



## Urban Studies Seminar 2018–2019

### Annual Theme:

### The Urban Spatialities of Religion in the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia

Monday, 17 December 2018, 5 pm

### The Jewish Neighborhood in Şan‘ā’ and the Relationship between Jews and Muslims: Physical Separation and Cultural Closeness

Lecture by **Menashe Anzi** (Ben-Gurion University, Beersheba)

Qā‘ al-Yahūd, the Jewish neighborhood of Şan‘ā’, was established at the end of the seventeenth century after the Şan‘ā’ni Jews were expelled from the old city. To many scholars, physical separation in Şan‘ā’ was a symbol of the marginalization of the Jews in the city. In his lecture, Menashe Anzi will suggest that the physical separation made it possible to preserve autonomy and at the same time allowed the community to remain involved in the life of the city. Physical separation between the neighborhoods allowed for the neutralization of the collective separation, and created common behavior among Muslims and Jews. The behaviors reflected and formed urban consciousness. The Şan‘ā’nis tried to shape an ideal image of learned, knowledgeable, well-dressed, aristocratic, refined individuals.

In the second part of the lecture, Anzi will present two examples of relations between the two groups behind the walls. In one case, an argument erupted between a rabbi and a Muslim merchant in the Jewish watch shop, which led to the rabbi’s imprisonment and a deep discussion on the text of Lot’s character as presented in the Bible, and in the Koran. Finally, he will show how an argument between Muslims and Christians in India in the shadow of British colonialism led to joint study and discussion in a Şan‘ā’ market and from there to an enlightened Jewish book written in Şan‘ā’ and to memoirs of a Muslim Şan‘ā’ni scholar.

Through these examples, we can see how the Jewish market functioned as an intellectual public space for interfaith dialogue. Despite the basic tension, it seems that Sūq al-Yahūd was a safe space for Jews to express their religious views during conversations with Muslims.

Menashe Anzi is a lecturer in the Jewish History department at Ben-Gurion University, member of the I-CORE Daat Hamakom, and Rosen Family Chair in Judaic Studies. Anzi held a Post-doctoral fellowship at EUME, Berlin (2014-2015).

His areas of specialization include the history of Yemenite Jews and Iraqi Jews, the relationship between Jews and Muslims in Islamic cities, and the trade networks and Jewish migration along the Indian Ocean.

#### Venue

Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient  
Kirchweg 33  
14129 Berlin

#### Contact and Enquiries

Jona.Vantard@zmo.de  
Ahmed.Sukker@zmo.de

#### In cooperation with:

