



Twice a month,  
Mondays 5 pm - 7 pm

**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@hu-berlin.de  
Phone: (+49) (0) 30 80307- 0

The seminar is a joint activity of  
the Zentrum Moderner Orient  
(ZMO) and 'Europe in the Middle  
East – The Middle East in Europe'  
(EUME).

EUME is a project at

**Forum  
Transregionale  
Studien**

which is funded by



Senatsverwaltung für Bildung,  
Wissenschaft und Forschung

For more information please visit

www.zmo.de  
www.eume-berlin.de  
www.forum-transregionale-studien.de  
www.h-net.msu.edu/~mediter

## Urban Studies Seminar 2012 - 2013

Chaired by Prof. Ulrike Freitag and Dr. Nora Lafi

Annual Theme: Cities as Laboratories of Change

Monday, January 28th, 2013, 5 pm - 7 pm

### Artisan Guilds in a Changing City: The Ottoman Institution of the *Gedik* and its Reform

Lecture by Prof. Suraiya Faroqhi

In this presentation, Faroqhi is going to review recent studies concerning the institution of slots (*gedik*) which profoundly changed the role of artisan organizations in Ottoman cities especially but not exclusively in Istanbul. When the right to open a shop was only available if the artisan had inherited or purchased the requisite authorization, an increased level of control over the aspirant on the part of his present or future colleagues must often have been the result. It is thus possible to regard *gediks* as an element promoting the control of artisan guilds over individual craftsmen. But state officials also gained in influence, as they played an active role in establishing *gediks*. But other perspectives are on offer as well. Onur Yıldırım has suggested that far from promoting guild control under certain conditions the institution of the *gedik* may have led to the weakening of the guilds. In certain cases at least the ownership of a *gedik* permitted an artisan to gain a degree of independence from his guild, as now he had a recognized right that the craft organization could not easily take away. Viewed in this perspective the *gedik* may even appear as a form of private property that its owner could alienate, thus further undermining guild control as the procedure permitted outsiders to manufacture items which according to regulations, should have been the sole prerogative of guild members. Given these ambiguities how did *gediks* come to an end? Ominous rumblings were audible already in the very early 1800s: while monopolies were a *conditio sine qua non* in guild life, in 1802 the Ottoman authorities refused a demand from the Izmir silk spinners for an exclusive right to spin raw silk. The author of this sultanic command clearly felt that monopolies were harmful to the community at large. However members of the governing elite were probably of two minds on this issue; and only in the 1830s under strong British pressure, did the Ottoman government abolish monopolies once and for all. This measure spelt the end of the *gediks*, though not – as yet – that of the guilds.

Incorporation into the European-dominated world economy of the time certainly was an important factor in weakening the guilds as well. However it seems that the effect was largely indirect; in the 1800s manufacture shifted from guild-organized artisans domiciled in towns and cities to non-organized workpeople, quite a few of them women, some of whom even lived and worked in the countryside. Given this decline in their economic functions, many though by no means all guilds lost so much of their power that their official abolition in 1910-12 was not a major bone of contention. Thus the end of the *gediks* was a direct consequence of pressure from the European-dominated world economy, while competition from imported goods led to a re-structuring of Ottoman production patterns that ultimately made the guilds irrelevant.

**Suraiya Faroqhi** (Istanbul Bilgi University) is regarded as one of the most important economic and social historians of the Ottoman Empire. She has written extensively on Ottoman urban history, arts and crafts, and on the daily life of ordinary people in the empire. She has published numerous books and articles in the field of pre- modern and modern Ottoman history. Among her latest publications: *Artisans of Empire: Crafts and Crafts people Under the Ottomans*, London, Tauris, 2011, 304p.