

# STATE DOCUMENTS

FROM THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMICATE WORLD

COLLOQUIUM

TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD

21-22 JUNE 2023



Invisible  
East



European Research Council  
Established by the European Commission



The Colloquium is jointly organised by the Invisible East Programme, University of Oxford, and the Geniza Lab, Princeton University.

## Acknowledgement

This colloquium is supported by the European Research Council, under grant agreement number: 851607.

A farmān of Sultan Fīrūz Shāh Bahmanī dated 14-05-1406 CE to grant land as *in'ām* to Muḥammad Qāzī







# CONTENTS

The Invisible East 2  
Programme

The Princeton 2  
Geniza Lab

Aims of the 3  
colloquium

Speakers 5

Session chairs and 6  
Organisers

Programme 8

# THE INVISIBLE EAST PROGRAMME

Based at the University of Oxford, *Invisible East* is the first single, coherent research programme dedicated to the study of the *Islamicate East*, Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, between the 8th and 13th century. We transcribe, translate and analyse some of the oldest texts written in New Persian, Judeo-Persian, Arabic, Bactrian, Sogdian, Khotanese and Middle Persian.

## THE PRINCETON GENIZA LAB

Since 1986, the Princeton Geniza Lab has been studying and digitizing historical documents from the Cairo Geniza, a cache of roughly 400,000 fragments of paper and parchment preserved in a medieval Egyptian synagogue. *We study the geniza's ephemeral, everyday texts – unique sources for the history of the Middle East and of premodern Jewish communities from Spain to Sumatra.* The documents include letters, legal documents, accounts and lists.

# AIMS OF THE COLLOQUIUM

The various political states that existed in the premodern history of the Islamicate world share a remarkable characteristic: their archives do not survive. As this puts restrictions on the extent to which we can examine consolidation of power, hierarchy, bureaucracy, legislation and taxation, their political systems often remain only partially understood.

However, historians have advanced helpful reinterpretations of what constitute “archives” and “original documents”, as well as called attention to (unexpectedly) large amounts of documents preserved in non-archival contexts which nevertheless relate to state administrations.

In view of these promising developments, the aim of this colloquium is to highlight some important original state documents which are preserved and currently researched.

## STATE DOCUMENTS COLLOQUIUM

---

The colloquium will also continue the discussion about alternative methods when sufficient original materials have not (yet) been recovered.

By bringing together experts on 8th to 16th-century West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia, the colloquium deliberately takes a transregional and diachronic perspective to the study of states and their administrations in the premodern Islamicate world. It is our intention that this will provide a useful cross section of the latest discoveries, lead to more disciplinary coherence, and stimulate innovative future research into documentary sources.

# SPEAKERS

András Barati	Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna/Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, Budapest
Anna Steffen	University of Hamburg
Arezou Azad	University of Oxford
Bruno De Nicola	Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna
Christoph Werner	Otto-Friedrich-University, Bamberg
Dai Matsui	Osaka University
David Durand-Guédy	University of Hamburg
Eva Orthmann	Georg-August University, Göttingen
Frédéric Bauden	University of Liège
Jeremy Johns	University of Oxford
Malika Dekkiche	University of Antwerp
Marina Rustow	Princeton University
Meia Walravens	University of Oxford
Naïm Vanthieghem	Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, Paris
Reza Huseini	University of Cambridge
Ryoko Watabe	University of Tokyo

# SESSION CHAIRS

Arezou Azad	University of Oxford
Edmund Herzig	University of Oxford
Fanny Bessard	University of Oxford
Jeremy Johns	University of Oxford
Judith Olszowy-Schlanger	University of Oxford
Mahroo Moosavi	University of Sydney/ University of Oxford
Marina Rustow	Princeton University
Umberto Bongianino	University of Oxford

# ORGANISERS

Meia Walravens	University of Oxford
Arezou Azad	University of Oxford
Marina Rustow	Princeton University

Administrative support: Silvia Ferreri (Admin & Outreach Coordinator, University of Oxford)







# PROGRAMME

21 JUNE 2023

8:45-9:15 Welcome & Introduction

9:15-10:30 **Session 1: Multilingual corpuses from the Islamicate East**

Chair: Arezou Azad

*Local administration and political structure in late antique Bactria: Documentary evidence*

Reza Huseini

*Royal documents from the Qutb Shahi dynasty*

Eva Orthmann

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

# PROGRAMME

---

11:00-12:15 **Session 2: Inshā' and the archive question**

Chair: Mahroo Moosavi

*Inshā' literature and manuals for letter writing: Building an administration in 13th-century Anatolia*

Bruno De Nicola

*Insha' collections in the Mamluk period: Encyclopedia or archive of the Islamicate society?*

Malika Dekkiche

12:15-13:15 Lunch

13:15-14:30 **Session 3: Inshā' and document types**

Chair: Fanny Bessard

*From vizier to sultan: "Official" letters in the Bahmani inshā' collections*

Meia Walravens

# PROGRAMME

---

*Typology of documents in Saljuq munsha'āts: Mar'ashī 11136 in perspective*

David Durand-Guédy

14:30-15:00 Coffee break

15:00-16:15 **Session 4: Original documents and their types**

Chair: Jeremy Johns

*Divani documents in 15th century Iran: Questions of terminology and genre*

Christoph Werner

*A poorly known documentary genre: letters of protection (amān) from the Fatimid period*

Naïm Vanthieghem

18:30-onwards Conference dinner

# PROGRAMME

---

22 JUNE 2023

9:00-9:15 Welcome to Day 2

9:15-10:30 **Session 5: Diplomats and state authority I**

Chair: Judith Olszowy-Schlanger

*Chancery documents in the Bāmiyān Papers*

Arezou Azad

*Mamluk chancery documents and their paper*

Frédéric Bauden

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:15 **Session 6: Diplomats and state authority II**

Chair: Marina Rustow

*The evolution of ṭughrā in the eastern Islamic lands in the late medieval and early modern periods*

András Barati



# PROGRAMME

---

*Old Uigur legacy in chancelleries of the post-Mongol dynasties in Iran and Western Central Asia*

Dai Matsui

12:15-13:15 Lunch

13:15-14:30 **Session 7: The Ḥaram al-Sharīf corpus**

Chair: Edmund Herzig

*Tracing archival practices in the Ḥaram al-Sharīf corpus: Polycentric networks of archival sites and actors in 8th/14th-century Jerusalem*

Anna Steffen

*The Ilkhanid and post-Ilkhanid Turko-Mongol military society in Persian legal documents from Ḥaram al-Sharīf*

Ryoko Watabe

14:30-15:00 Coffee break

# PROGRAMME

---

15:00-16:15 **Session 8: Multilingual corpuses from the Islamicate West**

Chair: Umberto Bongianino

*The Arabic and bilingual documents of the rulers of Norman Sicily, 1095-1198*

Jeremy Johns

*Official memoranda in the Fatimid period: Another poorly understood genre*

Marina Rustow

16:15-17:00 Wrap-up, next steps

# STATE DOCUMENTS

FROM THE MEDIEVAL ISLAMICATE WORLD  
COLLOQUIUM

## CONTACTS

Email: [silvia.ferreri@ames.ox.ac.uk](mailto:silvia.ferreri@ames.ox.ac.uk)

Website: [www.invisibleeast.web.ox.ac.uk](http://www.invisibleeast.web.ox.ac.uk)

## CONFERENCE VENUE

Trinity College,  
Broad St,  
Oxford OX1 3BH

