

The Cluster of Excellence  
**Understanding Written Artefacts**  
at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
cordially invites you to the workshop

**Social Time in Written Artefacts:  
Developing Understandings of ‘Time’  
in Urban Communities Across Cultures**

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm CET  
Friday, 14 March 2025, 9:00 am – 3:20 pm CET

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Organised by Ann Lauren Osthof (University of Hamburg)  
And Rogier E. M. van der Heijden (University of Freiburg)

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register/workshop68>

The study of written artefacts is deeply intertwined with questions of time, as they produce and manifest experiences and imaginations of time. Individuals, groups and institutions organise and regulate time through written artefacts, shaping and structuring the rhythms of a community. Time is also a way to show aspirations, creating socio-political, religious and cultural realities. A prime example is the *Urania-Weltzeituhr* (Alexanderplatz, Berlin, former GDR), which displays the time in 146 countries, exhibiting the hope of cosmopolitanism within a secluded country. At the same time, concepts and practices of 'social time' are culturally and epochally specific. As a result, multi- and interdisciplinary approaches to 'social time' are scarce; juxtaposing and integrating cross-disciplinary, cross-temporal, and cross-cultural perspectives can contribute significantly to our understanding of social experiences and time structuring. The workshop aims to study and discuss which aspects of 'social time' are influential in shaping written artefacts, and how written artefacts shape 'social time'. The workshop brings together young researchers from fields of research within the Humanities and Social Sciences and research from Antiquity to the modern world focusing on case studies in Europe, Asia and the Americas, thus creating an interdisciplinary platform for cross-disciplinary discussion on time and materiality in urban societies.

## Programme

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### Thursday, 13 March 2025, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

9:00 – 9:20            Registration

9:20 – 9:50            Welcome

**Ann Lauren Osthof and Rogier van der Heijden**

*Connecting Social Time and Written Artefacts: Towards a  
Cross-cultural Understanding of 'Time' in Urban Communities*

#### **Time, Society, and Politics**

Chair: tba

9:50 – 10:30

**Birgan Gokmenoglu (Birmingham City University)**

*On the Politicization of Time: A Sociological Perspective*

10:30 – 11:00

Coffee Break

11:00 – 11:40

**Amrita Chattopadhyay (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)**

*Mughal Illuminations: Social Practices and Material Temporalities  
of Medieval and Early Modern India*

11:40 – 12:20

**Rogier van der Heijden (University of Freiburg)**

*The Multi-temporality of Benefaction: Dimensions of Identity,  
Memory and the Practice of Civic Benefaction in the Roman-period  
Cities of Asia Minor*

12:20 – 2:00

Lunch Break

## Production of Time and Art

Chair: tba

- 2:00 – 2:40            **Laura Kalbow (University of Hamburg)**  
*“Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit” – Thoughts on Musical and Social  
Time between Written Artefacts and Performance*
- 2:40 – 3:20            **Julia Alting (University of Groningen)**  
*Fiona Tan, Raslene, ARK: Tracing Footsteps in the Eye Archive  
through Plural ‘Post’colonial Histories*
- 3:20 – 4:00            **Marius Rositzka (University of Freiburg)**  
*The Filocalus Codex and the Temporal Order of Late Antique Rome*

## Friday, 14 March 2025, 9:00 am – 3:20 pm

9:00 – 9:20            Registration

## Materiality of Memory

Chair: tba

- 9:20 – 10:00           **Archishman Sarker (Ashoka University)**  
*‘Social Time’, ‘Linearity’, and the Materiality of Memory: The  
Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra and Temporal Negotiations in  
Buddhist Manuscript Traditions of Nepal*
- 10:00 – 10:40           **Ann Lauren Osthof (University of Hamburg)**  
*Tomorrow Never Dies: Milesian Funerary Monuments between Past  
and Future*
- 10:40 – 11:10           Coffee Break
- 11:10 – 11:50           **Johanna Rozakis-Siu (Princeton University / University of Freiburg)**  
*Commemorating Rumi Heroes in India: How the Monuments of  
Early Modern Ottomans Shaped the Port Cities of Diu and Surat*

- 11:50 – 12:30      **Rodrigo Perujo (FU Berlin)**  
*Spatial Absences and Future Imagination in Two Maps of Mexico City in the Late Colonial Period*
- 12:30 – 2:00      Lunch Break
- 2:00 – 2:40      **Juan Ignacio Chavez (FU Berlin)**  
*Cities and Sounds from the Past: Nation-Building Cartography in 20th Century Argentina*
- 2:40 – 3:20      **Nelson Landry (University of Hamburg)**  
*Utopia Meets Topos: Unseen Agents and Real-time Construction Projects in a Dunhuang Manuscript S3728*

## Abstracts and Contributors

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### **Birgan Gokmenoglu (Birmingham City University)**

*On the Politicization of Time: A Sociological Perspective*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 9:50 am – 10:30 am

This essay introduces time as both a social and a political construct. My aim is to reflect on time in its relation to power and exemplify the ways in which time is politicized in a variety of social contexts. I draw on sociological and social scientific (e.g., social anthropology, human geography, and queer/feminist) literature on the subject as well as my own ethnographic study of an activist network in Istanbul. Based on a political ethnography of anti-authoritarian activists between 2016 and 2018, the said study analyses the experiences and narratives of time, and practices of timing. Focusing on narratives of time as (unwritten) artefacts that are collectively produced among activists, in this essay, I extend the insights gained from my fieldwork to reflect on the role of temporal agency, future imaginations, and anticipation in contentious politics. I argue that time as a social construct is an invisible force in politics that is frequently instrumentalized, for both domination and resistance.

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### **Amrita Chattopadhyay (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient)**

*Mughal Illuminations: Social Practices and Material Temporalities of Medieval and Early Modern India*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 11:00 am – 11:40 am

The paper focuses on Mughal illuminations as a spatial-temporal category where social practices and material procedures coalesced in medieval and early modern India. The Mughal empire at the helm of its political rule in India edified a well-organised workshop (*karkhana*) system of manufacturing objects catering to the royal court and the household. Furnishing the imperial realm, objects such as a variety of illuminants facilitated a range of socio-material temporal practices, especially calibrating the night-time demarcating darkness from light. The nocturnal character of the polity was heightened through the labour employed for the lighting, provisioning, carriage and maintenance of illuminants. This aided varied economic enterprises, enabled travel and

military undertakings and, observation of festivals, rituals and occasions of sociability and conviviality. The material lives of these illuminants and their functions charted a temporal order and a social-time that was nocturnal in character and integral to the cultural fabric of the Indo-Islamicate polity. Bringing these into focus, the paper charts the interlaces between materiality and social practices in delineating the nocturnal temporal order in this period. In doing so, it focuses on a textual corpus including Mughal chronicles and Indo-Persian household manuals in corroboration with visual sources from this period.

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**Rogier van der Heijden (University of Freiburg)**

*The Multi-temporality of Benefaction: Dimensions of Identity, Memory and the Practice of Civic Benefaction in the Roman-period Cities of Asia Minor*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 11:40 am – 12:20 am

Civic benefaction formed an integral part of the civic culture in the ancient Greek and Roman *polis*. Especially in the second century CE under Roman rule, wealthy citizens would donate sums of money for religious rituals, the oil used in the gymnasium, or the construction of a public building. Some acts of benefaction created ephemeral events, others were material and lastingly transformed the urban landscape. In many cases, however, the benefactor was honoured by different social groups, associations, or civic institutions, with a mixture of a golden crown, a (gilded) bronze or marble statue with an accompanying inscription recording their good deeds, or reserved seats at public events at the theatre. Benefaction was, as such, a multitemporal phenomenon. Using the theories of time and future developed by British sociologist B. Adam, I will show the integrated multi-temporality of civic benefaction in the ancient *polis* in the Roman period. I will especially dive into the potential future-oriented thinking involved with benefaction, and the effect this had on the nature of civic benefaction.

**Laura Kalbow (University of Hamburg)**

*“Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit” – Thoughts on Musical and Social Time between Written Artefacts and Performance*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 2:00 pm – 2:40 pm

Music has always been and still is a ‘time art’. The musical oeuvre itself only appears in a temporally form, the moment of its performance; “as a pure, uninterpreted fact, ‘the work itself’ has no existential place.” (Hinrichsen 1999: 214) Nonetheless, the cultural heritage of music is handed down through the centuries in form of ‘written artefacts’ in order to hold onto the fleeting moment of sound. This leads to a general anachronistic lapse in music culture/history: While the fixed level of time/music is inscribed in written artefacts such as autographs, composition sketches etc., and ends with the death of the composer, his oeuvre remains in the temporal dimension of art, as it can be endlessly ‘reproduced’ during period. This anachronistic shift provokes an endless chain of actualized ‘versions’ of a written text, that change within aesthetic tastes in societies, nationalities, cities etc.

In my paper, I want to show these interdependencies of materiality and time in music by reference to R. Wagners latest opera *Parsifal*. Not only is the concept of space and time of high relevance in the inner musical structure of his music drama (“Zum Raum wird hier die Zeit”), but its composition and performance circumstances evoked probably as no other opera of this period, a fascinating frame betwixt space, time, mythos and religion.

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**Julia Alting (University of Groningen)**

*Fiona Tan, Raslene, ARK: Tracing Footsteps in the Eye Archive through Plural ‘Post’colonial Histories*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 2:40 pm – 3:20 pm

In this paper I will consider the ‘traces of the past’ in the Dutch national film archive Eye, and contemporary artists’ usage and reworking of historical material. I ask how we can conceptually make sense of the multiple temporalities of artworks, signalling the way colonial histories “press on the present”, as historian Ann Laura Stoler formulates it. Fiona Tan (b. Pekanbaru, 1966) uses late 19th century and early 20th century archival footage of people at work in the Netherlands in *Footsteps* (2022). Overlaid is a voice that



reads aloud letters from Tan's father sent to her as she had just moved to the Netherlands to study at the Rietveld during the years 1988-1991, a period of great upheaval in the world. The film sketches the relations between the Netherlands, China, Indonesia, Australia in a constellation of different times and places, connecting colonial histories to the new period of global late capitalism since 1989. Raslene (b. Jakarta, 1991) borrows from the Eye archive in *Perempuan, Tanpa Nama* (2020), questioning gender dynamics in Indonesian society. The work combines a digital zine and a multi-channel video installation, covering eight chapters of an anonymous woman's life story, and is the result of a longer research project in which Raslene analysed narrative structures around female characters in Indonesian novels between 1940-2010. The Dutch art collective ARK imagines the Eye archive as a city: they walk through it in a serendipitous way, aiming to open new connections and speculations. Their artistic research aims to question the classification of the archive while simultaneously emphasising the multisensory through a focus on the body, and while documenting the archive through its own material, in 35mm film. In the analysis of these works I focus on the technical affordances of the camera in documentary practices. ARK, Tan and Raslene activate the historical archival material, and through the indexical quality of documentary produce a relationship to a past reality. Finally, their work provokes further questions on how to join the endurance of *material* objects to the *epistemological* traces of the colonial past.

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**Marius Rositzka (University of Freiburg)**

*The Filocalus Codex and the Temporal Order of Late Antique Rome*

Thursday, 13 March 2025, 3:20 pm – 4:00 pm

According to an older research paradigm the process of Christianization in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries was primarily a struggle for survival between the mutually exclusive groups of Christians and pagans. This paradigm was challenged during the 1970s and 1980s, resulting in its gradual abolishment. As of today, this research development, however, has not reached studies into the temporal orders of the same time period, which still largely view Christian and pagan temporal orders as either mutually exclusive or completely ignorant of each other. In this presentation a written document proving the mutual entanglement of Christian and pagan temporal orders in the late antique city of Rome will be discussed. The Filocalus Calendar, finished in 354 CE, provides us with a snapshot of a temporal order which seems to have been capable of unifying pagan and

Christian elements. In doing so it preserves some of the temporal pluralism characteristic of Classical Antiquity and helps to question the mutual exclusiveness and ignorance of Christian and pagan temporal conceptions in Late Antiquity.

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**Archishman Sarker (Ashoka University)**

*'Social Time', 'Linearity', and the Materiality of Memory: The Aṣṭasāhasrikā  
Prajñāpāramitāsūtra and Temporal Negotiations in Buddhist Manuscript Traditions of  
Nepal*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 9:20 am – 10:00 am

This paper critically examines the enduring influence of colonial historiography on the study of medieval Buddhist manuscripts from eastern India and Nepal, arguing that its linear and synchronic frameworks have not only shaped but also constrained contemporary understandings of these textual traditions. Focusing on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* manuscripts, the analysis examines their reception, dissemination, and preservation through the lens of 'social time.' Special attention is given to their role within contemporary urban Nepal, particularly among Buddhist communities in the Kathmandu valley and the Hiraṇyavarṇa Mahāvihāra in Kwa Baha, Patan (Lalitpur). The study contends that colonial influence on modern historiographical models obscure the intricate processes of cultural association, dissociation, and appropriation that have historically shaped Himalayan manuscript cultures, where manuscripts often play the role of 'living agents' in the construction of 'social time'; thus situating these manuscripts within the localised and interconnected contexts of Buddhist communities in Nepal and adjacent Himalayan regions—where manuscripts produced in eastern India during the Pāla dynasty (eighth to twelfth century), were actively translated, preserved, and disseminated. It is argued that manuscript cultures in contemporary Nepal are not static repositories of historical knowledge but dynamic participants in the production of historical and cultural continuity. By integrating the materiality of textual traditions with their embedded socio-cultural networks, this paper critiques the limitations of allochronic historiographical models in the study of manuscripts and societies in South Asia, and advocates for a more nuanced, contextually grounded approach to understanding the interplay between Buddhist textual traditions, the hermeneutics of colonial historiography, and the lived experiences of Buddhist communities.

**Ann Lauren Osthof (University of Hamburg)**

*Tomorrow Never Dies: Milesian Funerary Monuments between Past and Future*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 10:00 am – 10:40 am

In the second century CE, the past became important in the inscribed cityscape of Miletus: Centuries-old written artefacts were deliberately repositioned at central locations in the city. Moreover, for example, the *Stadttitulatur* of Miletus, which now preceded the honorary inscriptions, solely stressed the city's glorious past. While these changes were organised and/or authorised by the polis and focused on the identities of the city, this paper turns toward the Milesian necropolis and its funerary monuments. In Roman times, these were compositions of heavily nuanced choices reflecting different social groups, gender conventions, and individual distinctions. Thus, they strongly oscillate between collective habits and conventions and the individual choices of the family of the deceased or of the deceased himself/herself beforehand. The latter, in particular, proves crucial as the necropolis was a 'contested space' and textual, and material choices communicated and influenced the success and connectedness of the family within the city. Therefore, this case study analyses if and how the past of the city or of the individual played a significant function in the materiality or text of the funerary monuments. Was emphasising the past an investment in the future?

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**Johanna Rozakis-Siu (Princeton University / University of Freiburg)**

*Commemorating Rumi Heroes in India: How the Monuments of Early Modern Ottomans Shaped the Port Cities of Diu and Surat*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 11:10 am – 11:50 am

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### **Rodrigo Perujo (FU Berlin)**

#### *Spatial Absences and Future Imagination in Two Maps of Mexico City in the Late Colonial Period*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 11:50 am – 12:30 am

During the late colonial period in Mexico City, the enlightened reformism created the spatial representation device that would order the city physically and, above all, conceptually. In 1776 the viceroy Conde de Revillagigedo ordered the city architect, Ignacio Castrera, to draw up the map of the capital of New Spain. Under a neoclassical rationality, Castrera built an “objective” and “mathematical” representation of the largest city in the Americas. In this aerial perspective map, the stone buildings appeared, but all the peripheral constructions made of wood, adobe and palm were left out. Not coincidentally, the empty land, a *terra nullius*, corresponded to the Indian quarters of San Juan Tenochtitlan and Santiago Tlatelolco -colonial continuities of the ancient Mexica polity. The architect produced a second map, this time of the street alignment project, which was intended to be laid out as a grid and a walled city. This paper argues that both maps constituted the fundamental spatial and temporal devices that structured the image of urban space and its temporality, as well as the future imagination, even after Mexico's independence in 1821.

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### **Juan Ignacio Chavez (FU Berlin)**

#### *Cities and Sounds from the Past: Nation-Building Cartography in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Argentina*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 2:00 pm – 2:40 pm

This paper examines *Teoría de la Ciudad Argentina* [Theory of the Argentine City] (1951) by Bernardo Canal Feijóo, focusing on its *Mapa Etnológico* [Ethnological Map], a speculative cartographic project that reimagines Argentine territory by integrating indigenous histories with colonial urban foundations. Unlike conventional maps that prioritize visual representation, Canal Feijóo introduces the *tonada*—a regional accent or sonic marker—as an alternative way to experience space, framing territoriality through auditory perception rather than fixed borders. This sonic geography offers a counter-model to modernization that foregrounds cultural continuity over imposed spatial order. Drawing from ethnohistorical studies, particularly the diffusionist framework of Antonio Serrano, the *Mapa Etnológico* overlays indigenous population

zones with the chronological founding of cities, creating a layered temporality that resists linear historical narratives. This study situates the map within critical cartographic discourse, engaging with counter-mapping, spatial practices, and the ideological nature of maps. By tracing how the *tonada* structures territorial belonging, the paper argues that Canal Feijóo's cartography does more than reveal the persistence of indigenous and mestizo presences—it proposes an alternative criterion for territorialization, where sound, memory, and spatial practices actively shape the nation's geographic and cultural fabric.

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**Nelson Landry (University of Hamburg)**

*Utopia Meets Topos: Unseen Agents and Real-time Construction Projects in a Dunhuang Manuscript S3728*

Friday, 14 March 2025, 2:40 pm – 3:20 pm

Relevant to this talk is a Chinese Dunhuang manuscript from the British Library called S3728. The recto is related to combustibles in Dunhuang. The verso has varied Buddhist material: most notably, an excerpt from Daoxuan's 道宣 *Ji Shenzhou sanbao gantong lu* 集神州三寶感通錄 and a paraphrased edict that was passed in the first year of the Renshou era (601) under Emperor Wen of the Sui. Altogether, the verso makes three references to Buddhist construction projects. The Buddhist writing on the verso then bleeds onto the recto as the authors, who obviously were recycling an administrative document, elaborated on the reasons for the manuscripts collation: the renovation of a nunnery. The recurring theme in all these instances is the merit gained by investing in Buddhist construction projects, as well as the importance of timing. These instances represented the evangelical import of such projects. In the Daoxuan excerpt, as well as in Emperor Wen's excerpted edict, the timing construction project was meant as a show of force for founding emperors of newly unified nations. This talk will therefore look at this manuscript and its content to cast a light on the cultural environment and the sense of social time not only in Dunhuang, but across China during the Tang and Five Dynasties period.