

a workshop on the

Manuscript Cultures of the Ottoman Empire

June 6-7, 2014 Orient-Institut, Istanbul

What does a vibrant early modern manuscript culture actually look like when we stop regarding it simply as a lack of print? Over the past thirty years, scholarship on the history of the book and reading has raised new questions for scholars of European, East Asian, and South Asian history, making us rethink issues like authorship, reception, the transmission of knowledge and more. At the same time, this literature has some gaps, especially when it comes to understanding early modern manuscript cultures. Exploring this lacuna is particularly relevant now that scholars have challenged the fixity and singularity of print.

This workshop is a first attempt to bring together the growing number of scholars working on the history of the book in the Ottoman Empire to present and discuss theoretically informed papers that also delve deeply into historical evidence and sources. The workshop focuses specifically on manuscripts and the cultures and practices that allowed them to flourish. While there have been important scholars who have written on the topic of books and libraries in the early modern Middle East, an engagement with the broader literature is often missing. Similarly, there has been some valuable work on the courtly production of books as precious objects, but often without a sense of reading and book production in the larger society. To introduce new approaches, the workshop invites participants to directly engage with the more recent literature on the history of the book and reading (Roger Chartier, Ann Blair, Adrian Johns, Robert Darnton, etc.) and to use its insights to understand how the varied manuscript cultures of the Ottoman Empire functioned. In particular, we would like to broaden the scope of the inquiry and look at books and reading in the larger society and even explore the notion that there was a general expansion of reading, writing, and book production in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. To do so, this workshop brings together the perspectives of historians of the book, art historians, historians of science, codicologists, and others to understand the connections between the material culture of manuscripts and their content.

This workshop has been made possible with the generous support of the Orient-Institut Istanbul, the History Department at UCLA, and the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures



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FRIDAY – JUNE 6

Greetings & Welcome: 9:30-9:45

PANEL 1: Consumption: 9:45-11:15

Satisfying an Appetite for Books: Ottoman Çahâr-küşe Bindings – Jake Benson (Curator, Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation & Dar al-Kutub Manuscript Project)

Who Read What in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul – Meredith Quinn (Harvard University)

Discussant: Nir Shafir (UCLA)

PANEL 2: Authorship: 11:30-13:00

“Abu Hanifa cannot have authored this book”: A Case of Debated Authorship in Seventeenth Century Istanbul – Aslıhan Gürbüz (Harvard University)

A book on how to write a book: “instructions to authors” and transformations of authorship and reading in seventeenth-century Istanbul – Nir Shafir (UCLA)

Discussant: Zeynep Altok (Bilgi Üniversitesi)

PANEL 3: Reading: 14:30-17:00

Visual Reading or Reading with Images? Visuality and Orality in Ottoman Manuscript Culture – Tülün Değirmenci (Pamukkale Üniversitesi)

An Architecture of Bibliophilia: Private and Public Libraries in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul – Yavuz Sezer (MIT)

“Ondan Sonra Mürşit Bir Faslı Menakıb Okuta”: Manuscript Culture in Alevi Villages – Janina Karolewski (Universität Hamburg, Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures)

Discussant: Sooyong Kim (Koç Üniversitesi)

SATURDAY – JUNE 7

PANEL 4: Circulation: 9:30-11:45

Where Books Come From (And Where They Go): A Social History of Reading and Writing in 16th-Century Ottoman Lands – Helen Pfeifer (Princeton University)

Imperial Margins and Marginalia: Muftis, Scribes and the Transmission of Legal Knowledge in Late Ottoman Bosnia (1775-1886) – Selma Zecevic (York University)

Canonization, Censorship, and the Ottoman Practice of Taqriz/Imza – Guy Burak (New York University)

Discussant: Derin Terzioğlu (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi)

Concluding Discussion: 12:00-12:30

This workshop focuses on discussion of pre-circulated papers that participants will briefly present to the audience. It is open to the public but because space is limited, we ask those who wish to attend to please pre-register by contacting Julia Aylin Kolcu at the Orient-Institut at oiist@oidmg.org. For all other inquiries, please contact the organizer, Nir Shafir, at nshafir@ucla.edu.

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