

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Greenwich		
Unit of Assessment: 28 - History		
Title of case study: Building and enhancing public understanding of the histories of the Ottoman Empire and Middle East		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: September 2015 - July 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Michael Talbot	Senior Lecturer in the History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Middle East	01/09/2015 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2015 - December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Through a broad range of public engagement activities, including being BBC/AHRC New Generation Thinker, podcasting, schools sessions, and specialist media consultancy, Talbot's expertise in the history of the Ottoman empire and post-empire Middle East has resulted in 1000s of people of all ages engaging with aspects of Ottoman history, language and sources, often for the first time. His expertise, harnessed to valuable communication skills, have enabled media companies to develop and deliver engaging and accurate content; and specialist organisations to extend the reach of their collections and outputs, while also brokering new working relationships with other organisations. By leading on the diversification of publicly available material for this less familiar body of history both on social media platforms, and with school and college students, Talbot has diversified knowledge, methodological approaches, and access to primary sources for teachers, pupils, historians and interested members of the public in the UK, Europe, Palestine, Turkey and the USA.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Talbot's research ranges widely but deeply across the early modern Ottoman Empire and the modern Middle East and Mediterranean. Rarely for an English-language scholar, he uses sources not only in English, but also Ottoman Turkish, Italian, French, Hebrew and Arabic, and deploys innovative methodologies around visual and material sources and ephemera, across four main areas:</p>		
Ottoman-British relations, c. 1600-1900		
<p>Talbot's research primarily focuses upon diplomatic practice, commercial interactions, and cultural exchanges between the British and the Ottomans between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. Unlike other studies of Ottoman-British relations, Talbot moved well beyond just English-language sources, to highlight the intimate relationship between commerce, finance, and diplomatic practice; and foreground the experiences of British and Ottoman merchants and important changes in legal regimes on land and at sea. [3.1].</p>		
Ottoman maritime history		
<p>Talbot has contributed to the renaissance of Ottoman maritime history through work on Ottoman ideas of political and legal control at sea, with a particular focus on Ottoman responses to domestic and international piracy [3.1, 3.2, 3.6]. In particular Output 3.2 offers a major reassessment of the Ottomans and the Mediterranean in the eighteenth century. This research demonstrates that far from being a passive actor with the growth of increasing domestic and</p>		

international violence in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Ottomans instituted extensive naval and legal reforms to assert their maritime sovereignty.

Imperial and post-imperial images and identities in the Ottoman realms

Talbot's research in the history of changing identities between states and society in the Ottoman empire and post-imperial regions (notably Turkey and Palestine) is methodologically innovative in its use of visual and material sources, especially ephemera, pedagogic materials, postcards and photographs. **Talbot** showed the formal and informal ways in which the Ottoman state responded to new identities; and its attempts to assert its authority in the region. [3.3, 3.5]. Using aerial photographic sources, he has also revealed how the British Empire sought to use new technologies to assert imperial control over Palestine Mandate lands [3.4]

3. References to the research

1. **Michael Talbot** (author), *British-Ottoman Relations, 1661-1807: Commerce and Diplomatic Practice in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul*. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017. ISBN 978-1783272020. <https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/16533/> [REF2 Submission – Identifier 16533]
2. **Michael Talbot** (author), "Protecting the Mediterranean: Ottoman Responses to Maritime Violence, 1718-1770", *Journal of Early Modern History* 21:4 (2017), 283-317. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700658-12342524> [REF2 Submission - Identifier 17570]
3. **Michael Talbot** (author), "Sparks of happenstance: photographs, public celebrations, and the Ottoman military band of Jerusalem", *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 5:1 (2018), 33-66. <https://doi.org/10.2979/jotturstuass.5.1.04> [REF2 Submission – Identifier 21594]
4. **Michael Talbot** (co-author), Anne Caldwell & Chloe Emmott, "Perceiving Palestine: British visions of the Holy Land", *Jerusalem Quarterly* 82 (2020), 50-76. ISSN 0334-4800. <https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/29199/>
5. **Michael Talbot** (author), "The Exalted Column, the Hejaz Railway and imperial legitimization in late Ottoman Haifa", *Urban History* ,42:2 (2015), 246-272. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S096392681400056X>; also: <https://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/15483/>

4. Details of the impact

Talbot's research [3.1 - 3.5] has generated accessible media, social media and educational content, including podcasts, social media events, schools outreach activities and radio and television programmes, and via multiple languages including Turkish, and Arabic. 1000s have listened to and watched **Talbot's** public engagement activities, with the following benefits accruing to diverse groups: from school pupils to media content producers.

Creating compelling and accessible routes into Ottoman history in partnership with content producers

Talbot was one of only ten scholars selected for the prestigious BBC/AHRC *New Generation Thinkers* annual competition ("one of the AHRC's major vehicles for engaging the public with the inspiring research taking place across the UK" [5.1a] Andrew Thompson quote; 5.1d] in 2018-19. Through public talks about British-Ottoman relations [3.1] and Ottoman responses to Mediterranean piracy [3.2] at 2 BBC Radio 3 *Free Thinking Festivals* (10 March 2018; 29–31 March 2019), his research reached substantial live and remote radio/catch-up audiences. His package, "The Ottoman Empire, Power and the Sea" [5.1b] for BBC Radio 3 (11 April 2019) was broadcast in the *Essay* slot which regularly attracts weekly listener figures of 100-150K [5.1c]. NGT content is highly valued on Radio 3 for the "fresh perspectives to our cultural coverage" it brings, and producers are "always looking for ways to integrate it" [5.1a Robyn Read quote].

This has been true of **Talbot's** work, which has featured in two episodes of the *Free Thinking* programme (3 times per week: 12 July and 17 November 2018); and on AHRC/NGT podcast platform, *Hidden Histories*, hosted by Helen Carr (1/12/2020), which has achieved total audiences of 30K between December 2020-present [5.1e].

Commercial media producers have also gained from **Talbot's** "ability to bring the past life with such intelligence, compassion and creativity" across a range of media. Kelly McPherson of Karga Seven Pictures learnt about **Talbot's** maritime research through his podcasting and social media presence and invited him to appear as a subject specialist for the Netflix historical docu-drama *Rise of Empires: Ottoman* (6x60 min. eps: first released worldwide 24/1/2020) [5.2a]. So beneficial to the development and detail of the series was **Talbot's** "unique ability to tell a story and to bring these historic figures and events to life in a way that made them relevant and exciting for a 21st century audience" [5.2b], that he was asked to serve as a series consultant (November 2018-January 2020). The series has proved "extremely successful internationally... So much so, that we're currently in the early stages of a second season": **Talbot** is credited with being "a key part of that success" [5.2b; 5.5 viewer tweets]. Journalists have likewise benefitted from **Talbot's** "deep and independent knowledge... especially his capacity to provide a clear and plain explanation" in providing historical perspectives on contemporary Turkish political events: for example in interviews for Spain's daily newspaper *El Mundo* (Jan-Jun 2019 av. Daily circulation 116K): discussing Boris Johnson's Turkish heritage (December 2019) [5.3].

Deepening engagement with Ottoman histories & sources via social media

Talbot's skill in translating his scholarly research into accessible audio and social media content, has benefitted students and other educators, and members of the general public. As a long-standing producer and contributor of his own research to the *Ottoman History Podcast* [OHP], a bi-lingual (English/Turkish) podcast regularly reaching 9000+ track plays per episode across various platforms (Soundcloud, iTunes). Five undergraduate students benefitted from this expertise in developing their own podcasts, and being interviewed about their experiences in a 'how-to podcast' OHP episode, that gained more than 7000 separate trackplays (2018-19), while the student recordings have had more than 10,000 trackplays/downloads (both in year after release, 2018-19) [5.4].

A broad cross-section of twitter users from around the world have been motivated by **Talbot's** use of his popular Twitter account (@michaeltalbotuk) to engage with his accessible Ottoman history content and educational activities, drawing on sources and approaches explored in Outputs 3.3 and 3.4. Beneficiaries of a week-long 'tweetorial' in the early 20th century Ottoman-Turkish alphabet (25-29/3/ 2020: more than 872 'likes') included those who:

- were inspired to take their studies further, e.g. "your tweets inspired me so much that I started studying Arabic again!" [5.5: Ozpinar, 29/3/20]
- to use the resources in lockdown home-schooling [5.5: Little Alice 26/3/20]
- and to develop bespoke classroom sessions for US middle school teaching [5.5: Antonio, 25 & 26/3/20]

Other beneficiaries reported that **Talbot's** multilingual tweeting of his research-based content "add so much value" to Turkish-language Twitter, making it "a more encouraging and interesting space" [5.5: Osterlund & Srinivasan, 14/5/20]

Brokering relations between professional organisations and local, national and international communities

Talbot's expertise on British-Ottoman relations and 19th and 20th-century Palestine [3.1; 3.4] prompted an invitation to join the management council of the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF: June 2018). In this capacity, **Talbot's** abilities as an ambassador for the organisation are highly valued: "Michael is key to our organisation's development in Greenwich, and in understanding our own history, particularly in the colonial period". He has been invaluable too, for making "his colleagues in other institutions aware of the PEF as an archival resource, which we very much welcome" [5.6a]. The PEF has also benefitted from connections made through **Talbot** to

international organisations; for example, through **Talbot's** involvement in the Palestine-based educational and cultural charity, the A.M. Qattan Foundation's 'Palestine from Above' project public symposium (Ramallah, Dec. 2019). PEF aerial photography archives were brought into new dialogues with the Foundation's public partners in the very territories such material originally surveyed, as well as providing a first publication co-author credit for the two PGR students also involved [5.6b; 3.4].

Talbot has forged sustainable relationships between PEF and the university around teaching, scholarship and public engagement, of growing benefit to both organisations at several levels. These include two UG work placements; invaluable networking connections for two Greenwich PGR students; and public engagement activities, such as 'The Archaeological Origins of Britain in Palestine', a free artefact-handling event staged using PEF collections as part of the 2018 national humanities festival, *Being Human*. Attendees praised the event for enabling engagement with "real artefacts... and materials from the archive", and "showing new facts of a subject I know well" [5.4c].

Amplifying Ottoman histories and sources in the classroom and beyond

Talbot's research has supported educational workshops for approx. 7 primary and secondary schools and FE colleges in greater London, Essex and Kent, based on methodologies for interpreting visual and ephemera sources; and themes of power, nationalism and identity expressed through them [3.3; 3.4; 3.5]. These workshops have increased staff and students' engagement with Ottoman histories and historiographies; and opened up avenues for further learning through presentation of new sources and methodologies. At Our Lady's Catholic Primary School (a single-form entry, voluntary-aided school in Dartford, Kent), 189 KS1-2 pupils and their class teachers, explored Ottoman history topics -- many for the first time -- through the prism of Dartford's 19th and 20th century migrant and industrial histories (October 2018). "*The children learnt to think outside of the box and question the world and their place in it*" as a result of this session; and teachers planned to use the resources provided in subsequent teaching [5.7a].

These workshops have also enabled transformative connections to be made by students with their existing curriculum of study; and to bolster academic confidence and aspirations. At the Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, East Ham, **Talbot's** session with 20 A level students using Output 3.5 fostered deeper engagement with the Ottoman topics already studied as part of their OCR curriculum. After the seminar students felt better able to see their topic from different angles and had acquired new analytical skills [5.7b]:

- "*The talk truly opened my eyes to the complexity and nuances of Ottoman society and drew my focus towards the social aspect of the Empire, rather than exclusively researching its imperial nature*"
- "*this was the first time I have analysis [sic] a source with little contextual knowledge in such detail.*"

Remarkably for a school in a borough ranked 3rd nationally for childhood poverty, and with 88% of the student body from minority ethnic backgrounds, eight of these students subsequently applied to do History at university (a subject less commonly pursued by BAME students); of these, six received successful offers from Oxbridge colleges. All eight used examples explicitly drawn from the session in their personal statements: as the head of sixth form states, the workshop "*clearly had a significant formative impact in their understanding of History as an academic discipline*" [5.7b].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. **AHRC/BBC New Generation Thinkers activities: (a)** [New Generation Thinkers AHRC/BBC website, 2018, press release \(now web-archived at the National Archives\)](#): Quotes from Professor Andrew Thompson, Chief Executive of the AHRC; and from Robyn Read, BBC Radio 3 'Free Thinking' producer; **(b)** Michael Talbot, "[The Ottoman Empire, Power and the](#)

[Sea](#)", The Essay, BBC Radio 3, 11 April 2019; **(c)** BBC Marketing and Audience report for 22.45-23.00 BBC Radio 3 slot, 2016-18, http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio/commissioning/Radio_3_Mon-Fri_2245-2300_FINAL_220818.pdf [for *The Essay* av. listening figures 2018]; **(d)** [New Generation Thinkers Ten Years report, 2020](#); **(e)** *Hidden Histories* podcast (<https://tinyurl.com/nxeiy82v>) 1/12/2020.

2. **a)** [Netflix/Karga Seven Productions, *Rise of Empires: Ottoman* \(2020\)](#), <https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80990771> **(b)** Testimonial Kelly McPherson, Executive Producer, Karga Seven Productions, March 2021 [PDF].
3. [Lluis Miquel Hurtado, Middle Eastern correspondent, *El Mundo*](#), email testimonial March 2021 [PDF]
4. **Podcasts & play statistics:** **(a)** Michael Talbot, Taylan Güngör & Zeinab Azarbadegan, 'Podcasting the Ottomans II', *Ottoman History Podcast* ep. 360, 29/4/2018, <https://tinyurl.com/cfxd5wyx> and 'Exploring the early Ottoman World', ep. 361, 30/4/2018, <https://tinyurl.com/k5z8nh7w>; **(b)** *Ottoman History Podcast* series 7 report, June 2018, with June 2020 update: <https://www.ottomanhistorypodcast.com/2018/06/season-7-seven.html>.
5. [Collated Twitter screenshots, January-July 2020](#). [PDF]
6. [Palestine Exploration Fund](#) **(a)** Felicity Cobbing, Chief Executive, Palestine Exploration Fund, testimonial [PDF]; **(b)** A.M. Qattan Foundation (www.qattanfoundation.org) 'Palestine from Above' symposium, 7/12/2019, news item, <https://tinyurl.com/ykjd2unr> **(c)** *Being Human Festival* event 24/11/2018 details <https://tinyurl.com/353z57wp> & feedback forms [PDF]
7. **Schools/colleges feedback and testimonials:** **(a)** Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Dartford: email feedback from year 5 teacher, 2018 [PDF]; **(b)** Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, East Ham: PDF of students' feedback forms & Jerome Singh, Curriculum Lead History, testimonial, June 2020/February 2021 [PDF]