

OTTOMAN TRANS-SAHARAN SLAVE TRADE LEGACIES IN THE AEGEAN

HISTORICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHICAL APPROACHES



Mural on a Shop in Mytilene – Kali Argyriadis 2019 ©

International Workshop

University of the Aegean, Department of Social
Anthropology and History

Université Paris-Cité (URMIS, BRIO)

Mytilene, Greece, 30-31 October 2025



Atrium Humanités
et Sciences Sociales



Université
Paris Cité

URMIS
Unité de recherches
Migrations et société



UNIVERSITY OF THE
AEGEAN

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
AND HISTORY



TELEMMe

Temps,
Espaces,
Langages
Europe Méridionale,
Méditerranée

UMR 7303

9:30 *Presentation and Introduction*

Organising Committee

SESSION 1

AFRICANS' ENSLAVEMENT IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Geography Auditorium – 10am-12pm

10:00 *The Trans-Saharan Slave Trade's Significance in the Ottoman Domains and the Place of Enslaved Africans in the Ottoman Society (16th-18th centuries)*

Hayri Gökşin Özkoray (Université Aix-Marseille)

10:30 *Reconsidering the Ottoman Slave Trade during the Age of Revolutions. Invisible Effects, Visible Changes*

Leonidas Moiras (Democritus University of Thrace)

11:00 *The Ottoman-African Diaspora*

Yannis Spyropoulos (Institute of Mediterranean Studies, Rethymnon)

11:30 *Discussion*

Eleni Gara (University of the Aegean)

SESSION 2

OTTOMAN LEGACIES AND “BLACKNESS” IN TURKEY AND GREECE

Geography Video Conference Room C – 5pm-6.30pm

5:00 *Blackness in an “unexpected place”: The legacy of African slavery in the Late Ottoman and Early Republican period*

Ezgi Çakmak (University of Pennsylvania) [online]

5:30 *A colour without curse? Dark skin in Macedonia-Western Thrace*

Kali Argyriadis (IRD, Paris Cité University, URMIS)

6:00 *Discussion*

Ary Gordien (CNRS, Paris Cité University, URMIS)

SESSION 3

DISRUPTED AUTOCHTONIES

Geography Video Conference Room C – 6.30pm-8pm

6:30 *Kinship and patronymic systems within indigenous communities of African descent in the Aegean*

Lydia Zeghmar (Toulouse Jean Jaurès University)

7:00 *Muslim Roma in Greece*

Lambros Baltiotis (Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences)

7:30 *Discussion*

Effie Plexoussaki (University of the Aegean)

SESSION 4

IMAGINED AFRICA, AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

Geography Video Conference Room C – 9.30am-12pm

9:30 *Inventing 'Africa': the Western Gaze and its Discourses*
Emilios Tsekenis (University of the Aegean)

10:00 *About the participatory Exhibition "Africa Amongst Us"*
Sofia Chandaka (Benaki Museum) [online]

10:30 *"It's like we came from outer space". Racialisation within Turkey's Othering Regimes*
Armand Aupiais (Paris Cité University)

11:00 *Shades of Black and Islamic Piety in Postcolonial Sudan: Echoes of a Slave-holding Past reaching Distant Shores*
Gerassimos Makris (Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences)
[online]

11:30 *Discussion*
Pinelopi Topali (University of the Aegean)

SESSION 5

LABOUR & POST-SLAVERY IN POST-OTTOMAN TURKEY

Geography Video Conference Room C – 12.30pm-14.30pm

12:30 *The Afterlives of Slavery: Racialized and Gendered Labor in Post-Ottoman Turkey*
Ayşegül Kayagil (New School for Social Research)

13:00 *Turkey's new serfs and old servants? The Afro-Turks and the economy of the Kemalist Republic*

Alexandre Toumarkine (INALCO, Paris)

13:30 *Discussion*
Armand Aupiais (Paris Cité University)

14.00 Joint Discussion

ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Armand Aupiais (Paris Cité University)

Kali Argyriadis (Paris Cité University)

Eleni Gara (University of the Aegean)

Effie Plexoussaki (University of the Aegean)

Pinelopi Topali (University of the Aegean)

Lydia Zeghmar (Toulouse Jean Jaurès University)



Tavla Playing Zeybek – Osman Hamdi July 1890

SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATION

Current academic studies show a (re)emerging interest in decentring research on the history of slave trades and its consequences outside and/or beyond the Atlantic worlds. Since the turn of the century, and increasingly in the 2010s, research has documented the history of slavery, as well as the related social and intellectual genealogies of othering processes in the Middle East and North Africa. This empirical and theoretical enrichment has improved our knowledge of the specificities of Ottoman trans-Saharan slave trade within the frame of slavery in the Muslim Worlds.

The Greece-Turkey interface, structured by the confessional institution of otherness and autochthony, and disrupted by the rivalry of Greek and Turkish nationalism, remains relatively understudied in this research field.

Our international workshop, *Ottoman Trans-Saharan Slave Trade Legacies in the Aegean*, held at the University of Mytilene, aims to engage with the “Aegean case” as an opportunity to interrogate the global histories of Africans’ enslavements and challenge divisions between Western and Eastern histories, North and “Sub-Saharan” Africa, Christian and Muslim slavery.

How is the legacy of this plural and sensitive history manifested locally? How is it silenced or expressed, understood or interpreted in different ways? Above all, how can we study it while addressing the need for singular historical narratives, avoiding the pitfall of ethnographic predation and negotiating with the diversity of identity-based statements?

The workshop will consist of four sessions dealing respectively with 1. *Africans’ Enslavement in the Ottoman Empire*; 2. *Ottoman Legacies and “Blackness” in Turkey*; 3. *African Descent and Muslim Roma in the Aegean*; 4. *Imagined Africa, African Experiences*; 5. *Labour & Post-Slavery in Post-ottoman Turkey*.

We will pay special attention to the description of vernacular practices and representations that bear witness to the diversity of local configurations inherited from this history.

