

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

Colonial Encounters and Manuscripts in Muslim Societies

Thursday, 19 June 2025, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm CEST

Friday, 20 June 2025, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm CEST

Saturday, 21 June 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm CEST

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Organised by Elsa Clavé (University of Hamburg), Mauro Nobili
(University of Illinois), Amir Syed (University of Virginia)

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/register/workshop73>

Libraries and manuscripts have life histories that can be traced through a biographic approach (Hamilton 2011; Appadurai 1986). Like human beings, some moments in their lives can be particularly transformative. One such moment, in the history of the manuscripts of Muslim societies, was certainly the colonial encounter (Asad 1973). These moments could be considered as “philological encounters” or the contact between expanding European imperial powers and newly “discovered” written traditions found in other parts of the world (Delmas 2016). Although characterized by a substantial power imbalance, colonial encounters were complex, multidirectional historical dynamics. They were “determined, not only by the interests and agency of newly arrived Europeans but also by those of the different social groups of local peoples and their elites contacting them” (Lopez 2017).

This workshop seeks to capture the complexity of these encounters. On the one hand, these encounters were often premised on the forced removal of objects, disruption of existing libraries and manuscript cultures, and epistemological violence. But on the other hand, they were also generative moments that fostered the emergence of new types of intellectuals, new manuscripts, and new types of libraries. Though these generative movements were largely by-products of what Edmund Burke III has referred to as “scientific imperialism” (Burke 2014), or the effort to produce knowledge in order to classify and control colonized peoples, they also make possible new inquiries on the material history of Muslim communities and their worlds.

Through a multidisciplinary and expansive geographic approach, a key focus of this workshop is to gather different scholars to explore what contradictions, ambiguities, and new possibilities emerge in tracing the life histories of numerous manuscripts and libraries of the Muslim societies.

Programme

Thursday, 19 June 2025, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm

- 9:00 – 9:30 Registration for the speakers
- 9:30 – 10:00 Welcome and Introduction by Dmitry Bondarev (University of Hamburg)

Collectors

Chair: Amir Syed (University of Virginia)

- 10:00 – 10:45 Thibaut D’Hubert (University of Chicago)
“De vive voix”: A French Interpreter’s Study of Persian in Eighteenth-Century Bengal
- 10:45 – 11:30 Mauro Nobili (University of Illinois—Urbana Champaign)
The French Agronomist Who Loved Arabic Manuscripts: Georges de Gironcourt and his Quest for Historical Documents in West Africa
- 11:30 – 11:50 Coffee Break
- 11:50 – 12:35 Mulaika Hijjas (SOAS, University of London)
Snouck Hurgronje’s Sumatran Manuscripts
- 12:35 – 2:00 Lunch Break

Collections

Chair: Elsa Clavé (University of Hamburg)

- 2:00 – 2:45 Amir Syed (University of Virginia)
The Beginnings of the Bibliothèque ‘Umarienne de Ségou: A Preliminary Investigation into a Stolen Arabic Manuscript Library from Nineteenth-Century West Africa
- 2:45 – 3:30 Ziyodov Shovosil (Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center)
The Library of Dukchi Ishan – Leader of the Andijan Uprising of 1898
- 3:30 – 3:50 Coffee Break

3:50 – 4:35	Sumayya Ahmed (University of Chicago) <i>Generally National: 100 Years of the Library-Archives of Rabat, Morocco</i>
4:35 – 5:00	Wrap-up of the first day
7:00	Conference dinner for the speakers

Friday, 20 June 2025, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm

Texts

Chair: Mauro Nobili (University of Illinois—Urbana Champaign)

10:00 – 10:40	Said Bousbina (Université Internationale de Rabat) <i>The Marabout, The Colonial Administrator, and the Manuscript: The Encounter between Moussa Kamara and Henri Gaden, and the Writing of the History of Fouta Toro</i>
10:40 – 11:20	Stéphane Dudoignon (GSRL - Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) <i>Decolonising Central Asian History: The Soviet-Time Manuscript Work of 'Ali-Khan Tura "Saghuni" (1885-1976) and Its Editions and Translations since 2003</i>
11:20 – 11:50	Coffee Break
11:50 – 12:30	Chapane Mutiua (Universidade Eduardo Mondlane) <i>Musa Quanto and the Portuguese Colonial Administration in Infusi: Understanding Slave Trade and Competition for Power through a Swahili Ajami Letter by Sheikh Ayuba b.Yussuf, 1874</i>
12:30 – 2:00	Lunch Break

Dynamics of Change

Chair: Scott Reese (University of Northern Arizona)

2:00 – 2:45	Syukri Rizki (University of Hamburg) <i>The Acehese Muslim Manuscript Tradition and Its Adaptive Responses to Consequences of the 19th-Century Dutch Occupation</i>
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2:45 – 3:30	Elsa Clavé (University of Hamburg) <i>Land rights, Communities, and Malay manuscript culture in the 19th c. British Malaya and Dutch East Indies</i>
3:30 – 3:50	Coffee Break
3:50 – 4:35	Arthur Asseraf (Cambridge University) <i>A Manuscript Net: The Surveillance Archive as Library in Colonial Algeria</i>
4:35 – 5:00	Wrap-up of the second day

Saturday, 21 June 2025, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm (for presenters only)

9:30 – 10:00	Introduction to the book project
10:00 – 12:00	Discussion and brainstorming session with workshop participants for producing an edited volume