



## 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, January 23rd, 2012, 5 pm**

### ZMO-EUME-Colloquium

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

#### Venue:

Conference Hall  
Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33  
14129 Berlin-Nikolassee

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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

**Forum  
Transregionale  
Studien**

which is funded by



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

### Urban Sociability among 18th and early-19th century Mobile Persians between Iran and India

#### Lecture by Mana Kia

The mid-18th to early 19th century saw momentous changes across West and South Asia, as Mughal central power devolved onto regional kingdoms, which came to later be dominated by rising British imperial power. The fall of the Safavid state inaugurated decades of invasion, conflict and upheaval in West Asia until the rise of the Qajars. Early modernists have documented the linked Persianate cultures and social circulation between Iran and India, but this interaction is presumed to have abruptly ceased with the demise of the Mughal and Safavid empires. The focus of this paper is on the conception and expression of *adab* as an ethics of sociability in the context of West and South Asian urban settings, particularly among mobile Persians traveling between these regions in this period just before the rise of modern nationalism. Persianate cultural notions of ideal sociability were fundamentally urban. On a conceptual level, the virtues of civility were bound up in learning and masculinity, and the *adīb* or bearer of these virtues, was at once urban, learned and a model of masculine virtue. It was through its expression, as the individual's ethical interaction with the world, that virtue existed. I address the expression of civility in two moments, first in the mid-18th century in the context of stylistic debates that raged in Delhi over proper poetic usage. Viewed according to the social context and enactment of these debates, their stakes encompass public and politically significant negotiations of masculinity, affiliation and loyalty. Second, I turn to early 19th-century narratives of interregional travelers to explore to what degree expressions of urban sociability were still embedded in a shared Persianate notion of *adab*. This paper is part of a larger study on the effects of the re-configurations of indigenous power and the rise of colonial modernity on transregional intra-Asian forms of social and cultural affiliation, and the attendant constitution of parochial differences.

**Mana Kia** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin where she is working on a project titled "Friendship, Love and Loyalty: The Ethics of Persianate Self and Community Before Nationalism." She received her Ph.D. from Harvard University in History and Middle Eastern Studies (2011), an M.A. from New York University in Near Eastern Studies (2001) and a BA from Vassar College in International Studies (1997). Her research interests include comparative and connective social and cultural histories of West, Central and South Asia (18th-20th centuries), mobile communities and modernity in the age of British colonialism in South Asia and the Indian Ocean, gender and sexuality, and the continuity and ruptures between the early modern and modern periods.