

### How to read German state archives differently: the case of the "Iraqi traveller" Yūnis Bahrī (ca. 1901-1979) in a global frame

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## How to read German state archives differently: the case of the »Iraqi traveller« Yūnis Baḥrī (ca. 1901-1979) in a global frame

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### Abstract

This essay<sup>1</sup> is the first stage in a larger project that investigates an inter-imperial history of knowledge production through the prism of Baḥrī's activities and networks at various imperial sites in the Dutch, British and German empires as well as the French imperial nation-state. In this essay, I begin by asking how we can tell the history of the nationalist, journalist, author and traveller Yūnis Baḥrī (ca. 1901-1979) – once known in Arab-speaking populations from Europe across the Middle East to South East Asia as the »Iraqi traveller« (Arabic *al-sā'iḥ al-'irāqī*) – by acknowledging his inter-imperial life and activities. Taking the archives of the German Foreign Office as examples, I seek to render these inter-imperial coordinates of his life visible. Previous research on Baḥrī has neglected these inter-imperial connections. Due to this reduction, Baḥrī's case could be described as a dualistic story of »Middle Eastern-German« relations. Thus, he could be a symbol for an ideological proximity of Arab nationalists and National Socialism. In this essay, I want to move away from the civilizational lens underlying such arguments by developing a broader methodological outlook. If Baḥrī's story

<sup>1</sup> The research for this paper has been generously funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) within the framework of the Research Group 955 »Actors of Globalization«. I am grateful to both reviewers, Ulrike Freitag and Peter Wien, for their comments. I also wish to thank Sebastian Conrad, Andreas Eckert, Kerstin Stubenvoll, Nikolay Kamenov and Dolf-Alexander Neuhaus of the DFG research group as well as Heike Liebau, Larissa Schmid, Regina Sarreiter and Anandita Bajpai of the ZMO-research group »Trajectories of Lives and Knowledge« for comments on earlier versions of this paper. Moreover, I am greatly indebted to the critical comments by Ruth Streicher.

forms part of the historical relationship between Arab nationalists and National Socialism, it is also an element of wider inter-imperial histories. To bring out these histories requires reading practices of the archives that do not follow civilizational or national logics. I therefore take what the archives of the German Foreign Office tell about Baḥrī as a starting point to tease out how his activities transgress civilizational historiographical frameworks. In conclusion, I explain how the conceptual shift involved in my argument leads to a both broader and denser account of the politics that governed Baḥrī's life and other actors like him.

**Keywords:** Yūnis Baḥrī, propaganda, journalism, Arab nationalism, National Socialism, Islam, inter-imperial connections, knowledge, archive, global intellectual history

### Introduction

This essay forms part of a larger project that inquires into the life and activities of the Arab nationalist, journalist and traveller Yūnis Baḥrī (ca. 1901-1979) as a window onto the global and inter-imperial dimensions of Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism and Pan-Islamism. Baḥrī was once known as the »Iraqi traveller« (Arabic *al-sā'iḥ al-'irāqī*) not only in the Mashreq, but also in European publications as well as among Arabic-speaking communities in South East Asia. People who remember him today mostly associate him with his role as a traveller, journalist and as an announcer for Arab language National Socialist radio propaganda during the Second World War. By focusing on Baḥrī's journalistic and political activities across several continents and empires from the inter-war period and World War II to the Cold War and the era of decolonisation, my larger project seeks to

trace how Baḥrī formed part of and connected different sites of knowledge production. I thus pay particular attention to how Baḥrī was part of certain south-south networks between the Dutch East Indies, the Arabian Peninsula, the Maghreb and Western Europe. From this translocal perspective I focus on specific sites and episodes of his life from a micro historical perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Recent research on German National Socialist wartime propaganda for the Middle East has highlighted Baḥrī's role as a radio announcer for National Socialist radio propaganda. He has figured here as one of those Arab nationalists who found ideological partners in the National Socialists and their anti-Semitism.<sup>3</sup> Such accounts connect Baḥrī's and other Arab expatriates' stories to a historical confluence of what they portray as two strands of eliminatory anti-Semitism: the anti-Semitism of Islam and Arabs on one hand and the anti-Semitism of the National Socialist regime on the other. Moreover, these accounts interpret this historical confluence as the root of contemporary Islamism and anti-Semitic views among Arabs today.<sup>4</sup> Interpreting the cooperation between Arab nationalists and the National Socialist regime as the birthplace of contemporary Islamism relies on the assumption of a direct continuity of the 1930s and 1940s with today. Such a view produces a specific concept of history – in this case, the history of the political attitudes of Arab societies – as linear, empty and continuous. Students of nationalism have historicised such views of history and concepts – such as »Germany« – as an effect of nationalist discursive practices.<sup>5</sup> The same point applies to this case. Civilizational and culturalist discourses typically produce a view of »the Arab world«, »the Islamic world«, »the Middle East«, »the West« and »Islam« as travelling through the

2 Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, »Introduction: ›Translocality‹: An Approach to Connection and Transfer in Area Studies«, in *Translocality: The Study of Globalising Processes from a Southern Perspective*, ed. Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, Studies in Global Social History (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010); Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen, »Translokalität als Zugang zur Geschichte globaler Verflechtungen«, *H-Soz-u-Kult* (2005), <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2005-06-001>.

3 Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 8, 71, 139, 234, 238, 280, n. 154. Herf's text frames Baḥrī's life within the coordinates of the Middle East and Germany as civilizational spheres.

4 Ibid., Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Yale University Press, 2014); Matthias Küntzel, »Zeesen bis Beirut. Nationalsozialismus und Antisemitismus in der arabischen Welt«, in *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte*, ed. Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck and Natan Sznajder (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).

5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006).

empty, homogenous time of a history where the basic units are »cultures« and »civilizations«. Framed by what I find too rigid conceptual coordinates – »German-Arab« relations on one hand, and the relation between »National Socialism« and »Islam« on the other – Baḥrī's life could be reduced to the role of illustrating the »cultural fusion, borrowing and interaction between Nazi ideology and certain strains of Arab nationalism and Islamic religious traditions.«<sup>6</sup>

In contradistinction to this outlook, my approach builds on two strands of research that help to cast a different light on Baḥrī's story. The first strand challenges the view of a direct continuity between National Socialism, Arab nationalism, Islam and today's Islamism. It emphasises the importance of local circumstances, foregrounds decolonisation as a historical context of this relationship and works with a broader outlook on intellectual history.<sup>7</sup> Second, my approach builds on research that studies the lives of actors within a global frame, that is, beyond established units of analysis such as nation-states or one linguistic framework.<sup>8</sup>

6 Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*: 3. See also the formulation: »the diffusion of ideology and of a meeting of hearts and minds that began from very different civilizational starting points.« Ibid., 14.

7 Peter Wien, »›Neue Generation‹ und Führersehnsucht. Generationenkonflikt und totalitäre Tendenzen im Irak der dreißiger Jahre«, in *Blind für die Geschichte? Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien and René Wildangel (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004); Peter Wien, »Coming to Terms with the Past: German Academia and Historical Relations between the Arab Lands and Nazi Germany«, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 02 (2010); Peter Wien, »The Culpability of Exile: Arabs in Nazi Germany«, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011); Peter Wien, »Arabs and Fascism: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives«, *Die Welt des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012); Götz Nordbruch, »The Arab World and National Socialism – Some Reflections on an Ambiguous Relationship«, *Orient-Institut Studies. Rethinking Totalitarianism and its Arab Readings* 1 (2012); Götz Nordbruch, »Islam as a ›Giant Progressive Leap‹ – Religious Critiques of Fascism and National Socialism, 1933-1945«, *Die Welt des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012); Ulrike Freitag and Israel Gershoni, »The Politics of Memory. The Necessity for Historical Investigation into Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism«, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011); Israel Gershoni, »Why the Muslims Must Fight against Nazi Germany: Muḥammad Najātī Ṣidqī's Plea«, *Die Welt des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012); Israel Gershoni, ed., *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism: Attraction and Repulsion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014); Marc David Baer, »Muslim Encounters with Nazism and the Holocaust: The Ahmadi of Berlin and Jewish Convert to Islam Hugo Marcus«, *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (2015).

8 See Isabella Löhr, »Lives Beyond Borders, or: How to Trace Global Biographies, 1880-1950«, *Comparativ* 23, no. 6 (2013); George E. Marcus, »Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography«, *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995); Bernd Hausberger, *Globale Lebensläufe: Menschen als Akteure im weltgeschichtlichen Geschehen* (Wien: Mandelbaum, 2006); David Lambert and Alan Lester, »Introduction. Imperial Spaces, Imperial

Taken together, these works allow us to frame actors like Baḥrī as imperial actors whose lives connected various empires, who played a part in processes of knowledge production in the global South and the global North and connected both areas. We can ask, then, how Baḥrī developed a skill-set as a propagandist that he could profitably offer in various imperial settings – Dutch, Iraqi, German, Jordanian and French. And what kind of similarities and differences can we observe in his use of nationalist and Islamic rhetoric at different times and places? What is interesting about an actor such as Baḥrī is not only his crossing of multiple borders as such. What is conceptually at stake are the following issues: How is his life and the narration of his life connected to the history of modernity biographically, conceptually and politically? From my perspective, his life does not simply constitute »the other« of a Euro-American modernity. The shift I propose here has political consequences insofar as it touches upon the very conceptual ground of Baḥrī's story in literature. It establishes a different and broader frame for telling the political frame for interpreting Baḥrī's life and connected to the representation of his biography.

In this essay, I start by exploring Baḥrī's activities through the particular archive of a particular site of Baḥrī's life, that of the German Foreign Office in Berlin. I suggest that the archive in fact contains traces of this inter-imperial history that have so far not been addressed enough and that call tell us a different story of Baḥrī's life and activities. Whereas previous research has mostly interpreted Baḥrī's activities in Berlin during the Second World War as a radio announcer within a framework conceived along civilizational, national and cultural lines, I thus take what the archives of the German Foreign Office tell about Baḥrī as a starting point to tease out how his activities transgress such historiographical frameworks. This shift in perspective is to allow us to develop an inter-imperial history of knowledge production through the prism of Baḥrī's propagandistic activities at various imperial sites in the Dutch, British and German empires as well as the French imperial nation-state. I seek to show that situating Baḥrī's life not in a civilizational, but in an inter-imperial interpretive framework leads to a shifted account of the conceptual-ideological field and the politics

in which we situate Baḥrī. This account acknowledges to a greater degree inter-imperial connections and goes beyond an understanding of spatial and ideological notions – such as »Germany«, »Islam«, »National Socialism« and »anti-imperialism« – as self-enclosed units.

I will first consider the methodological challenge of how to follow a multi-sited life across multiple empires. I will advance a suggestion for how to tackle this challenge by making a plea for a specific reading practice that connects the archives of this life. Then, I will show how such a reading effects our conceptualisation of the relations between Arab nationalism and National Socialism as elements of a globalised modernity. Second, taking the files of the German Foreign Office as an example, I will illustrate how such an approach allows a different reading practice of this archive. Here, I will foreground how the reading practice I propose allows us to situate Baḥrī's life within a wider history of imperial connections that potentially alter our understanding of his work as a radio announcer for the National Socialist regime. Third, and in conclusion, I explain how the conceptual shift involved in my argument leads to a both broader and denser account of the politics that governed Baḥrī's life and other actors like him.

### The archives of a multi-sited life

In Baḥrī's case, establishing what readers usually take as »basic facts« of a biography is itself a challenging task. On one hand, the archives and libraries in Iraq are currently very difficult to access due to the political circumstances. On the other hand, studies in the field of global history generally face the practical problem of how to adequately deal with multiple languages and archives. Baḥrī's life connects multiple archives in the Ottoman, German, Dutch, French and British empires.<sup>9</sup> I suggest that this observation forces us to take seriously the various archives that structure what has become legible as »Baḥrī« and »Baḥrī's life«. Actors like Baḥrī produced knowledge<sup>10</sup> at various sites and across borders. Acknowledging this movement across borders that connects »metropolis« and »periphery« requires a particular reading practice. I follow here Lisa Lowe's suggestion in her recent study of the »intimacies across four continents«, in which she seeks to (re-)connect

Subjects«, in *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Desley Deacon, Penny Russell, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700-Present* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). See also Madeleine Herren, »Inszenierungen des globalen Subjekts. Vorschläge zur Typologie einer transgressiven Biographie«, *Historische Anthropologie* 13 (2005).

<sup>9</sup> I work with materials in Arabic, English, French and German, but due to my language capabilities not with materials in Dutch and Italian.

<sup>10</sup> I understand knowledge as any claim about the world within relations of communication. These relations are structured by power relations. For example, any claim about the »rational« character of a certain body of knowledge is already a move within a certain politics of truth. See also Dirk Baecker, *Beobachter unter sich: eine Kulturtheorie* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013).

the various archives of liberalism.<sup>11</sup> Crucially, the reading practice Lowe proposes unsettles established ways of conceiving the very objects of inquiry. Her approach fits with the plea of global history to not reproduce the views of boundaries as civilizational, national and imperial gazes produce them. If we step away from these historiographical and political regimes that authorise very specific understandings of difference, we can look for connections between nation-states and empires of a possibly different character.<sup>12</sup> The analytic purchase of such an approach lies in creating a conceptual ground for researching across national and other confinements of the histories we tell.<sup>13</sup>

My example here will be the files of the archive of the German Foreign Office. These files contain multiple traces of these global connections if one employs a certain optic that allows for seeing them. In this way, I read the files of the German Foreign Office as elements of larger histories that go beyond the frames of both »German« national history and »Middle Eastern history«. Such a perspective implies understanding *both* historical spaces as constituted within and through wider historical processes of knowledge production that we have come to call globalisation.

A shifted view of German and Middle Eastern history beyond a dualistic opposition can also help to counter what Sebastian Conrad has called the »double marginalization« of the extra-European dimension of the German past.<sup>14</sup> He thus critically referred to the conceptual stakes of situating what we call German history in a global frame. First, he has noted, theories of modernity have not embraced a notion of a *shared* history of Europe and other regions. Second, German history has long been taken as less involved in and less affected by

colonialism than other countries.<sup>15</sup> My inquiry into the relationship between National Socialism and Arab nationalism through situating Baḥrī's life in a global frame responds to both these dimensions of marginalisation. I argue that studying Baḥrī's life can help us to further rethink the history of Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism, National Socialism and Pan-Islamism in relation to the history of modernity.

Discussions about National Socialism and its murderous violence have always also been discussions about modernity and its others.<sup>16</sup> Assertions of intrinsic links between National Socialism, Arab nationalism and Islam form, willingly or not, part of this on-going negotiation of the question of modernity – not just in the framework of German or European history, but within a global frame. Those who see a close alignment of Arab nationalists and National Socialists as well as National Socialism and Islam provide transregional histories based on their readings of the archives. Such readings tend to tacitly assume that Arab nationalists were only Muslims and thus adherents of »Islam« as a »religion«. Such a view is problematic for many reasons. The view of entities such as »Islam«, »religion« and »National Socialism« as container-like entities precludes a more thorough engagement with conceptual issues such as the modern constitution of »religion« as a category, the heterogeneous social realities subsumed under these concepts, and the history of these conceptualisations themselves. Presenting Arab nationalists as Muslims *per se* overlooks the existence of Christian Arab nationalists, thus allowing the reduction of Arab nationalism to Islam. Such readings themselves constitute historical elements within extensive transregional debates on the history of modernity. Those who suggest a close alignment of Islam and National Socialism as anti-modern forces but do not actively situate their arguments within those debates, disregard other interpretations that view National Socialism as a constitutively modern phenomenon, interpret Arab nationalism as an element of modern, globally connected public spheres, and emphasize the modern shifts in understandings of Islam. To reckon with the imbrication of these ideologies and spaces with modernity as a global historical phenomenon within imperial histories affects how we explain, for instance, the motivations of »Arab«

**11** Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015). I follow Lowe in understanding archives not as a »repository« (ibid., 185) or »as a stable, transparent collection of facts« (ibid., 4) but rather, following Foucault, as »a state-authorized framework that establishes official categories of knowledge, regulating what can be known and prohibiting what must not be known; the archive governs the criteria and conventions for documenting events, subjects, and geographies.« (ibid., 185, n. 11).

**12** See Achim von Oppen and Silke Strickrodt, »Introduction: Biographies Between Spheres of Empire«, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 44, no. 5 (2016): 718; Sebastian Dorsch, »Translokale Wissensakteure: Ein Debattenvorschlag zu Wissens- und Globalgeschichtsschreibung«, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 64, no. 9 (2016); Christoph Kamissek and Jonas Kreienbaum, »An Imperial Cloud? Conceptualising Interimperial Connections and Transimperial Knowledge«, *Journal of Modern European History* 14, no. 2 (2016).

**13** Ibid., 6.

**14** Sebastian Conrad, »Doppelte Marginalisierung. Plädoyer für eine transnationale Perspektive auf die deutsche Geschichte«, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28, no. H. 1 (2002).

**15** Ibid.: 148. In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of this dimension of German history in the German public and academia.

**16** See e.g. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989); Riccardo Bavaj, »Modernisierung, Modernität und Moderne: Ein wissenschaftlicher Diskurs und seine Bedeutung für die historische Einordnung des »Dritten Reiches«, *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 125(2005).

and »Muslim« actors to cooperate with the National Socialist regime.

Moreover, both dimensions of this form of marginalisation – the way theories of modernity construe modernity both in relation to its others and the colonial past of German history – are not only historiographical, but also *political* issues. They are political because the struggles over defining the »modern« present and its others rely on specific claims about history. Therefore, they involve the problem of historical representation as such. The point that I wish to emphasise here is that the faultlines in these debates point to different discourses authorising different »truths« about the past in relation to the present as a political, contentious timespace. The debates about the relationship between German history and colonialism, modernity and colonialism, and National Socialism, Arab nationalism and Islam are not only about pasts, but about political stakes in the present. Getting a grip on this issue of politicisation requires not a retreat to allegedly non-political, more »objective« research methods. Instead, I think it is important to fully engage with this politics of truth by looking at the politics of the archive.<sup>17</sup> In other words, we should take the history of knowledge and our own place within this history seriously. To understand the relationship between multiple archives of a life such as Baḥrī's, is to understand the politics that governs this relationship. For that reason, it is essential to look closely at our reading practices of the archive. The files of the archive of the German Foreign Office have been elements within histories and politics that point beyond the nation-state framework. Taking this observation seriously urges us to consider framing the analysis of Baḥrī's life in relation to such histories and politics beyond the nation-state.

### Reconstructing Baḥrī's life before World War II

Let us now first look at Baḥrī's social and historical background. He was born in Mosul, presumably between 1901 and 1904 – or 10 December 1908 as the files in the archive of the German Foreign Ministry state.<sup>18</sup> Yūnis (or Yūnus – both versions appear throughout the historical sources in Arabic and German, English and other translations) is a Quranic name used by Muslims, Christians and Jews alike and thus does not indicate Baḥrī's religious background. Mosul was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Subsequently it became part of the British Mandate for Mesopotamia (1920-1932) and as of 1932 of Iraq as a constitutional monarchy. Most sources state that Baḥrī died in Bagh-

dad in 1979. One source states that he was buried in Al-Ghazzālī-cemetery in March (Adhār) of the same year.<sup>19</sup> A biographical dictionary states, however, that Baḥrī had moved to Abu Dhabi and died there in 1978.<sup>20</sup> As his full name Yūnis Šāliḥ Baḥrī al-Jabūrī indicates, he was born into the predominantly Sunni tribe of the Jabūrīs. A file in the German Foreign Office, which was produced in the 1960s, mentions several versions of »Bahri Younes«, namely »alias Bey-Bahri, alias Al-Bahrry-Jaboury, alias El-Djaboury-Bahri, alias El-Dakrani«.<sup>21</sup> A biographical dictionary indicates that he grew up in a well-to-do landowning family.<sup>22</sup> His father was Šāliḥ Aḡā Al-Jabūrī who is referred to as a civil servant in several districts of Ottoman Empire, a Yūzbāšī (captain in Ottoman army) in charge of the protection of the mail between Istanbul and Mosul.<sup>23</sup> Mu'in 'Abd al-Qādir Āl Zakariyā's assertion that Baḥrī was the first Iraqi to establish a newspaper outside Iraq points again to the role Baḥrī's travelling plays in present ways of remembering Iraq within a global frame.<sup>24</sup> The trend to remember Baḥrī as an adventurer often leads to what seems like exaggerated assertions about his life. For instance, Al-'Ani states that Baḥrī had »at least forty wives« and spoke sixteen languages and dialects.<sup>25</sup> I already referred to Baḥrī's reputation as a traveller. Contemporary websites about Baḥrī often stress his role as a legendary Iraqi traveller.<sup>26</sup> An issue of the Italian journal *Oriente*

**19** Ḥālid 'Abd al-Mun'im Al-'Ānī, »Al-Muqaddima«, in *Mudhakkirāt. Al-raḥḥāla Yūnus Baḥrī. Fī siḡn Abū Ġarīb ma'a riḡāl al-'ahd al-malakī fī al-'Irāq ba'da maḡzara qaṣr al-raḥāb 'amm 1958* [Memoirs. The traveller Yunis Bahri in the prison of Abu Ghraib with the men of the royal era in Iraq after the bloodbath of Qasr al-Rahab 1958], ed. Ḥālid 'Abd al-Mun'im Al-'Ānī (Beirut: Al-Dār al-'arabiya li-l-mausū'āt, 2005), 6. See also Kāmil Ḥuršid, »Yūnis Baḥrī. Uṣṭūra ḥaqīqa!«, Al-maktabah.net, 2010, <http://www.almaktabah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=60231>, accessed 2.2.2014.

**20** Edmund A. Ghareeb, »Historical Dictionary of Iraq. With the assistance of Beth Dougherty«, *Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East* (Lanham, Maryland, and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2004), 36.

**21** PA AA B 82 Nr. 525, V3-88 1964-1968. It is significant that this information came from the German embassy in Paris because it indicates that Baḥrī spent time in France and quite possibly in Paris.

**22** Ghareeb, »Historical Dictionary of Iraq«, 36.

**23** »Uṣṭūra al-arḡ .. al-musammā Yūnis Baḥrī« [Legend of the world .. Yūnis Baḥrī] [Oral presentation delivered by the historian Professor Doctor Sayyār al-Jamīl in the Club Al-Salām in Toronto in Canada on the evening April/Nisān 30, 2011, during a special Iraqi night attended by over 260 guests from Canada and the United States.], <http://www.sama3y.net/forum/showthread.php?p=647398>, accessed 23.3.2014.

**24** Mu'in 'Abd al-Qādir Āl Zakariyā, »Al-Šaḥāfa al-mauṣuliya .. Ayyām zamān (Mosul's press .. then)«, <http://almadasupplements.com/news.php?action=view&id=5502>.

**25** Al-'Ānī, »Al-Muqaddima«, 8.

**26** <http://www.almaktabah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=60231>, accessed 7.8.2013; <http://www.sama3y.net/forum/showthread.php?p=647398>, accessed 23.3.2014; »Yūnis Baḥrī.

**17** See Ruth Mas, »Follow the Politics«, *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 43, no. 4 (2014): esp 12.

**18** Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt (PA AA) B 82 Nr. 525, V3-88, 1964-1968. The year 1904 is given in Rush and Priestland, *Records of Iraq. 1914-1966*, 52.

*moderno* from 1932 called him the »Ibn Baḥrī« of our century», thus comparing him to the legendary traveller of the fourteenth century.<sup>27</sup> Sources variously associate his name »Baḥrī«, which literally means »sailor« and »mariner«, with his travels and claims that he swam across the English Channel or relate it to the fictional hero Sinbad the Sailor (as-Sindibād al-Baḥrīy).<sup>28</sup> At some point he became associated with the Arabic epithet »al-sā'ih al-'irāqī«, that is, »the Iraqi traveller.«

Apparently, Baḥrī started travelling through Iraq in 1920 and soon beyond that across the Mashreq, Maghreb and Europe, acquiring several dialects and languages. Several sources state that Baḥrī studied in Istanbul.<sup>29</sup> Reportedly, Baḥrī lived in Paris for a while, fell into debt, was subsequently incarcerated in Paris, finally relieved and could travel back to the Mashreq. A report on »leading personalities of Iraq for 1945« for the British Foreign Office tells this story as follows:

From 1923 to 1926 he held minor clerical posts in Government offices. In June 1926, he went on a journey round the world and was repatriated destitute from Paris after having served a term of imprisonment for a misdemeanour. Between 1929 and 1933 he travelled in Arab countries, including Tripoli, Tunis and the Hadhramaut, also Java, India, Afghanistan and Iran. On his return to Iraq he took up journalism and gave his support to extreme nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

Based on sources from other archives, including the German Foreign Office, this story can be substantially expanded. Perhaps it was during this time in France in the 1920s that he married the Dutch painter Julie Henriëtte Eugénie van der Veen (1903-1997), as a picture of both suggests.<sup>31</sup>

Uṣṭūra ḥaqīqīya!! [Yūnis Baḥrī. A real legend!!]«, <http://www.baghdadch.tv/article.php?id=294&print=1>, accessed 29.6.2012; »Al-sā'ih al-'irāqī ... uṣṭūra lan tatakarrara ... qirā'a mu'ammiq fi ḥayāt al-sā'ih al-'irāqī Yūnis Baḥrī [The Iraqi traveller - a legend that will not be repeated - a deeper reading of the life of the Iraqi traveller Yūnis Baḥrī], <http://www.mosul-network.org/index.php?do=article&id=19061>, accessed 4.10.2012.

**27** V. V. and E. R., »ORIENTE IN GENERALE«, *Oriente Moderno* 12, no. 6 (1932): 272. The text reads: »dal noto viaggiatore e scrittore Yūnus el-Baḥrī, di Mossul, detto »d'Ibn Battutah del nostro secolo«

**28** Regarding the British channel: <http://www.almaktabah.net/vb/showthread.php?t=60231>, 2010, accessed 7.8.2013.

**29** Ghareeb, »Historical Dictionary of Iraq«, 36. »Yūnis Baḥrī .. al-sā'ih al-'irāqī« [Yūnis Baḥrī .. the Iraqi traveller] [http://abu-isaac.blogspot.de/2007/05/blog-post\\_13.html](http://abu-isaac.blogspot.de/2007/05/blog-post_13.html), 2007, accessed 10.4.2014. This source also states that Baḥrī entered »Dār al-'alamayn al-'āliya« - a high school in Baghdad - in 1921. I could not yet corroborate this fact.

**30** Alan de L. Rush and Jane Priestland, eds., *Records of Iraq. 1914-1966*, vol. 9: 1941-1945 ([London]: Archive Editions, 2001), 52.

**31** »Uṣṭūra al-arḍ .. al-musammā Yūnis Baḥrī« [Legend of the world .. Yunis Baḥrī'] <http://www.sama3y.net/forum/showthread.php?p=647398>, accessed 23.3.2014.

Possibly in 1929 Baḥrī probably travelled for the first time to Batavia in the Dutch East Indies.<sup>32</sup> In May 1932 he apparently travelled again to Java. The Arabic journal *Ḥaḍramaut* from Surabaya in East Java welcomed him as the »Iraqi traveller« in a short paragraph.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the authors and perhaps the readers must have already known about the identity of »al-sā'ih al-'irāqī«. At least between 1931 and 1933 he was involved with the editing of two periodicals.<sup>34</sup> The first was *Al-Kuwait wa-l-'Irāqī* (»Kuwait and the Iraqi«), which appeared from 1931 until at least June 1932. The title referred to 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ruṣayyid from Kuwait and Baḥrī.<sup>35</sup> On the title page of the first issue both appear as proprietors and editors of the periodical. When Baḥrī left, however, the periodical, its name changed to *Al-Kuwait*. Baḥrī then edited a periodical titled *Al-Ḥaqq* (»The Truth«) in Bogor, a town a little south to Batavia from 1932 until the beginning of 1933. At the same time, he was working as a correspondent for at least one Egyptian periodical.<sup>36</sup> Natalie Mobini-Kesheh has pointed out that Ibn Saud financed the magazines to call upon Muslims to perform the Hajj in Mecca. It might be argued that Ibn Saud was not only calling for a religious duty, but also had financial reasons in mind because the pilgrimage constituted an important source of income.<sup>37</sup> It is quite safe to assume that Ibn Saud knew Baḥrī personally.<sup>38</sup>

Having returned to Iraq, which was partially independent since 1930 and officially fully independent since 1932 when it joined the League of

**32** E. G. Miller, »Foiling Espionage in Berlin Radio's Arabic Service«, *The Journal of Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2000). Miller relies on Baḥrī's own account.

**33** »Al-sā'ih al-'irāqī«, in: *Ḥaḍramaut*, no. 330, 28 May 1932, 3.

**34** See for an overview of Arabic periodicals in the Dutch East Indies Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, »The Arab Periodicals of the Netherlands East Indies, 1914-1942«, *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 152, no. 2 (1996): 253.

**35** V. and R., »ORIENTE IN GENERALE«, 272. The text mentions Baḥrī's and al-Ruṣayyid's »Al-Kuwait wa-l-'Irāqī« as a »new Arab journal« in Batavia.

**36** I am grateful to Umar Ryad for sharing this observation with me.

**37** See William Ochsenwald, »Islam and Loyalty in the Saudi Hijaz, 1926-1939«, *Die Welt des Islams* 47, no. 1 (2007). See also Al-'Ānī, »Al-Muqaddima«, 5.

**38** Ibn Saud seems to refer to Baḥrī in a personal communication with his envoy in Berlin, Khalid al-Hud, regarding a possible arms purchase. He speaks of »the Iraqi« - the text adds »announcer« - whose voice he »recognised« while referring to a wireless broadcast from Berlin. Anita L.P. Burdett, ed., *Saudi Arabia: Secret Intelligence Records 1926-1939*, 8 vols., vol. 8: 1938-1939 ([London]: Archive Editions, 2003), 190. See also »Uṣṭūra al-arḍ .. al-musammā Yūnis Baḥrī« [Legend of the world .. Yunis Baḥrī'] <http://www.sama3y.net/forum/showthread.php?p=647398>, accessed 23.3.2014. See also PA AA, R 104795, on a report about Baḥrī's announcement on Radio Berlin that Khalid al-Hud had travelled to Rome. See also Al-'Ānī, »Al-Muqaddima«, 12-13, on a meeting between Abd al-'Aziz, Faisal, and Baḥrī on the occasion of the King's sixty-third birthday.

Nations, Baḥrī edited a periodical in Baghdad. Its title was *Al-'Uqāb* («The Eagle»). The newspaper had four pages and appeared three times per week with 1000 copies.<sup>39</sup> As such, it constituted an element of a then diversifying public sphere in Iraq.<sup>40</sup> As far as I can ascertain until now, the newspaper appeared from 1933 until 1939.<sup>41</sup> The heading of the newspaper addresses him as the Iraqi traveller: »Political newspaper, a cooperation of the Iraqi traveller Yūnus Baḥrī and the executive editor, Ismā'il Šabrī. Its office is in the new quarter Ḥasan Bāšā in Baghdad.«<sup>42</sup>

*Al-'Uqāb* dealt with political issues such as the Palestine question and had an anti-British stance. This stance against the British imperial presence in Iraq might explain the representation of Baḥrī as an adherent of »extreme nationalism« in the report on »leading personalities of Iraq for 1945« for the British Foreign Office that I quoted above. Moreover, a report by the British Foreign Office stated that Baḥrī was »subsidised in 1935-36 to publish articles in favouring the Italian conquest of Abyssinia and in 1936 he sold himself to the German Legation.«<sup>43</sup> All of this might explain that *Al-'Uqāb* experienced bans for political reasons, as Baḥrī wrote in his own booklet on the Iraqi press that appeared in German in 1942.<sup>44</sup> Thus, it is not entirely surprising that Baḥrī complained about the problems of being a journalist in then Baghdad.<sup>45</sup> However, Baḥrī also worked for the radio

station established in the palace of the king of Iraq, Ghazi I, *Qasr al-Zuhūr*.<sup>46</sup> This station started broadcasting in 1935 or 1936.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, Baḥrī seems to have kept travelling during this period, even if his movements are difficult to track. For instance, in December 1938 he was seen in Jidda, as a file of the Foreign Office states.<sup>48</sup> This note is another indicator for connections between Baḥrī and Ibn Saud.

Baḥrī left Iraq in 1939 – most probably in April<sup>49</sup> – with the help of Fritz Grobba (1886–1973), German envoy in Baghdad. A Lufthansa flight took Baḥrī from Baghdad to Berlin. There are differing accounts of how this came about. The anecdote I just mentioned implies that Baḥrī had to flee from Iraq because of his anti-British stance. Another version suggests he first offered his services as a radio announcer to the British, who contemplated hiring Baḥrī for their Arabic propaganda, but after they finally decided against it, he joined the Germans.<sup>50</sup>

In Berlin Baḥrī became an important speaker of the Arabic radio propaganda of the National Socialist regime.<sup>51</sup> Baḥrī was hired as a freelance worker for the »Internationaler Programmaustausch« (IPA) of the »Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft«. As said earlier, it is Baḥrī's role as a speaker for »Radio Berlin« or »Voice of Free Arabism« that he is today widely associated with, especially in the Arab world.<sup>52</sup> Peter Wien points out that the Iraqi Abraham Elkabir compared Baḥrī to »Lord Haw Haw« – a name

**39** Allāf, »Ġarīda al-'Uqāb«, <http://www.alteif.com/%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%B9%D9%8F%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84-%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%AD-%D8%B1%D9%8A-1933-1949/>, accessed 12.6.2012. But see Junis Bahri, *Die arabische Presse* (Berlin: Arabisches Büro des Irakischen Ministerpräsidenten Raschid Ali el Gailani, um 1942), 10.

**40** Recent research highlights the diversity of the Iraqi public sphere at the time. See Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932-1941*, vol. 4, SOAS Routledge studies on the Middle East (London und New York 2006); Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009).

**41** Ibrāhīm Allāf asserts that *Al-'Uqāb* appeared from 1933 until 1949. Ibrāhīm Allāf, »Ġarīda al-'uqāb .. li Yūnus Baḥrī 1933-1949 [The newspaper al-Uqāb .. by Yūnus Baḥrī 1933-1949]«, <http://www.alteif.com/%D8%AC%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D9%8F%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%84%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%A8%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A-1933-1949/>, accessed: 12.6.2012.

**42** I am grateful to Naeem Djouda for scanning passages from *Al-'Uqāb* for me in the National Library in Baghdad.

**43** Rush and Priestland, *Records of Iraq. 1914-1966*, 53. I could not ascertain yet whether this information was the cause for the ban of the journal.

**44** Bahri, *Die arabische Presse*.

**45** Interestingly, Peter Wien points to an interview with Baḥrī in 1934 in the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Handelsblad*, in which Baḥrī speaks favourably about the Netherlands and complains about the difficulties of being a journalist in Baghdad. Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*, 4: 132, n. 152.

**46** PA AA NL Grobba, 13. See also Hans Goldenbaum, »Nationalsozialismus als Antikolonialismus«, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 64, no. 3 (2016), 486.

**47** Freitag and Gershoni, »The Politics of Memory. The Necessity for Historical Investigation into Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism«, 323.

**48** FO 371/23271 Jeddah Report December 1938. I owe this information to Ulrike Freitag.

**49** Rush and Priestland, *Records of Iraq. 1914-1966*, 53.

**50** Farhat Ziadeh et al., »Interview with Farhat Ziadeh, Nicholas Heer and Ilsa Cirtautas by Terri DeYoung and Gabriel Skoog«, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu/research-works/handle/1773/15548>. Ziadeh asserted in this interview that Baḥrī was in fact a German-British double agent.

**51** There are differing accounts regarding the question whether the German Foreign Office and its »Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung« or the »Reichspropagandaministerium« were in charge of these broadcasts. See Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*; Jeffrey Herf, »Nazi Germany's Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims During World War II and the Holocaust: Old Themes, New Archival Findings«, *Central European History* 42, no. 4 (2009); Jeffrey Herf, »Arabischsprachige nationalsozialistische Propaganda während des Zweiten Weltkriegs und des Holocaust«, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011). In contrast to Herf, who sees a shift from the German Foreign Ministry to the Propaganda Ministry, Goldenbaum argues that the main competence for the broadcasts was during the whole war with the »Reichspropagandaministerium«. Goldenbaum, »Nationalsozialismus als Antikolonialismus«, esp. 455.

**52** Laith Ulaby, »Mass Media and Music in the Arab Persian Gulf«, in *Music and Media in the Arab World*, ed. Michael Aaron Frishkopf (Cairo and New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 116.

used to ridicule the upper class English of the English speakers of the National Socialist propaganda in general and the US-American William Joyce in particular.<sup>53</sup> Stefano Fabei points out that Baḥrī became one of the most famous journalists in Axis Europe.<sup>54</sup> Regarding Baḥrī's reception in the Arab region he writes: »Bahri, le speaker principal de Radio Stuttgart et Radio Berlin, était extrêmement écouté et apprécié dans tout le monde arabe.«<sup>55</sup> Many point out that Baḥrī was rhetorically gifted.<sup>56</sup> The fact that the BBC in London devoted one of their broadcasts to Baḥrī and Grobba equally shows how widely known Baḥrī was at the time.<sup>57</sup> The Saudi novelist 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muṅīf (1933-2004) confirms this picture of a wide audience listening to Baḥrī's broadcasts from Berlin. Muṅīf indicates that in Amman in Jordan during the Second World War, radio was the only source of information. Thus, people would listen to Baḥrī's broadcasts, while some would give further explanations to what he said, Muṅīf writes.<sup>58</sup>

Radio Berlin's programme included news, comments, Quranic recitations and music seven days a week and formed part of the regime's larger propaganda efforts in multiple languages. Jeffrey Herf has pointed out that the broadcasts disseminated the regime's anti-Semitic messages to the Arabic-speaking region.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, as Laith Ulabby points out, Baḥrī »would play popular Egyptian, Iraqi and Gulf recordings, attracting a large regional audience.«<sup>60</sup> In contrast to his own self-representation in his autobiography *Hunā Barlīn* and other accounts of his, Baḥrī did not establish the broadcast station in Berlin.<sup>61</sup> Instead, the German

Foreign Office hired him because Baḥrī seemed the only apt person for the job among a list of possible employees. The files in the German Foreign Office reveal that officials sought to replace Baḥrī from early on. In March 1940, officials of the IPA and the Foreign Office discussed this question. The IPA officials explicitly asked the Foreign Office again to find a replacement for Baḥrī.<sup>62</sup> In the files of Grobba's estate in the German Foreign Office we find a note that *Orientreferent* [«advisor for the Orient»] Werner Oskar von Hentig and his aide, *Legationssekretär* [«diplomatic secretary»] Hans Schlobies attempted to relegate Baḥrī from his post at the radio station despite the lack of a suitable replacement.<sup>63</sup> The file indicates that Baḥrī's »occasional« linguistic lapses were the reason why von Hentig and Schlobies undertook this attempt. These »lapses« were the use of »vulgar and dialectal words« that were deemed offending for educated Arabic audiences.<sup>64</sup> Hentig's memorandum on Baḥrī from July 1939 characterised him as a gifted speaker, but as clearly unreliable:

I met by chance today the brother of a friend of the announcer in the German radio, Junus Bahri. In the conversation, I could ascertain the following about Junus: Junus Bahri was working for the Soviet and later for the Italian administration as an announcer. Then, he made his living as a journalist and went to India. Finally, before his appointment to Germany [he was] at the radio station Baghdad where he created for himself a large audience by his great autonomy and an undeniably entertaining manner. But he is said to be politically completely untrustworthy among the serious voices of the Arab world.<sup>65</sup>

**53** Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism*, 4: 50. See also on »Lord Haw-Haw« John A. Cole, *Lord Haw-Haw & William Joyce: The Full Story* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964).

**54** Stefano Fabei, *Le faisceau, la croix gammée et le croissant*, trans. Hans Moretus (Saint-Genis-Laval (Rhône): Akribeia, 2005). 252; Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*: 238.

**55** Fabei, *Le faisceau, la croix gammée et le croissant*: 251. I could not gather more information on »Radio Stuttgart« yet.

**56** See e.g. Fayçal Cherif, »Fondements du discours propagandiste arabe de la Grande-Bretagne au Maghreb pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1939-1943)«, *LISA* 6, no. 1 (2008), <http://lisa.revues.org/492>.

**57** PA AA NL Grobba.

**58** 'Abd-ar-Raḥmān Muṅīf, *Sīrat Madīna: 'Ammān fī l-arba'īnāt* [= Biography of a City: Amman in the Forties], aṭ-Ṭab'a 1 ed. (Bairūt al-Mu'assasa l-'Arabiya, 1994), 140.

**59** See Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*. Herf looks much less, however, at the reception of these messages in the Arab region at the time.

**60** Quote and following paragraph Ulabby, »Mass Media and Music in the Arab Persian Gulf«, 116. See also for a general assessment of the broadcasts and their institutional setting Goldenbaum, »Nationalsozialismus als Antikolonialismus«.

**61** Baḥrī wrote in his German account of the Iraqi press in 1942: »The newspaper ›Al-Ikab‹ (›The Eagle‹) appeared in Baghdad as the only evening newspaper. Its founder was Junis Bahri. It first appeared on 7 November 1933 and is meant to disseminate the Arab National-Socialist ideas of

the Arab Union. The newspaper found a very high demand. On 25 April 1939 Nuri Said ordered its shutdown. Its editor fled to Berlin and established the Arab broadcasts in the Greater German radio station. Junis Bahri heads today the Arabic Office that is subordinate to Raschid Ali el-Gailani.« Bahri, *Die arabische Presse*: 10.

**62** PA AA Rundfunkpolitische Abteilung R 67487 Referat B, Allg. Propaganda. In the file, we find the following information about Baḥrī who is categorised as »Arab«: »Unis al Bahrry (Araber), Berlin W. 15, Kurfürstendamm 50, Tel 914455.« The files in the Foreign Office from 29 March 1940 states that those running the international propaganda broadcasts were trying to replace Baḥrī. Dr. Harald Dietrich at the »Internationaler Programmaustausch« of the »Reichsrundfunkgesellschaft« wrote regarding a replacement for Baḥrī: »wird ebenfalls weiter gesucht, jedoch kann unsererseits keine Ersatzkraft für Bahrry gefunden werden. Ich wiederhole deshalb nochmals die Bitte, dass das A.A. die nötigen Schritte unternimmt.« PA AA, R 67487 Referat B, Allg. Propaganda 1940-1941, 3.

**63** See also Goldenbaum, »Nationalsozialismus als Antikolonialismus«, 462.

**64** PA AA NL Grobba.

**65** PA AA, R 104795, 6 July 1939. The German original reads: »Durch einen Zufall habe ich heute den Bruder eines Freundes des Ansagers im deutschen Radio, Junus Bahri, getroffen, von dem ich über Junus im Laufe des Gesprächs folgen-

Grobba, however, managed to thwart Hentig's and Schlobies' efforts according to his own presentation.<sup>66</sup> Bent on protecting the Iraqi he had helped to come to Germany, Grobba stated that Baḥrī was famous in the Arab world. Referring to the already mentioned BBC-broadcast on Baḥrī he wrote: »He had a resounding voice and a suggestive way of speaking. Within a short time, he was so popular in the Arab world that the B.B.C. fiercely attacked him in a broadcast, while not sparing the author because the latter had sent Yunus Bahri to Berlin.«<sup>67</sup>

A closer look at the files of the German Foreign Office reveals several things. Not only were Baḥrī's credentials in doubt when he worked for the National Socialist regime, but his connection with Germany did not end with this job. He came back to Germany and through the files produced around these stays in Germany we learn that Baḥrī seemingly kept on selling his propagandistic skills to more than one power.

Reading the archives of the German Foreign Office differently I suggest an exclusive temporal and spatial focus on Baḥrī's time in Berlin from 1939 until 1945 – and his association with the National Socialist regime – prevents us from understanding that his life and his activities were situated within wider inter-imperial histories. This framing has a direct impact on how we tell his story as an example of Arab nationalists' cooperation with National Socialist Germany. But if we follow the argument of global history, these connections are not peripheral, but constitutive for telling the history of his – modern – life. Limiting our archival gaze at the files to the events during the Second World War and or by taking this period as the point zero of a history of contemporary Islamist anti-Semitism, we overlook the wider coordinates of the politics of Baḥrī's life.

A focus on the inter-imperial connections in Baḥrī's path might help us to develop a more complex account of the genealogy of contemporary forms of anti-Semitism in present-day ideological

conflicts beyond all too linear stories of »influence«.<sup>68</sup> If we only take Baḥrī' as embodying certain »ideas« – radical anti-Semitism – as a function of his origins identified in a certain way as »Arab« and »Muslim«, we simply reproduce the binary logic of the regime's propaganda. My primary point *here* is not *whether* Baḥrī actively shared anti-Semitic attitudes and feelings or not. What we can of course say is that he was the speaker of a decidedly anti-Semitic radio propaganda program me organised by a regime that worked towards the extermination of the European Jews and beyond.

But to answer questions about motivations and the politics that governed his path requires acknowledging that his life was not merely situated within a Middle Eastern-German relationship, but in many more geographical and political coordinates. Any explanation of the cooperation of Baḥrī's – and actors like him – with the German regime must acknowledge these other coordinates. In the following, I want to offer some glimpses into the archive of the German Foreign Office that point us to the inter-imperial histories that also constituted Baḥrī's life. Even if they are no more than glimpses, they indicate that an account of the politics of Baḥrī's life requires a broader framework.

Files in the German Foreign Office show that Baḥrī returned at least twice to Germany after 1945, first accompanying the Libyan King Idris I. as a press adviser, then on his own, launching an Arabic journal called *Al-Arab*. Baḥrī published *Al-Arab* from March until November 1964.<sup>69</sup> I will focus on the latter episode because it reveals other imperial connections in Baḥrī's life after 1945 and represents yet another turn in his career. This episode connected Germany, France, Algeria, Switzerland and Iraq.

The German Foreign Office noted that Baḥrī entered Germany on 5 September 1963.<sup>70</sup> Maybe Baḥrī's arrival in Germany was related to poli-

des festgestellt habe. [...] Junus Bahri ist im Jahre 1930/31 für die Sowjetregierung, später auch für die italienische Regierung als Ansager tätig gewesen, hat inzwischen sein Brot als Tagesschriftsteller verdient und ist darauf in Indien gewesen, schließlich vor seiner Berufung nach Deutschland Ansager im Sender Bagdad, wo er sich durch große Selbständigkeit und auch eine unbestreitbar unterhaltsame Art eine Hörergemeinde zu schaffen gewußt hat. Er gilt aber in der ernstesten arabischen Welt als politisch völlig unzuverlässig.« I could not yet find further evidence sustaining the source's assertion that Baḥrī worked for the Soviet and Italian administration and lived temporarily in India.

<sup>66</sup> PA AA NL Grobba.

<sup>67</sup> PA AA NL Grobba. Grobba's defence fits into a larger pattern of the dynamics in the relations between Arab politicians in Berlin during this time and the National Socialist regime. Claiming influence in the region was a strategy to assert one's position in the power struggles between exiles from the region and in relation to the regime.

<sup>68</sup> See for differentiated accounts of the concept and the history of anti-Semitism: Esther Webman, »The challenge of assessing Arab/Islamic antisemitism«, *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010); Gudrun Krämer, »Anti-Semitism in the Muslim World. A Critical Review«, *Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 46, no. 3 (2006). See also the articles in the special issue of *Welt des Islams* on »Islamofascism« (2012). See esp. Alexander Flores, »The Arabs as Nazis? Some Reflections on »Islamofascism« and Arab Anti-Semitism«, *Die Welt des Islams* 52, no. 3/4 (2012); Wien, »Arabs and Fascism: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives«; René Wildangel, »The Invention of »Islamofascism«; »Nazi Propaganda to the Arab World and Perceptions from Palestine«, *Die Welt des Islams* 52 (2012).

<sup>69</sup> He had visited Germany again in 1951 working as press counsellor for Libyan King Idris I (until at least 1953 when Baḥrī is said to have visited Paris with Idris I in this function). PA AA B 11 (Band 1390). The files also state that Baḥrī published another weekly called *Al Arab* in Paris at that time. I was not yet able to find copies of this weekly.

<sup>70</sup> PA AA, B 82 Nr. 525, V3-88 1964-1968.

tical upheavals in Iraq. In February 1963, the Ba'ath-party overthrew in a coup d'état 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim during what came to be known as the Ramadan revolution, which Baḥrī also covered in a book.<sup>71</sup> In its wake 'Abd as-Salām 'Ārif became president of Iraq. 'Abd al-Karīm Qāsim had supposedly provided him with a job. Baḥrī thus might have felt that this position had become more precarious.

Baḥrī's journal *Al-Arab* was published in Stuttgart, as a handwritten note on a Foreign Office file from 17 July 1964 explained. The file stated that the contract with a publisher in Beuel, a city district in the then German capital Bonn, had not materialised.<sup>72</sup> The handwritten note was to disprove the text of the file that stated that Baḥrī had the journal printed in Beuel with the support of Helen Arenz, a resident of the town. But Baḥrī had in fact a postal address near Bonn, namely in Bad Godesberg according to the Middle Eastern New Agency (MENA) from 5 August 1964.<sup>73</sup>

What had brought Baḥrī's publishing activity to the attention of the Foreign Office? In May the Iraqi and Lebanese ambassadors in Germany, 'Umar<sup>74</sup> and Amiouni, probably at the behest of other Arab ambassadors, officially requested from the German government a ban on Baḥrī's *Al-Arab* because Baḥrī had insulted several Iraqi diplomats – including 'Umar and Amiouni – and their wives in his journal. Moreover, they wanted the German government to expel Baḥrī. They depicted the journal as a burden for diplomatic relations between Arab countries and Germany. German officials were aware that Baḥrī's journal and his stay in Germany were the subject of media articles in the Arab world.<sup>75</sup>

The German Foreign Office's response to the Arab ambassadors' request to expel Baḥrī seems to have been reluctant at first. But to avoid further diplomatic problems with the involved Arab states, the Foreign Office inquired into Baḥrī's activities and whereabouts. Apparently, there was not much information on Baḥrī inside the German Foreign Office at that time. Thus, the Foreign Office received its basic information on Baḥrī from the ambassadors, the German embassy in Baghdad and the retired Fritz Grobba.

It was in this context that the German Foreign Office produced another biography of Baḥrī. This biographical sketch from the German embassy in Baghdad again alludes to several remarkable

points. The text refers to the suspicion that Baḥrī in his role as an announcer at Radio Berlin was in fact an »agent provocateur«. The German original states that Baḥrī's role seemed »even back then ambiguous, because he sharpened the message of the radio propaganda against the directives of the responsible authorities, which raised the suspicion that he worked as an »agent provocateur«.<sup>76</sup>

As early as 17 March 1964 the German embassy in Baghdad had informed the Foreign Office about Baḥrī. This information relied on a press report from the newspaper *Al-Hawadith* from Beirut. The report stated that no less than four Arab countries had put an entry ban on Baḥrī and reasoned that the Arab countries had not forgiven Baḥrī his »versatile relations as a spy with various non-Arabic powers«. <sup>77</sup> Moreover, the embassy informed the Foreign Office that the Arabic Boycott Office for Israel had explained in a report that Baḥrī was working in Geneva for the Israeli intelligence service Mossad.<sup>78</sup> A file in the German Foreign Office noted in this regard in May 1964 that Baḥrī's associates distanced themselves from him when they learned that the Israeli state financed the journal.<sup>79</sup>

The German Foreign Office then approached Grobba (1886-1973), the German envoy in Baghdad before the war, to verify this information. Grobba argued, however, that Mossad did not pay Baḥrī. Instead, he depicted this assertion as an attempt by Amiouni to take revenge on Baḥrī by linking him to the Israeli secret service.<sup>80</sup> Grobba tried to depict Baḥrī as somebody now interested in creating mutual understanding and peace between Israel and its Arab neighbouring countries. Later, the German embassy in Baghdad informed the Ministry about the perception in Iraq that Baḥrī was undertaking propaganda efforts in Germany for Israel under the pretence of »true Arab nationalism«. <sup>81</sup> These findings invite further questions regarding Baḥrī's cooperation with the National Socialist regime.

The text produced by the German Foreign Office then brings up yet another episode in Baḥrī's propagandistic activities. It points to Baḥrī's employment at a radio station in Amman that began

**71** Yūnus Baḥrī, *Ṭaurat 14 [arba'at 'ašar] Ramaḍān al-mubārak* [The Blessed Revolution of Ramadan 14] (Bairūt Dār al-Andalus, 1963).

**72** PA AA, B 82 Nr. 525, V3-88 1964-1968.

**73** Ibid.

**74** See on 'Umar Wien, »The Culpability of Exile: Arabs in Nazi Germany«, 354-357.

**75** PA AA, B 36 (Band 83).

**76** The German original reads: »bereits damals zweideutig, da er gegen Weisung der verantwortlichen Stellen eine Verschärfung in die Rundfunkpropaganda hineinbrachte, die den Verdacht aufkommen ließ, dass er als »Agent provocateur« arbeitet«, PA AA B 130, Bd. 6460A.

**77** PA AA, B 130. Bd. 6460A. The German original reads: »seine vielseitigen Agentenbeziehungen zu den verschiedenen außerarabischen Mächten«.

**78** PA AA, B 130, Bd. 6460A.

**79** Ibid.

**80** Ibid.

**81** Ibid. See also PA AA, B 36 (Band 83). German embassy in Beirut, 22 January 1964, referring to a statement by Afif al-Tibi.

broadcasting in late January 1956. The files from 16 July 1964 suggest that it was the British commander of the »Jordan Legion« General Glubb (1897-1986) who set up the Amman radio station.<sup>82</sup> The station was possibly called »Hayyi al-‘arab«, thus harking back to the expression Baħrī had used as an announcer at Radio Berlin.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, the files of the German Foreign Office tell us that King Abdallah of Jordan (1882-1951) forgave Baħrī for his activities during the Second World War and awarded him Jordanian nationality.<sup>84</sup> In an article on »Arab Propaganda Rivalries in Middle East Broadcasts« from 28 February a correspondent of *The Times* situated the broadcasts of the Amman radio station in the conflict between Jordan and Egypt:

Amman radio’s approach to affairs, especially foreign relations, is so different from Cairo’s that the »Voice of the Arabs« [the Cairo radio station, N.R.] at once put it about that the new Jordan station was in fact the voice of the British Foreign Office, that its policies were not governed by the Jordan Government, and that Yunis al Bahri (possibly together with King Hussein) received his instructions direct from Mr. Selwyn Lloyd [then British Foreign Secretary, N.R.]. While the equipment is almost certainly British, it is extremely unlikely that the British connexion is strong enough to direct the content of the broadcasts.<sup>85</sup>

Files in the British Foreign Office also provide evidence that Baħrī worked for the Amman radio station: »They brought Yunis Bahri to wage radio propaganda against the ESS powers [Egypt, Syria and Saudi-Arabia, N.R.]. Jordan did not wish to harm her relations with these countries. Mr. Allen asked who had brought Yunis Bahri to Jordan. Mr. Rifa’i replied that it had been the British, working through the King.«<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, the files of the German Foreign Office point to another episode where Baħrī apparently could employ his propagandistic know how. The aforementioned »biography« of the German Foreign Office – which its officials produced

because German police sought to locate Baħrī because of slander and an offense against the Federal press law in relation to his journal *Al-Arab*<sup>87</sup> – asserted that Baħrī was in the service of the French government and worked in Paris as a propagandist against Arab Algerians.<sup>88</sup> The investigation itself remained inconclusive because the police departments in Berlin and Bonn passed the responsibility for the case to one another. Finally, on 17 August 1965, a report from the German Embassy in Paris explained that Baħrī had legally entered France on 11 January 1965 and again on 17 August. The report explains that Baħrī had left Germany for France because he had been afraid of being arrested, even though the German administration had already rejected the Iraqi and the Egyptian administrations’ request for his expulsion.

Subsequently, the German authorities stopped their penal proceedings against Baħrī due to the statute of limitations (»Verfolgungsverjährung«).<sup>89</sup> The files in the German Foreign Office do not tell us more about Baħrī’s work in Paris. But they reveal that Baħrī’s time in Germany does not end in 1945, nor can his cooperation with the German regime be conceptually reduced to a civilizational logic of ideological fusion.

### Conclusion

The argument I wanted to make here is simply that in combination with other archives the German Foreign Office’s files can tell us a much more complicated story about Baħrī’s place within multiple imperial entanglements and the complexities of lives connecting these empires. I have suggested that recent approaches to global history lead us to different reading practices of existing archives that situate Baħrī’s life and activities not within a dualistic framework of »Germany« on the one hand, and the »Middle East« and »Islam« on the other, but within a broader, inter-imperial perspective. I have deployed a particular reading practice that brings out the complexity of such an actor’s life as opposed to a methodology that reads such lives exclusively through a civilizational logic. By following this lead, I have shown that such an approach has the potential to shed a different light on the most well known aspect of his life, his work as a radio announcer for the National Socialist regime. Situating Baħrī’s life and activities in a global frame can help to rethink – following Götz Nordbruch’s plea<sup>90</sup> – the dichotomic alternative for explaining the cooperation of Arab

**82** PA AA B 130, Bd. 6460A. Bonn 16. Juli 1964.

**83** Ibid.

**84** Message from German embassy to German Foreign Office, 18. June 1964. PA AA, B 130, Bd. 6460A.

**85** *The Times*, London, England, Tuesday, Feb 28, 1956, issue 53466, p 8, left column. Selwyn was British Foreign Secretary from 1955 to 1960.

**86** Memorandum of a Conversation Between the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs (Allen) and the Jordanian Ambassador (Rifa’i), Department of State, Washington, January 28, 1956, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, Volume XIII, Near East: Jordan-Yemen, Document 18. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v13/d18>, accessed 21.11.14.

**87** PA AA, B 130, Bd. 6460A, 23. July 1964 to Referat V3.

**88** The Algerian war had officially ended in 1962.

**89** PA AA, B 82 Nr. 525, V3-88 1964-1968.

**90** Götz Nordbruch, »Cultural Fusion« of Thought and Ambitions? – Memory, Politics and the History of Arab-Nazi German Encounters« (Rezensionsartikel), *Middle Eastern Studies* 47, no. 1 (2011).

nationalists with the German regime, that is, either instrumentalist motivation or the fusion of ideological horizons. By looking at a second-tier actor – in relation to much more prominent figures like al-Hussaini and al-Gailani who have been the object of many studies – we can locate a story such as Baḥrī's and the cooperation of Arab nationalists with the National Socialist regime in the history of multiple imperial connections and thus aim at more complex histories of knowledge production and the translation of concepts in a global frame.<sup>91</sup> My point in addressing *other* connections was not simply to highlight the fact of connectedness, but rather the observation that such a shifted perspective can help us develop a different account of the politics of Baḥrī's life, namely one that provides us with an inter-imperial account of power relations beyond seemingly fixated political-geographical, civilizational categories.

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<sup>91</sup> See for a similar plea based on a biographical study Marc David Baer, »Muslim Encounters with Nazism and the Holocaust: The Ahmadi of Berlin and Jewish Convert to Islam Hugo Marcus«, *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 1 (2015). See for a similar plea regarding the history of knowledge Rebekka Habermas, »Intermediaries, Kaufleute, Missionare, Forscher und Diakonissen«, in *Von Käfern, Märkten und Menschen: Kolonialismus und Wissen in der Moderne*, ed. Rebekka Habermas and Alexandra Przyrembel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 27.

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