

## **Locusts of Power: Borders, Empire, and Environment in the Modern Middle East, 1858-1939**

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### **Abstract**

This presentation focuses on locusts in the region of the Jazira. It traces how the insects animated a mobile ecology often at odds with state borders. It also suggests how locusts and moving people—including Arab and Kurdish nomads, Armenian deportees, and Assyrian refugees—managed to turn their place on the political and environmental edge into a space of survival. It concludes by considering the impact of the virtual eradication of locusts in the twentieth century and the transformation of the Jazira into Syria's most productive agricultural lands. By focusing on border-crossing people and insects, the project thus unearths a legacy of agrarian development, state violence, and popular resistance that complicates our thinking about the end of the Ottoman Empire.

### **Bio**

Samuel Dolbee is an environmental historian of the modern Middle East. He is currently a lecturer on History and Literature at Harvard University. He has published in *Past & Present* and *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. His book manuscript is under contract with Cambridge University Press. He is also editor in chief of the Ottoman History Podcast.