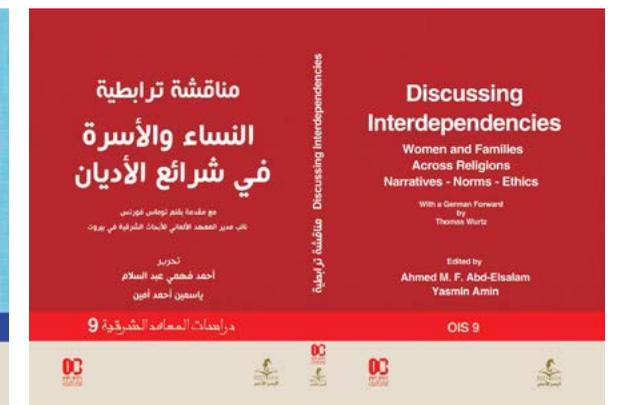
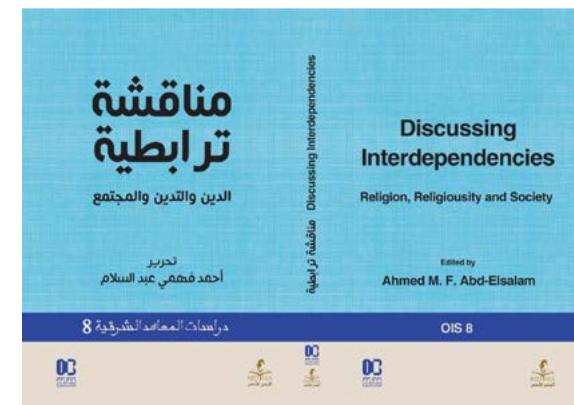
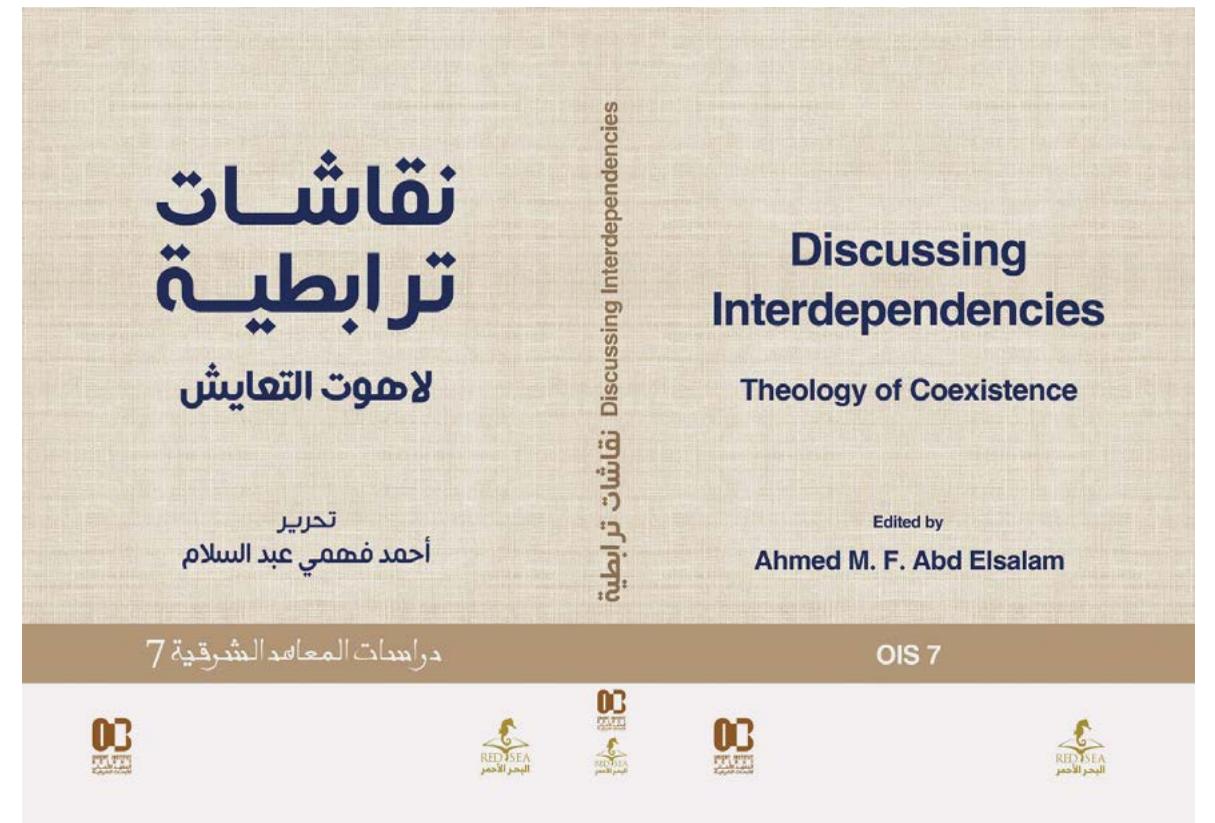
Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed, ed. *Discussing Interdependencies: Religion, Religiosity and Society: Proceedings of the Conference “Discussing Interdependencies: Religion, Religiosity and Society,” Alexandria University, December 2022*. Cairo, 2024. Open access.

### OIS 9

Amin, Yasmin, and Ahmed Abd-Elsalam, eds. *Discussing Interdependencies: Women and Families across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics: Proceedings of the Conference “Discussing Interdependencies: Women and Families across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics,” May 3–5, 2024, Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco*. Cairo, 2024. Open access.

### OIS 10

Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed. *Transformations of the Religious Institution and Religious Discourse after the Egyptian Revolution*. Cairo, 2024. Open access. (Manuscript in preparation.)



## Events

### Workshops and Conferences

#### **Global Weimar – Global Nahda.**

International conference. Arabisches Kulturhaus Divan, Berlin. January 25–27, 2024.

Max Weiss and Jens Hanssen are the principal investigators of the international research project “Global Weimar/Global Nahda,” which results in three conferences on three continents. This project is carried by two Princeton doctoral students, Peter Makhoul and Simon Conrad. The project investigates echoes, links, and contrasts between the German and Arabic intellectual spheres in the first half of the 20th century. The first workshop in Berlin served to establish the parameters of the project, provide ample room for case studies, and relate these theoretical discussions that question assumptions about the movement of ideas in both German and Arabic Studies. The second workshop, held by Princeton University, focused on specific themes and discursive fields, such as the study of religion, the history of architecture, and literature. The third and final workshop, hosted at the Orient-Institut Beirut, allowed for the themes of Global Weimar/Global Nahda to bring the Arabic public sphere into the conversation, drawing upon the robust traffic of scholars, artists, and public intellectuals to whom Beirut is host. It will also prepare the grounds for one, or more, publications that bring together our findings and help set up a new global and comparative framework of study.

#### **Artistic Hubs in and of the Arab Region**

LAWHA International Conference. Organized by Nadia von Maltzahn. Orient-Institut Beirut, June 3–5, 2024.

LAWHA's international conference “Artistic Hubs in and of the Arab Region” started from the perception that Beirut of the 1950s to 1970s has often been referred to as the Arab capital of culture, in its so-called “Golden Age”—a notion that is increasingly put into a wider perspective—and thought about who might have taken on this role after Beirut. The project looked at what makes cities draw artists and intellectuals over time, and what are the instigators of these shifts or change. The conference analyzed how, why, and when things shift, and what role different cities have played over time. For whom has Beirut been relevant, and for whom not? What role did Baghdad play on a regional level? Has the Gulf succeeded in becoming a hub? To what extent can a city outside the region act as an artistic hub of the region? The conference examined who different hubs speak to, and which actors and initiatives are central in attracting artists and intellectuals. In short, it aimed to conceptualize the pull and push factors of artistic hubs in and of the Arab region. The conference closed with a visit of the exhibition “Intimate Garden Scene” at the Sursock Museum, and a roundtable discussion with Lamia Joreige and Gregory Buchakjian reflecting on Beirut's role as a cultural and artistic hub. In parallel, a display of archival material from the archive of art critic Joseph Tarrab was exhibited at the OIB, highlighting some of the material donated to the Institute as it related to the conference theme.

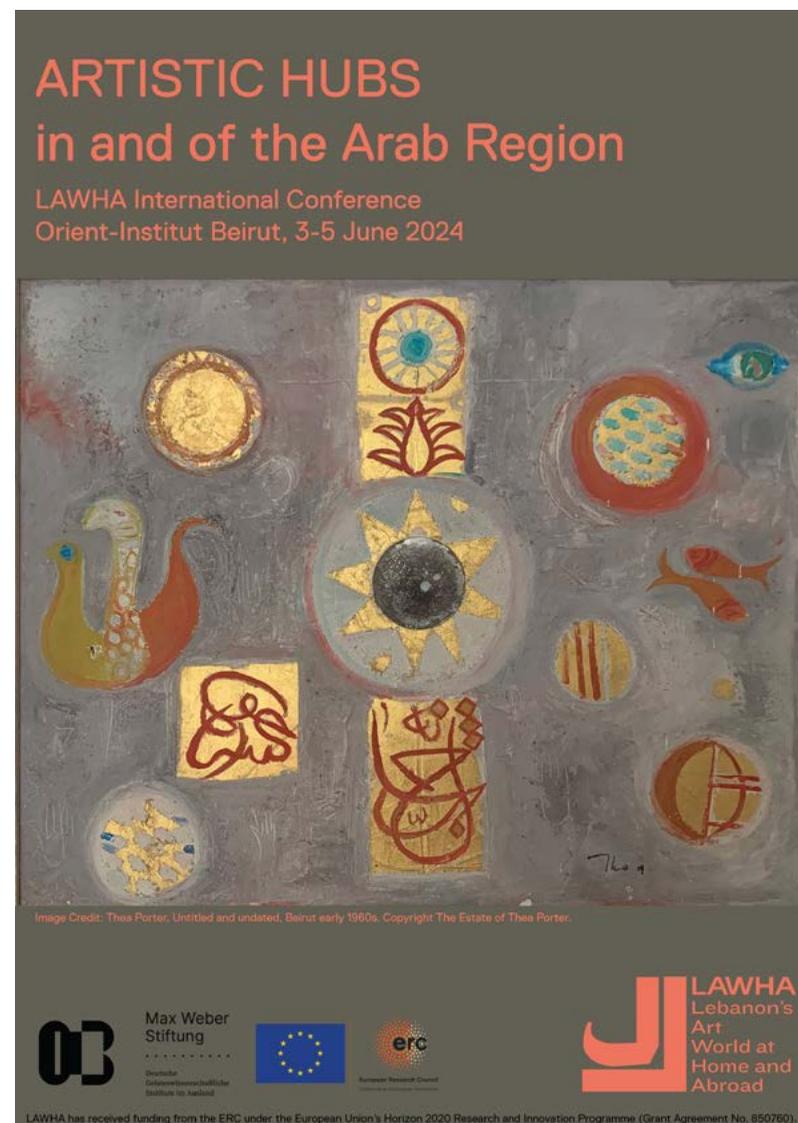
#### **Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions**

International Workshop. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München, November 15–17, 2024

With the support from Orient-Institut Beirut and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, the organizers and participants of a workshop on Islamic philosophical thought convened in Munich (November 15–17) to share their latest research. Titled “Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions,” the workshop follows up on an earlier event held at the OIB, Beirut, in July 2022. This latest iteration brought together twenty-one established and

emerging scholars in the field to explore the later developments of Islamic thought in light of Avicenna's wide-ranging influence. The goal was to critically examine in what way Avicennism or the Avicennian tradition can be used to frame the study of philosophical thought during the so-called post-classical period. What preoccupied scholars of the workshop was the subtle brilliance of later thinkers who engaged critically with the Avicennian system to produce original and compelling philosophical theories of their own, whether in the domains of metaphysics, physics, theology, ethics, rhetoric, Sufism, medicine, or logic. The workshop also covered the modern reception of Avicenna's thought in the European and Iranian contexts. A volume of collected papers based on the first and second workshops is under preparation.

The workshop was organized by Husayn Ibrahim (former doctoral fellow at the OIB and currently a doctoral researcher at the LMU) and Muhammad Fariduddin Attar (former postdoc fellow at the OIB and currently postdoc fellow at Carleton University). The organization was overseen by Prof. Jens Hanßen, Prof. Peter Adamson, and Dr. Thomas Würtz.



LAWHA Conference Poster, featuring an artwork by Thea Porter from the 1960s.



Top: LAWHA Conference, Panel 2, from left to right: Venetia Porter, Monique Bellan, Flavia Malusardi, Saleh Barakat and Ashraf Osman.

Bottom: LAWHA Conference archival display. *Avicenna, Avicennism(s), and the Later Philosophical Traditions*. Workshop. Munich, November 15-17, 2023.

## Book Fairs

**Lebanese Book Festival, February 29–March 10, 2024**  
The Rahbani Brothers Theater at Mar Elias Monastery, Antelias

The 2024 Lebanese Book Festival was a resounding success, bringing together thousands of book lovers, authors, publishers, and distributors from Lebanon and beyond. The event celebrated the vibrant cultural heritage of Lebanon while fostering dialogue, collaboration, and cultural exchange. This annual gathering serves as a platform to showcase the Lebanese people's contributions to contemporary Arab culture and their commitment to intellectual and creative endeavors.

### The OIB's Participation

The OIB had the pleasure of participating in this prestigious festival, which provided the opportunity to meet with a wide range of book lovers, printing houses, publishers, and literary professionals, paving the way for future endeavors. It was a true privilege to connect with so many passionate individuals, and we were thrilled to offer visitors a chance to explore a large collection of fascinating books at our booth. Our participation provided an excellent opportunity for attendees to discover and engage with a variety of publications, further enriching the cultural experience of the festival. The success of the festival underscores its role as a cornerstone of Lebanon's cultural calendar, embodying the country's democratic and inclusive values in the broader context of Arab culture.

### Highlights from the 2024 Festival

#### 1. A Thriving Book Fair

The book fair, held in the grand hall of the Mar Elias Monastery, featured:

- Pavilions displaying a diverse array of books and publications in Arabic, French, English, Armenian, and other languages.
- Active participation from Lebanese publishing houses, bookstores, libraries, universities, and international organizations.

The fair drew tens of thousands of visitors, with books and publications offered at discounted prices. Key features included:

- Tribute panels honoring influential Lebanese cultural figures.
- Student visits and competitions, with awards presented to outstanding participants.
- Book signings by authors introducing their latest works.
- "New Exhibition" stand, highlighting recent publications.
- "Individuals" stand, featuring works by independent publishers.

The event fostered strong connections with numerous bookstores, cultural centers, and distributors, opening new opportunities for future collaborations.

#### 2. Honoring Cultural Icons

In line with its tradition since 1985, the festival celebrated distinguished figures who have enriched Lebanon's cultural and intellectual legacy. Each honoree was recognized through dedicated seminars, with their achievements highlighted in the annual booklet, *Flags of Culture in Lebanon*.

#### 3. Engaging Special Seminars

Several specialized seminars were organized to commemorate:

- Anniversaries of iconic Lebanese and Arab cultural figures.
- Milestones achieved by media and cultural institutions.

**OIB Summer Book Bazaar 2024: A Celebration of Knowledge and Engagement**  
Bazaar, June 26-28 (Orient-Institut Beirut)

The OIB Summer Book Bazaar, held from June 26 to June 28, 2024, was a remarkable event that provided a unique opportunity for book enthusiasts to explore the diverse publications of the Orient-Institut Beirut. Hosted in the exhibition room at the OIB, the bazaar was a vibrant space where visitors connected with the Institute's scholarly works and enjoyed engaging with the community.



The OIB's set-up for the summer book bazaar.

## Highlights from the 2024 Book Bazaar

The book bazaar spanned three days with dedicated time slots:

- June 26: 5 – 6 p.m.
- June 27: 6 – 7 p.m.
- June 28: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Visitors were treated to discounted prices ranging from 2 to 5 USD per book, making knowledge and research accessible to a wider audience. To ensure fair access to all, a limit of four copies per title per person was enforced.

The event showcased a wide variety of OIB publications, reflecting the Institute's commitment to advancing knowledge in various fields, including Middle Eastern studies, history, culture, and language.

### 1. Connecting with the Community

The OIB Summer Book Bazaar was more than just a book sale. It served as a platform for meaningful engagement, offering attendees the chance to:

- Discover Publications: Gain insight into OIB's extensive scholarly work.
- Build Connections: Foster dialogue between readers, researchers, and the OIB team.
- Support Research: Contribute to the dissemination of knowledge by purchasing OIB's high-quality publications.

The exhibition room provided an inviting and intellectual atmosphere, allowing participants to immerse themselves in a curated collection of works while interacting with like-minded individuals and scholars.

### 2. A Successful Endeavor

The bazaar was a great success, attracting a diverse audience and reinforcing the OIB's mission of promoting cultural and academic exchange. By making its publications more accessible, the OIB continues to play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between scholarship and the wider public.

The Orient-Institut Beirut extends its gratitude to everyone who participated in the event and contributed to its success. We look forward to welcoming you to future events as we continue our journey of fostering knowledge and dialogue.

For more information about the OIB and its upcoming events, please visit <https://www.orient-institut.org/events/dateFilter/2025>.

## Winter School

### Reading and Analyzing Ottoman Manuscript Sources Cairo, February 18-23, 2024

The fifth edition of the summer/winter school took place in Cairo, following the summer schools of 2016 in Amman (Jordan), 2017 in Beirut (Lebanon), 2018 in Aix-en-Provence (France), Ankara (Turkey), and 2022 in Wittenberg-Berlin (Germany). This series of summer schools and winter schools (depending on the climate of the host country) is organized by several prominent research institutes and universities including the OIB. The 2024 winter school was organized by the French Institute for Oriental Archaeology in Cairo (IFAO) in cooperation with the OIB and other research institutes and universities like Islamic Studies Department of the University of Halle-Wittenberg, the French Institute of the Near East (Ifpo), the Center for Turkish, Ottoman, Balkan and Central Asian Studies (CETOBaC), the Institute of Research and Study on the Arab and Islamic Worlds (IREMAM), the Department for Oriental and Islamic Studies at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, the Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients, Abteilung Islamwissenschaft at Universität Heidelberg and the Social Sciences University of Ankara (ASBÜ).

The objective of the winter school was to foster an exchange around theory and methodology among specialists of different regions of the empire. The winter school was devoted to reading and analyzing Ottoman manuscript sources, with a particular focus on archival documents. During the five-day intensive training of reading and analyzing Ottoman manuscript sources, seven instructors from the organizing institutes offered to support twenty participants (mostly MA students or Ph.D. candidates) in overcoming the initial difficulties researchers often face when working with archival documents from the Ottoman period. The spectrum of the participants included a wide variety of young researchers from various countries.

Sessions focused on the study of archives in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, and other languages (Coptic, Armenian, Greek, Hebrew, etc.) to provide future historians with the skills necessary to use such sources within the framework of their research projects. In addition to the academic program, participants visited the Islamic Art Museum and Ottoman Cairo, the Coptic Museum, and Al-Azhar library.

## Public Research Seminars

January 8, 2024

**Knowledge and Its Discontents: Religion and Society according to al-Jāhiz**

**Presenter:** Hussein Ali Abdulsater

**Hosted by:** American University of Beirut

Human reason is not reliable, but Islam is a rational and true religion. To solve this paradox, the great littérateur and intellectual provocateur al-Jāhiz (d. 868-9) proposed that the cornerstone of rationality is social exposure, not theoretical arguments. His unique contribution lies in his uncanny attention to the biases of thinking and cognitive pitfalls. This talk seeks to situate his project in the formative 'Abbasid moment of Islamic history. It also discusses the worldview of the theological group whose teachings he was advocating, the Epistemists.

February 26

**Islamic Environmental Ethics Between Theory and Practice: Observations of Ten Years in the Field**

**Presenter:** Sara Binay

**Hosted by:** Orient-Institut Beirut

During her stay in Jordan in 2015-2017, Sara Binay was often confronted about her interest in water in Islam. Even people considered “pious” rejected the idea that water or environmental protection should be addressed by religious authorities. They considered the protection of the environment to be a technical or practical issue that should not be predicated on religious arguments. Her talk recounted experiences with the project in which Jordanian imams and wa’izat were trained to preach on water issues and to give practical advice to their communities. Second, she illustrated some of the features of the approaches of the Islamic environmental theology since the 20th century. Third, she circled back to the topic of water in Islam as an example where religious needs and obligations (*ibadat*) meet environmental issues and how they were approached by religious authorities in fatwas and handled by Muslim contemporary activists.

March 12

**Albert Hourani and the American University of Beirut, 1937-1939**

**Presenter:** Prof. Jens Hanssen (Director, Orient-Institut Beirut)

**Discussant:** Prof. Sonja Mejcher-Atassi (Department of English, AUB)

**Hosted by:** American University of Beirut, Asfari Institute Building

May 24

**The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule**

**Presenter:** Prof. Stefan Winter

**Hosted by:** The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (Saifi)

This presentation revisited the author’s monograph *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*, based on his award-winning Chicago dissertation and published by Cambridge University Press in 2010, ahead of its publication in Turkish translation by Koç University Press. In reframing the work specifically for a modern Middle Eastern audience, it highlighted the discursive associations made by the Ottoman state between the Lebanese Shiites and the Kızılbaş and suggested ways in which the experiences of the Lebanese Shiites help illuminate the situation of non-orthodox populations throughout the Empire.

May 27

**The ‘Alawis of Syria from World War I to the Turkish War of Liberation**

**Presenter:** Stefan Winter

**Hosted by:** Orient Institut Beirut

The history of Syria’s ‘Alawi community has become a key topic of Ottomanist research in recent years, due in no small part to the sectarianism fueled by the civil war. Much of this research has drawn on the Ottoman archives in Istanbul to concentrate on the community’s changing relationship with the imperial state in the 19th century, and on its inclusion in the *tashih-i akaid* (“rectification of belief”) initiative under sultan Abdülhamid in the 1890’s. This paper will revisit the long-term history of the ‘Alawi community from the 10th to the 20th century and concentrate on later Ottoman policy towards the ‘Alawis as one of social integration rather than religious discrimination. It shed new light on the community’s situation during

and immediately after World War I by drawing on Arabic chronicles, local accounts from Cilicia, French diplomatic reports as well as papers from the ATASE (military) archives in Ankara. It also attempted to show that the ‘Alawis were willing to forego their ties with the Arab nationalist movement and instead seek the support and leadership of the Kemalist movement during the Turkish War of Liberation (Kurtuluş Savaşı) to maintain a maximum of autonomy in both northwestern Syria and southern Turkey after the dislocation of the Ottoman Empire.

May 30-31

**War and Civilizationist Horizons (Panel Discussion)**

**Speakers:**

Prof. Ala Alazeh (Anthropology, Birzeit University)

Prof. Cemil Aydin (History, UNC Chapel Hill)

Dr. Hans Kundnani (Remarque Institute, NYU)

Prof. Srirupa Roy (University of Göttingen/ICAS:MP)

**Discussant:**

Prof. Rima Majed (Sociology, AUB)

**Location:** Orient-Institut Beirut

The first decades of the 21st century have seen the resurgence of “civilization talk” that defines people and nations in terms of their unique civilizational identity and calls for states to refurbish their timeless civilizational glory. This panel focuses on the relationship between war – real or rhetorical – and invocations of civilizational fault lines and conflicts in the Middle East, Europe/Russia, and South Asia. Panelists discussed the rhetoric of civilizational wars, collective memory, historical retrieval and revanchism, and violence as a source of historical justice.

June 26

**Inter-cultural Dialogue: A Dream That Turned into Nightmare. A Personal (German) Retrospective**

**Presenter:** Dr. Udo Steinbach

**Location:** Orient-Institut Beirut

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the cultural and intellectual elites, supported by eminent representatives of the political class in Germany have intensively engaged themselves in deepening cultural relationships with the Muslim world. These efforts culminated in the inauguration of the monument of the Dialogue of Cultures in Weimar (July 2000). Since 9/11, this process not only came to a halt but was paralleled by a mood of alienation towards parts of the Muslim citizens within German society. In light of recent events in the Middle East, there is no alternative to looking for paths back to the spirit of optimism, tolerance, and constructive cultural engagement that inspired cultural and political leaders in all segments of German society by the end of the last century.

July 2

### Designing Arab Modernity: Al Mashrū' al-Ālamī's Modernist Endeavor in Jericho (1949-1967)

#### Program:

Introduction: Prof. Jens Hanssen

*Designing Modernity*: Dr. George Arbid

*Al-Mashrou'*: Prof. Pelin Tan & Dr. Dima Yaser

Film screening: *Landscapes as Archives* (20 min., Pelin Tan, 2023)

**Location:** Orient-Institut Beirut

How can we discuss the experimental agriculture farm and school Al Mashrou' in our current time? What does this modern heritage tell us about the aims of Musa Alami and our reflection from the current time under genocide, colonial extraction, climate crisis, and toxicity of slow violence? How can we define and present Palestinian architecture and its spatial production under colonial violence? The event included a discussion of Palestinian architecture and spatial production; a presentation of the book *Designing Modernity* (Jovis, 2022); and a screening of a short film "Landscapes as Archives."

September 5, 2024

### Why Are We Moving in the Opposite Direction of Perpetual Peace?

**Location:** DIVAN – Das Arabische Kulturhaus, Berlin

#### Speaker:

Dr. Oxana Timofeeva (Institute for Global Reconstitution, Berlin)

#### Discussants:

Prof. Dr. Jens Hanssen (Director, Orient-Institut Beirut)

Dr. Sami Khatib (Senior Research Associate, Orient-Institut Beirut)

**Hosted by** Orient-Institut Beirut, Center for Critical Humanities for the Liberal Arts (CHLA), American University of Beirut, and DIVAN – Das Arabische Kulturhaus

In his famous essay "Toward Perpetual Peace," Kant outlined a project for a future international political community, the idea of which was to put an end to warfare as a destructive element of social life, once and for all, and on the global scale. Today, when we are obviously moving in the opposite direction from Kant's regulative idea of perpetual peace, we can reconsider the general conditions of its possibility.

October 31

### El Alamein – Perspektiven aus der ägyptischen und deutschen Erinnerung

#### Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Emad Helal from Suez Canal University

Prof. Dr. Christian Fuhrmeister of the Central Institute for Art History in Munich

Prof. Dr. Dieter Pohl from Alpen-Adria University

**Moderator:** Prof. Dr. Liliana Gómez of the University of Kassel

**Hosted by:** Museum Fridericianum, Kassel and organized in collaboration with Orient-Institut Beirut, the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (German War Graves Commission), the documenta-Institut, and the Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung

On October 31, 2024, the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel hosted a conference dedicated to exploring the historical, cultural, and architectural significance of the memorial site of El Alamein in Egypt. The event brought together scholars and experts to examine multiple narratives surrounding this site, focusing on its implications for memory culture in both Egypt and



Prof. Udo Steinbach at the OIB on intercultural dialogue



Prof. Emad Helal on the Egyptian perspective of the battles in El Alamein

Germany. By addressing the intersection of history, politics, and societal remembrance, the event sought to foster a deeper understanding of how the battles of El Alamein are remembered and interpreted today.

Organized in collaboration with the Orient-Institut Beirut, the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (German War Graves Commission), the documenta-Institut and the Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung, the evening was part of the cross-foundation lecture series “Ends of War – International Perspectives on the Second World War” initiated by the Max Weber Foundation. The program featured three distinguished speakers offering diverse perspectives on the legacy of El Alamein:

- Emad Helal from Suez Canal University presented the Egyptian perspective on the battles, highlighting often overlooked local experiences and the role of Egyptian soldiers.
- Christian Fuhrmeister of the Central Institute for Art History in Munich addressed the importance of the El Alamein war cemetery within the context of German memory culture.
- Dieter Pohl from Alpen-Adria University explored the international impact and historical significance of the battles.

The evening started with opening remarks from Andreas Hoffmann, CEO of documenta and Museum Fridericianum GmbH, along with Kassel’s Mayor Sven Schoeller and Dirk Backen, Secretary General of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V., as well as Felix Münch, Deputy Director of the Hessian State Center for Political Education. Moderated by Liliána Gómez of the University of Kassel, the event concluded with a panel discussion, providing space for an in-depth exchange of ideas and perspectives.

The participants analyzed the ways in which Egypt and Germany remember the battles of El Alamein, which were crucial to the course of World War II in North Africa. While these battles are widely recognized in Germany as a crucial military turning point, the Egyptian perspective, including the experiences of Egyptian soldiers, has been largely marginalized. The lectures and subsequent discussions critically examined the political and societal dimensions of this historical memory, addressing the broader question of how historical sites like El Alamein are incorporated into each country’s narrative of the past. In Germany, the war cemetery near the battlefield serves as a focal point of memory, reflecting a tradition of institutionalized commemoration. In Egypt, the legacy of El Alamein is closely intertwined with the region’s colonial history and its role in global conflicts, thereby providing a distinct framework for understanding the site’s significance.

A further key focus of the evening was the architecture of the El Alamein war cemetery, constructed in the 1950s by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge in collaboration with the German government. Designed as a Totenburg (castle of the dead) and inspired by the medieval Castel del Monte, the cemetery embodies the memorial strategies of postwar Germany. Its austere, depersonalized architecture reflects a shift in commemorative practices, aligning with both the emerging identity of the Federal Republic and the broader tradition of imperial monumentalism. Consequently, the cemetery can be considered both a historical and architectural landmark, prompting reflection on the politics of memory and the ways in which sites of war are remembered and constructed. The event provided a valuable opportunity for international scholars to engage in critical dialogue and reflect on the shared and divergent memory cultures of Egypt and Germany.

The interdisciplinary approach highlighted the necessity of revisiting historical sites to gain a deeper understanding of their role in shaping contemporary identities and political discourses. Events of this nature facilitate a nuanced comprehension of World War II’s multifaceted legacies and the ways in which they continue to resonate across diverse societies and cultural contexts. As a result, they emphasize the enduring significance of memory studies in enabling cross-cultural understanding and critical engagement with the past. (Helene Eckmann)

November 11, 2024

**Europa schrumpft, Afrika wächst / Europe Is Shrinking, Africa Is Growing**

**Location:** Katholische Akademie in Berlin

**Speakers:**

Prof. Dr. Katharina Spieß (Population Economics, University of Mainz)

Michael Kuhnert (Managing Director, Medmissio Würzburg)

Nils Fischer (Head of Unit for the Near and Middle East, KAAD Bonn)

**Hosted by:**

Katholische Akademie in Berlin, Friends of the Zentrum Moderner Orient, Maecenata Foundation, and Orient-Institut Beirut

Three panelists spoke about influencing factors, hotspots and future trends in demographic change and the development of population figures worldwide.

In the opening lecture, Katharina Spieß, Professor of Population Economics at the University of Mainz, explained global population trends. There are now around 8.2 billion people living on the planet. These figures were unthinkable for centuries. Only since the 17th century has the world’s population grown exponentially, with ever shorter doubling intervals. While there were only around one billion people on earth in 1800, and it took around 127 years for the number to double to 2 billion, the last doubling from 4 billion in 1974 to 8 billion in 2023 took just 49 years. The influence of modern medicine has increased life expectancy, reduced infant mortality and, in an initial phase, led to a veritable population boom in the so-called industrialized countries. By 2050, the world population could grow to around 10 billion people. Nevertheless, a new trend can now be observed: In the industrialized countries, the birth rate has fallen sharply, and population figures are declining. By contrast, the continent whose population will increase the most in the coming decade is Africa, although the growth rate is also expected to fall there in the medium term.

To cope with the continuing population growth, the UN has set seventeen goals for sustainable development. Michael Kuhnert, Managing Director of Medmissio Würzburg, emphasized the role of fair resource distribution and burden sharing and the need for “peaceful, just and sustainable coexistence in abundance.” Using Nigeria as an example, Kuhnert illustrated the risks of rapid population growth: between 2023 and 2050, the country’s population is expected to grow from 228 million to 359 million, which would make Nigeria the third most populous nation after India and China. This would be linked to rising urbanization, increased resource consumption, and growing pressure on education and healthcare systems. Kuhnert underlined the importance of the UN goals, especially Goal 4 (quality education), and pointed out that education programs, especially for women, play a key role in reducing the birth rate. Well-educated women not only influence their own family planning but also act as role models in their respective communities.

In the final presentation, Nils Fischer, Head of Unit for the Near and Middle East at KAAD in Bonn, shed light on demographic developments in the region, focusing on Egypt. Despite

slower growth, Egypt's population continues to increase steadily, with around 50% of the population under the age of 25. Mr. Fischer highlighted the challenges associated with inadequate infrastructure, a lack of schools and hospitals, and the need to create jobs. The Egyptian state is pursuing ambitious development goals, like the construction of entire new cities, and keeps relying on international cooperation to promote knowledge transfer and sustainable urban planning.

Political instability in the MENA region also has an impact on educational opportunities - wars in the region have destroyed educational infrastructure, meaning that educational goals are unlikely to be achieved in the countries concerned, such as Syria, Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq and the Palestinian territories—with negative consequences for society, the economy and health. If incomes and educational standards in the region cannot be raised, the MENA region would continue to be heavily reliant on international aid and cooperation. (Antonia Grau)



The organizers and partners for OIB's first public event on EL Alamein in Kassel (Germany)

## OIB Seminars

### OIB Colloquia

February 22, 2024

**Speaker:** Lavinia Parsi (OIB Affiliated Researcher)

**Title:** *Lebanon as a Crossroad of Displacement(s): An Assessment under International Criminal Law*

March 14, 2024

**Speaker:** Martin Greve (OIB Affiliated Researcher)

**Title:** *Music in "Greater Derism": Loss, Nostalgia, and Reconstruction*

April 4, 2024

**Speaker:** Layla Bartheldi (OIB Affiliated Researcher)

**Title:** *Superfood on the Mission to Save Lebanon: The Role of the Development Aid Industry in Avocado Production*

May 21, 2024

**Speaker:** Marija Nemčenko (OIB Affiliated Researcher)

**Title:** *A Future Reading from Two Distinct Images from Lithuania and Palestine*

May 30, 2024

**Speaker:** Yasmin Amin (OIB Associated Researcher)

**Title:** *Women's Participation in Knowledge Production: Evidence from Manuscripts of Islamic Material Culture*

### Theory and Method Seminar

April 25

**Ashraf Osman**, "Intersecting Identities: Sursock Museum in the 1980s" and "The Rise of the Sursock Museum: The Power of the Image to Create an Image of Power."

This seminar investigates the Sursock Museum in Beirut during the 1980s, a period marked by the Lebanese Civil War. Employing post-colonial intersectionality and data feminism, it analyzes the museum's exhibition choices, revealing a shift towards European and Lebanese art at the expense of regional and global representation, despite the museum's location in a politically divided city.

May 9

**Mona Khneisser**, "Crises & Everyday Collapse in Lebanon."

This preliminary research framework delves into the pervasive and routinized nature of crises in Lebanon, examining their profound impact on everyday lives and the socio-political fabric. Through an ethnographic exploration, my study critiques the pervasive, self-referential fram-

ings of crises that exceptionalize Lebanon, advocating instead for a nuanced understanding of crises as lived experiences that shape and are shaped by ordinary people's lives.

May 16

**Jeremy Randall**, "Cinema on Palestine in the 1970s: Entanglements of Revolution, Film, and Liberation."

Following the Naksa in 1967 and Black September in 1970, the Palestinian movement criticized the present conditions facing it and the wider region struggling against ongoing occupation, comprador states, and global capitalism. This seminar engages with a body of work encompassing film manifestos, films, and film analysis appearing in periodicals. Building upon earlier works that analyze cinema's role in imagining the Palestinian nation, drawing upon the *Manifesto of the Palestinian Cinema Group*, *The Cinema and the Revolution* by the PFLP, and articles in the PFLP magazine *al-Hadaf* alongside films such as Christian Ghazi's *A Hundred Faces for a Single Day*, Wakamatsu Koji and Adachi Masao's *Red Army PFLP Declaration of World War*, Kassem Hawal's *Our Small Houses*, and Mustafa Abu Ali's *They Do Not Exist* to explore the liberatory powers of critique made via film.

May 23

**Ziad Kiblawi**, "Rethinking the Intellectual History of Arabic Social Thought After 1967."

Twentieth-century Arabic social and political thought engaged with European social theory to produce novel trends in existentialism, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and structuralism that were at once specific in their creation and universal in their claims. The re-commitment of the Arab intellectual post-1967 (the defeat of Arab armies to Israel) to the question of national liberation mandated rethinking the epistemological conjuncture of science, philosophy, and politics in Arab thought. The resort to democratic materialist, provincialist, holistic, contextualist—and other approaches based on intentionality—provides a productive point for intervention by synthesizing the conceptual and the historical. This talk concerns itself with recent issues in Arab intellectual history and the theoretical demands necessary to redress the schism in the mechanistically inscribed lacunae between materialist intellectual thought in the Arab world and global modernity.

June 6

**Jan Altaner**, "Sex and the City (Center): Prostitution, Social Science Research and Urban Planning in 1960s Lebanon."

While sex work in the mandate-period Mashriq has drawn extensive scholarly attention over the last two decades, not least due to the accessibility of archives of and in the respective imperial metropolises, no comparable research has been undertaken for the ensuing historical period following the countries' independence. This article will present a first foray into the history of sex work in post-independence Lebanon (1943-1975) by drawing on contemporary social science studies, press records, and governmental papers. Inspired by the Social Scientific Turn, it places a 1964 sociological survey of sex workers in Beirut's women-run brothel-district at the center of analysis by reading it as an archive for social history. Furthermore, its close examination will reveal a rich social history of the life-worlds female sex workers inhabited in the Levantine port city.

June 27

**Benjamin Raßbach**, "God Is Expired!: Reincarnation and Religionization in Contemporary Lebanese Druze Narratives."

Benjamin Raßbach presents a working paper on contemporary Lebanese Druze narratives around religion, the secular, and ideas about reincarnation. Drawing from interviews with members of the Druze community in Beirut and the Chouf area of Lebanon, he analyzes how non-traditional Druze discuss their own identity today and how they separate the religious from the secular realms. He shows how his interlocutors integrate traditional concepts into the modern idea of secularism. Druzism has, like other ethno-religious communities in the region, long been shaped by a division in two groups – the initiated who handed down religious knowledge among themselves, and the uninitiated who were not allowed to take part in much of the group's religious life. In the wake of the Druze's assimilation into Lebanese nation state structures, the political influence of the uninitiated has strongly risen in importance during the 20th century. In this context, current ideas about the Druze religion as a philosophical knowledge globally connected to other spiritual ideas have become widespread, and they fit well with the idea of an essentially secular tradition.

July 4

**Susan Abraham**, "Traces of Truth, Inkling of Death: Ethical Transformation in a Morisco Didactic Treatise."

This chapter focuses on the preface of a mid-seventeenth-century didactic manual written by an anonymous Morisco living in Tunis, titled *Tratado de los dos caminos*, or *Treatise of the Two Paths* (Galmés de Fuentes 2005). The *Tratado* is exemplary in the way its didactic narrative skillfully foregrounds how Morisco authors in exile creatively deployed literary strategies around the ethical imperatives of their texts. In the opening narrative, the anonymous author retells the event of the Morisco expulsion through a symbolic encounter between Truth and Falsehood. Drawing on multiple sources, including Qur'anic passages and commentaries from North Africa, Morisco recipes for ink (BNE, MS. 5300), apocalyptic *ḥadīth* (Sánchez Álvarez 1982), and the apocryphal Books of Sacromonte, I argue that images and allusions to blood and ink are critical modalities used by Morisco authors to reinforce their religious, rhetorical, and literary authority while simultaneously eliciting emotional and ethical responses from their readers.

September 12

**Ashraf Osman**, "The Sursock Museum in the 1980s: Inclusion and exclusion in a decade of conflict."

This article analyzes the Sursock Museum in Beirut during the 1980s, a period overlapping with Lebanon's devastating civil war. It examines how the museum's operations, specifically its annual Salon d'Automne exhibitions, reflected and responded to the conflict's socio-political context, highlighting issues of inclusion and exclusion within the Lebanese art world. It explores the museum's programming choices—a significant decrease in exhibitions, a shift towards European art, and the prominent use of homages to deceased artists—as responses to the war's impact. The analysis further investigates the composition and biases of the selection jury, the political affiliations of key figures, and the artists' perspectives on participation, revealing complex dynamics of power, identity, and artistic expression within a fractured society. Ultimately, the piece questions the museum's role in navigating the conflict and its legacy in shaping Lebanese artistic identity.

November 21

**Janina Santer**, “Abdallah al-Mudaress – performing social criticism in 1940s-Beirut.”

This paper, presented on November 21, 2024, examines the work of Abdallah al-Mudaress (c. 1917–1958), a monologist renowned at the time for his rhyming soliloquies in colloquial Arabic (*‘ammiya*). Drawing on written, visual, and audio materials, it demonstrates how al-Mudaress’ monologues offer criticism of social transformations in mid-20th-century Lebanon. Specifically, the paper argues that al-Mudaress’ monologues employed humor to amplify aspirations and anxieties of a self-fashioned middle class shaped by postwar social mobility. Al-Mudaress’ monologues capture the excitement of a new consumerist culture while also addressing an unease surrounding changing gender roles and shifting social stratification. In situating his performances within the cabaret and radio contexts, the paper underscores how leisure venues must also be understood as political spaces. It is in the engagement with the audience that al-Mudaress’ rhetorical knife cuts deepest. In doing so, the paper contributes to the historical literature on mid-20th-century Lebanon and broader studies of popular culture in the Arab world, showing how monologists like al-Mudaress – many of whom are largely forgotten today – offer a window into the sociocultural complexities of early postcolonial history.

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## Lebanon and Syria Seminar

February 13

**Speaker:** Cyma Farah

**Title:** “Shaken Hierarchies: The Great Syrian Revolt and Gender Models amongst Male and Female Qabaḍyāt of the northern Biqa.”

Cyma Farah, Affiliate researcher at OIB and Arab Council of Social Sciences, opened the seminar series with a talk on a local rebellion in the Biqa’ Valley in northeastern Lebanon that unfolded in conjunction with the 1925 Great Syrian Revolt in Syria. Farah employed a gendered narrative to understand the culture of resistance amongst the population of the Biqa’ by exploring ideals of masculinity and femininity that go beyond the rigidity of the prescribed characteristics of hegemonic models. It highlighted instead the flexibility of gender ideals in the Biqa’s rebellion against the French mandate power, the dismissal by the latter of the local gender ideology as backward, and the protest by the local rebels against what they view as an unfair and condescending misrepresentation of their local ideology.

May 2

**Speaker:** Dima de Clerk

**Title:** “The Lebanon War (1975-1990) between the Local and the Global Civil War or “Glocal’ War?”

Dima de Clerk’s talk revisited the debate over the nature and designation of the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1990. She is a fellow researcher at the Near East French Institute, and a lecturer at various universities in France and Lebanon. The talk critically assessed the Lebanese war in light of different theories and interpretations of civil conflicts. It showed how the Lebanese war was both a civil war in the strict sense (an internal war) and a “civil war” according to the definition accepted today in academic circles, which integrates its regional and global ramifications. De Clerk argued for an approach more in line with the representations of its actors and victims.

June 10

**Speakers:** Jim Muir, Philip Bajjaly, and Carol Hakim

**Title:** “Beirut 1982 in the Rear-View Mirror.”

On June 10, Jim Muir (BBC Radio), Philip Bajjaly (ZDF German TV Middle East in 1982), and Carol Hakim (OIB Research Associate and Agence France Press, AFP, 1979-1989) held a talk on Beirut in. The three journalists shared reminiscences and comments on the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982, which they covered as journalists for their respective media organizations, in light of the ongoing Israeli offensive against Gaza, drawing parallels and divergences between both events.

June 18

**Speaker:** Johannes Waardenburg

**Title:** “New perspectives on the Asad Regime and the Syrian Revolution.”

Dr. Johannes Waardenburg, Lecturer at the Instituto per l’Oriente in Rome, shared the main findings of his new book *Contemporary Syria: Redesigning the Map of the Near East* (in Italian), focusing more particularly on the causes behind the resilience of the Assad Regime before and during the Syrian Revolution.

## Cairo Office

### OIB COSIMENA Research Colloquium I: “On Biomedical Ethics”

January 2024

**Speaker:** Nils Fischer (Head of the Middle East Department, KAAD)

**Title:** *The Debate on the Status of the Embryo in the Middle East from a Comparative Perspective: Religious, Cultural, and Political Aspects*

The first lecture of the year and the ninth in the series was held by Nils Fischer, Head of the Middle East Department at the KAAD (Catholic Academic Exchange Service). The lecture summarized the debate on the status of the embryo as a central issue in medical and bioethics, emphasizing its relevance to medical practice, research, and everyday life. In the international discourse on bioethics and medical ethics, “the Islamic position” on the status of the embryo is usually described as a gradual protection of the developing life. It is often contrasted with the strict protection advocated by the Catholic Church in particular. The lecture first gave a short introduction into bioethics and medical ethics, then went on to show the diversity of positions in Islam and the Middle East and looked at them from a comparative perspective, focusing on religious, cultural and political aspects.

February 2024

**Speaker:** Dr. Bjoern Bentlage (Senior Researcher, Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich)

**Title:** *Paternity, Islamic Bioethics, and the Body Politic.*

The lecture addressed the ethical concerns that sprang from medical advancements in medical and globalized discourses, as well as the related debates in Muslim majority countries within the framework of bioethics, which originally came with a comparative perspective and a strong focus on culture and religion. Using the controversial issue of paternity and its establishment as an example, this sketched the development of Islamic Bioethics as a specialized field with increasing social implications. It argued that different strands of Islamic Bioethics, namely the formulation of ethical norms by trained experts, the implementation of such norms in state and society, as well as the study of these processes and debates, have begun to converge on a common trajectory towards the social and political, as ethical matters become more and more enmeshed in issues and strategies that shape the form and structures of societies.

March 2024

**Speaker:** Dr. Hadil Lababidi (Lecturer, University of Zurich)

**Title:** *Mapping the Field of Islamic Bioethics*

The lecture summarized the health debates by and for Muslims worldwide. Individual Muslim physicians and Muslim theologians, as well as Islamic international institutions around the world, are involved in this area. What is crucial, however, is an interweaving of practice and Islamic theology with the aim of transferring knowledge into society. These particularly arise from technological developments in intensive care medicine, such as artificial ventilation and organ transplantation. There is a need for an ethical discussion about which principles guide actions when decisions must be made at the end of life. This lecture therefore mapped the field of Islamic bioethics and answered the following questions: What constitutes Islamic bio-

ethics? What makes Islamic bioethics Islamic? Who are the main players in this area? Which topics dominate? Which principles guide the medical ethics debates?

April 2024

**Speaker:** Dr. Anna Gade (Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**Title:** *Equity, Justice, and Climate Change*

**Location:** Residence of the German Ambassador to Egypt

This lecture discussed key intersections of environmental and biomedical ethics today. Dr. Gade demonstrated that theoretical and practical perspectives from Islamic ethics address fundamental challenges in the field of public health, especially equity and justice considering climate change.

### OIB COSIMENA Research Colloquium II: “Knowledge Transfer, its History and its Future in the Age of Digital Humanities.”

January 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Dr. Albrecht Fues (Professor of Islamic Studies, Marburg University)

**Title:** *Knowledge and Culture Transfer in the Mamluk Period (1250–1517)*

This presentation highlighted aspects of knowledge transfer in the Mamluk period and described processes of (knowledge) transfer and (personal) mobility in general in the Mamluk Empire and then dwelled on two specific case studies, namely the transfer of military technology from Europe to the Mamluk realm and on the image of the Mamluk into contemporary Europe. In doing so, it added to the discussion of mobility in the pre-modern period in Egypt and beyond.

June 26, 2024

**Speaker:** Dr. Hoda El Saadi (History Professor, American University in Cairo/AUC)

**Title:** *Women and the Transmission of Knowledge in Pre-Modern Islamic Societies: Muftis, Muḥaddithāt, and Faqīhāt*

The presentation highlighted the role of women in the transmission of knowledge in pre-modern Islamic societies. Women in these Islamic societies had a definite participatory role, as well as an active historical presence in the fields of theology and religious sciences. Women participated in the transmission of religious knowledge and scholarship, through the teaching of these sciences and were present among the intellectual elite as *muftiyāt*, *faqīhāt*, and *muḥaddithāt*. The presentation focused not on the “representation” of the “feminine” in religious texts, but rather on Muslim women as historical agents and subjects, as opposed to objects. In what way did they have access to knowledge and what was their role in its transmission? The space of historical documentation granted to women, in general, was not equal to male elites connected with state authority and official institutions of knowledge “*madrassa*.” However, information can either be found in biographical dictionaries that record the lives and deaths of prominent figures in special categories and professions or can be “hunted” and “dug out” from other types of historical sources. The methodology employed in this research is content analysis of the aforementioned sources and the discourse embedded within them.

### September 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Dr. Florian Zemmin (Professor of Islamic and Middle East Studies, Freie Universität Berlin; Director, Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies)

**Title:** *What went wrong with Islamic Historiography? On the Need for a Global Perspective*

This lecture touched upon the questions in the title, which were inspired by the long-standing nature of imperialism. Typically, the paradigm of modernization as westernization was coupled with that of an Islamic decline. Both paradigms have by now been refuted, the first mainly by social theorists, and the second by historians of the Islamic Middle East. However, no alternative model or narrative to these obsolete paradigms has yet been established. This contributes to the lasting purchase of notions of Islamic decline and Western progress in non-specialized academic fields and amongst the public. This lecture revisited the main trends and options in the writing of modernity in the Middle East and discussed especially their underlying premises. In opposition of internalist perspectives and culturalist explanations, this study argued for the necessity of connected histories, departing from the synchronic emergence of modernity in the colonial encounter.

### October 30, 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Dr. Stefan Leder (Halle University)

**Title:** *Translation and the Colonial Dilemma: Pioneering Approaches during Egypt's 19th Century Modernization Period*

This lecture highlighted the importance of Translations from European languages as an instrument for modernization for roughly four decades beginning in the 1830s. Besides being documents of intellectual acumen and linguistic proficiency, they may reflect, and in fact react to, the unequal power relations characteristic of the colonial setup. Tahtawi's first modern Arabic literary translation, nearly forgotten today, as well as his translation of the French constitutional law and the translations of the huge corpus of the five French law books, which he supervised, give evidence of the translator's strategies of cultural self-assertion and, potentially much more important, their endeavor to practically and politically convey relevant knowledge beyond cultural boundaries. The exploration of the intricacies involved in translating legal texts from this period can facilitate a more profound and transformative understanding of the colonial condition.

### November 5, 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Dr. Mohamed Serag (American University in Cairo/AUC)

**Title:** *Creation and Transfer of Knowledge in Islamic Law*

This lecture centered on the premise that Islamic law is derived from the fundamental tenets outlined in the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet. Following his death, the judges appointed by the expanding nascent state made their utmost effort to adjudicate cases and settle rising disputes to keep peace and tranquility within society. They succeeded in their mission and set many precedents that were created by their efforts. Their creative endeavor was later termed *Ijtihād*. The establishment of novel precedents has facilitated the resolution of disputes and the development of legal systems. Many cases established essential legal principles transferred to future generations through oral transmission up to the time of documenting them in the manuals of jurisprudence. Creative *Ijtihad* continues, and its high value for securing justice and peace in society necessitated the preservation of the legal knowledge up to the present day.

### November 27, 2024

**Speaker:** Dr. Carsten Walbiner (DAAD)

**Title:** *The Contribution of 'Syrians' to the Early Stages of the Egyptian "Nahḍa" in the Reign of Muḥammad 'Alī*

This presentation explained that Muḥammad 'Alī (r. 1805-1848) is generally regarded as the father of modern Egypt, who, through the development of industry and infrastructure and the creation of a modern army, transformed the backward country into a powerful state capable of challenging even the sultans in Istanbul. The lecture took a closer look at these processes of change, knowledge transfer, and creation in the fields of culture and education – developments that are often referred to as the "Nahḍa", the cultural, especially literary, reawakening of the Arab world during the 19th and early 20th centuries, which had its main stages in Egypt and Lebanon. Muḥammad 'Alī's modernization activities are often associated with the Europeans who served him as advisers, educators and managers. Rarely mentioned is the fact that there was also a south-south transfer of knowledge and expertise by mostly Christian Syrians who had immigrated to Egypt since the 18th century. Special attention was given to "Don Raphael" (Rūfā'īl Zakhkhūr), an illustrious figure of Syrian origin who was an advisor to Napoleon in Egypt and the only Arab member of the famous Institut d'Égypte. Don Raphael was involved in many of Muḥammad 'Alī's educational and cultural projects, such as the medical school, the printing press, and translation activities. Through his portrayal and a few others, it was shown that "Syrians" already contributed significantly to the early stages of the "Nahḍa" in Egypt.

### 18 December 2024

**Speaker:** Prof. Dr. Walid Ghali (Aga Khan University, London)

**Title:** *Muslim Women as Scribes and Calligraphers: Biographical and Codicological Notes*

The lecture sought to refute the argument that knowledge production was traditionally a male enterprise by presenting a counter argument that demonstrated the presence of women in the field of knowledge transmission and production. This is based on the biographical accounts and chronicles to show the names of and information about *warrāqāt* or *muwarrīqāt* ('paper-ologist'), *nāsikhāt* (scribes, copyists), *khattaṭāt* (calligraphers) and *munammimāt* or *munammīqāt* (illuminists). In addition, Dr. Ghali presented some codicological features of manuscripts that have been written by women and followed their professional patterns. In addition, the OIB invited a female calligrapher, Dr. Shima El Fahham, who provided samples of calligraphy to the attendees.



At the OIB's COSIMENA Research Colloquium "New Approaches in Islamic Ethics" Dr. Björn Bentlage (left) discussed biomedical ethics in Islam and its using of legal cases with Dr. Ahmed Abd-Elsalam.

## Conferences and Workshops

### 4–5 May 2024

**Title:** Women and Families Across Religions: Narratives – Norms – Ethics

**Organizers:** OIB in cooperation with Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, the Council of the Moroccan Community Living Abroad (CCME), and Ibn Khaldoun Center for Migration Studies

**Location:** Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane

**Participants:** Over 20 researchers from Egypt, Germany, Morocco, and Tunisia

### May 2024

**Event:** OIB Cairo Office members (Dr. Ahmed Abd-El salam, Dr. Thomas Würtz, and Dr. Yasmin Amin) visited Sidi Mohamed ben Abd Allah University in Fez for an international academic meeting at the Faculty of Comparative Religions. The event included several lectures by the OIB Cairo team along with Moroccan professors from various universities as part of a training programme for Ph.D. students.

**Location:** Sidi Mohamed ben Abd Allah University in Fez

**Lectures:** Topics included Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies, Biblical Studies, comparative religious themes, cyber-fatwas, and online preaching.

### 10 June 2024

**Title:** Daily Lives in the Mamluk Era (within the Ta'ziz Project titled "Dealing with Material Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean Between Excavation and Digitization.")

**Organizers:** OIB Cairo Office within the Ta'ziz Project, in cooperation with Marburg University, the Islamic Museum in Cairo, and the DAAD

**Location:** Cairo

**Presenters:** 14 participants from Ain Shams University, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Museum of Islamic Art, Marburg University, Otto-Friedrich-University in Bamberg, and Max-Planck Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence

### 13 June 2024

**Title:** OIB COSIMENA Research Colloquium II – Knowledge Transfer, Its History and its Future in the Age of Digital Humanities

**Organizer:** OIB Cairo

**Structure:** Three clusters with four presentations each, addressing knowledge transfer, methods and actors, and digitizing history

On June 13, 2024, the OIB Cairo started the OIB COSIMENA Research Colloquium II titled "Knowledge Transfer, Its History and Its Future in the Age of Digital Humanities." In this series, the topic is treated in an interdisciplinary manner from different perspectives, namely history, religious studies, gender, sociology, modernity, and computer science. Three clusters presented four presentations each. The first cluster addressed the question of knowledge transfer. The second cluster addressed the questions of how, why and by whom. And the third cluster addressed "digitizing history."

### August 19–23, 2024

**Title:** Islamic Environmental and Ecological Ethics: Past and Present

**Event:** Panel at the EASR Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden

**Location:** EASR Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden

**Lectures:**

*The Case of Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: Environmentalism in 10th Century Baghdad* – Dr. Yasmin Amin (OIB)

*Discourses on Environment Ethics in Islamic Theology* – Dr. Sara Binay (Hochschule Anhalt - University of Applied Sciences in Saxony-Anhalt)

*Eco-Islam, Eco-Muslims: A Critical Approach* – Dr. Ahmed M. F. Abd-El salam (OIB)

*The Ecology of Sorrow: Al-khalā (Emptiness) as a Concept and a Place in Egyptian Ritual* – Prof. Dr. Hager El Hadidi (California State University, Bakersfield)

### September 26–28, 2024

**Title:** Islamische Rechtswirklichkeit im Kontext säkularer und religiöser Ordnungen

**Event:** Panel at the 30th International DAVO Congress in Göttingen

**Lectures:**

*Urf, die säkulare Quelle islamischer Scharia* – Dr. Ahmed Abd-El salam (OIB)

*Einschüchterung ja, Bestrafung nein. Positionen zur Rechtlichen Ahndung von häuslicher Gewalt im Kontext religiöser Grenzziehungsprozesse zwischen säkularen und religiösen Ordnungen im Libanon* – Dr. Doris Decker (University of Zürich)

*Religiöse Praxis in einem säkularen rechtspluralistischen Umfeld* – Dr. Yasmin Amin (OIB)

### October 7, 2024

**Event:** OIB Team (Dr. Jens Hanssen, Dr. Thomas Würtz, and Dr. Yasmin Amin) visited al-Azhar University and held talks with the Dean of the Faculty for Arabic and Islamic Studies about future cooperation and a joint conference in 2025.

**Location:** Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Sweden

### December 7–9, 2024

**Title:** International Conference for Islamic Philosophy

**Organizer:** Egyptian Philosophical Society

**Location:** Dar al-Ifta'

**Panel:** OIB Cairo contributed with four lectures:

*The OIB's Efforts in the Field of Philosophy and Humanities* – Dr. Jens Hanssen

*The Relationship of Philosophy to Exegetical Sciences* – Dr. Thomas Würtz

*New Approaches to Islamic Ethics* – Dr. Yasmin Amin

*Issues from the Theology of Coexistence* – Dr. Ahmed Abd-El salam

### December 9, 2024

**Event:** OIB Cairo Team (Dr. Thomas Würtz, Dr. Ahmed Abd-El salam, and Dr. Yasmin Amin), Director Dr. Jens Hanssen, and Dr. Carol Hakim visited the Grand Mufti Dr. Nazir Ayyad at Dar al-Ifta to discuss future cooperation.

## Books

The OIB Cairo office has published three books in 2024, namely:

- Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed M. F., ed. 2024. *Discussing Interdependencies – Theology of Coexistence*. Orient-Institut Studies 7. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00003>.
- Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed M. F., ed. 2024. *Discussing Interdependencies – Religion, Religiosity, and Society*. Orient-Institut Studies 8. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications. <https://doi.org/10.25360/01-2024-00011>.
- Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed M. F., ed. 2024. *Transformation of Islamic Authorities and Discourses after the Egyptian Revolution 2011*. Orient-Institut Studies 10. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications.

Moreover, two books were completed in 2024 and are forthcoming in 2025, namely:

- Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed M. F., and Yasmin Amin, eds. 2025. *Discussing Interdependencies – Women and Families Across Religions*. Orient-Institut Studies 9. Beirut/Cairo: OIB/Red Sea Publications.
- Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed M. F., and Yasmin Amin, eds. 2025. *New Approaches in Islamic Ethics: Gender – Environment – Biomedical Ethics*. BTS.



Meeting between the OIB Directorate and OIB Cairo Team with Dr. Nazir Ayyad, the Grand Mufti of Egypt.

## Library

**Hans-Peter Pökel**, Head Librarian



Hans-Peter Pökel joined the OIB in 2014 as a research associate and has been Head Librarian at the OIB since 2019. He studied Semitic philology, Religious Studies and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Marburg/Germany. He received his PhD from Jena/Germany with a thesis on al-Jahiz and was research associate at the Seminar for Semitic and Arabic Studies in Berlin until 2014. He also studied Library and Information Science and received his M.A. LIS from Berlin/Germany with a thesis on National Libraries in the Arab World.

### Library Report 2024

The OIB library is a specialized research and reference library for Near and Middle Eastern Studies and is upon registration open to researchers and all researchers at large.

The rich collections of the OIB library mainly cover the scholarly disciplines in the broad field of Near and Middle Eastern Studies particularly the history, culture, geography, anthropology, sociology, and the lingual and religious pluralism of the region. The predominant language of our acquisitions is Arabic with around sixty percent of the holdings, followed by English, French and German, as well as other European and Middle Eastern Semitic languages, and Persian. In recent years, the library acquired publications with a broader interdisciplinary scope within the field of humanities particularly within the framework of the Max Weber Digital Library which is a continuous effort by all libraries within the Max Weber Foundation.

The holdings of the library include a special collection on Lebanon and the Levant, as well as a growing section in Armenian culture in the Middle East. Arabic literature, history of the Near and Middle East, history of religions, cultural history, Arabic and Islamic intellectual history, particularly theology and philosophy as well as Eastern Christianity, Christian Arabic literature, Judaism and Semitic philology, have been special foci of the library since its foundation in 1961.

In response to the cultural, lingual and religious pluralism of the region, the Institute cultivates a collection policy that pays particular attention to this unique diversity. A large part of the library collection are printed Levantine and regional journals from the broader MENA region.

In tradition and support of the OIB publication series *Bibliotheca Islamica*, the library continues to enrich its substantial collection of critical editions of classical Arabic literature and holds some treatises in Persian, Hebrew and Syriac. A collection of more than five hundred maps and several architectural and topographical plans from Beirut, Lebanon, and the Levant as well as a collection of rare books are also a part of the library's holdings beside a letter and photo collection of Ramez Khalil Sarkis (1921-2017). Some of these materials have undergone preparational steps for digitization.



The library provides three reading rooms that are equipped with wireless access to the internet and offers a microfilm reader and a book scanner. Twenty-one study desks are available and are equipped with daylight reading lamps and electric outlets. Our reading rooms and the entrance to these from the OIB's garden offer an inviting atmosphere for our scholarly events and support the exchange of scholars and researchers on these occasions.

During the wars in 2023 and 2024 were extremely difficult times for the library of the OIB, and as a result we were forced to close our doors for several months. Although the Library of the OIB was able to fully operate internally, the situation changed dramatically in late summer 2024 when we were forced to close the library. The library staff continued its work remotely as it facilitated some basic services like providing electronic resources to researchers and acquired around 1645 titles in 2024, among them an increasing number of electronic resources. The library increased its physical holdings up to more than 140,000 volumes and more than 150,000 online accessible resources among them many open access available titles.

The library also finalized two local agreements with the Haigazian University and the Bibliothèque Orientale (Université Saint Joseph) to facilitate all our researchers with additional possibilities of access to information. On behalf of the *Max Weber Foundation*, we also advanced to build up a shared digital library and to optimize the range of electronic material that includes journals and databases with an interdisciplinary scope.

Furthermore, the library received book collections from the Syrian-Lebanese poet Fuad Rifka (1930-2011), the Lebanese art critic Joseph Tarrab (1943-2025), and the Lebanese-Palestinian journalist Tewfik Mishlawi (1935-2012). In addition, the library received a collection of old prints of the former director of the Goethe Institut, Dr. Wolfgang Ule.

The library intensified its close collaborations with the *German Special Information Service Middle East, North Africa and Islamic Studies* (FID) in Halle, Germany, to offer access to the *MENALIB Middle East Virtual Library* and to discuss strategies within the growing field of research data management and was also involved in the continuation of publishing our Institute's Open Access series.

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 Universität Jena/Musikhochschule Weimar

June 10 – July 5  
**Arda Christine Kashkashian**  
 Université Saint-Joseph Beirut

February 15 – 15 April  
**Mohammad Tabaja**  
 American University Beirut

August 11 – September 19  
**Mohamad Azzam**  
 Freie Universität Berlin

February 20 – April 20  
**Nourine Emad**  
 Alexandria University

August 20 – October 20  
**Levke Christiansen** (Remote Internship)  
 Universität Erfurt

March 1 – April 30  
**Tobias Maisch** (Remote Internship)  
 Universität Erlangen

September 1 – October 31  
**Ruth Vollmer** (Internship in the Cairo office)  
 Universität Freiburg

May 2 – June 12  
**Zoé Lunven**  
 Université Saint-Joseph Beirut

September 22 – November 15  
**Jan Purtzel** (Internship in the Cairo office)  
 Freie Universität Berlin

May 2 – June 30  
**Helene Eckmann** (Remote Internship)  
 Universität Leipzig

September 16 – October  
**Sali Abbas**  
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## Index

Abd-Elsalam, Ahmed	70-72, 90, 115-118, 122
Abdulsater, Hussein Ali	99
Abraham, Susan	30, 109
Adamson, Peter	94
Alazzeh, Ala	101
Al-Bazzal, Fatima	78
Ali, Iman	78
Altaner, Jan	5, 11, 55, 108
Amin, Yasmin	66, 72, 74-77, 90, 107, 116-118, 122
Arbid, George	102
Aydin, Cemil	101
Ayyad, Nazir	117, 119
Bajjaly, Philip	111
Bartheldi, Layla	79, 107
Bellan, Monique	35-36, 40-41, 95
Bentlage, Bjoern	112, 115
Beyhom, Rosy Azar	79
Binay, Sara	8, 14, 82, 100, 117
Bishop, Elisabeth	80-81
Chelhot Lemyre, Carine	78
De Clerk, Dina	110
Decker, Doris	77, 117
Derichs, Claudia	7-8, 11, 13, 83, 124
El Bulbeisi, Sarah	5, 8, 11, 13, 26, 49-53, 122
El Hadidi, Hager	117
El Saadi, Hoda	113
Elsadda, Hoda	85
Ermiş, Fatih	67-68, 122
Farah, Cyma	78, 110
Attar, Muhammad Fariduddin	94
Fischer, Nils	105-106, 112
Fuess, Albrecht	113
Fuhrmeister, Christian	102, 104
Gade, Anna	113
Gaudreau-Majeau, Charlotte	78
Ghali, Walid	115
Gómez, Liliana	102, 104
Greve, Martin	79, 107
Guirguis, Laure	79

Hachem, Nour	79
Haddad, Angela	28-29
Hakim, Carol	52-53, 111, 117, 122
Halabi, Zeina G.	7, 13, 20-21, 30, 58, 122
Hanßen, Jens-Peter	5, 11, 17-19, 24-25, 83, 93-94, 100, 102, 117, 122
Helal, Emad	102-104
Höhn, David	27
Ibrahim, Husayn	94
Jajcay, Jakub	78
Karame, Alya	35, 122
Khatib, Sami	8, 13, 22-26, 102, 122
Khneisser, Mona	56-57, 107
Kiblawi, Ziad	32-33, 108
Kuhnert, Michael	105
Kundnani, Hans	101
Lababidi, Hadil	112
Leder, Stefan	114
Majed, Rima	101
Malusardi, Flavia Elena	36, 42-43, 46, 95
Mejcher-Atassi, Sonja	19, 100
Metzler, Berenike	69, 122
Muir, Jim	111
Nemčenko, Marija	79, 107
Osman, Ashraf	36, 44-46, 95, 107, 109
Parsi, Lavinia	79, 107
Pohl, Dieter	102, 104
Pökel, Hans-Peter	120, 122
Randall, Jeremy	59-61, 78, 108
Raßbach, Benjamin	62-63, 109
Roy, Arpan	78
Roy, Srirupa	101
Safieddine, Karim	78
Şahin, Abdullah Musab	78
Sander, Christian	78
Santer, Janina	57-58, 110
Serag, Mohamed	114
Spieß, Katharina	105
Steinbach, Udo	101, 103

Tan, Pelin	82, 102
Thuselt, Christian	53-54, 122
Timofeeva, Oxana	19, 25, 102
Von Maltzahn, Nadia	35-36, 40-41, 46, 93, 122
Waardenburg, Johannes	111
Walbiner, Carsten	8, 14, 115
Weiss, Max	83, 93
Widmann, Philipp	79
Winter, Stefan	19, 85, 100
Würtz, Thomas	65-67, 94, 116-117, 122
Yaser, Dina	102
Zemmin, Florian	114

# Imprint

## **Orient-Institut Beirut**

Zokak el-Blat  
Rue Hussein Beyhum  
P.O.B. 11-2988  
Beirut, Lebanon  
T +961 1 35 94 23  
F +961 1 35 91 76  
sek@orient-institut.org  
www.orient-institut.org

An Institute of the Max Weber Foundation,  
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Director

**Prof. Dr. Jens-Peter Hanßen**

Editorial Committee

**Dr. Thomas Würtz, Dr. Zeina Halabi, Dr. Alya Karame**

Copy-Editing

**Rima Rantisi, Antonia Grau, Louisa Rohde**

Concept & Design

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Print

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**The Orient-Institut** (OIB) is an academic hub in central Beirut. It was designed to foster German research on and throughout the region. The OIB has come to benefit from the advantages of Lebanon's unique position as an intellectual centre in the Arab world. As the only German research institute devoted to Arabic and Islamic Studies based in the Arab Middle East, the OIB has helped to train generations of German scholars who specialised in the region. Since 2010, the OIB has maintained an office in Cairo to strengthen academic collaboration and research across the MENA region. In 1961 the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft), an academic association founded in 1845 to promote the study of the languages and cultures of the 'Orient', established the OIB as a base for German oriental studies abroad. The institute gained legal recognition from the Lebanese government in 1963 and moved to its present premises in the former Villa Maud Farajallah, in the Zokak al-Blat quarter, near downtown Beirut. Even during the most turbulent periods of Lebanese history academic activities at the institute continued, although in 1987 the German staff were evacuated to Istanbul temporarily. The directorate and some of the research staff returned to Beirut in 1994, but as a result of the evacuation the institute developed into a bilocal entity, with branches in both Istanbul (OII) and Beirut (OIB). The Istanbul branch became an independent institute in 2009. In 2003, the OIB joined the other German Humanities Institutes Abroad in a foundation named Max Weber Foundation in 2012. The Max Weber Foundation is a publicly regulated body funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).



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