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DMG

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The Orient Institute in Beirut and Istanbul

The Orient Institute, with its centre in Beirut and a branch in Istanbul, is the only German research institution in the field of Near Eastern and Islamic Studies situated in the Middle East. Its aim is to undertake, initiate and support research in all fields of Oriental studies, particularly those focusing on its host countries, Lebanon and Turkey. Its objectives have always been broad, ranging from linguistic studies on Arab regional dialects via historico-philologic research on Muslim theology and Classical Arabic, Persian and Ottoman/Turkish literatures up to developments in contemporary thought and intellectual movements. In recent years the study of the dynamics conditioning contemporary Near Eastern societies, particularly the rebuilding process in Lebanon and the challenge of Turkey's integration into Europe, have occupied a central position within the Institute's research projects.

The initial task of the Institute at the time of its foundation was to promote basic research in the fields of Arabic, Turkish, and Semitic language studies, Islamic studies, and the study of the Christian Orient. Since then Oriental scholarly work on the region has shifted in focus and expanded significantly in contents and method. Besides traditional philological and historical work, which is continued, the Institute today also hosts scientific activities ranging from social anthropology, political and social sciences to methodologies of modern literary criticism.

The Orient Institute pursues diverse research projects supervised by the director and by fellows of the Institute. In addition, it provides visiting researchers and students with scientific, documentary, administrative and accommodation services. Research results are regularly presented in public lectures given in English, French or Arabic as well as in the framework of conferences and symposia which are organized by the Institute in order to enhance the scientific communication between Lebanese and Turkish colleagues and their counterparts abroad. They are also presented summarily in the Institute's yearbooks, the *Beiruter Blaetter* and the *Istanbul Almanach*.

History and Locations

The Institute, established in 1961 in Beirut by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (DMG), was to serve as a regional base for Oriental studies. Its founding director, Prof. Dr Hans R. Roemer, in choosing Beirut as the location, was led by the conviction that 'the experiences which have been made in previously founded institutions, and the flourishing of Oriental Studies at German universities in the past years, have made it imperative to establish a permanent "embassy" in one of the cultural capitals of the Orient.' His choice proved to be wisely taken; the Institute was to flourish during the following fifteen years, until the Lebanese Civil War made work in the city more and more difficult and eventually impossible.

The Institute continued to function even during the Civil War until in 1987 its German staff was forced to leave the town due to the beginning hostage crisis. Leaving a number of faithful Lebanese staff members behind in Beirut, the German researchers moved to Istanbul. Here they established themselves in an apartment in the quarter of Cihangir, which was initially meant to be no more than a temporary refuge. However, since the war continued the provisional refuge in the course of time consolidated itself, developing into an active branch for Turkish, Ottoman and Central Asian studies. When in 1994, finally, the Beirut centre was re-

opened and part of the German scientific staff returned to Lebanon, the Istanbul branch proved vital enough to subsist. It subsequently gained standing in its academic environment through long-term research projects initiated together with European and Turkish partners as well as international symposia on various topics. In view of these structural achievements and in view of the dimensions of its library – highly estimated by local and foreign researchers specialized in Ottoman and Turkish Studies – the German Government in 1998 decided to establish the Istanbul centre as a permanent branch of the Orient Institute.

The Beirut branch of the Institute is situated in a mid-19th-century mansion erected by a prominent Beirut family on a vast garden plot in Zokak al-Blat, which was then one of the emerging suburban quarters of Beirut. Today this quarter has become a traditional Shi'fi residential area right next to the newly rebuilt city centre of the Lebanese capital. In Istanbul, the Institute occupies four stories in an apartment building in Cihangir, not far from Taksim square and overlooking the Bosphorus.

Current Status and Library

The Institute has always aimed at presenting the achievements of German and international scholarship to Arab colleagues and academic institutions and thus to enhance the relations between German and European scholars and their Arab counterparts. Today this task has been widened to encompass similar work in Turkey.

Apart from the director and the library staff, four research fellows are working at the Institute in Beirut and three others in Istanbul. A number of cooperators, whose work is financed by the European Community and various scientific foundations, have joined them so as to make interdisciplinary work and long-term research projects possible. The Institute grants three annual scholarships for PhD students to continue their studies at the Institute and benefit from its infrastructure. The Institute also offers internships for young graduate students (e.g. in library work, publication projects and research).

The most important asset of the Institute is its library, which contains approximately 120,000 volumes in Beirut and 25,000 in Istanbul. Since the foundation of the Institute in 1961, the most important books and periodicals published in Beirut and in other centres of the Arab world (as well as later in Turkey) have been accessioned. Although the Institute does not have a manuscript collection, it has had the opportunity to buy a number of private libraries and collections so that the library stock may include a great number of volumes published well before the 60s. The Arabic and Turkish collections are complemented by literature in European languages on the fundamental topics of orientalist research.

Both libraries in Beirut and Istanbul are open to the public and attract a great number of local readers. The Institute is currently computerizing its collection and planning to make the catalogue accessible on the Internet.

Projects

Projects carried out at the Institute and/or pursued by members of the Institute in cooperation with partner institutions are as follows:

- 'Vie commune – mémoire partagée – Le Liban laboratoire de la Méditerranée' (on collective memory; in cooperation with CERMO, Beirut);
- 'Le nationalisme turc face à l'Europe' (on culturalist movements and the problem of Turkey's integration into Europe; in cooperation with IFEA, Istanbul);
- 'Cultural Self-assertion of the Palestinians: Survey of Modern Palestinian Poetry';
- (In preparation): 'Zokak al-Blat – a Beirut quarter – its urban structure and its history';
- 'The Beginning of Book Printing in the Arab Near East' (in cooperation with various Lebanese libraries, archives and Monasteries); and
- (In preparation): 'Levant as a paradigm. The co-existence of cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean' (in cooperation with various German and Lebanese universities).

Publications

The two main publication series of the Orient Institute are the *Bibliotheca Islamica* and *Beiruter Texte und Studien*. The *Bibliotheca Islamica* (BI) was established as early as 1926 by Helmut Ritter in Istanbul to facilitate the printing of Arabic text editions prepared by German scholars. The series includes important texts such as al-Ash'ari's *Maqalat al-islamiyyin* and encyclopaedias like al-Safadi's *al-Wafi bi-l-wafayat*. Today editions are prepared by both European and Arab editors. *Beiruter Texte und Studien* (BTS) was established in the early 60s immediately after the foundation of the Orient Institute in Beirut meant to provide a forum for studies in linguistics, history, Islamic theology and Arabic literature authored mainly by the members and fellows of the Institute. Together both series come up to more than 100 published volumes in four languages. By now, three sub-series have been established: *Türkische Welten*, *Iranische Welten* in Istanbul and *Christlich-orientalische Welten* in Beirut.

The Institute produces an annual periodical, the *Beiruter Blätter*, presenting short academic and journalistic articles in German and English on social and intellectual developments in Beirut and Lebanon and giving an overview of the Institute's annual activities. An analogous yearbook is published under the title *Istanbul Almanach* by the Istanbul branch of the Institute. A number of lectures given at the Orient Institute appear as booklets in the *Zokak el-Blat(t)* series of occasional papers published in Beirut and *Pera-Blätter*, published in Istanbul. Recent book publications of the Orient Institute include, amongst others:

- BTS 75 *Türkische Welten* 5: Tobias Heinzelmann, *Die Balkankrise in der osmanischen Karikatur*. 1999. 290pp.
- BTS 72: Stephan Guth, Priska Furrer, J. Christoph Bürgel (eds), *Conscious Voices. Concepts of Writing in the Middle East*. 1999. XXI, 332pp.
- BTS 69: Thomas Scheffler, Hélène Sader, Angelika Neuwirth (eds), *Baalbek: Image and Monument*, 1898-1998. 1998. XIV, 348pp.
- BTS 67 *Türkische Welten* 3: Günther Seufert, *Politischer Islam in der Türkei. Islamismus als symbolische Repräsentation einer sich modernisierenden muslimischen Gesellschaft*. 1997. 600pp.

- BTS 61: Barbara Finster, Christa Fagner, Herta Hafenrichter (eds), *Rezeption in der islamischen Kunst*. 1999. 332pp. Forthcoming publications include, amongst others:
- BTS 64: Angelika Neuwirth, Sebastian Guenther, Birgit Embalo, Maher Jarrar (eds), *Myths, Historical Archetypes and Symbolic Figures in Classical and Modern Arabic Literature*.
- BTS 74: Carsten Walbinder, Bernhard Heyberger, Albrecht Fuess (eds), *Les Européens vus par les Libanais à l'époque ottomane*.
- BTS 76: Thomas Scheffler (ed), *Religion Between Violence and Reconciliation*.
- BTS 77: Angelika Neuwirth, Andreas Pflitsch (eds), *Crisis and Memory in Islamic Societies*.
- BTS 79: Patrick Franke, *Begegnungen mit Khidr. Quellenstudien zum Imaginären im Islam*.
- BTS 82 *Türkische Welten* 6: Günther Seufert, Jacques Waardenburg (eds), *Turkish Islam and Europe*. ◆

To order publications:

For the *Beiruter Texte und Studien* series:

Franz Steiner Verlag, Postfach 101061,

D-70009 Stuttgart, Germany

franz.steiner.verlag@t-online.de

For the *Bibliotheca Islamica* and the *Beiruter Blätter* and *Istanbul Almanach*:

Das Arabische Buch,

Horstweg 2, D-14059 Berlin, Germany

www.das-arabische-buch.de

For more information on the Orient Institute of the

DMG and for the series of occasional papers *Zokak*

el-Blat(t) and *Pera-Blätter* please contact our

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Prof. Dr Angelika Neuwirth was director of the Orient

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