

The Cluster of Excellence
Understanding Written Artefacts
cordially invites you to a lecture by

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**Manuscript Collections in Decentralised Regions:
Research Challenges and Strategies
for Overcoming These**

In collaboration with RomanIslam –
Center for Comparative Empire and Transcultural Studies

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Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Hybrid Event

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-lecture31>

While centralised states and regions often have a focal or key repository for manuscripts and an overarching strategy for conserving written texts, decentralised political spaces are frequently characterised by heterogeneous approaches to text conservation and varying places of preservation.

Libya, as a case-study, never experienced effective or long-lasting centralism. As a consequence, working on the issue of the country's documentation for the premodern period, we encounter a wide range of situations. We propose three paths of investigation that should help us sketching what is at stake. In order to frame a taxonomy for the discussion, we examine three scenarios answering this simple question: how did some Libyan collections originate?

First, we are dealing with historical collections, like the Central Library of Benghazi University. It was established in the course of the 20th century, following different steps as the result of a complex institutional foundation, and bound to the emergence of a nation-state. What are these moments? What do they teach us for such a taxon? What is left in the province?

Second, we are confronted with political collections, like the Markaz of Tripoli. This centre was created by the jamahiriyan regime at the end of 1978. If its primary function was to promote the research on the Libyan ġihād (resistance) against the Italian and French aggressions, it soon extended its scope and integrated manuscripts from the western area. It has conducted many broad projects in the field of heritage. How should we assess its actions? What impact had the Civil War of 2011?

Third, we are working with voluntary collections, like the Ghadames Society for Heritage and Manuscripts. Lying at the periphery, it nurtures a hybrid relationship with the capital city and the decision makers. Besides, it relies on local family ties. As such, it does not fully exist.

As a conclusion, we reflect on the perspectives that might be drawn for endangered cultural artefacts within a society paralysed by an enduring crisis.