



Call for Papers

“Ottoman Mobilities and Interactions”

Symposium

13-14 April 2026 Istanbul, Türkiye

Investigating the Ottoman Empire as a dynamic web of circulation in which people, objects, and ideas continually reshaped the imperial fabric.

The British International Research Institutes (BIRI), in partnership with Sabancı University, invite paper proposals for a symposium organised as part of the Ottoman Mobilities and Interactions project.

This symposium posits mobility as a constitutive force in Ottoman history, rather than a passive byproduct of empire. We invite papers that approach the Ottoman world not as a static territorial unit but as a dynamic space defined by connectivity and interaction. Within this vast network, the movement of people, ideas, and objects did not merely unfold across a pre-existing imperial landscape; it actively reshaped it. By examining the interplay between fluid mobility and imperial infrastructures, the symposium invites scholars to explore how flows of commodities, cultural forms, and institutional knowledge mediated governance, generated new social hierarchies, and produced complex trans-imperial entanglements.

The symposium welcomes research from across the breadth of the Ottoman era. From early modern networks of circulation to later transformations in transport and border regimes during the long nineteenth century, it aims to examine how these dynamics reshaped the “Ottoman” experience across regions as diverse as the Balkans, Anatolia, the Mediterranean, the Southwest Asia, and North and East Africa. Drawing on history, art history, anthropology, archaeology, and related fields, the symposium seeks to map the flows that connected the empire internally and linked it to the broader world. Contributors may, for example, examine tensions between the fluidity of movement and the state’s evolving efforts to document, categorise, and control it, or develop empirically grounded case studies that draw on diverse primary sources to situate Ottoman mobilities within broader regional or global contexts.

We invite contributions that engage with, but are by no means restricted to, the following themes:

- **Sacred Mobilities and Interactions:** Pilgrimage routes, missionary networks, religious exile.
- **Material Culture in Motion:** The circulation of manuscripts, luxury goods, archeological objects and artistic styles..
- **Labour and Expertise:** Networks and interactions of businesspeople, merchants, itinerant artisans, bureaucrats, scholars.
- **Displacement and Coercion:** Forced migration, captivity, slavery, refugee crises, and politics of settlement.
- **Governance of Mobilities:** Passport regimes, criminalisation of undocumented movements, and resistance to state control.
- **Technologies of Movement:** Steamships, railways, telegraphs, and other transport infrastructures.
- **Spatial Politics:** Borderlands, inter-imperial porosity and interactions, formation of diasporas.
- **Knowledge and Culture in Transit:** Intellectual mobility and the circulation of ideas, travel writing, translation, the flow and adaptation of literary genres, and the politics of observation.
- **Urban and Rural Flows:** Changing patterns of mobility and interaction between hinterlands and port cities.

Advisory Board

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Practical Details & Submission Guidelines

Symposium Logistics

Date: 13–14 April 2026

Location: Minerva Han, Istanbul, Türkiye

Language: English

Format: In-person only (no hybrid option)

Fees & Funding

Symposium fee: There is no fee to attend or present at this symposium.

Funding: A small amount of funding is available to contribute to the travel, accommodation and subsistence costs incurred by Early Career Researchers presenting at the symposium. Please enquire for details.

Submission Requirements

We invite proposals for **20-minute papers**.

Please submit a single document containing:

- 1. Abstract:** Maximum 250 words
- 2. Biography:** Maximum 150 words
- 3. File format:** .pdf, .docx, .doc, or .odt
- 4. File naming convention:** Surname_Name_OMI2026

Timeline

Submission deadline: 23 January 2026

Notification of acceptance: Late January 2026

Contact

Please send all proposals and enquiries to
ottomanmobilities@biaa.ac.uk

The British International Research Institutes (BIRI) are a network of nine academic schools and institutions operating across more than forty countries. The BIRI are the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA), British Institute of Eastern Africa (BIEA), British Institute for Libyan and North African Studies (BILNAS), British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS), British Institute for the Study of Iraq (BISI), British School at Athens (BSA), British School at Rome (BSR), Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL), and the Egypt Exploration Society (EES)