



**European cultural diplomacy and Eastern Christianity in Syria and Palestine:  
A connected history in Late Ottoman times and the British Mandate**

**14-15 May 2020, Room 3,  
AUn Research Committee**



## **Provisional Program**

### ***Alphabetical order***

**Hani J. Bawardi** (University of Michigan)  
**The Arab Orthodox Society**

In October, 1922 the First Conference of the Arab Orthodox Society convened in the city of Nazareth in northern Palestine headed by Salim Qawar. The timing of this conference was critical in two respects: For one, this gathering took place amid the attempts to tie the loose end of WWI by the British and French allies, who sought to cement their hold on the region by enshrining provisions of the secret Sykes Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration into the language of the League of Nations. Although the Palestinian population was spared knowledge of these agreements, the educated class, among them Orthodox Christians were beginning against increasing Zionist encroachment with European support. Second, the gathering also was intended to reassert Arab Orthodox displeasure with the general indifference of the Greek Orthodox hegemony over their affairs and needs. This research makes available the only known original papers including the agenda, roster of attendance, and content, relating to this conference. The documents are parts of the Bawardi Manuscript Collection and were accessioned from the original owners among the early twentieth century immigrants to the US from Nazareth.

*Biography*  
<https://umdearborn.edu/users/bawardi>

**Evelien Dierauff** (Tübingen University)

## **The Arab Orthodox Renaissance in Palestine during the late Ottoman years (1908-14): a ‘Saddle Period’ in a Nutshell?**

Dierauff's contribution treats the ‘Orthodox Renaissance’ (al-nahḍa al-urṭūduksiya); a reform movement of local Arab Palestinian Christians who strove to participate in the administration of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem and have a say in its cultural orientation. In specific, it sought to access financial resources in the Patriarchate that was dominated by clerics of Greek origin, and to Arabize its character. The presentation sheds some light on the practical goals, political agendas and instruments of the Orthodox Renaissance movement during the Young Turks’ period (1908-14) - an era of fundamental conceptual shifts and a little ‘Orthodox saddle period’ of its own, I argue - while highlighting the role of some of its leading activists, and the newspaper Filastīn during these years.

### *Biography*

Dr. Evelin Dierauff studied Arabic, Islamic and Jewish Studies at Halle University and Birzeit University/Palestinian Territories and completed her PhD at the Department of Oriental and Islamic Studies at Tübingen University. Currently, she is a research associate at the Priority Programme Transottomanica, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

*Keywords:* French Mandate, Patriarchate of Antioch, Greek Policy, Russia

## **Leyla Dakhli / Angelos Dalachanis (CNRS Centre Marc Bloch Berlin and EFA Athens) Philanthropy and Tea Time during Palestine’s Crucial Years: The Greek Ladies’ Union of Jerusalem, 1937-1950**

The point of departure for this paper is an intriguing but unexploited source: the minutes of the Greek Ladies’ Union covering almost 13 crucial years of Jerusalem’s history: from December 1937 to October 1950. For that period in Jerusalem, women’s voices are rare. In this case, these “ladies” who had created this association along ethnic and national lines back in 1924, formed a place for philanthropy, social gatherings and the exchange of views on communal and other issues. The minutes of their gatherings are bringing to us unheard voices of Jerusalem and the Greek community whose institutional life is almost exclusively linked to the Greek (Rum) Orthodox patriarchate of the city. An analysis of these minutes gives us the opportunity to understand the different strategies women developed to make their views known within their community, to examine their philanthropic activities within and beyond the Greek (Rum) Orthodox charitable universe of the holy city and, most of all, to deal with multiple political developments at different levels during a period which is not only sensitive regarding the future of Palestine but also for the future of the Christian communities of Jerusalem.

### *Biography*

<https://efa.academia.edu/AngelosDalachanis>  
<https://cmb.hu-berlin.de/team/profil/leyla-dakhli/>

## **Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis (University of Cyprus) The Greek “Discovery” of Syria. The 1860 Civil War in Lebanon and Damascus and the Greek Public Opinion.**

Both the 1860 civil war in Mount Lebanon and the massacres of Christians in Damascus and other cities the same year, are widely considered to have ushered a new era in the region, leading to the establishment of the Mount Lebanon Mutassarifate and strengthening the move towards confessionalism in public life. This paper, based on unpublished documents from the Archives of

the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and private collections, as well as articles in the Greek press and literary reviews, aims firstly to explore the image of the various ethnic, linguistic and religious groups of Syria in the Kingdom of Greece during the 1840s-1860s. Were the Christians of the region, Maronites, Greek Catholics and Greek Orthodox, simply considered as unredeemed “Greeks” while their Muslim compatriots, both Sunni and Shia were classified as “Turks”? Or did the Greeks possess a more nuanced and multi-layered conception, allowing a fuller understanding of the complex ethno-confessional map of Syria? The existence of a number of Greeks in the region, in particular in the ports of Beirut and Sidon (Saida) and above all the strong ecclesiastical ties of the local Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch with the Constantinople Patriarchate add wider perspectives to the Greek “discovery” of Syria. The character and “mission” of the Greek Orthodox Church in the region had been debated in particular among Greek consuls and Foreign Office officials who held conflicting views and formulated often contradictory blueprints for the aims of Greek “cultural diplomacy” in Syria. The different shades of opinion were highlighted during the first Greek “humanitarian intervention”, in the summer and autumn of 1860, when several Greek war vessels and ships were sent to Beirut carrying food provisions and providing medical assistance for the needy, while also transporting to Greece a number of local Christian refugees. For the government in Athens the mission aimed to promote an image of strength and efficiency, boosting the prestige of the Greek state in the area, while for Greek journalists and writers it had much wider implications, since it reinforced a feeling of cultural affinity between Greeks of the nation-state and the Christians of Syria.

#### *Biography*

Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis was appointed to the position of Lecturer in Modern Greek History (1453-1909) at the University of Cyprus in 2018. He studied History and Archaeology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (1996-2000), where he completed his MA studies (2000-2003) in Modern and Contemporary Greek History and subsequently he was awarded with honors his doctoral title (PhD) in Modern Greek History for his thesis titled “The Greek Diaspora in Romania. The case study of the Greek paroikia of Braila (c. 1820-1914).” His research interests lie in Modern Greek and Balkan political and social history, the history of diaspora and migration, and the economic and social history of Greece and Southeastern Europe in particular during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis has taught history of Central and Southeastern Europe at the Ionian University (two semesters, 2016-2017, 2017-2018), history of Eastern and Southeastern Europe at the University of Ioannina (2017 spring semester) and historical geography of the Black Sea (modern and contemporary period) at the International Hellenic University (2012-2016). He has participated in many international research projects and worked as an external researcher at the Institute for Historical Research/National Hellenic Research Foundation (2014-2015). He has published a monograph (in collaboration with two other historians). He is the author of 20 papers in Greek and English, in peer-reviewed scientific journals, specialised peer-reviewed edited volumes and conference proceeding, has published 14 encyclopaedia entries and has co-edited two volumes (proceedings of scientific congresses). He has participated in many conferences in Greece and abroad.

**Bernhard Kronegger** (Erfurt University)

#### **The Melkite Church between Latinisation and Arabisation**

The election of Cyrille IX Moughabghab as the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and Alexandria and Jerusalem in 1925 initiated a new era for the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. His predecessor Demetrius I Qadi had initiated radical reforms within the Melkite Church that were aimed at modernising its structure and modus operandi. Moughabghab focused his attention on pushing back on – what he conceived as – the increasing Latinisation of his church, cancelling many initiatives of his predecessor. At the moment of Moughabghab’s ascension to the Patriarchal Seat about half of the episcopacy of the Melkite Church had received their education in the Jerusalem based Seminary of Saint Anne, while the other half had received a more traditional formation in one of the three monastic orders of the Melkites.

The Seminary of Saint Anne – led by the Latin Order of the White Fathers – became the main target of Moughabghab’s efforts to undo the work of Patriarch Cadi. His attempts to suppress the Seminary and its former students were however hindered by canon law. As a Latin Institution the Seminary itself did not fall under his jurisdiction, just as all the former students who had attained the rank of a bishop could not simply be removed by their patriarch. The only exception was to be found in Mgr. Antoine Farge who – after his consecration as bishop – had been named the Patriarchal Vicar of Egypt and Sudan in 1922. When Patriarch Moughabghab decided to suppress this function and recall Mgr. Farge to Damascus his course of action initiated an intervention of the Congregation for the Oriental Church. The enquiry carried out by the Congregation revealed a dense network of conflicting interests that were attributed to the quarrels within the Melkite Church.

The proposed paper will focus on the sources that resulted from the work of the Congregation for the Oriental Church and the Apostolic Delegations of Egypt and Syria to discern the methods, potentials and limits of intervention by the Holy See vis-à-vis the Melkite Church in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. Special attention will be given to the presentation and use of cultural and religious stereotypes within the argumentative discourse of the church hierarchy of the Melkite and Latin Catholic Churches. Thus, the paper hopes to provide new insights into the complex relations between the Holy See and one of its Uniate churches within the context of the struggle for religious and political independence.

*Biography*

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Bernhard\\_Kronegger](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Bernhard_Kronegger)

**Lora Gerd** (St Petersburg University)

#### **Russian church policy in Syria from the 1840-s to 1914**

Since the early 1840-s Syria and Palestine become areas of special attention from the Russian government in the frames of the Eastern Question. Beginning with the first mission of Porfirii Uspenskii in 1843 direct relations with the Patriarchate of Antioch are established. Apart of the traditional annual donations, a school in Beirut received regular financing from Russia. In 1848 a dependence of the Patriarchate was founded in Moscow, providing the delivery of solid sums of money for the church of Syria. The Russian politicians in general aimed at supporting the Arabic clergy against the Greek hierarchy, though preserving good relationship with the latter was constantly regarded of great importance. Another trend was the patronage over groups of Greek-Catholics willing to adopt Orthodoxy. With the foundation of the Imperial Palestine Society in 1882 a network of Russian schools for Arab children in Syria and Palestine was created. The rising national self-consciousness of the Arabs allowed the Russian policy to enthrone an Arab Patriarch in Damascus in 1899. Since then the material aid for the church of Syria increased greatly, followed by direct political influence in the local affairs. The peak of this tendency was the visit of Patriarch Gregory to Russia in 1913. WWI and the revolution in Russia in 1917 put an end to Russian political and material support of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Compared to other regions of the Middle East, the ‘soft power’ of Russian church policy in Syria till WWI was most successful.

*Biography*

<https://iib-ac.academia.edu/LoraGerd>

**Maria Litina**

#### **Church and politics in Jerusalem: the case of Patriarch Cyril II (1845-1872)**

The paper follows the career of Cyril II as Patriarch of Jerusalem from his election to the Patriarchal throne (1845) until his deposition (1872) and death (1877) in the wider historical, ecclesiastical and political context. It examines the major events that marked his patriarchate, focusing on his election (and subsequent deposition) by the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, his response to the pressures of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the leaders of the Greek Community in Constantinople,

and Russia concerning the schism with the Bulgarian Church, the demands of the Arab-speaking Orthodox flock in Palestine, the election of the abbot of the Monastery of St Catherine in Sinai, the Patriarchal estate property in Russia and Romania, the claims by other Christian denominations of rights over the Holy Land. The paper closes with an assessment of his legacy in the decades and centuries that followed to the present.

*Biography*

<http://cas.bg/en/cas-former-fellows/maria-litina-310.html>

**Sarah Irving** (Edge Hill University)

**The Syriac Community and the Dead Sea Scrolls: claim and counter-claim in Palestinian cultural diplomacy**

In 1947, a shepherd in the hills north of the Dead Sea visited a contact in Bethlehem, a dealer of antiquities to foreign visitors, offering fragments of written material. The dealer, a member of the Syriac community, was unsure of the items' value and began a series of enquiries which followed Syriac networks including the then Metropolitan of Jerusalem, Athanasius Samuel, and another Bethlehemite Syrian Orthodox, the scholar Stephan Stephan at the Palestine Archaeological Museum.

Despite initial scepticism from Stephan and others, the fragments were the first finds from the now globally famous Dead Sea Scrolls, and ever since have been surrounded by rumours, ownership claims and counter-claims, and controversy. Inextricably entwined in these has been the Palestinian Syriac church, both ordinary members and its highest hierarchy, in a pattern of involvements which link this small Christian community with the creation of knowledge in and about Mandate Palestine, the fate of the community's members during the Nakba, and internal competition for ownership of valuable resources which pitted individual against leadership claims in a community fragmented by the 1947-49 conflict.

In this paper, I reconstruct the hitherto ignored role of members of the Syriac community in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, examining the ways in which the parts they played were informed by their status as Christians, scholars, religious leaders in late Mandate Palestine. As a counterpoint to this, the case also highlights how the needs of the community – particularly in the wake of the Nakba – were tied to a kind of cultural diplomacy by Mar Samuel in ways which sought to frame the Syriacs of Palestine as refugees, as Christian Palestinians, and as owners and valid beneficiaries of the region's archaeological heritage. I argue that the concept of cultural diplomacy enables us to elucidate the community's role, both as a target of such diplomacy by European and American scholars, and as an aspiring player in this field in an attempt to raise awareness and funds for needy Palestinian Christians.

*Biography*

Sarah Irving is currently a postdoctoral research fellow at Linnaeus University, Sweden, and will be taking up a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at Edge Hill University in January 2020. Her PhD, at the University of Edinburgh, focused on knowledge creation amongst a small group of Palestinian Christians during the Mandate period, and her subsequent research has primarily concerned the role of local labourers, especially women, in archaeology in Late Ottoman Palestine. She is the author of a number of academic and non-academic books and articles on Palestine and other areas of the Middle East.

*Keywords:*

Syriac; Syrian Orthodox; Dead Sea Scrolls; archaeology; Nakba.

**Konstantinos Papastathis** (University of Thessaloniki and Leiden University)

**Cultural Diplomacy, Church Politics, and Nationalism in early Mandatory Palestine: the case of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church**

The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem is independent and ranked fourth among other Orthodox Church institutions. Since the Ottoman conquest of Palestine (1517), it was closely linked to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, which had a great say in the appointment of its head and mediated on its behalf to the Porte. At the same time, the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre was established as the ruling authority of the Church of Jerusalem. In practice, this reform meant the implementation of the monastic pattern of organizational operation of the Patriarchate.

This restructuring produced a two-fold effect. First, the gradual Hellenization of the Patriarchate, in the sense that its staffing by clerics coming from, or being closely related to, Constantinople paved the way to the Greek dominance in parallel to the Greek nation-building process. On the other hand, the indigenous parochial clergy and laity were excluded from the Church's governance, which in turn led to the gradual construction of a distinctive Arab Orthodox identity, defined along ethnic lines through its opposition to the 'foreign' Greek hierarchy. In particular, the Arab Orthodox side with Russian support claimed the laicization of the communal power structures, the co-management of the finances and properties, the gradual removal of the foreign Greek hierarchy and the subsequent takeover of ecclesiastical power by the indigenous Orthodox. However, due to the central place of Helleno-Orthodoxia for the development of Greek nationalism, i.e. the alleged linear relationship between Greek national idea and the Orthodox Church, the Arab demands were demonized by the Greek clergy, who treated them as an attempt to corrupt religious purity, which was identified with Greek dominance per se.

Starting from late nineteenth century, the controversy between the two poles has taken various formulation in accordance to the inter-religious, and the political context. In brief, any crisis within the Greek Brotherhood between opposing factions seeking power, or any structural change in the political landscape (e.g. Young Turks' Revolution) worked as an opportunity for the Arab laity to put forward its claims, and to attempt intervening in the power game to serve its own ends. In this regard, the regime change after the end of the First WW marked by all means a new stage in their relations.

The transition period from the Ottoman withdraw from Jerusalem to the establishment of the British rule in Palestine was very critical for the Jerusalem Orthodox Church. On the one hand, the rule of Patriarch Damianos was contested by a powerful opposition within the Brotherhood, which was supported by Athens' Government and the powerful Greek ecclesiastics of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Alexandria and Athens. On the other hand, the Arab laity sided with Damianos, looking forward to compensate his allies and accept their claims, and at the same time put pressure to the new Administration for upgrading their status both at a political and religious level. In conjunction to these, the huge debt of the Patriarchate, which led it at the threshold of bankruptcy and the danger of losing its real estate property, made the resolution of the problem even more difficult for the new authorities. Not to mention that the military administration had no clue at that time neither of the social stakes and the political effects of religious policy making in the Holy Land, nor of the thin lines of ecclesial balance of power and the give and take process between the various sides involved.

The paper attempts to contextually sketch out the historical course of events, paying special attention on the religious policy agenda of the new authorities, as well as the diplomatic and cultural factors influencing the decision-making process. Moreover, the paper critically assess the political connotations of the dispute between the hierarchy and the lay community within the framework of the respective Greek as well as Palestinian nation-building process. Last but not least, it elaborates on the legal aspect of the controversy, and how this was related to the power struggle between religious institutions with conflicting interests. Besides the published state records, the church documents and the secondary literature, the paper builds on primary sources from the British National Archives, the Greek Foreign Ministry, the Israel State Archives, and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The general research questions to be addressed are:

1. What was the character of the controversy between the side of Patriarch Damianos and the internal opposition within the Greek Brotherhood?
2. How did it relate to the overall dispute between the religious hierarchy and the Arab Orthodox laity?
3. What was the stance of the political actors involved (both internal and external), and which were the factors that influenced their policy making?

Overall, the paper suggests that the internal church crisis under examination was the starting point of a new phase in the long-term controversy between the Greek clergy and the Arab Orthodox. While under the Ottoman rule it formed a local issue, for which the central authorities were indifferent taking the side of the Greek religious elites, it became an important domestic question, though not a pivotal one, after the occupation of Palestine by the British. The question, being related to the administration of the holy places for which a number of external as well as internal actors were involved, might have partially influenced the bargaining for the future status of Palestine and the possible role of foreign states (i.e. France, Greece, Vatican, etc.) to its governance. It might, therefore, have a negative effect on the overall policy planning of the British on their new zone of control.

The article is divided into two main parts. In the first one, an outline of the historical background of the question is provided with emphasis on the social and religious stakes as well as on the distinct political goals of each agent. In the second part, I examine contextually: a) the patriarchal crisis that was strongly influenced by the question of the centralized operation and the Greek control of the institution; and b) the strategies adopted by the various sides in order to get hold of religious power. The issue under discussion is viewed as an articulation of the endogenous and exogenous aspects of Church ruling: on the one hand, it is perceived as a power game between antagonistic ecclesiastics with diverse backgrounds, who promoted distinct interests, but at the same time were representing a sense of common institutional belonging as proponents of an invented tradition of an imagined national superiority; on the other hand, it is elaborated as the outcome of the activation of the indigenous Orthodox element, which claimed the respect of its rights on its religious heritage and on the administration of the Christian institution. Last but not least, the British authorities, which had to intervene in the affair in order to carry out their wider colonial objectives, played a role of special importance. The British stance was determined by the historical particularities of the region as well as by their diplomatic priorities. In conclusion, an overall assessment of the affair is made, defining the outcomes of the patriarchal crisis as well as indicating the motives of governmental policy and its reception by the interested parties.

#### *Biography*

Dr. Konstantinos Papastathis is an assistant professor at the department of Political Science of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH). He is also involved in the research project: 'CrossRoads: European cultural diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine' at Leiden University. He has studied theology, philosophy and political science at AUTH and K.U. Leuven. He has worked as a research fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2011-13), and the University of Luxembourg (2013-2018). His main research interests involve politics and religion, church history, as well as Middle Eastern studies. He currently works on the interaction between religion and the radical right in Europe, as well as on the modern and contemporary history of Middle East Christianity. He has contributed in peer-reviewed journals (*Religion, State and Society*; *Politics, Religion and Ideology*; *Middle Eastern Studies*; *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*; *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*; *Jerusalem Quarterly*; and others), as well as in collective volumes.

**Sotiris Roussos** (Cemmis)

#### **The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and survival strategies of Christian Communities in Greater Syria: a comparative approach**

Millet system compartmentalized religious communities into different sociopolitical environments under the overarching Ottoman imperial realm. However state transformation and crisis and global re-allocation of political and economic power led to exacerbation of ethnoreligious conflicts. Facing with the collapse of the Ottoman imperium and the threat of extinction, the Greek Orthodox, Assyrian, Chaldean and Syrian Orthodox communities developed four survival strategies. The first was that of co-optation with the state authorities, the second, that of the protection of the Great Powers, the third that of armed resistance and the creation of autonomous enclaves and the last that of integrating themselves into Arab nationalism, lowering the banner of religion and becoming strong advocates of Arab nationalism encompassing Muslims and

Christians, alike. The paper is aiming at presenting a comparative approach of these strategies in the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the formation of the Mandates.

*Biography*

<https://pedis.uop.gr/?faculty=sotiris-roussos>

**Dimitris Stamatopoulos** (University of Thessaloniki)

**Unholy loans, Holy Banking: the issue of the debt of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in the 19th c.**

The Archives of the Holy Sepulchre Metochion which the Patriarchate of Jerusalem maintained at Istanbul is an invaluable source of information for the Jerusalem patriarchate's history. Naturally the Metochion's pivotal importance in organizing the patriarchate's interests is reflected in the level of its influence: through the centuries, the Metochion sought to fill the role of a powerful political center for the empire's Orthodox in its very heart and, indeed, geographically close to the Constantinople patriarchate at the Phanar.

The bulk of the Archives' documents was transferred to Greece after 1974. One section, however, was transferred to the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the Princeton University Library.

The paper will focus on the majority of the documents of this section consisted mainly of bonds concerning the loans which the representatives of the Metochion received from prominent members of the Greek Orthodox community as well as from some rich Jewish bankers in Jerusalem. Although someone can find in the Archive many bonds edited since the end of the 18th century, I will deal with the those edited during the years of the Patriarch Cyril II (1845-1872) who successfully tried to confront the problem of the debt of the Patriarchate especially through the renting of the estates belonged to the Patriarchate in Moldavia and especially, Bessarabia. My interpretational approach will focus on this possible relation between the profits of the Patriarchate from the exploitation of the real estate and the use of debt as mechanism of covered banking activities.

*Biography*

<https://www.uom.gr/en/ds#undefined1>

**Panagiotis Tzoumerkas** (University Ecclesiastical Academy of Thessaloniki)

**The Patriarchate of Antioch and Greek politics in the years 1940-1945.**

**The re-emergence of Russia and the conflicting interests of the mandate forces**

The work, as its title states, focuses primarily on the actions of the Greek government and Greek foreign policy in general during World War II, with the aim of maintaining its influence on the Patriarchate of Antioch mainly through financial aid. and the influence of the Patriarchate's hierarchs in her favor. It will be shown that this effort is further enhanced by the fact that Russia appears in the region at this time in its Soviet form, but with the eyes of Tsarist Russia, seeking to gain a foothold in the Middle East. Things are complicated for the Greek government and by the fact that the conflicting interests of the French and Great Britain delegates are in conflict, with France assisting the activity of the Soviet presence for to reduce the influence of Great Britain in the region, while Britain is making every effort to prevent such a Russian engagement that would endanger its major geo-strategic and economic interests. Another factor that was important to the success or otherwise of the Greek policy towards the Patriarchate of Antioch were the aspirations of hierarchs of the Patriarchate and their rivalries, managed by the French policy to promote Russian-Soviet interests and aspirations in the Middle East.

The various documents of the Greek diplomats and special envoys in the region for on-the-spot consideration of the situation show their "anxiety" for Russia's appearance in the region and the negative role it could play in the Patriarchate's relations with other Orthodox Churches and with Greece. As Greece's existing official correspondence shows, a small force in the region could not

play an important role or have a major impact on developments. With its actions and attitude, it served those forces that did not want the Russian presence in the region to be strengthened, and its policy mainly served a cultural, confirmation of the historical past and the presence of a Hellenistic and Byzantine world in the region. which Greece considered to be the sole heir.

*Biography*

<https://aeath.academia.edu/PanagiotisTzoumerkas/CurriculumVitae>

**Sary Zananiri** (Leiden University)

### **Transcendence and Transformation: Iconography, Orthodoxy and the Forging of Modern Visual Culture**

The late Kamal Boullata (2009) argued that iconography was central to the development of Modern Palestinian art. Indeed, iconography can be seen as having many ramifications for Palestine visual culture, but more broadly, studying the development of the field engenders new cultural understandings of the politicised networks Orthodoxy extending well beyond the geographies of Palestine. This paper seeks to examine the role of iconography and post-iconographic practices as it pertains to Palestinian cultural diplomacy, the development of the art market, nationalist contestations of religious spaces and the ways in which iconography is transformed and secularised to bolster regional nationalism through the prism of Orthodoxy.

Firstly, this paper considers the role of iconography in proffering a mode of Palestinian cultural diplomacy. The development of the Jerusalem School of iconography and associated industries of iconography, particularly the production of proskynetaria, can be seen on the one hand as an indigenous response to the local art market, but on the other, it is part of the mechanism by which Palestinians presented Palestine to the world. The industry can be seen one of the ways Palestinian cultural producers actively engaged with the outside world.

Secondly, in considering the developments of iconographic and post-iconographic practices, this paper will relate them to the context of Orthodox networks and their impacts in Palestine, particularly the fractious politics of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. Recent analyses of icons undergoing conservation work in Palestinian private collections shows there was a practice of overpainting. This process of overpainting removed Greek texts and replaced them with Arab texts and vice versa, as well as similar processes that 'de- and re-ethnicised' peoples' features to look more Arab or Greek. The contentious territorialism that marks Patriarchate politics appears to have extended to cultural realm in the claiming of icons themselves and, implicitly, the ethnicities of the holy likenesses that they depict, making nationalist claims on the rights to spiritual capital visually.

Finally, this paper considers the role of iconography in shaping modern painting practices. Comparing both Palestine and Greece, it considers the ways in which artists, trained as iconographers, came to make 'secular' artwork. It will specifically seek to ground these shifts in visual culture considering the role of Ottoman decolonisation in generating Greek nationalist responses to the Greek War of Independence and Palestinian nationalist responses to the shift from Ottoman to British rule. In doing so, it will look at the ways in which visual culture memorialised such nationalist responses utilising the language of iconography to lend legitimacy to nationalist ambitions.

*Biography*

Sary Zananiri is an artist and cultural historian. His interests sit at the intersection of religion, colonialism and visual culture with a focus on the ways in which social and cultural histories can explicate the political. He completed his PhD at Monash University looking at the confluence of 19th-century Western colonial imaging of the Palestinian landscape and Zionist narrative. He works on the NWO project 'CrossRoads: European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine 1918-1948' led by Dr Karène Sanchez as well as the Netherlands Institute for the Near East as the Frank Scholten Postdoctoral Researcher.

*Keywords:* iconography, post-iconographic practices, Orthodoxy, secularisation, nationalism

Anthony O'Mahony (BlackFriars College, Oxford)

**The Latin and Eastern Catholic churches during the British Mandate in Palestine: a study in church-state relations in comparative perspective with the Mandatory power in Syria until the end of the inter-war period (Tba)**



*Franck Scholten collection (NINO, Leiden)*