



Universität  
Basel

## Research Project

### Dissertation Musterle: Coping with Kismet: British and French Life Offices and the Genesis of a Turkish Market for Life Insurance, 1870–1920

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** Dissertation Musterle: Coping with Kismet: British and French Life Offices and the Genesis of a Turkish Market for Life Insurance, 1870–1920

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Geschichte / Neuere Allgemeine Geschichte (Lengwiler)

**Project Website** <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/de/personen/claus-musterle/dissertationsprojekte/>

**Project start** 01.10.2016

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**Status** Completed

"Coping with Kismet: British and French Life Offices and the Genesis of a Turkish Market for Life Insurance, 1870–1920" – This project investigates the activities of British and French life insurers in what constitutes today's Republic of Turkey between 1870 and 1920. Pioneering insurance internationally (Pearson 2012: 67), British composite offices appointed their first agents in Turkey in the early 1860s. Their French rivals arrived later but made, under the aegis of the Union of Paris, all the more significant inroads into this bridgehead market. At the onset of World War I, both countries accounted for more than half of all the life insurers operating in the heartland of the Ottoman Empire. Their influence greatly diminished after the Great War and by the mid-1940s most of the British and French insurance companies had ceased their underwriting activities in the nascent Republic. – With international insurance history still emerging as an independent field of research, it should hardly surprise that the activities of Western insurers in the Turkish market remain by and large unexplored. Both British and French writings are overwhelmingly conceived as general corporate histories and, as such, continue to be framed within a national perspective. Such a rendering has its justifications, but leaves little room for a more nuanced discussion of the complexities of venturing overseas. Not only are in-house accounts bound to remain largely silent on the idiosyncrasies of these markets (Pearson 2004 : 9), they also tend to gloss over the demand side. Within economic and business histories of the late Ottoman Empire and the nascent Republic, life insurance in general and the operations of foreign life insurers in particular have so far received a degree of attention at best congruent with their limited meso-economic importance, both past and present. When not relegated to the margins of more general economic histories (Geyikda1 2011), life underwriting has been subject of a limited number of general studies, scholarly articles, and company histories (see, amongst others: Bask1c1 2002; Koraltürk & Kahya 2009; Kahya 2010; Toprak 2010; Akbulut 2014; Eldem 2015; Özger 2017). – Hier können Sie weiterlesen: <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/de/personen/claus-musterle/dissertationsprojekt/>

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Other funds

**Follow-up Project of...** [4439782 Global Cultures of Risk: Insurance in Non-western Contexts \(1880–1980\)](#)

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