

Lecture series: "Reconstructing Libraries of the Medieval and Early Modern Period (the Islamic World)"

The premodern Islamic world is famous for its numerous enormous libraries, many of which have completely vanished. Mention should be made, by way of example, of the royal libraries that were assembled during the Fatimid period which seem to have constituted the largest collection of books during the time. While next to nothing can be said about the actual holdings of the Fatimid libraries, several libraries that had been founded during the medieval or early modern period have survived up until today and can be studied from a large variety of viewpoints. Some premodern libraries have come down to us in their entirety while others can partly be reconstructed on the basis of the dispersed manuscripts from such collections and on the basis of secondary sources. The intellectual, social, and codicological context of a text is increasingly coming into focus in current scholarship—be it through a comprehensive approach to "one-volume-libraries"¹ or by reconstructing and / or studying historical libraries in their entirety.² The lecture series focuses on four libraries, situated in different parts of the Islamic world and each representing a different intellectual environment, which have been partly preserved—the library founded by the Zaydi imām al-Manṣūr bi-llāh in the 13th century, the library of the ‘Umariyya madrasa in Damascus, the library of the 15th century Bukharan Naqshbandi scholar, Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā, and the library of the 17th century Moroccan Sultan Muley Zidan.

1. Following the political unification of the two Zaydi communities in Northern Iran and the Northern Highlands of Yemen Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh ‘Abd Allāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217) founded a library in Ḍafār, his town of residence, for which he had a wealth of textual sources copied by a team of scholars and scribes that comprised nearly the entire literary and religious legacy of Caspian Zaydism. In 1929, the library's holdings, which had continued to grow under al-Manṣūr's successors, were transferred from Ḍafār to the newly founded Khizāna al-Mutawakkiliyya (now al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya or Maktabat al-Awqāf), which is housed in the complex of the Great Mosque of Ṣan‘ā’. A handlist was published in 1942, followed by a more detailed catalogue published in 1984. Its holdings provide a comprehensive image of the intellectual horizons of Zaydi Yemen during the 13th through 20th century, and they allow for detailed paleographical and codicological studies on a large, while at the same time closely related, corpus of books. The corpus allows for a minute investigation of the library's history and evolution over the centuries, and provides insights into the functionality and accessibility of al-Manṣūr's library during his lifetime and beyond. For example, many of the manuscripts that are held at the Maktabat al-awqāf today appear not to have been used extensively, if at all. Observations such as these suggest that only a restricted audience had access to the imām's library, which was a typical "central ruler library," not meant to serve a wider audience.

2. The ‘Umariyya madrasa in Damascus was founded in 554/1159 by Abū ‘Umar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ibn Qudāma al-Maqdisī (d. 607/1210-11), a member of the Qudāma family who were immigrants from Palestine who had fled the Crusaders. The madrasa served as the base of the Ḥanbalīs of the Ṣāliḥiyya quarter. While initially open to Ḥanbalīs only, professors and students of all four law schools began to be admitted from 847/1443 onwards. Its expansion peaked in the mid-9th/15th century but thereafter the madrasa experienced a decline resulting from the embezzlement of waqf properties and mismanagement. Attached to the madrasa was a library whose holdings are described in the sources as having been substantial. Major parts of the library, especially the multi-text volumes that were originally part of the adjacent Ḍiyā’iyya madrasa and

¹ E.g., *Middeleeuwse Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden (MVN)* <<https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/mvn/>>, or Michael Friedrich and Cosima Schwarke (eds.), *One-Volume Libraries: Composite and Multiple-Text Manuscripts*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016.

² E.g., the digital project to virtually reconstruct the monastic library of Lorsch, <<http://www.bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de>>.

were later integrated into the library of the ‘Umariyya madrasa, have come down to us (153 majāmi‘ in total). These provide a focussed insight into the socio-intellectual world of the Ḥanbalis of Damascus during the 12th through 15th century. They inform us about the canon of texts that was popular among the Ḥanbalis of Damascus during these centuries, and their common codicological features allow for an indepth investigation of the history of book production and reading practices in these circles. The countless reader colophons and licences further provide insights into the social aspects of religious education and book consumption. The corpus was brought together in the Zāhiriyya library (since 1984: the Asad library) in Damascus.³

3. The Bukharan scholar Kh^wāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 822/1420), who was one of the principal successors of Kh^wāja Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Naqshband (d. 791/1389), the eponym of the Naqshbandiyya, and is considered the founder of the learned traditions of the Naqshbandī Sufi order, is well known for the library he established. Unlike the libraries of al-Manṣūr in Yemen and the corpus of multi-text volumes that came from the ‘Umariyya madrasa, Muḥammad Pārsā’s library is no longer preserved in a single location. Nevertheless, numerous books that originally belonged to his library have been discovered over the past decades.⁴ The lecture will provide an overview of the state of reconstruction of his library. The identified materials will be analyzed again with respect to the socio-intellectual scope of Muḥammad Pārsā’s library in the context of its Central Asian environment, and paleographical and codicological idiosyncracies will be discussed, as well as (to the extent possible) the social function of the library.

4. Another library that is partly preserved is the collection of books of the Moroccan Sultan, Mūlāy Zidān (Muley Zidan) (r. 967/1560-1036/1627). The collection of some four thousand books was first stolen by the French consul (and pirate) Jehan Philippe de Castelane who headed towards Marseille. His ship was captured in July 1612 by a Spanish fleet and was brought to Lisbon. Two years later, in 1614, the manuscript collection was incorporated into the new Royal Library of San Lorenzo in the Escorial. About half of the collection was destroyed during the 1671 fire. The surviving manuscripts are preserved up until today in the El Escorial library in the vicinity of

³ A catalogue was published by Yāsin Muḥammad Sawwās in 1987 (Fihris majāmi‘ al-Madrasa al-‘Umariyya fi Dār al-kutub al-Zāhiriyya, al-Ṣafāh, Kuwait), and unlike the holdings of the Maktabat al-Awqāf, surrogates of the entire collection of manuscripts of the madrasa al-‘Umariyya are available online through open access (tajmī‘ majāmi‘ al-madrasa al-‘Umariyya bi-l-Zāhiriyya <<http://www.alukah.net/library/11358/>>).

⁴ See, e.g., Lola Dodkhudoeva, “Rukopisi s pechat’ju vakfa Muḥammada Pārsā iz arabskogo otdela fonda vostochnykh rukopisej Natsional’noj biblioteki Frantsii,” *Kniga v razvitii kul’tury narodov Vostoka: Istorija i sovremennost’*, Duchanbe 1990, pp. 31-33; A.B. Khalidov, “Rukopisi iz biblioteki Muḥammada Pārsā,” *Petersburgskoe Vostokovedenie* 6 (1994), pp. 506-19; Lola Dodkhudoeva, “La bibliothèque de Khwāja Mohammad Pārsā à Boukhara,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale*, 5/6 (1998), pp. 125-42; Aširbek Muminov and Šovasil Zijadov, “L’horizon intellectuel d’un érudit du XV^e siècle: Nouvelles découvertes sur la bibliothèque de Muḥammad Pārsā,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 7 (1999), pp. 77-96; Francis Richard, “Manuscrits persans de la Bibliothèque nationale de France se rapportant à l’Asie centrale musulmane,” *Cahiers d’Asie centrale* 7 (1999), pp. 57-63; Maria Eva Subtelny, “The Making of Bukhārā-yi Sharīf: Scholars, Books and Libraries in Medieval Bukhara (The Library of Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā),” *Studies on Central Asian History in Honour of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin deWeese, Bloomington 2001, pp. 79-111; eadem, *Timurids in transition: Turko-Persian politics and acculturation in Medieval Iran*, Leiden 2007, p. 248; ‘Alī Bahrāmiyān, “Atharī nā-shanākhtah az Maqrīzī (Muntakhab durrat al-aslāk fi dawlat al-atrāk az majmū‘a-yi Kh^wāja Muḥammad Pārsā),” *Nāma-yi Bahāristān* 6-7 i-ii (1384-5/2005-6), pp. 211-16; Sabine Schmidtke, “Early Aš‘arite Theology: Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013) and his *Hidāyat al-mustarshidīn*,” *Bulletin d’Etudes Orientales* 60 (2011), pp. 39-72. Cf. also Shahab Ahmed, “Mapping the World of a Scholar in Sixth/Twelfth Century Bukhārā: Regional Tradition in Medieval Islamic Scholarship as Reflected in a Bibliography,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120 (2000), pp. 24-43

Madrid and have been fully catalogued.⁵ The collection is a witness to yet another different intellectual environment, namely that of early 17th century Morocco. As with the three other collections, the socio-intellectual setting of Mūlāy Zidān's library will be analyzed, and possible parallels between his library and that of al-Manṣūr, both of which represent the genre of a ruler's library, will be discussed.

⁵ <<http://rbme.patrimonionacional.es/home/Bibliografia/Manuscritos/Arabes.aspx>>. See also Nemesio Morata, "Un catálogo de los fondos árabes primitivos de El Escorial," *Al-Andalus* 2 (1934), pp. 87-94; Georges Vajda, "Notes sur le fonds de manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque de l'Escorial," *Al-Andalus* 28 (1963), pp. 61-94; Mohammed Ibn Azuz, "La Biblioteca de Muley Zaidan en el Escorial," *Cuadernos de la Biblioteca Española de Tetuán* 17-18 (1978), pp. 117-153; Robert Jones, "Piracy, Wars, and the Acquisition of Arabic Manuscripts in Renaissance Europe," *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987), pp. 96-109.