

## **Phantoms in the colonies. Amnesia, nostalgia, and the crisis of imperial transition in Baghdad after the Ottomans**

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### **Abstract**

Comparative scholarship on post-Ottoman spaces has first identified a general will to break away from the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, thus systematically silencing voices linking Empire and nation-state. But new scholarship, by shedding light on the multiple expressions of continuity with former social, cultural and political practices inherited from the Ottoman Empire in various sectors of post-Ottoman societies, has challenged the idea that Ottoman “amnesia” always prevailed. Processes of ruptures and continuities, it seems, co-existed, and produced conflicting memory cultures and history-writing traditions.

In post-Ottoman Iraq, disillusion with the new British colonial regime emerged, from the very early days of the formation of the state already. This, in turn, led some within the political elite deeply imbedded in Ottoman-Turkish culture by education, professional training and often marriage, to attempt to renew their tie with their former “Turkish” rulers, most notably around the fate of the province of Mosul. This talk explores the variety of responses in memory production, where the Ottoman past was domesticated (Lowenthal 1996) so as to respond to political concerns of the present day, in a context of strongly divided loyalties.

### **Bio**

Aline Schläpfer is Assistant Professor at the University of Basel (Department of Near and Middle Eastern Studies), with the Swiss National Science Foundation-Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship. After a postdoctoral fellowship that brought her to the American University of Beirut and Princeton University, she worked at University of Geneva. She is the author of *Les intellectuels juifs de Bagdad. Discours et allégeances (1908-1951)* (Brill 2016), and a number of articles dealing with the history of Jews in Arab lands, nationalism, history of minorities, and the study of Ottoman imprint in Arab spaces.