The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) cordially invites you to the conference

**Displaced or Stolen?**
Removed Archives and Written Artefacts

Thursday, 20 October 2022, 2:00 pm – 6:15 pm  
Friday, 21 October 2022, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm  
Saturday, 22 October 2022, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Registration:  
[https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-workshop29](https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-workshop29)

Archives have stored written artefacts of their founding social groups and societies since antiquity. Consequently, they have always been sites of contention and the removing of archives by someone who is not the owner is as old as record-keeping itself. The motivation of those who remove parts of or complete archives have been many and varied: personal, political, religious, economic, or simply practical reasons. While displacement might have been intentionally aimed at obliteration and destruction, in other cases it has been accidental or even motivated by an attempt to safeguard the written artefacts.

Various questions may be addressed concerning the ways the persons who removed an archive proceeded in terms of access to the archive’s space, and of navigation among a mass of written artefacts organised according to someone else’s classification. They may also concern the prevention against theft of archives and the types of protection used: strong rooms, safes, seals, guards, et cetera. The fate of the removed archives is also a point to investigate. They can be kept hidden within a collection, recycled, appropriated, or destroyed. Eventually, the consequences of removing archives for the new owners of the archival collection and for the previous owners of this collection can be addressed.
Programme

Thursday, 20 October 2022, 2:00 pm – 6:15 pm

2.00 – 2:30 Welcome note and introduction

2:30 – 3:30 Keynote lecture
Bénédicte Savoy (Technische Universität Berlin)
Translocations. Historical enquiries into the displacement of cultural assets – grasping the future

3:30 – 4:00 Coffee break

Archives and violence I: 4:00 pm – 6:15 pm
Chair: Cécile Michel (CNRS, Paris and CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Natalie Krentz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)
Tokens of power, collector’s items, and pieces of evidence: The many uses of displaced archives in the Thirty Year’s War

Jakob Wigand (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
Colonial collecting of written artefacts at ethnological museums. Evidence from the MARKK Museum in Hamburg

Philippe Abrahami (Université de Lille, UMR 8164 HALMA)
Removed archives: The case of the royal palace of Mari

7:00 pm Conference dinner
Friday, 21 October 2022, 9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Archives and violence II: 9:00 am – 11:15 am
Chair: Felix Heinzer (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Maria Pia Donato (CNRS, Paris)
*Removed archives under Napoleon and documentary culture in early nineteenth-century Europe*

Massimo Zaccaria (Università di Pavia)
*Displaced, removed but also left behind. Italian colonial archives in Africa: An overview of the Eritrean case*

Jörg Quenzer (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
*Stolen and destroyed regional archives in late medieval and early modern Japan*

11:15 – 11:45 Coffee break

Archives and violence III: 11:45 am – 1:15 pm
Chair: Markus Friedrich (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Olly Akkerman (Freie Universität Berlin)
*A treasury of books across the Indian Ocean: The confiscation and survival of Isma‘ili manuscripts in Yemen and Gujarat*

Éloi Ficquet (École des hautes études en sciences sociales, Marseille)
*Reorganisation, relocation and selection of the Ethiopian Imperial Archives by the Italian fascist occupation administration between 1936 and 1941*

1:15 – 2:15 Finger food
Archival displacement I: 2:15 pm – 3:45 pm
Chair: Sebastian Schirrmeister (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Suganya Anandakichenin (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
*Displaced manuscripts and mysterious owners: A look at the Kallitaiku̇ricci collection of palm-leaf manuscripts*

Mario C.D. Paganini (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna)
*The afterlife of private archives in the Graeco-Roman world: Case studies from Egypt*

3:45 – 4:15 Coffee break

Archival displacement II: 4:15 pm – 6:00 pm
Chair: Konrad Hirschler (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Christina Philips (independent researcher)
*Of documents lost and found: The Manchurian archive and the discourse on sanshi documents in China*

Zahir Bhalloo (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
*A displaced archive from Northwest Iran in Jerusalem: The Ādūji documents in the Islamic documentary corpus from al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf*

Saturday, 22 October 2022, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm

Mobility of archives I: 9:00 am – 10:45 am
Chair: Alessandro Bausi

Anna Dolganov (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna)
*The mismanagement of local archives in Roman Egypt: Deliberate destruction or cultural misunderstanding?*

Philippe Depreux (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
*Lost by chance, by misfortune or by design? Strategies of archiving and hazard of preservation of charters in early medieval Europe*
10:45 – 11:15  Coffee break

Mobility of archives II: 11:15 am – 12:45 pm
Chair: Eike Grossmann (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

Nicolas Michel (Aix-Marseille Université)
*Land survey and archival process in Egypt, c. 1315-1820*

Nandini Chatterjee (University of Exeter)
*Hidden in plain sight: The mystery of the missing Mughal archives*

12:45 – 2:00  Final discussion & concluding remarks
Abstracts and Contributors in Alphabetical Order

Philippe Abrahiami (Université de Lille, UMR 8164 HALMA)
Removed archives: The case of the royal palace of Mari
Thursday, 20 October 2022

The theme of the present conference on displaced or stolen archives will be treated by taking as a case study the royal palace of the city of Mari in the Old-Babylonian period. A first point will discuss the sorting operations of the diplomatic archives, mostly letters, carried out by the Babylonians after their conquest of the city. Various labels, dated to the year 32 of Hammurabi of Babylon (1760 B.C.), suggest that baskets were used to store previously selected documents in order to send them to Babylonia. A second point presents the cases of intercepted correspondence as reflected by some batches of letters whose presence in the palace of Mari cannot be explained unless one considers that they were confiscated or misappropriated documents. In view of the risk of interception and disclosure of sensitive information, the third point will examine some examples of secret correspondence.

Olly Akkerman (Freie Universität Berlin)
A treasury of books across the Indian Ocean: The confiscation and survival of Isma’ili manuscripts in Yemen and Gujarat
Friday, 21 October 2022

This paper focuses on the confiscation and survival of Isma’ili manuscripts across the Indian Ocean between Yemen and Gujarat. More specifically, it discusses the persecution of a Muslim community known as the Tayyibi Isma’ilis at the hand of the ruling Zaydi Imamate (r.897-1962) and the looting of its khizanat al-kutub (book treasuries). Contemporary Tayyibi documents and Zaydi historiographic works provide unique insight into the motives and practices of manuscript confiscation, as well as the consequences of their removal form their original habitat. Zaydi persecution and looting, I argue, resulted in the relocation of the Tayyibi Isma’ili community overseas to Gujarat in the late sixteenth century, where these Yemeni manuscripts acquired a new social role as sacred objects. In Yemen, the displacement of Tayyibi manuscripts among the Zaydis, did not lead to their obliteration. Instead, I demonstrate, these ‘alien’ Isma’ili manuscripts were reappropriated and recopied into the new sectarian context of Zaydi Imamic libraries.
Displaced manuscripts and mysterious owners: A look at the Kalliṭaikuricci collection of palm-leaf manuscripts
Friday, 21 October 2022

The Kalliṭaikuricci collection of palm-leaf manuscripts, remarkable in more ways than one, have travelled across South India to reach their present destination. Having apparently been thrown out in the streets after the death of its original (?) owner in 1981 in the deep south of India, this collection, made up of 108 manuscripts, was transported 500 km away to Pondicherry, and reached the hands of Professor Vijayavenugopal (EFEO), in whose possession they lay undisturbed till 2018. And 40 years after they were discarded, the manuscripts are now revealing their secrets as a pilot project funded by the British Library - Endangered Archives Programme is allowing us to explore them thoroughly.

However, even after cataloguing more than half of the collection, we are yet to know the name of the owner(s), their family or hometown, although we do know of their religious beliefs and affiliations, as well as the dates of composition through their elaborate colophons found in some manuscripts. Some other manuscripts, however, seem untouched, with no signs of personalisation nor of wear and tear (except the ones caused by the passage of time), as if they were commissioned or bought, but never studied. And yet within that collection lie a set of totally different manuscripts (in terms of contents, religious affiliations, etc.) which do have colophons and names. But clearly, they were not part of the original collection: were they borrowed but never returned? Or were they received as gifts, and ignored afterwards? Or perhaps, were they removed from their original location to prevent destruction? Questions abound as we try to look closely at these different sets of manuscripts found within the Kalliṭaikuricci collection, which is what this talk will seek to address.

A displaced archive from Northwest Iran in Jerusalem: The Ādūji documents in the Islamic documentary corpus from al-Haram al-Sharīf
Friday, 21 October 2022

The archival trajectories of the collection of over 900 medieval Islamic documents discovered since the 1970s in locked drawers of the Islamic Museum located at the Temple Mount (al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf) in Jerusalem are complex. Recent research has shown that the collection consists of several sub-corpora. While most of these sub-corpora were produced in fourteenth century Mamluk Jerusalem itself, an important sub-corpus of
around 78 documents written in Persian, Arabic, Armenian and Uighur was produced outside Jerusalem. These documents dated between 1286 and 1353 appear to have been produced mainly in Northwest Iran under Mongol rule. At least 20 documents can be traced to the private archive of a local military commander named Amīr Ādūji b. Yāzili (d. ca. 1331) and his descendants. This paper will address the formation of the Ādūji archive, the possible motivations for its long-distance displacement to Jerusalem and its subsequent preservation within the collection of documents of the Islamic Museum.

Nandini Chatterjee (University of Exeter)

*Hidden in plain sight: The mystery of the missing Mughal archives*
Saturday, 22 October 2022

Historians of early modern South Asia have long lamented the absence of archives pertaining to the workings of the grand Mughal empire (1526-1858). Given the dense contemporary descriptions of documentation and about scribal communities adept at it, the missing archive has been explained with reference to destruction due to war and regime change, as well as climactic impact on paper. In this paper, I shall argue that this purported absence is really the product of a misdirected search – the result of looking for a centralised state-controlled repository that is premised on colonial models. Mughal records are in fact abundant, but these were maintained by households of landed lineages – both familial and spiritual. Using examples from several such collections, some deposited in modern archives and libraries, others still in private hands, and nearly all of them scattered in one way or another, this paper will argue that household archives are Mughal archives, and that we need certain skills of imagination and reconstruction in order to use them.

Philippe Depreux (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)

*Lost by chance, by misfortune or by design? Strategies of archiving and hazard of preservation of charters in early medieval Europe*
Saturday, 22 October 2022

This paper is devoted to the way early medieval people kept their archive and managed to secure their legal documents. Based on written sources explaining what happens in the case of destruction and based on the charters itself written in confirmation of lost or outdated documents, I would like to appraise on which occasions we can presume that documents were really lost or simply put away and under which conditions it occurred.
Anna Dolganov (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna)
The mismanagement of local archives in Roman Egypt: Deliberate destruction or cultural misunderstanding?
Saturday, 22 October 2022

The rich evidence from Egypt as a province of the Roman Empire documents a curious story of local public archives being mismanaged over a period of several decades after their introduction by the Roman state in the mid-first century CE. The events involved the destruction of records through failure to catalogue and index them in the archives. Precisely why this happened remains a mystery. Was this a case of subaltern resistance by local elites tasked with maintaining Roman state archives, one targeted aim of which was to generate administrative knowledge about private wealth? Or had local liturgists misunderstood their duties or been overwhelmed by the demands imposed by the Roman imperial administration? This story will be confronted with other evidence for the destruction, evasion and manipulation of public records in the Roman Empire, which underscores how invasive Roman record-keeping institutions were perceived to be.

Maria Pia Donato (CNRS, Paris)
Removed archives under Napoleon and documentary culture in early 19th-century Europe
Friday, 21 October 2022

The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars witnessed momentous alterations in Europe’s archives. Archives were displaced, seized by the state, looted, destroyed, rearranged on an unprecedented scale. More particularly, in the period 1808–14, large portions of archives in Europe were removed and transported to Paris to form a central imperial repository.

Like other similar institutions in Europe, the Archives de l’Empire in Paris were meant to materialize the glory and authority of Napoleon’s empire. What kind of archives were seized, and why? Were these archives “stolen”? To whom did these displaced archives actually belong? What does archival looting under Napoleon reveal of Western European documentary culture at the turn of the 18th and 19th century? This paper will tentatively address such questions, focusing on the case of Tuscany (annexed to France in 1808).
In May 1936, after five months of violent warfare, the armed forces of the Italian fascist government entered the Ethiopian imperial capital, Addis Ababa, victorious. To provoke the war and win the victory, the fascist government had used all the means at its disposal, resorting to the most outrageous manoeuvres of propaganda, false pretext, intimidation, violation of international treaties, legal contortion, bypassing of sanctions, policy of fait accompli, and even the massive dispatch of troops and the use of unconventional arms. The Italian Empire of East Africa (Africa Orientale Italiana) was proclaimed. The general government moved into the palace of Hayle Selassie, the deposed Ethiopian ruler, and a new administration was quickly set up. How did it replace the old administration? For a long time, questions about this period remained unanswered, due to the lack of primary sources.

The archives of the imperial palace in Addis Ababa were long hidden. It was thought that they had been destroyed or looted by the Italian invaders. These archives are still not available for consultation today, but preliminary diagnostic and inventory work has revealed a number of findings. Firstly, the archives prior to the Italian invasion were not entirely destroyed or moved. A review remains to be carried out to describe the displacements, their dimensions and their significance. Traces remain of a selection made in the Ethiopian archives by the Italian occupation administration. A "Raccolta di documenti storici del passato regime negussita" [Collection of historical documents from the past regime of the Negus] was made. Several versions of this raccolta, handwritten and typewritten, have been found, showing several operations of description and selection from the old collection. After the Italian defeat in 1941 and the reconstitution of an imperial Ethiopian administration, the collection was reorganised. Some of the documents have been reinstated, but it is not yet clear whether the previous classification has been rearranged and whether all the documents have been returned or some have disappeared or been placed in other sections of the collection. This paper will not provide the answers, but will offer a first assessment of the potential for archival and historical investigation.
Natalie Krentz (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)

Tokens of power, collector’s items, and pieces of evidence: The many uses of displaced archives in the Thirty Year’s War
Thursday, 20 October 2022

This paper explores the displacement of archives in the Thirty Year’s War (1618-1648). During this period numerous archives – from town and monastery archives to chancellery archives of the principalities to the imperial archives – were seized and transported between the German principalities and across Europe, causing one of the most extensive displacements of archival documents in early modern Europe.

The paper raises the question as to why – at all – archives were displaced in times of war in seventeenth-century Europe. Why did the actors take the considerable efforts and costs of capturing and transporting archival goods during the crucial situation of war? The paper highlights four major uses of seized documents, based on case studies from all periods of the conflict and different warring parties. First, charters and administrative records were utilized as tokens of power in legal contexts, supporting the attempt to obtain control over territories. Second, and closely connected to this, is their symbolic meaning as spoils of war and trophies of victory. Third, displaced archival documents of all kinds were valued by collectors as written artefacts of antiquarian and cultural interest. And finally, they became important as pieces of evidence against the enemy to be used in battles of propaganda and – more generally – as means to dominate narratives and cultural memory.

With these findings, the paper aims to consider the displacement of archives in the Thirty Year’s war within the broader contexts of archives and power, cultures of credibility and proof, as well as cultural memory in early seventeenth-century Europe, and to determine how the crisis of war and the resulting mobility changed the archives themselves, as well as the attitude towards archives and documents of this time.

Nicolas Michel (Aix-Marseille Université)

Land survey and archival process in Egypt, c. 1315-1820
Saturday, 22 October 2022

Public archiving is a key element of modern States. It postulates not only the preservation of public documents within dedicated places and institutions, but also the conception and writing of documents intended for an unlimited preservation. Thus, the issue of immovable and perennial archives is related to the circulation of information, the production of reference documents and the multiple forms they could take. My paper proposes scrutinizing the mobility of information in the specific field of land surveys in
Egypt, through documents produced during and after three surveys that are landmarks in Egyptian history, i.e. the 1315 (al-rawk al-nāṣirī), 1528 (al-tarbī) and 1810s surveys. In contrast with the solemnity of these operations, their result was poorly formalized: multiple documents were produced on the occasion, with no apparent purpose of creating a definite reference archive. Attempts were made afterwards to gather and unify this mobile information. They suggest a larger picture, involving the evolution of public action in these crucial topics, between the Mamluk period and the beginning of modern times.

Mario C. D. Paganini (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna)
The afterlife of private archives in the Graeco-Roman World: Case studies from Egypt
Friday, 21 October 2022

The preservation of personal papers in private archives by families and private institutions was a common practice in the Graeco-Roman world: however, most of the time hard evidence to this regard eludes us. After providing a brief overview of this custom from Classical to Imperial times, this paper focuses specifically on case studies of private archives from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: these best exemplify issues of conservation, protection, removal, and reuse. In addition to offering some technical and terminological clarifications regarding the usage of the term ‘archive’, the paper draws attention to a paradox that we experience: these archives have been preserved to us mostly because they had been removed for destruction. This adds an extra layer of methodological complexity to the topic of the removal of archives.

Christina Philips (independent researcher)
Of documents lost and found: The Manchurian archive and the discourse on sanshi documents in China
Friday, 21 October 2022

According to a popular narrative in Chinese archival studies, provincial archival holdings from the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) suffered greatly from the encroachment of foreign powers in the border regions of the empire. A great number of documents from the period, mostly from the local and provincial administrations, are supposed to be “dispersed and lost (sanshi).” Chinese historians of archives attribute this loss either to the destruction of archives following the consolidation of foreign powers in the border regions or to the fragmentation and relocation of archives and documents beyond the Qing borders. This paper is first in trying to provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding the histories of archival holdings from the border regions of the Qing empire. Taking the
Manchurian Archive as an example, which was extracted from the administrative seats of the Qing bureaucracy in the northeastern border provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin by Russian sinologists in 1900 and returned to China in 1956, the paper will shed light on the contentious history of Qing borderland archives as an overlooked part of Sino-foreign relations. It will also outline the current Chinese discourse on “dispersed and lost” archival holdings from the Qing dynasty, which includes questions on the restitution of collections and the access to documents in archives outside of China.

Bénédicte Savoy (Technische Universität Berlin)
Translocations. Historical enquiries into the displacement of cultural assets – grasping the future
Thursday, 20 October 2022 (keynote lecture)

Controversies over the territorial displacement of cultural assets in times of war and peace is an essential component of cultural history and is of greater relevance than ever. Not a day goes by without a public appeal urging “equitable and fair” decisions in disputes about cultural restitution. Lawyers, museum curators, politicians, ethnologists and archaeologists, art dealers, political activists and journalists, artists and writers all over the world are concerned with the subject. Its topicality is reflected in headlines, blogs and TV documentations, in the founding of state institutions as well as in feature films from Hong Kong to Hollywood, which dramatize various cases and situations with considerable emotion for the wider public. There is no doubt that the consequences of past translocations of cultural assets form one of the great challenges of the twenty-first century. The keynote will discuss the notion of translocation and its scientific and political relevance to contemporary and future discussions.

Jakob Wigand (CSMC, Universität Hamburg)
Colonial collecting of written artefacts at ethnological museums. Evidence from the MARKK Hamburg
Thursday, 20 October 2022

The academic and public debate on the translocation of artefacts from colonial contexts exhibited and stored at European museums has primarily focused on ethnographic and archeological collections. That said, the existence of manuscript collections within ethnological museums has received little scholarly attention so far. This scholarly neglect is also evident in Angela Zimmerman’s study Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany (2001) in which she analyzes anthropology as a discipline that developed in reaction to the humanistic scholarly tradition and that “focused not on canonical texts
of celebrated cultural peoples but on the bodies and the everyday objects of the colo-
nized natural peoples.” This paper demonstrates that, despite focusing on material cul-
ture and more precisely non-written material culture, ethnological museums were in-
volved in the collection of written artefacts. Drawing on different manuscript examples
from the MARKK Hamburg, the former Ethnological Museum, this paper sheds light on
the role of written artefacts within the larger colonial project of ethnological museums.
The paper identifies the different ways in which Georg Thilenius, the director of the eth-
nological museum, interacted with written artefacts. The paper shows that in some
cases the collection of written artefacts was rejected by the officials of the museum.
During the negotiation for the establishment of a Papyrus collection in Hamburg in 1906,
Thilenius opposed the idea that his institution should host such a collection given their
greater philological rather than ethnological importance. However, archival documents
preserved at the MARKK reveal that the colonial translocation of non-written and writ-
ten artefacts was often entangled and that Thilenius facilitated the collection of written
artefacts for other institutions and colleagues. When Thilenius commissioned Franz von
Stephani, an officer of the German colonial troops, to “collect” artefacts in Northern
Cameroun, he put him in contact with Carl Heinrich Becker, who was keen to obtain
manuscripts for the Stadtbibliothek Hamburg and the city’s Colonial Institute. As a re-
sult, objects from the same collection were divided across disciplinary lines, preserved in
different institutions, and researched by scholars from different disciplines. Moreover,
the paper demonstrates that Hamburg’s Ethnological Museum actively pursued the ac-
quision of manuscripts and other written artefacts as exemplified by several manu-
scripts that were displaced from Cameroun and Northern Nigeria by Leo Frobenius in
1910. The paper argues that the colonial translocation of written artefacts at the former
Ethnological Museum Hamburg was conducted through similar networks and with com-
parable methods as the collection of other artefacts. Considering the collection of writ-
ten artefacts at ethnological museums, the paper hence invites the reader to rethink a
more complex relationship between ethnology and the philological disciplines.

Massimo Zaccaria (Università di Pavia)
Displaced, removed but also left behind. Italian colonial archives in Africa: An overview of
the Eritrean case
Friday, 21 October 2022

For the African case, the image that still prevails is that of a continent where most of the
colonial archives have been removed, brought to Europe when not simply destroyed. A
fate well represented by the case of Algeria and Kenya, the two most notorious examples
of African countries at the center of a heated dispute over the fate of their colonial doc-
umentation. Although unintentionally, the case of migrated archives has led us to think

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that, archivistically speaking, in many African countries there is nothing of any value to be found. So much so that even today the bulk of archival research takes place in European archives where scholars still find most of the documents for their research, at best complemented by papers recovered from some African minor archives which survived the destruction or removal.

However, the case of the former Italian African colonies does not strictly follow this pattern. Between 1941 and 1943, as a result of the defeat in WWII, Italy lost the possession of Eritrea, Somalia, and Libya, and there was no time to migrate the archives while massive destruction of documents did not take place. Moreover, political and practical considerations contributed in postponing any “rescue” attempt. It was only in 1951, after a prolonged negotiation with British authorities, that Italy was able to move to Rome an important collection of documents and books, the so-called “Archivio Eritrea” now held at the historical archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affair and International Cooperation. But in the country there still remain numerous colonial archives, public and private, which can help us to investigate new aspects and substantially modify our understanding of the Eritrean past.

This essay investigates the destiny of Italian colonial archives in Africa after the end of Italian domination, with a special emphasis on Eritrea, and argues that the fate of the colonial archives always depended on how colonial domination ended and that displacement and removal are only one of the possible options faced by colonial archives, in fact, in the Italian case the opposite has happened and numerous archives have remained in Africa, left behind during the agitated phases of the demise of Italian colonialism. Why did the Italian Government decide not to recover the colonial archives? What happened then to these archives and what are the challenges that this poses to African studies scholars?