

**Venue:**

Conference Hall  
Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin-Nikolassee

Participants are asked to register at the following address:

Dr. Nora Lafi  
nora.lafi@rz.hu-berlin.de  
Phone: (+49) (0) 30 80307- 0

The seminar is part of the activities of the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) and of 'Cities Compared: Cosmopolitanism in the Mediterranean and Adjacent Regions', a research field within 'Europe in the Middle East - The Middle East in Europe' (EUME), a research program of the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, and the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

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**Fritz Thyssen Stiftung**  
FÜR WISSENSCHAFTSFÖRDERUNG

**Invitation ZMO-EUME-Colloquium****Ottoman Urban Studies Seminar**

**Chaired by Prof. Ulrike Freitag and Dr. Nora Lafi**  
**Annual Theme 2009 -2010: Post-Ottoman Cities**

**Monday, January 25, 2009, 5 pm**

**Changing Social Roles in Post-Ottoman Istanbul: a Gendered Approach****Lecture by Dr. Nazan Maksudyan**

Max Bonnafous, who was a professor of philosophy in the Department of Literature in Darülfünun (University) of Istanbul and Lycée de Galatasaray in between 1926 and 1929, undertook a detailed survey of suicides in Istanbul in the decade between 1916 and 1926. As he started publishing his findings both in French and Turkish from 1927 onwards, his research became the topic of a heated debate in the media and among academic circles, together with causing uneasiness on the part of the new political regime. Underlining that young Muslim women feature an exceptionally large proportion in the suicide statistics, Bonnafous claimed that the drastic changes introduced by the new Republican regime were the main reasons for these female suicides, since these women were entrapped between the emancipatory promises of the new political authority and still traditional nature of the society.

Placing this very interesting and significant survey at the center of analysis, this paper aims to analyze how seemingly non-political, even completely personal matters were interpreted as serious challenges by an authoritarian state apparatus. Defined as an epidemic throughout the 1920s and 30s, suicide was at first defined as a social ill and was attempted to be rehabilitated. Then, realizing the critical implications of this sociological interpretation, the regime chose to lean on to psychiatry and treated the cases of suicide as representations of a form of mental disorder or breakdown. In the end, with the introduction of an article to the Press Law of 1931, the government prohibited the publication of suicide news in the press. With this attempt of completely silencing the issue, the regime reaffirmed its denialist attitude relating to any unpleasant reality, which would cast a doubt on state's success and bright future.

This paper, in that respect, aims to analyze the intricate relations between social change, suicide, gender, and urban reorganization in the context of relatively homogenized, but yet still multi-ethnic and multi-religious city of post-Ottoman Istanbul.

**Dr. Nazan Maksudyan** received her PhD at History from Sabanci University in January 2008 with her dissertation entitled Hearing the Voiceless - Seeing the Invisible: Orphans and Destitute Children as Actors of Social, Economic, and Political History in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire. Then, she taught courses on Ottoman and European social history and history of childhood at Boğaziçi and Sabanci Universities in 2008 and 2009.

Her current research-project focuses on the introduction of vocational education and training to orphaned, destitute, and poor children in the urban provincial centers.

**Presentation of the Seminar**

What is the historical experience of cities in the former territories of the Ottoman Empire - in the Balkans, Anatolia, the Middle East, and North Africa - in dealing with the impact of global changes and the transformation from Empire to nation States? How did people of different cultural, social and religious backgrounds live together? How are such examples of conviviality, conflict, migration, and urban regimes of governance and stratification conceptualized? And how have urban traditions been reinterpreted, and what bearing does this have on modern conceptions of civil society, multicultural societies, migration, or cosmopolitanism. These and other questions will be addressed in this year's Seminar in Ottoman Urban Studies.

This seminar is supported with funds of the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung.