



Guest Lecture

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Ottoman Roots Agriculture and Displacement at the End of Empire

UCD School of History/Scoil na Staire UCD

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17.00

Fruit trees planted in the Ottoman Empire during the late nineteenth century may have lived for decades (and even over a century) after the polity they grew up in disappeared from maps. This presentation takes these organisms and markers of time as a starting point for thinking through the relationship between fruit production and displacement of people at the end of empire. Figs of Aydın, grapes of İzmir, hazelnuts of Giresun, olives of Ayvalık, oranges of Mersin, and pistachios of Antep all offer variations on these themes, as most of the people who planted the trees left—or were forced to leave—and newly settled people—many of them refugees themselves—came to care for these living relics of the past. Alongside the violence of the end of empire, the history of trees and displacement also sheds light on efforts to undo the economic networks of the Ottoman Empire and reformat them within the spatial confines of the newly formed Republic of Turkey. Relying on agronomical reports, state archival records, and memoirs, the presentation traces how efforts at national division—whether through economic protectionism or calling a nut a different name—had the unexpected impact of integration, as the ecologies of former Ottoman states and beyond (all the way to California) began to resemble one another. The project thus attempts to offer an ecological history of the end of empire that places displaced people and their tenacious rootedness in the face of uprooting at its center.

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