

## **Call for Papers**

International Conference Constitutional Experiences in the Middle East and North Africa (from approx. 18th to 20th centuries)

Convenors: Stefan Leder and Astrid Meier

Date: November 6-7, 2014 Venue: Orient-Institut Beirut

Deadline: May 16, 2014

The conference is aimed at exploring political concepts and practices which are related to constitutional experiences prior and parallel to the occurrence of written constitutions. Combining political, intellectual, legal and social history across the region, we invite papers on legal and organizational frameworks, administrative bodies, associations, councils, corporative structures, customs, as well as discourses of rule, power and statehood aimed at containing authority. Constitution can in its broadest sense be understood as the internal governmental norms and practices that establish the institution and system of government and define and limit the scope of governmental sovereign powers. Adopting a cross-temporal approach and taking account of diverse historical trajectories, we are interested in exploring the extent to which social practices of power sharing, especially when legally framed, as well as Islamic and other conceptual systems or habitual institutions provide a context that is akin to constitutional thought.

We therefore suggest that the notion of constitutional experiences be extended beyond the occurrence of written constitutions. Analogous to the western experience of constitutional thought, which cumulated in the widespread emergence of the idea of written constitutions between 1815 and 1848, the Middle East also witnessed different phases of constitution-making processes, the first of which resulted in the short-lived Tunisian Constitution of 1861, the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 and the Egyptian Constitution of 1882. Although they adopted elements of European constitutions, ideas and practices which bore elements of constitutional thought were by no means alien to political theory and practice in the Middle East.

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## Max Weber Stiftung

Orient-Institut Beirut

Die Max Weber Stiftung
Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche
Institute im Ausland ist eine
bundesunmittelbare Stiftung des
öffentlichen Rechts.

Against this background, the conference invites participants to study in greater detail the

extent to which political discourse and legal and administrative frameworks of the 18th and

19th centuries anticipated, paralleled or informed the rising demand for and gradual

drafting of written constitutions. Such local customs and practices of power sharing may

also have been superseded by the new power structures of an increasingly globalized world.

It remains to be asked, however, whether the development highlighted here can be

described as consistent with a shift in values which advocated the benefits of the state and

the subjects of political authority, a shift propelled and accompanied by the demand for

organizational principles from an early form of, to all intents, self-organized 'civil society'.

The deadline for the submission of abstracts (300 words maximum) is May 16, 2014. Your

abstract, together with a short biographical note, should be sent to Ahmad Hussein

(sek@orient-institut.org), under the subject header "constitutional experiences". You will

be informed about the decision of the selection committee by June 2, 2014.

Accommodation in Beirut will be provided for the duration of the conference. We are

currently finalizing the conference budget and very much hope that air travel will also be

provided to participants. However, if your own university, center or institute can help in

this matter, this will considerably reduce our financial obligations to our two institutional

sponsors. If you plan to apply for a travel grant, please indicate this when submitting your

abstract.

Please submit only unpublished papers that would be eligible for publication in an edited

volume.

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