

Press release

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'Texts in Context' - Neue Online-Reihe des ZMO für außereuropäische Quellen in Übersetzung.

Wie wird ein Dialog auf Augenhöhe möglich, wenn wir unsere außereuropäischen Partner*innen in Wissenschaft, Kultur und Kunst wenig bis gar nicht kennen? Die neue Open-Access Reihe 'Texts in Context' des Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient präsentiert unveröffentlichte historische und zeitgenössische Quellen aus den Forschungsregionen des ZMO im Original sowie Übersetzung und verbessert so den intellektuellen Austausch. In der Reihe 'Texts in Context' werden Originaltexte der außereuropäischen Moderne in Deutsch oder Englisch veröffentlicht. Die Reihe stellt unbekannte Primärmaterialien mit Einleitung zu Autor und Entstehungszusammenhang der Quelle vor.

Die Rolle von teuren wie komplizierten Übersetzungen werden im Nord-Süd Dialog häufig unterschätzt. Mit seiner neuen Reihe ermöglicht das ZMO Positionen aus den Regionen direkt kennenzulernen.

Zwei Texte sind bislang erschienen:

No. 1 „History of Those Who Have None. Diaries of Prisoner Ahmad Suwaydan 1991–1992“ Dies sind die arabischen Tagebücher des syrischen Journalisten und politischen Häftlings Ahmad Suwaydan. Mit englischer sowie arabischer Einführung von Dr. Abdallah Hanna und einem Vorwort von Prof. Ulrike Freitag.

No. 2 Reihe „Die Zukunft von der Vergangenheit befreien? Und die Vergangenheit von der Zukunft?“ stellt den Wettbewerbsbeitrag des marokkanischen Philosophen Mohamed Abed al-Jabri für einen Essaywettbewerb von Lettre International im Jahr 1998 in einer kongenialen Übersetzung von Dr. Dieter Merlin vor. Mit Einleitung von Dr. Sonja Hegasy.

In Kürze wird 'Texts in Context' No. 3 von Dr. Stefan Kirmse über das Booklet „The Tatar Poor“ von Konstantin Lavrskii aus dem Jahr 1884 erscheinen. Bei diesem Text handelt es sich um eine ethnographische Studie von ländlich geprägten muslimischen Gemeinschaften.

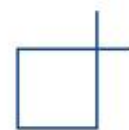
Das ZMO in Berlin-Nikolassee forscht zur Geschichte und Gesellschaft islamisch geprägter Regionen. Gerne stehen Wissenschaftler*innen des ZMO zu einem Gespräch über ihre Quellen und ihre Forschungen vor Ort zur Verfügung.

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Foreword to the Introduction to "Diaries of Prisoner Ahmad Suwaydan"

Ulrike Freitag, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient

This first "text in context" consists of two parts. The main text, provided as an Arabic-language pdf, is the diary kept in prison by Ahmad Suwaydan (18.12.1935 – 29.2.2001). He was a Syrian journalist working for the trade union newspapers who had joined the Ba'th Party in his youth. Although opposed to Communism, Suwaydan became dissatisfied with the conservative turn taken by the so-called "Corrective Movement" of Hafiz al-Asad, who took power in Syria in 1970. Suwaydan thus joined the break-away Democratic Ba'th Party for which he agitated until arrested in 1982. Suwaydan languished in al-Asad's torture chambers and prisons, particularly the one in Saydnaya, until his release in 1994.

During the last three years of his internment, Suwaydan began to write a diary most of which he later passed on to Syrian historian 'Abdallah Hanna. Hanna slightly abridged the text for publication. Suwaydan's diary provides an important political commentary of a once prominent Syrian activist. His notes on the experience in prison, from the disorienting experience of long-term internment to the physical exertions, reflect not only on the dungeons in Syria but mirror the suffering of many Arab (and other) activists. Given the widespread occurrence of political imprisonment and torture in the wider Arab world, it also gives insights into the lives of tens of thousands of political detainees.

The second part is the introduction to this text, here presented both in the original Arabic and an English translation. It situates Suwaydan in his wider contemporary context. The introduction was prepared by Suwaydan's contemporary, 'Abdallah Hanna (b. 1932). Hanna is a Marxist historian of the labour as well as the peasant movements in Syria, and of intellectual life and trends in what Hanna calls the "Arab Renaissance". By this, he means the period often known as *nahda*, roughly between the 1860s and World War I, when a host of different cultural trends and political ideologies developed in the cities of the Arab East.

Hanna's introduction is testimony to the leftist tendency in Arab historiography which has often been overlooked due to its exclusion from official academia in most countries. Although Syria under Hafiz al-Asad and the Ba'th Party era was nominally socialist, official historiography was more informed by nationalism, even if this was inflected with socialist tendencies. Hanna's introduction thus might be of interest to students of Syrian political life, and particularly the leftist movements in the post-independence period, coming, as it were, from a committed Marxist historian.

The ZMO online series Texts in Context presents previously unpublished historical and contemporary sources from the ZMO research regions in original versions and with translation into German or English. The ZMO thus makes available primary materials that reflect important voices and discourses of non-European modernity and whose underlying debates shaped and continue to shape social life and political or religious interactions. Each of the texts published here is introduced by a short essay explaining the contexts and, where possible, the circumstances of their creation and, if known, providing relevant information about the author. A main task of the essay is to present the relevance and significance of the source text presented and to provide references to the relevant fields of research and scholarly debates.

Texts in Context No 1 online: https://www.zmo.de/fileadmin/Inhalte/Publikationen/PDFs/Texts_in_Context/ZMO_TIC_1_2022_suwaydan.pdf

The Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) is the only German research institute devoted to an interdisciplinary and comparative study of the Middle East, Africa, South, South-east and Central Asia from a historical perspective. Current research focuses on the interaction between predominantly Muslim societies and their relations with non-Muslim neighbours. ZMO was founded in 1996 as one of six university-independent, non-profit research centres for research in the humanities. Since 2017 it has been a member of the Leibniz Association.

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