



**FRIDAY,  
APRIL 12, 2024  
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CERES Brown Bag Talk:  
**ALCOHOL AND THE POLITICS OF  
IDENTITY IN TURKEY**

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Anatolia stands as one of the world's earliest sites of alcohol production, with diverse peoples shaping its drinking cultures over centuries. Turkish Muslims, the most recent arrivals, established the Ottoman Empire in 1300 and added their own strata of tradition and proscription to this opulent landscape. In general, non-Muslim communities continued to produce, trade, and consume alcohol while Muslims largely refrained. Occasional imperial attempts at teetotalism by some sultans resulted in short-lived and ineffective policies. Non-Muslim communities and tavern guilds provided stability to the alcohol trade with the empire, regulating the number of drinking establishments, pricing, and other facets. Nineteenth-century global disruptions, however, upended political ideas and agendas, social relations and economic order, and cultural practices. The empire suddenly seemed awash in imports and European debtors scrambled to capture all alcohol profits.

As ethno-religious communal politics turned violent amid recurring cycles of resistance, rebellion, and brutal reprisals, particular beverages became symbols in intractable identity conflicts. Concurrently, modern medical and social reformers began to denounce all that was brewed, fermented, and distilled. Amid this maelstrom, the dry and wet politics of what became modern Turkey was marked by contentious and divisive debates akin to the Prohibition era in the United States. This presentation will focus on changes in drinking patterns since the nineteenth century and examine how a cultural shift was in the making through new drinks, drinkers, and ways of drinking in modern Turkey.

