

## Gotha Manuscript Talks Fall 2023

**4 October 2023, 6:15pm CET**

Dr. Kristof D'hulster (Humboldt Research Fellow, University of Bonn)

***Kuttābīya, Kuttāb, Mukattibūn: Stocking Sultanic Libraries in Late Mamluk Cairo***

The libraries of the late Mamluk sultans Qāyṭbāy and Qānīṣawh al-Ghawrī were replete with manuscripts penned by the so-called *kuttābīya*: the sultans' military slaves, who were trained inside the barracks of Cairo to wield both sword and pen.



Colophon of Mamay © Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Hs. or. 9865, fol. 53v

We explore the non-military half of their curriculum by following in the footsteps of one particular *mamlūk*, Qayt al-Sharīfī, from his rudimentary ABC up to his manumission and mandatory graduation copy as a *kātib* or scribe.

Next to Qayt al-Sharīfī as our protagonist, we introduce some characters who must have populated his story inside the barracks, all through the lens of *mamlūk* manuscripts and their paratextual elements: the so-called *mukattibs* or writing instructors, such as the aspiring yet frustrated expert calligrapher al-Ṭayyibī, and a colourful company of fellow *kuttābīya*, including newbie Tamur and sneaky Jānim min Qānī, deferential Burdubak al-Sayfī and Māmāy min Bardībak's double.

**Kristof D'hulster** is a Humboldt Research Fellow based at the University of Bonn (2023-2025). After completing his PhD in Turkic linguistics at the University of Leuven, he previously held research fellowships in Ghent, Birmingham, and Jena. His publications include *Browsing through the Sultan's Bookshelves: Towards a Reconstruction of the Library of the Mamluk Sultan Qānīṣawh al-Ghawrī* (Bonn University Press, 2021), and *Ottoman Poets in the Sixteenth Century: Introducing 'Āşık Çelebi and Laṭīfī's Biographical Dictionaries* (Gibb Memorial Trust/Edinburgh University Press, in press).

**18 October 2023, 6:15pm CET**

Prof. Zeynep Yürekli (University of Oxford)

### **Manuscripts Attributed to Matrakçı and the Dresden Drafts**

Presenting one aspect of an ongoing research project on a group of Ottoman manuscripts famously attributed to the historian and courtier Matrakçı Nasuh (d. ca 1564), this lecture focuses on a compilation of manuscript fragments and topographical views in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek/ Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Dresden. A thorough codicological examination revealed that these were made as parts of a single project in the 1540s and early 1550s (which also produced nine other non-illustrated manuscripts currently in Berlin, Cambridge, Istanbul, London, St Petersburg and Vienna) and served as drafts for two illustrated manuscripts that are now in the Topkapi Palace collection in Istanbul.

The Dresden drafts bear witness to the teamwork behind the corpus attributed to Matrakçı, involving an author/editor (quite possibly, though not necessarily, Matrakçı Nasuh), bureaucrats, scribes and artists, at the initial stages of a long-winded effort to produce an illustrated record of the Ottoman sultans' achievements – an effort that would continue until the end of the sixteenth century and generate a series of lavishly illustrated narratives. Situating this experimental early phase of writing and illustrating Ottoman dynastic history within the evolving cultural policies and courtly structures of the time, this talk shifts attention from final product to process; from painting to relationship between text and image; and from high point to early experimentation.



Historical work attributed to Matrakçı © SLUB Dresden, Digitale Sammlungen, Mscr.Dresd.Eb.391

**Zeynep Yürekli** is Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Oxford, UK. She specializes in Ottoman Studies, but her research interests also extend to pre-modern Iran and Central Asia. Her publications explore aspects of architecture, cult of the saints, hagiography, historiography and manuscripts in the early modern period.

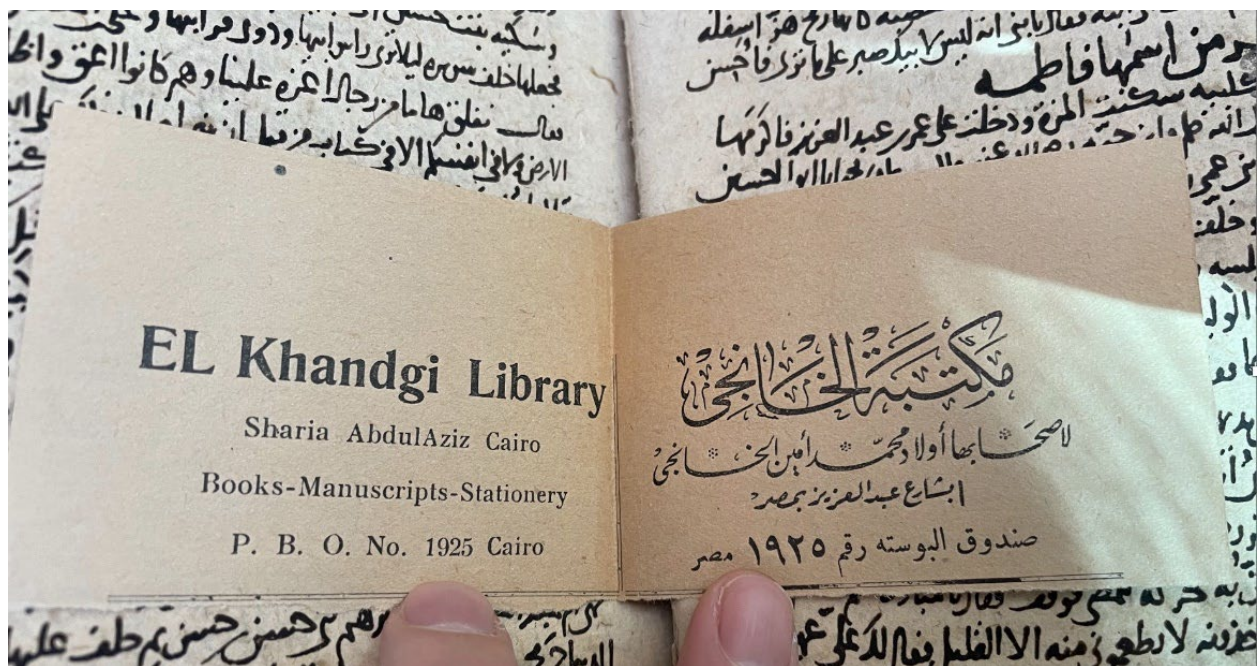


**1 November 2023, 6:15pm CET**

Prof. Garrett A. Davidson (College of Charleston)

### **A Preliminary View of the Maktabat al-Khānjī Papers**

This talk offers a preliminary view of the recently discovered collection of Maktabat al-Khānjī papers. The papers, accumulated and preserved by Sāmī al-Khanjī in Cairo, document his and his father's business and scholarly activities from the 1920s to 1960s and provide an unparalleled window onto the worlds of the Arabic and Islamic manuscript trade, as well as the networks and connections between Orientalists and Muslim scholars in the first half of the twentieth century. Further, the collection is key to understanding the provenance history of some of the major collections of the Middle East, Europe, and North America.



El Khandgi Library - Note

**Garrett Davidson** is Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the College of Charleston. He studies the Islamic scholarly tradition, Arabic Manuscript culture, and provenance history. He is author of *Carrying on the Tradition: A Social and Intellectual History of Hadith Transmission across a Thousand Years*.

**25 November 2023, 6:15pm CET**

Dr. Adeline Laclau (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes)

## **Illuminated Manuscripts in the Mamluk Sultanate: Making Processes and Contexts of Production**

In 14th and 15th century Egypt and Syria, thousands of manuscripts were commissioned by Mamluk sultans and emirs, as well as the civilian elites, for private libraries or for religious and academic foundations. Preserved in large number, these manuscripts bear witness to the effervescent social, intellectual, and cultural life in late medieval Egypt and Syria. Many of these books are illuminated and emphasize the importance of the arts of the book in the history of manuscript production in the Mamluk period. Primary sources are almost completely silent on practices and contexts of production associated with the realization of these illuminated manuscripts, so only a material analysis can provide information on the history of this artistic production.

This paper sheds light on the making processes, as well as the contexts of production and reception of these illuminated manuscripts in order to give an insight into their material and socio-cultural history. The material and stylistic characteristics of these artifacts are discussed through the examination of relevant examples in order to highlight the major developments of this artistic production. Emphasis is also placed on the main artists and patrons who contributed to the flourishing and evolution of this specific book production throughout the Mamluk period.



Frontispiece, Takhmīs al-Burda  
© Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Arabe 5842, fol. 2r

**Adeline Laclau** is an Art Historian who specializes in Mamluk artistic productions. Her research focuses on the material and social history of illuminated manuscripts produced in 14th and 15th century Egypt and Syria. She completed her PhD in Islamic Art History at Aix-Marseille University in 2019. She was a Bahari Visiting fellow at the Bodleian Library in 2021 and held a postdoctoral position at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 2022-2023.

**UNIVERSITÄT  
ERFURT**

Forschungsbibliothek  
Gotha



**CENTRE FOR THE  
STUDY OF  
MANUSCRIPT  
CULTURES**



**Universität Hamburg**

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG