

# *Environmental Approaches in Pre-Modern Middle Eastern Studies*

## International Conference

(5<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> December 2016)

Defined in as many different ways as there are disciplines in the humanities, environmental history is the study of relations between people and their natural environment through time. On one level, it offers perspectives on the impact of climatic and other environmental changes on society, and on another it is a window on the varied ways people make use of, understand, control, and maintain their natural resources. Rejecting the outdated models of environmental determinism, environmental historians tend to either study the environment as a very powerful actor in socio-cultural change or as the locus of social conflict. Environmental history can be a potent tool for contextualizing political change and explaining the complex combination of factors behind dynastic decline in pre-modern societies. It is, in short, uniquely positioned for writing holistic histories.

Environmental history also provides a useful tool for social, legal (laws and ethics related to the management and equitable access to scarce resources, and disputes over them), and intellectual history (perceptions of the natural environment – color, space, etc.); urban studies (the “Islamic garden”, urban gardening and the development of urban “green spaces”);

and, most importantly, the study of knowledge transfer (the agrarian manuals). Social history can certainly benefit from such lines of inquiry.

This international conference is meant to be a forum for exchange of ideas about environmental history, and methods and theories, by scholars engaged in the study of the pre-modern Islamic world. Papers from the fields of history, historical geography, archaeology and art history, natural sciences, and historical anthropology are most welcome, as well as studies of a more theoretical (but historically grounded) nature. We welcome the participation of doctoral students and post-doctoral scholars, as well as senior scholars. The chronological coverage is the period of the Islamic Conquests until the early nineteenth-century (pre-Tanzimat), with a geographical coverage of all regions of the world under the control of an Islamic regime. While our focus remains the Mamluk (and the larger “Middle Islamic”) period of the 13th-16th centuries and the territories of the Mamluk state – and while we aim to promote environmental lines of inquiry in Mamluk Studies – this conference encourages transregional and comparative approaches and particularly welcomes papers from Ottoman Studies.

## Organisation

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## Venues

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# Timetable

## Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December

- 09:00-09:30 Bethany WALKER (Bonn)  
*Welcome*
- Chair:** Bethany WALKER
- 09:30-10:15 Stuart BORSCH (Worcester)  
*The Differential Impact of Low Nile Flood Disasters*
- 10:15-10:45 **Break**
- Chair:** Bethany WALKER
- 10:45-11:30 Anna Paulina LEWICKA (Warsaw)  
*Greek Medical Thought in Post-Mamluk Cairo: a Cultured Sufi's Understanding of Nature and Its Interaction with Body and Mind*
- 11:30-12:15 Gül ŞEN (Bonn)  
*The Environment of the Southern Bilad al-Shām through the Eyes of the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Cosmographer Āşık Meḥmed*
- 12:15-13:15 **Lunch**

- 13:15-14:00 Christopher BRAUN (London)  
*There is no Place which is not Full of Buried Treasures": Perceptions on Egypt's Landscape during Mamluk and Ottoman Times*
- 14:00-14:45 Raymond RUHAAK (Liverpool)  
*Assessing Risk & Resilience of Irish Gaels and the Bedouins of the Mamluk frontier leading up to and during Black Death through theorists of infectious disease, ecology, and socio-economic sustainability*
- 14:45-15:15 **Break**
- Chair:** Anthony QUICKEL
- 15:15-16:00 Aleksandar SHOPOV (Harvard)  
*Between the vineyard and the pen in the mid-sixteenth century: the first book on agriculture written in Ottoman Turkish*
- 16:00-16:45 Yehoshua FRENKEL (Haifa)  
*The Contribution of European Sources to the Study of Environmental History of the Levant (14-16 centuries)*
- 18:00 **Key note**  
Alan MIKHAIL (Yale)  
Middle East Climate History: Dispatches from Ottoman Iceland

## Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December

- Chair:** Stefan HEIDEMANN
- 09:00-09:45 Bethany WALKER (Bonn)  
*It Takes a Village: Local Know-How and Interdependencies in Syrian Agriculture, the Late Medieval Era*
- 09:45-10:30 Ahmad KHAN (Hamburg)  
*The Rural Estate Economy in the Early Islamic Empire: A View from the Province*
- 10:30-11:00 **Break**
- Chair:** Gül ŞEN
- 11:00-11:45 Anthony QUICKEL (Marburg)  
*Nature or City: Mamluk Cairo as a Model for Reinterpreting the Urban/Rural Dichotomy*
- 11:45-12:30 Stefan P. PEYCHEV (Illinois)  
*The Nature of the Ottoman City: Water, Urban Space, and Communal Identity in Early Modern Sofia*
- 12:30-13:30 **Lunch**

**Chair:** Stuart BORSCH  
13:30-14:15 Dorothee KREUZER (Bonn)  
*“The world is a garden, hedged in by sovereignty ...”*  
*The Cairo Bustan between the Circle of Justice and the Quran*

14:15-15:00 Hend EL SAYYED (Bonn)  
*Reassessing the Building Craze in Mamluk Cairo: Meeting the Crisis of Building Material*

**15:00-15:30 Break**

**Chair:** Aleksandar SHOPOV

15:30-16:15 Chiara CORBINO (Sheffield)  
*Animal husbandry and landscape exploitation in Mamluk society: the 14th century AD at Tell Hisban (Jordan)*

16:15-17:00 Annette HANSEN (Groningen)  
*Agriculture in Southern Bilad al-Sham in the Mamluk Period (13th-16th centuries AD)*

**18:00 Visiting Christmas Market  
Bonn**

09:00-09:45 Rachel HOFFMAN (Jerusalem)  
*Not by the ruler alone: The Mamluk Sultanate’s price-stabilizing policies in the face of climatic disasters*

09:45-10:30 Stefan HEIDEMANN, Jan WEHBERG (Hamburg)  
*Historical - Comparative GIS Project The Cities in Transoxiana – Occupation, Agriculture, and Environmental Changes in the First Millennium - The Bukhara Oasis*

**10:30-11:00 Break**

**Chair:** Anna Paulina LEWICKA

11:00-11:45 Yossef RAPOPORT (London)  
*1068: A micro-history*

11:45-12:30 Mathieu EYCHENNE (Bonn/ Paris)  
*What was the Weather like in Damascus? Evidence from Historical Narratives on Climate and Weather Condition in Mamluk Damascus and Its Countryside*

**12:30-13:30 Lunch**

## Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December

**Chair:** Yehoshua FRENKEL

**Chair:** Christopher BRAUN  
13:30-14:15 Abdelrazzaq MOAZ (Bonn)  
*Environmental history, Domestic Architecture and Life Style in Damascus in the later Mamluk and Post-Mamluk period*

14:15-15:00 Lutfallah GARI (Yanbu al-Sinaiyah)  
*Environmental Studies about Cities in Medieval Islam*

**15:00-15:30 Break**

15:30-16:15 Concluding notes



ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL KOLLEG.

History and Society during the  
Mamluk Era (1250 - 1517)