Anglo-Turkish Society online Zoom lecture, 25 June 2024, 6.00 pm (UK time)

Speaker: Dr. Ellinor Morack

Title: 'Dispossession, confiscation, appropriation: property rights of minorities in modern Turkey'

Since 1915, Turkish politics have been haunted by the spectre of "abandoned property" *(emval-i metruke)*. Introduced in 1915 to refer to property left behind by the Armenian and Syriac populations deported or massacred in the shadow of war, the term was later used for the assets that Ottoman Greeks left behind when they were forced out of Anatolia at the end of the Greek-Turkish War in 1922.

"Abandoned" property was supposed to be liquidated or administered by the state. In theory, surviving owners could have re-claimed it upon their return. In practice, however, they were physically prevented from doing so and, if they returned, required to sign away their rights. Armenian and Greek property thus became the "dowry of the new state" (Keyder 2003): while much of the assets disappeared in the quagmire of corruption, a considerable portion remained available for policies aimed at creating create a new, Muslim-Turkish population that was loyal to the new nation-state of Turkey. This process, however, was complicated by competing and mutually contradictory interpretations of the relevant laws and regulations.

In this presentation, I shall trace the legal, conceptual and social history of "abandoned" property in republican Turkey. After providing a sketch of the legal framework and its development, I will discuss several disputes surrounding such property, showing how these were related to process of nation-building in modern Turkey.

Booking essential: https://ellinor-morack-lecture.eventbrite.co.uk

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Dr. Ellinor Morack is a research and teaching associate (Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin) at Bamberg University, Germany. She holds an MA (2008) and a Dr. phil. (2013) in history from Freie Universität Berlin. After two years as a post-doctoral fellow of the Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2013–15), she started her current position at Bamberg in 2015. As a historian specializing in the history of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, she has published a book and several articles on various aspects of "abandoned property" and the Greek-Turkish population exchange (2014, 2017, 2020, 2023), the history of emotions (2017), memoirs-as-historiography in Turkey (2017), the "phantom pain" of non-Muslim labor in early republican Turkey (2019), parliamentary history (2021) and Gog and Magog in late Ottoman texts (2023). She currently works on her Habilitation thesis about the politics of remembering the Muslim guerrillas in the Turkish War of Independence (1923–1980). She is the principal investigator of the DFG-funded network project "Post-Ottoman Transformations" (2022–2025).

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