Anglo-Turkish Society online lecture, 27 July 2021, 6.00 pm

Speaker: Alp Eren Topal

Platform: Zoom with link provided to those who register

Title: 'Opposition in Exile: Namık Kemal in London (1867-1870)'

Namık Kemal (1840-1888) was arguably the most influential man of letters in the 19th century Ottoman world. As a poet, journalist, editor, historian, publicist and political figure he left thousands of pages of writing behind him through which he had a lasting impact on Turkish language, prose and politics. Still, in the Turkish collective memory and academic scholarship he is remembered mostly as a poet and his political standing is frequently ignored or reduced to insignificance. He was the most elaborate and systematic political thinker of his time, and he was the person who contributed the most to the emergence and popularization of concepts such as liberty, equality, representation, accountability, and consultation. Still, his social and political writing is still partly inaccessible even to this day. Accordingly, this lecture will present a narrative account of his activities between 1867 and 1870 when he was in voluntary exile in Paris and London with an emphasis on Kemal's political persona as a dissident (*muhalif*). During his exile, Kemal also interacted with prominent European figures such as the novelist Alexandre Dumas pere, David Urquhart the diplomat and Charles Wells the Turcologist. In addition to such encounters, the lecture will also present some of Kemal's key ideas by drawing on his political writing in the newspaper *Hurriyet* (*la Liberte*) which he ran for more than a year in London. An annotated critical edition of *Hurriyet* was edited and published by the author, Alp Eren Topal, in 2018, marking the 150th anniversary of its first publication.

Booking essential: https://alp-eren-topal-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

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Alp Eren Topal is currently a Marie Curie fellow at University of Oslo, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS), with his project "Messianic Conceptions of Politics and Authoritarianism in Turkey 1850-2015". Topal has received his PhD degree in 2017 from Bilkent University, Department of Political Science with his dissertation on Ottoman concepts of reform. Topal's research focuses on the transformation of social and political concepts from the late 18th century to the present with a revisionist take on questions such as modernization, secularization and traditionalism. Topal has several articles, published and forthcoming, on these topics in academic outlets such as *Journal of Islamic Studies, Contributions to the History of Concepts, Die Welt des Islams* and *Oriente Moderno.*