

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

**The Persistence of Manuscript Cultures in Modern Times:
Change and Revival**

Friday, 13 May, 3:15 pm – 7:00 pm CEST
Saturday, 14 May, 9:00 am – 12:45 pm CEST

Warburgstraße 26, 20354 Hamburg

Hybrid Event

Registration:

<https://www.csmc.uni-hamburg.de/en/register-workshop22>

Manuscript cultures are not unchanging systems but subject to constant transformations. Change in manuscript cultures can be promoted by the advent of new production techniques or by general social and economic developments. Often manuscript-makers abandoned single practices, or entire manuscript cultures ceased to exist. However, even after the introduction first of printing techniques and later of digital information technology, handwriting and making handwritten artefacts remained important and indispensable cultural techniques until today.

The numerous and manifold ways in which manuscript cultures change can be described as ranging from *retention* to *reduction* and *innovation* to *disappearance*. *Retention* may refer to traditions of making and using manuscripts that are often perceived as unchanging. *Innovation* includes, among others, the introduction of new materials, such as industrially produced stationery. *Innovation* may also concern layout, as observed with manuscripts that mimic the visual organisation of printed books. Often, innovation leads to the abrupt or slowly increasing *disappearance* of previous practices; see, for example, the shift from parchment to paper as writing support. Transformations in manuscript cultures are not necessarily linear and monodirectional; sometimes practitioners revive previously abandoned practices and take them up again.

In the workshop, we want to focus on these phenomena of change and retention with respect to visual organisation, materiality, and contents, and we wish to shed light on the agents behind these transformation processes.

Programme

Friday, 13 May 2022, 3:15 pm – 7:00 pm

3:15 – 3:30 Welcome and Introduction

Session 1: 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Chair: Malena Ratzke (Hamburg)

3:30 – 4:15 Neela Bhaskar (Hamburg): *Tamil Manuscript Cultures Through the British Colonial Period: A Struggle for Survival*

4:15 – 5:00 Theresa Müller (Hamburg) *Private Devotion for the Masses: The Persistence of Handwriting in Case of Letters from Heaven (19th and 20th Century Germany)*

5:00 – 5:30 Break

Session 2: 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Chair: Thies Staack (Hamburg)

5:30 – 6:15 Linda Chance (Philadelphia): *How to Read and How to Handwrite: Innovations and Retentions in Japanese Printed Commentary*

6:15 – 7:00 Devin Fitzgerald (Los Angeles): *Learning to Write: Epistolary Practices, Manuscript Cultures, and Print Mediation in Chinese California to 1900*

Saturday, 14 May 2022, 9:00 am – 12:45 pm

Session 3: 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Chair: Heidi Buck-Albulet (Hamburg)

9:00 – 09:45 Silpsupa Jaengsawang (Hamburg): *Oblong Paper Manuscripts in Resemblance to Palm-leaf Manuscripts: Retention and Innovation*

9:45 – 10:30 Direk Hongthong (Bangkok): *In the Wind of Change: The Adaptation of Ethnic Khmer's Didactic Manuscript Reproduction in Thailand*

10:30 – 10:45 Break

Session 4: 10:45 am – 12:45 pm

Chair: Janina Karolewski (Hamburg)

10:45 – 11:30 Olga Verlato (New York City): *Manuscript and Print Cultures Around the Mediterranean: The Case of the Medici Oriental Press*

11:30 – 12:15 Cornelius Berthold (Hamburg): *The Impact of Print on Arabic Manuscript Culture in the 19th and Early 20th Century*

12:15 – 12:45 *Final Discussion* – Moderator: Michael Kohs (Hamburg)

Abstracts

Neela Bhaskar (Hamburg): *Tamil Manuscript Cultures Through the British Colonial Period: A Struggle for Survival*, Friday, 13 May, 3:30 pm – 4:15 pm

The peak of British control in India was in the 18th and 19th centuries. This was when Tamil manuscript cultures experienced great change, as they struggled to survive. Their transmission was also aided by a small but prolific group of British scholars, who began to collect, copy, commission, and archive Tamil documents. In my presentation, I trace these changes, and the circumstances behind them: how the traditional medium of palm-leaf was replaced by paper, and through that, how private knowledge that was once controlled by a handful of Tamil scholars became public knowledge, stored in archives around the world. The persistence of Tamil manuscript cultures is thus the story of generational learning, through which we have inherited textual material that is the result of a 2000-year-old, unbroken literary tradition.

Theresa Müller (Hamburg): *Private Devotion for the Masses: The Persistence of Handwriting in Case of Letters from Heaven (19th and 20th Century Germany)*, Friday, 13 May, 4:15 pm – 5:00 pm

Letters from Heaven are textual amulets that were popular among German soldiers in the 19th and 20th century. The amulets promised divine protection and salvation from any danger, even weapons, and existed in handwritten and in printed form. Under the constant threat of death during war, Letters from Heaven met people's need to experience transcendence. Even though Letters from Heaven were mass-produced and easily accessible as broadsides, handwritten versions continued to exist and seemed even more popular in the face of war and threat. This paper asks two questions: why did handwritten Letters from Heaven persist and even outlive broadside versions as an apotropaic artefact in the context of war? What role did the materiality of the tangible artefact play in that process?

Linda Chance (Philadelphia): *How to Read and How to Handwrite: Innovations and Retentions in Japanese Printed Commentary*, Friday, 13 May, 5:30 pm – 6:15 pm

Even as printing technology took hold in Japan from the end of the sixteenth century, producers strove to retain the appearance of handwriting on the page. First with movable type that reproduced the ligatures of brush calligraphy, then by carving openings of continuous text on woodblocks, printers imitated the prestige format of manuscript. This was arguably most true of prefaces that laid out the purposes and patrons of works, and was standard in the body of texts, but it also extended to commentary. I will explore features that signalled knowledge about classic works, especially of literature, as well as innovations and variations in recording styles that proliferated as compendia of commentaries became more popular in the seventeenth century.

Devin Fitzgerald (Los Angeles): *Learning to Write: Epistolary Practices, Manuscript Cultures, and Print Mediation in Chinese California to 1900*, Friday, 13 May, 6:15 pm – 7:00 pm

In this paper, I will survey the possibility of a Chinese-American book history before the 20th century. To date, scholars of the Chinese in America have focused almost exclusively on Chinese language news or English language materials. Collections of Chinese manuscripts and printed books have either been neglected or understudied. Through considering the case of epistolary manuals and surviving letters, I will introduce how scholars could begin to reassemble Chinese language information ecologies in early California.

Silpsupa Jaengsawang (Hamburg): *Oblong Paper Manuscripts in Resemblance to Palm-leaf Manuscripts: Retention and Innovation*, Saturday, 14 May, 9:00 am – 9:45 am

To replace palm-leaf manuscripts which had gradually been decreased in number due to less accessibility of leaves of palm trees and of stylus scribes, oblong leporello manuscripts made of paper were perceived another choice, given by their shapes and appearance that look very much like palm leaves. Our corpus comprises twenty-five oblong paper manuscripts from Luang Prabang, the ancient royal capital of Laos where modern printing technologies took place and interchangeably influenced on the Lao manuscript culture. Initial investigations reveal that the oblong paper manuscripts were produced in the early 21st century (2004–2006 CE) and are mostly kept at Vat Saen Sukharam, Luang Prabang, the residential monastery of Venerable Sathu Nyai Khamchan Virachitta

Mahathela (1920–2007), an influential charismatic and monk scholar whose contributions were greatly related to the propagation of Buddhist teachings. The mainly multiple-text manuscripts contain religious texts, most of which are homiletic texts called *anisonṅ*. The presentation aims at investigating and interpreting the manuscripts that were deliberately shaped in the oblong format to resemble or replace traditional palm-leaf manuscripts yet made of paper. Retentions of old features and innovations of materials and tools coexist in the oblong paper manuscripts. Textual selections and manuscript usage will also be discussed.

Direk Hongthong (Bangkok): *In the Wind of Change: The Adaptation of Ethnic Khmer's Didactic Manuscript Reproduction in Thailand*, Saturday, 14 May, 9:45 am – 10:30 am

Ethnic Khmers, or Northern Khmers, have settled down in the present-day Thailand for centuries, particularly in Surin, Buriram, and Sisaket provinces. These people have lived under the influences of Khmer culture and Thai politics, educational systems, media, and capitalism. These influences have caused significantly changes in their culture including the reproduction of traditional literature. This research aims at studying the adaptation of the ethnic Khmer's manuscript reproduction by focusing on didactic literature collected in the fieldwork during 2009–2010 in the three provinces and from online data in 2021, then examining them in terms of agent, material, script and language, and function. The study reveals that the adaptation is an option and varies in each area. Therefore, the agents are not limited to Buddhist novices, monks, and laymen, but expand towards folksong performers, scholars, and civil servants. These agents reproduce the texts on several materials from palm leaves to notebook paper, printed book and YouTube video. On these materials, many scripts and languages are found either solely or mixed: Khmer, Khom-Thai and Thai scripts; Khmer dialect and Thai language. These reproductions serve from traditional functions such as monastic education to the new ones such as cultural goods and identity preservation.

Olga Verlato (New York City): *Manuscript and Print Cultures Around the Mediterranean: The Case of the Medici Oriental Press*, Saturday, 14 May, 10:45 am – 11:30 am

How did new printing endeavors from the early-modern period relate to established manuscript cultures and their workings as an economic and social system? In my presentation, I use the case of the Medici Oriental Press –which in the late sixteenth century embarked on a project to print Arabic-language books through the use of typography and sell them in various regions of North Africa and the Middle East– in order to document the encounter of typographic and manuscript forms of knowledge production and

economic profit across the Mediterranean. In turn, I reflect on the different ways in which typography and lithography have been associated with the pursuit of manuscript-like aesthetics from the early-modern period to the early nineteenth century.

Cornelius Berthold (Hamburg): *The Impact of Print on Arabic Manuscript Culture in the 19th and Early 20th Century*, Saturday, 14 May, 11:30 am – 12:15 pm

It was not before the 19th century CE that Arabic texts were printed on a large scale in the Middle East. While it has been shown that this nascent printing industry was influenced by the local manuscript culture with regard to workforce, text selection and layout choices, the present talk will attempt to show how manuscript production, in turn, was affected by the new technology and its agents. Based on a corpus of more than 700 manuscripts written between 1820 and 1930, now kept in German libraries, it will examine which kinds of texts continued to be copied by hand and which were superseded by print. Furthermore, the paper will give examples of how the ever-growing influence of printed books changed the materiality and visual organisation of manuscripts – but also how scribes and bookmakers persisted in their traditional ways.