

PRESS RELEASE

Essen, 27.10.2020

## The Turkishness Contract and the Formation of Turkishness Lecture by Barış Ünlü

Thursday, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2020, 2:00 p.m. via ZOOM

Drawing on the conceptual tools of **Whiteness Studies**, Barış Ünlü presents a historical-sociological model to examine the relations between the historical constitution and contemporary functioning of Turkishness: the socio-genesis of the Turkish nation and state and the psycho-genesis of the Turkish individual; the thoughts and feelings of Turks and the structural privileges and unconsciousness strategies of Turkishness.

What he means by Turkishness is not a bond of citizenship, a cultural identity, or a form of ideological belonging, as in Turkish nationalism. Rather, Turkishness points to certain structures of thought, feeling, ways of acting, strategies, and embodied performances that, for all their differences across lines of class, gender, or ideological belonging, also display a number of important shared characteristics that transcend such lines of differentiation — in other words, **Turkishness as *habitus***.

The roots of Turkishness, he argues, can be traced back to **Turkishness Contract**, a largely unspoken and unwritten agreement amongst the majority of Muslims in Anatolia that took place gradually between 1912 and 1925, the formative years of Turkish nationalism. Yet this contract is not a relic of the past. As the **basic constitution of the Turkish Republic**, unwritten, yet far more effective than anything in writing, the Turkishness Contract has, since the 1920s, defined the norms and rules of fields and institutions, and formed the schemas of thought, feeling, and action of individuals born, raised, socialized, and working within these fields and institutions, making them Turkish subjects. The Turkishness Contract also constitutes a particular “interaction order” that informs and guides countless everyday encounters, between individuals inside the contract and those outside.

**Barış Ünlü** has a BA in Economics and MA in Political Science from Ankara University. He completed his PhD in Sociology at SUNY Binghamton in the spring of 2008. His

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dissertation, entitled “The Genealogy of a World-Empire: The Ottomans in World History”, explores the formation of the Ottoman Empire from a comparative and world-historical perspective. His most recent book is “The Turkishness Contract: Its Formation, Functioning, and Crisis” (in Turkish - Ankara: Dipnot Press, 2018). In February 2017, with a State of Emergency decree, he was expelled from Ankara University, where he had been employed for 17 years, for signing the Academics for Peace declaration. He is currently a Philipp Schwartz research fellow at the University of Duisburg-Essen.

## **SPEAKER**

Barış Ünlü, University of Duisburg-Essen

## **COORDINATION**

Volker Heins, KWI & Academy in Exile

Egemen Özbek, KWI & Academy in Exile

## **PARTICIPATION**

Participation only via ZOOM. Participants can register for the lecture via e-mail to Egemen Özbek ([egemen.oezbek@kwi-nrw.de](mailto:egemen.oezbek@kwi-nrw.de)) by Tuesday, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

Participants will then receive the Zoom link.

## **ORGANISATION**

An event by the [Academy in Exile](#) at the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) in Essen.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

[Event on the KWI website](#)

**We would appreciate the circulation of this press release.**

### **About the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI):**

The Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) Essen, Germany, is an interdisciplinary research centre following the tradition of international Institutes for Advanced Study. In its role as an inter-university institution connecting the Ruhr-University Bochum, the Technological University Dortmund and the University of Duisburg-Essen, the institute works together with researchers and scientists from its neighbouring universities as well as other partners from the federal state NRW and places in- and outside of Germany. Within the Ruhr area, the KWI is a place to share and discuss the questions and results of ambitious research with interested parties from the city and the greater region. Currently, work at the KWI focusses on the following areas: “cultural studies of science and science policy making”, “sociology of literature and culture”, “science communication”, and a “teaching lab”. Projects in the established research fields “culture of participation” and “culture of communication”, as well as individual projects, will be continued. [www.kulturwissenschaften.de](http://www.kulturwissenschaften.de)

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