

Gotha Manuscript Talks Spring 2024

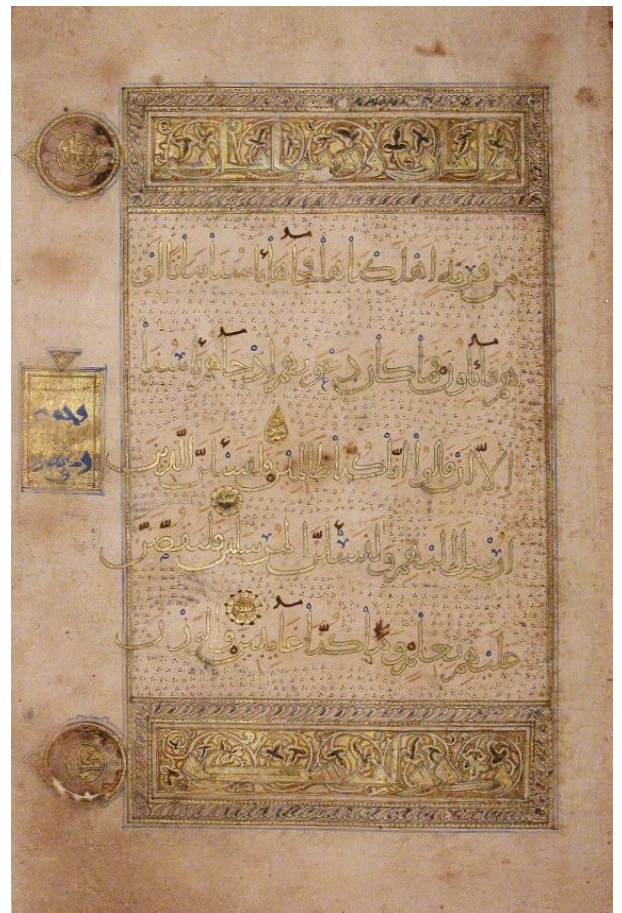
March 20, 2024, 6:15 pm CET

Dr. Alya Karame (Collège de France, Paris)

The Journey of a Qur'an from Cairo to Yemen

The subject of this talk is a Qur'an copied in the 11th century with illuminated pages added decades later that tell us it was ordered by the ruler of the Sulayhid dynasty in Yemen for the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir (r. 427/1036-487/1094). The manuscript is now in Istanbul with some dispersed folios around the world. While it informs us of Qur'anic production in a period of major transformations, it is also a testimony to the circulation of manuscripts, diplomatic exchange and political power in the medieval period. The 'Sulayhid Qur'an' unfolds stories of connections and belonging within and beyond a short-lived dynasty in which a woman rose to a position of political prominence. It reveals the various stages in the life of a Qur'an, from the ways in which it was copied and illuminated to how it was appropriated and dispersed.

Alya Karame specialises in Islamic art and material culture. She is the recipient of the Paris Région award at the Collège de France where she is writing her first monograph on a forgotten corpus of medieval Qur'ans. Before that, she held numerous posts such as the Aga Khan programme fellowship for Islamic Arts at Harvard University and the Barakat Trust fellowship at the Khalili Research Centre of the University of Oxford.



Folio of the Sulayhid Qur'an,
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 40.164.4b

April 10, 2024, 6:15 pm CET

Dr. Guy Burak (New York University, New York City)

Situating an Eighteenth-Century Library: Reflections from the Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar's Library Project

In recent years, the study of Middle Eastern and Islamic libraries has called into question commonly used adjectives: “Islamic”, “Ottoman”, “Medieval”, “Mamluk”, “Syrian”, “Palestinian”... Years of research and numerous monographs have made it quite evident that each of these adjectives conceals as much as it reveals about the library, yet scholars have found it hard to abandon them. The question of the proper adjectives has become pressing again in the collaborative research project on the eighteenth-century library established by the famous Ottoman governor al-Jazzar in the northern Palestinian town of ‘Akka. As one of the editors who coordinated the project, whose participants came from different disciplinary backgrounds, I found myself intrigued by these attempts to classify al-Jazzar’s library. The talk, then, will offer a reflection on the challenge of classifying a library in the broader context of the historiography of libraries in the region.

Guy Burak is Librarian for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at NYU Libraries. His research focuses, among other topics, on Islamic history and law.



A book from al-Jazzār's library: the *Kitāb Wafayāt al-a'yān*, Princeton Library, MS Garrett 3415Y, fol. 2a

April 24, 2024, 6:15pm CET

Prof. Adam Sabra (University of California, Santa Barbara)

Books Left Behind: The Library of a Cairene Scholar at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century

Zayn al-Ābidīn ibn Muḥammad al-Bakrī, one of the leading religious scholars of his time in Egypt and the son of a very famous scholar and Sufi, died suddenly and mysteriously in 1604. His estate inventory, which is preserved in a sijill of Maḥkamat al-Qisma al-Askariya (Probate Court of the Askeri Class) in Cairo, lists a collection of books that were his private property and formed part of his estate. This list provides a window to the cultural horizons of an elite scholar of this period, especially when contextualized with the life of the owner and the history of the lineage to which he belonged.

Adam Sabra is Professor of History and King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud Chair in Islamic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on the social and cultural history of Egypt in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods.



The Diwān of al-Bakrī,
Princeton University Islamic Manuscripts, Garrett no. 227Y

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