

XV Convegno SeSaMO

Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale

22-24 giugno 2022



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

TITOLO/TITLE: Catastrophes, religious philanthropy, and state-building in the Interwar Levant

PROPONENTE/I – PROPONENT/s: Philippe BOURMAUD

ABSTRACT (1500 parole/words):

Languages of the panel: English, French

Rationale:

The modern Middle Eastern states have been built on catastrophe and major crises. This notion has been at the centre of a renewed historiography of the Interwar period, articulating philanthropy and state-building processes. This historiography has underlined how international and local philanthropic, missionary or religious actors, in a situation of extreme paucity of resources, have been able to leave their imprint on the post-war reconstruction and reorganization of the Middle East. This historiography has crossed over with another dominant theme, the revisiting of the assumed “clean break” from the Ottoman order at the end of World War I. The latter trend is illustrated both by works on the fading of Ottoman allegiances and the continuities and reverberations of the Ottoman order in post-Ottoman polities.

This panel aims at delineating how religion was mobilized or instrumentalized in these intersecting processes. We want to examine how state institutions were organized as responses to humanitarian emergencies, or how voluntary and denominational / religious organizations took up the functions of these institutions in a region of the world where most ministries of welfare and social affairs developed no earlier than the breakout of the Second World War.

A first line of enquiry regards agendas. State institutions inherited from Ottoman times, such as awqaf and state schools, new state institutions such as the departments and ministries of health, colonial bodies and largely religious voluntary organizations all carried their own agenda, and an understanding of the state and the country formulated in religious terms. How did these agendas channel resources, influence policies, and shape populations? To shed light on this issue, our perspective is to examine what part religion played in constructing the notions that structured these agendas, buttressed state-building and fostered social and geographical differentiation in Middle Eastern societies : nation, social organization, development, national economy.

A second approach has to do with actors. It is commonly said that religious and missionary actors played a dominant part in post-war reconstruction and, from the backstage, in state-building, due to their existing networks and their capacity to centralize resources. Who were the men and, although much more sparsely, women able to play such an influential role? What characteristics - gender indeed, as well as training, social status or job description - proved relevant? What were their family backgrounds and their ties with, on the one hand, earlier missionary network, on the other, donors? What were the connections that counted among these men? And how did they manage religious differences among themselves when devising their strategies?

Our last focus is on methods. The panel will enquire into methods of diagnosis and prioritizing. What part did religious motives play in establishing priorities in relief and humanitarian responses to the ongoing crises? On a larger, non-state-centered plane, what principles of justice and what criteria of efficiency were mobilized to make sense of the critical situation lived in the post-1918 Levant and to guide public action?

Individual abstracts :

Annalaura Turiano: Délégation apostolique, internés italiens et charité transnationale en Égypte (1939-1945)

En 1937, les Italiens en Égypte étaient estimés à 52 462 individus. La plupart résidaient à Alexandrie, et au Caire. Les autres étaient dispersés dans les villes de la région du canal de Suez et, dans une moindre mesure, en Haute-Égypte. Au cours des années 1930, le régime fasciste avait investi une grande quantité d'argent dans les institutions italiennes en Égypte, car il voyait dans les communautés italiennes la possibilité d'affaiblir l'hégémonie britannique et française dans le contexte méditerranéen. Facilité par les conditions d'extraterritorialité garanties par le régime capitulaire, le gouvernement utilisa les résidents italiens et les institutions publiques (écoles, clubs, chambres de commerce) en Égypte pour véhiculer un message fortement nationaliste et impérialiste.

Bien que l'Égypte fût nominalement indépendante de la Grande-Bretagne (depuis 1922), celle-ci contrôlait des secteurs clés et ses troupes stationnaient dans la région du canal de Suez. Le traité anglo-égyptien de 1936 stipulait qu'en cas de guerre, l'Égypte serait placée sous le contrôle militaire britannique. Cette clause entraîna la rupture des relations diplomatiques avec l'Italie pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, créant une situation complexe tant pour les relations entre les gouvernements que pour les Italiens vivant dans le pays africain. Craignant que la communauté italienne ne constitue une cinquième colonne en Égypte, les autorités britanniques adoptèrent une série de mesures restrictives à son encontre à partir de l'été 1940, notamment l'internement de plusieurs milliers de civils et la saisie des biens d'une partie de la communauté.

La Légation suisse fut chargée d'assister les Italiens en l'absence des représentants du gouvernement italien. Toutefois, cette tâche devint difficile à mener en raison de l'affaiblissement des ressources des gouvernements italien et suisse, tandis que les autorités anglo-égyptiennes s'efforçaient tant bien que mal de gérer l'internement. La Délégation apostolique d'Égypte et de Palestine intervint à son tour, en menant des actions de médiation et d'assistance humanitaire sur plusieurs fronts : aide aux internés et à leurs familles, soutien économique aux institutions éducatives confessionnelles, rapatriement des enfants et des adolescents de la Gioventu' Italiana del Littorio all'estero (GILE) bloqués en Italie à cause du conflit.

Cette présentation s'intéresse à l'action assistancielle de la Délégation Apostolique en Égypte et en Palestine pendant la guerre, en s'appuyant principalement sur les archives inédites du pontificat de Pie XII, en particulier sur les fonds des archives de la Nonciature Apostolique en Égypte et, dans une moindre mesure, sur les documents du Secrétariat d'État. Nous nous concentrerons sur la manière dont, pendant une partie du mandat de Mons Hughes (1942-1945), la DA mobilisa un réseau humanitaire transnational entre l'Égypte, les États-Unis et l'Italie en faveur de cette communauté. Que révèle cette "diplomatie de l'assistance" sur la place de l'Église et du catholicisme latin en Égypte ainsi que sur les nouveaux équilibres géopolitiques en Méditerranée orientale ? Notre analyse se concentrera sur les objectifs de la médiation pontificale en Égypte, visant à préserver l'avenir du catholicisme (latin) dans l'Égypte d'après-guerre. Nous réfléchirons plus

largement au rôle de la délégation apostolique dans le développement d'une administration vaticane de la charité soutenue par l'argent nord-américain au Moyen-Orient.

Marie Levant:

Catholic Transnational Networks in Post Wars Middle East. Figures, Methods and Agendas

The renewed historiography of middle-eastern missions over the last few years, drawing on new insights from global, cultural and gender history, has brought a fresh perspective to the previously less studied Catholic missions. This recent scholarship examines, in particular, the actions of missionaries in the humanitarian and beneficence fields. However, the Catholic world operating in the Middle East goes beyond missions, understood in the traditional sense. This paper explores the transnational Catholic networks working for Middle Eastern populations. More specifically, it focuses on an umbrella structure, connected with missions on the ground and local Churches: the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), born between Rome and New York in the mid-1920s. The Pontifical Mission reinforced it after the Second World War, and became its executive agency with offices in Beirut, Amman and Jerusalem.

I will look at the primary actors' profile, training, and approaches, starting with the American officials. I will study how the methods evolved, in terms of fundraising techniques, growing demands for transparency, and the search for greater efficiency, while questioning the American cultural imprint

Finally, if such a structure claims political neutrality relying on the universal character of the Roman Church, one must nevertheless look at the motives and agendas. These dealt less with local and international politics in the wake of reconstruction, the emergence of American power, and later the bipolarisation of the world than with political-ecclesial and socio-political issues –the Christian social presence, for example, and its embedding in nation-building processes.

Philippe Bourmaud:

Competing worldviews? Missionaries, Philanthropy and the State in early-Mandate Syria and Lebanon (1922-1926)

Relief and reconstruction in the mandate of Syria-Lebanon were conducted by colonial, religious and philanthropical actors that diverged on the place of religion.

The French colonial state counted on missions and sectarian organizations to channel aid and social services, while asserting that mandatory states ought to open a space for secular actors. Missionaries and international philanthropies clashed on matters of method: philanthropies increasingly opposed missionary proselytism in the name of humanitarian universalism. Limited mutual trust existed between philanthropies and the colonial state, as the former were assimilated by the latter to non-French protestantism-inspired movements for social reform.

This paper shows that these tensions played out in the delivery of relief and the resettlement of refugees. The acceptance, across the board, of sectarianism as a social structure created a hiatus between the principle of universal delivery of aid and the recruitment of indigenous workers, which was part and parcel of the provision of aid. Resettlement plans were based on interlocked strategical consideration and ethno-religious geographies. If anything, the goals of universal relief, and of development targeting the most fragile communities, consolidated spatial-denominational differentiation.

This paper is based on the archives of the Rockefeller Foundation, Catholic and Protestant missionary institutions, French colonial institutions and international organizations.

PROFILO ACCADEMICO DEL/DELLA/DEI/DELLE PROPONENTE/I – SHORT BIO OF PROPONENTS

Philippe Bourmaud is an assistant professor at the Université Jean Moulin - Lyon 3. His research focus on missionary history and the history of health in the Middle East, with a focus on Palestine and Turkey. He currently researches missionary dealings with alcohol in the Middle East in the modern era.

Marie Levant is Fellow of the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, and collaborates with the Institut français du Proche-Orient in Beirut. Her research interests include Vatican diplomacy in the early 20th century, ecumenical and interdenominational issues, and the religious dimension of modern humanitarianism. She has been a post-doctoral researcher at Sorbonne University, a member of the Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna, and a resident researcher at the École française de Rome.

Annalaura Turiano holds a PhD in Middle Eastern studies from Aix-Marseille University. She is an affiliated researcher with IREMAM and a member of the research network EGY-Class (CNRS/Cedej) and the research project CrossRoads. She has been a postdoc fellow at École française de Rome and at Freie Universität. Her research interests include missionary education, trans-Mediterranean migrations, gender, and philanthropy in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean. She currently co-coordinates the project “Philanthropic action and development in the Middle East: actors, practices and expertise (20th -21st centuries)”, funded by the IFAO.

INDIRIZZO/I EMAIL/EMAIL ADDRESSES:

philippe.bourmaud@univ-lyon3.fr

marielevant@yahoo.fr / marie.levant@posteo.net

annalauraturiano@gmail.com