

Tuesday, 24 January 2017, 11:00-12:30

LAURENT DISSARD (University College London)

“Arapgir’s ‘Culture of Memory’ in Eastern Turkey and the Presence-Absence of Ottoman Armenians”

The town of Arapgir in Eastern Turkey has recently embarked upon ambitious renovation projects in an effort to attract visitors. By restoring its Ottoman architectural heritage and promoting other cultural and natural assets, the municipality is “giving a direction” to the town and encouraging tourism, while simultaneously reinventing its identity as the nation turns more and more to its memories of Ottoman culture. In this presentation, I first examine Arapgir’s particular „Culture of Memory“ and later describe the absence-presence of the town’s Ottoman Armenian past within this broader push to reinvent itself. In the end, I discuss the simultaneous exposure and erasure of Ottoman Armenian heritage in Turkey today by examining Arapgir’s „restored“ Armenian cemetery.



Laurent Dissard is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Advanced Studies at University College London. After completing his PhD in Near Eastern Studies at UC Berkeley, he held a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania Humanities Forum. He is currently working on two book manuscripts. *Submerged Stories* (forthcoming at IB Tauris) discusses the politics of the past in Eastern Turkey and asks whose past is worth rescuing and whose history remains submerged? *A Nation Under Construction* (under consideration with MIT Press) takes the mega-dam built at Keban in the 1960s to examine the politics and poetics of infrastructural development in Turkey. It tells the interconnected stories of US scientists and European engineers, newly trained Turkish politicians and technical experts, anti-dam activists and human-rights NGOs Kurdish and Alevi internally displaced families, who together construct and contest Turkey as a nation during and after the Cold War.

