



ZMO-EUME-Colloquium

Twice a month,
Mondays 17:00-19:00

Venue:

Conference Hall
Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33
14129 Berlin-Nikolassee

Participants are asked to register at
the following address:

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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



which is funded by



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

Urban Studies Seminar 2011 - 2012

Chaired by Prof. Ulrike Freitag and Dr. Nora Lafi

**Annual theme: Urban Sociability and Urban
Movements (Middle East, North Africa, Iran, Turkey)**

Monday, December 12th, 2011, 5 pm

Urban Meets 'Urban: Ottoman Relations with the Bedouins of the Libyan Frontiers (1880-1900)

Lecture by Dr. Mostafa Minawi

In 1884, with the French to the west and the British to the east of Ottoman Libya, Istanbul entered the competitive race for African territories with a plan to consolidate its hold over its remaining province in Africa and to expand its rule further south into the Sahara. In this paper, I will turn the spotlight on the Ottoman participation in the so-called "scramble for Africa" by focusing on one of the strategies the Ottoman government followed in its inter-imperial competitive pursuits; namely, the building of political and military ties with the Bedouin tribes ('urban) of the Libyan hinterland. In particular, I will discuss the Ottoman alliance with the spiritual and political leader of the Bedouin tribes in the region, Muhammad al-Mahdi as-Sanusi. I will argue that the long-standing divide between the Ottoman-controlled coastal cities and the vast Bedouin-controlled desert was effectively bridged through negotiations between imperial representatives from Istanbul and the main power broker in the Libyan desert and the eastern Sahara, al-Mahdi as-Sanusi. To understand al-Mahdi as-Sanusi's strategic importance as a partner for Istanbul, I will briefly describe the rise of the Sanusi order in the region, setting the stage for al-Mahdi as-Sanusi's spiritual and political influence, which, by 1885, had extended as far south as the Lake Chad basin. This, I will argue, made al-Mahdi as-Sanusi Istanbul's ideal strategic partner in its efforts to claim sovereignty over the Libyan frontiers, in the face of British and French colonial ambitions in the last two decades of the 19th century.

Mostafa Minawi is a EUME Fellow at ZMO in Berlin. He received a Bachelor of Civil Engineering and Management from McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada in 1997, a Masters of Arts in History from the University of Toronto in 2005 and a Ph.D. in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from New York University in 2011. His research interests include the political and social history of the Ottoman Empire in the Arab provinces, south-south inter-imperial relations in Africa and the Red Sea basin, and the lives of itinerant Arab-Ottomans of Istanbul at the end of the "Age of Empire."