

February 2  
4PM–5:30PM



Center for  
Middle East Studies  
UC SANTA BARBARA

HSSB 4080  
UC Santa Barbara

## Ambition on the Road: Getting Ahead in Arabic Travel Writing

**Speaker: Björn Bentlage**  
Universities of Bern and Munich



A Syrian merchant known as the `Aṭṭār set out on a new road in 1765. When he began to write about his journey, he did so with specific aim and purpose: success, prestige, and merit. A few years earlier, in 1758, a Maronite Christian by the name of Shukrallāh had put together a literary compendium. The inclusion of a travel-based topography arguably sought to promote an embattled community's position vis-a-vis the sacred landscapes of the homeland. In both cases, as in many others, making literature was an aspirational act with tangible goals. The talk will investigate the ambitious side of culture with a focus on Arabic narrations of travel and movement from the early modern period onwards.

Björn Bentlage is a lecturer and researcher of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies at the universities of Bern (Switzerland) and Munich (Germany). His interests range from contemporary legal debates over the connected history of the modern Middle East to literature and media since the Ottoman period.

Sponsors: This event is organized by the King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud Chair in Islamic Studies.

