

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

**Rulers as Authors in the Islamic world.  
Knowledge, authority and legitimacy**

Hamburg, 18 – 19 December 2017  
Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures  
Warburgstraße 26, Room 0001  
20354 Hamburg

organized by Sonja Brentjes (Max Planck Gesellschaft, Berlin), Maribel Fierro (ILC-CSIC, Madrid),  
Tilman Seidensticker (CSMC)

**Programme**

**MONDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2017**

*8:30-9:00 Registration and introduction*

**I. The early period (1)**

**9:00-09:30** Teresa Bernheimer (SOAS, London), *'Ali b. Abi Talib and other imams.*

**09:30-10:00** Adam Gaiser (The Florida State University), *Eloquent Exchange: Asceticism and Shirā' in the Poetry of Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a.*

**10:00-10:20:** Discussion

10:20-10:40 Coffee Break

**I. The early period (2)**

**10:40-11:10** Sean W. Anthony (Ohio State University), *Authors of piety, poets of blasphemy: caliphal authorship in the construction of the Umayyad past.*

**11:10-11:40** Letizia Osti (University of Milan), *Monarchs, kuttāb, orators, epistolographers, land-tax officials, heads of bureaux. Abbasid rulers and their standing as authors.*

**11:40-12:00** Discussion

12:00-13:00 Lunch

## **II. Caliphs, Imams and Messianic figures (1)**

**13:00-13:30** Olly Akkermann (Freie Universität Berlin), *The Bohras and the making of the Neo-Fatimid Library*.

**13:30-14:00** María Luisa Ávila (CSIC-Granada) and Maribel Fierro (CSIC-Madrid), *Do caliphs write? The cases of the Cordoban Umayyads, the Hammudids and the Mu'minids*.

**14:00-14:30** Hasan Ansari (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton), *Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh 'Abdullāh b. Ḥamza: A Zaydī ruler and author*.

**14:30-15:00** Discussion

15:00-15:20 Coffee Break

## **II. Caliphs, Imams and Messianic figures (2)**

**15:20-15:50** Murray Last (University College, London), *How really 'bookish' were the Sokoto mujahidun?*

**15:50-16:20** Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk (Qatar University), *The Pen and the Sword: The Case of the Sudanese Mahdi (1844-1885)*.

**16:20-16:50** Todd Lawson (University of Toronto), *An Author as Ruler: The Bāb and his Qayyūm al-asmā'*.

**16:50-17:20**: Discussion

## **TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2017**

### **III. Emirs and sultans (1)**

**9:00-9:30** Maribel Fierro (CSIC), *What and why non-caliphal rulers wrote in al-Andalus and the Maghrib*.

**9:30-10:00** Petra Schmidl (Exzellenzcluster *Normative Ordnungen*, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt), *The Rasulids in Yemen and the science*.

**10:00-10:20**: Discussion

10:20-10:40 Coffee Break

### **III. Emirs and sultans (2)**

**10:40-11:10** Anne-Marie Eddé (Université Paris 1), *The qalam and the sword: the Ayyūbid princes as authors.*

**11:10-11:40** Christian Mauder (Göttingen University), *Legitimizing Sultanic Rule in Arabic, Turkish and Persian– Late Mamluk Rulers as Authors of Religious Poetry.*

**11:40-12:00:** Discussion

12:00-13:00 Lunch

### **III. Emirs and sultans (3)**

**13:00-13:30** David Durand-Guédy (Independent scholar), *The Seljuks.*

**13:30-14:00** Jürgen Paul (CSMC), *Epigrammatic quatrains: Versifying Khwārazmshāhs.*

**14:00-14:20** Discussion

14:20-14:40 Coffee Break

### **IV. The great empires: Timurids-Mughals, Ottomans, Safavids**

**14:40-15:10** Matthew Melvin-Koushki (University of South Carolina), *Timurid-Mughal Philosopher-Kings as Sultan-Scientists.*

**15:10-15:40** A.T. Sen (Leiden University), *A Scholar-Prince in Defiance of Ottoman Practice: The Politics of Şehzade Korkud's Intellectual Output.*

**15:40-16:10** Hani Khafipour (University of Southern California), *Dreams of a Sufi King: Shah Tahmasb and Visions of the Sacred.*

**16:10-16:40** Discussion

Discussants: Sonja Brentjes, Alejandro Rodríguez de la Peña, Tilman Seidensticker.

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## Abstracts

**Ahmed Ibrahim ABUSHOUK (Qatar University)**

### **The Pen and the Sword: The Case of the Sudanese Mahdi (1844-1885)**

Muhammad Ahmad al-Mahdi (1844-1885) is the founder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century revolution that drew its strength of his charismatic leadership and the ideology of the expected, inspiring the Sudanese to revolt against the Turco-Egyptian Administration in the Sudan (1821-1881). In June 1881 the Mahdi dispatched letters from the Island of Aba on the White Nile, informing notables of the Sudan that he was the expected Mahdi who would fill the earth of justice and equity as it had been filled with oppression and tyranny. He claimed that his Mahdship was declared in a prophetic assembly attended by the Prophet Muhammad, the four Guided Caliphs, the Prophet Khidir, and princes of the faith. He supported his claim by Ibn al-'Arabi who says in his commentary on the Quran that "the knowledge of the Mahdi of the Hour and that Hour none knowth but Allah Most High." Indicating that his nomination lies outside the scope of human capacity, and the previous Mahdi-claimants were illegitimate due to Ahmad b. Idris' prophesy that the Mahdi will come forth from a place that nobody knows and in a condition which the people will refuse to acknowledge. Based on his claim, he declared the jihad as an effective means for the overthrow of the "infidel Turkish rulers", and for the reformation of Islam on puritanical lines, not only in the Sudan, but throughout the Muslim world. The Mahdi's written propaganda was produced in forms of letters of warning, proclamations, legal rulings, teaching sessions, sermons, and prayers. During the short period of the revolution (1881-1885) that culminated in the capture of Khartoum and killing of Charles Gordon, the Mahdi issued more 1000 letters of warning and proclamations. In 1990s, Muhammad Ibrahim Abu Salim (d. 2007) collected and edited the Mahdi's written propaganda in seven volumes under the title of *Al-Athar al-Kamila lil-Imam al-Mahdi (The Complete Works of the Imam al-Mahdi)*.

The purpose of this paper is threefold: The first objective is to examine the epistemological background of the Sudanese Mahdi. The second objective is to discuss the socio-political context in which the Mahdist revolution broke out in 1881. The third objective is to give a textual analysis of the Mahdi's writings that motivated the Sudanese to revolt against the Turco-Egyptian administration and laid down the foundation of the Mahdist state in the Sudan.

**Oily AKKERMAN (Freie Universität Berlin)**

***The Bohras and the making of the Neo-Fatimid Library***

The Bohras, a small but vibrant Muslim Shia community in India that is almost entirely closed to outsiders, hold a secret Arabic manuscript culture, which is enshrined and preserved in royal archives or *khizānāt*.

As Ismailis, the Bohras were one of the few communities to survive the fall of the Fatimid Caliphate in North Africa in the late twelfth century, having established an independent community well before its demise. Unlike Persian Ismaili Islam, which reached the Indian subcontinent during the ninth century over land, the Arabic Ismaili tradition travelled from Yemen to Gujarat via Indian Ocean trade several centuries later. In the new social, political, and historical reality of medieval Gujarat Bohra clerics reworked and enshrined their Fatimid heritage from North Africa in *khizānāt* under the supervision of local sacerdotal families, bringing into being a new sacred literary canon and manuscript culture with a local South Asian touch.

In my paper I argue that, from the fifteenth century onwards, a narrative was constructed in which these sacerdotal families were depicted as the direct spiritual heirs of the Fatimid intellectual heritage: only the highest clerics could access, comment upon, and transmit the sacred knowledge of the Fatimid Imams. The invention of the secret royal *khizānāt* in particular played a vital role in strengthening the community's "Neo-Fatimid" identity and hierarchical structures, a practice that is continued to the present time. Additionally, this paper will shed new light on the multi-lingual, scriptural, and scribal contexts of transmission and reception of Bohra *bāṭinī* knowledge in Yemen and Gujarat.

**Hasan ANSARI (Freie Universität Berlin)**

**Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥamza: A Zaydī ruler and author**

As a result of the unification of the Caspian Zaydiyya and the Zaydīs in Yemen in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century a massive transfer of knowledge from Iran to Yemen increased. This led on the one hand to a cultural revival as a result of which the cultural center of Zaydī Mu‘tazilism gradually shifted from the coastal regions south of the Caspian Sea to Yemen, and on the other to a renewed blossoming of Mu‘tazilī theology. The cultural transfer process reached its peak under the reign of Imam al-Manṣūr bi-llāh ‘Abdullāh b. Ḥamza (d. 614/1217) who further encouraged the transfer of Caspian Zaydī and Mu‘tazilī religious literature to Yemen. At his initiative numerous books, among them many Mu‘tazilī texts, were acquired, copied and subsequently incorporated into his library in Ḥafār, his residential town. He took on a staff of professional scribes – who were often scholars in their own right – in order to copy a wide range of Mu‘tazilī texts written by chief representatives of the Baṣran Mu‘tazila in its scholastic phase. Many of the texts copied for al-Manṣūr bi-llāh’s library have survived in Yemeni collections as unique manuscripts. al-Manṣūr bi-llāh is also known as a very respected Zaydī scholar whose writings were among the most important sources of Zaydī knowledge for centuries. He wrote on Zaydī kalām, jurisprudence and Hadith. In my paper I examine his writings in which he benefits from the above-mentioned cultural transfer from Iran to Yemen in his time.

**Sean W. ANTHONY (Ohio State University)**

***Authors of piety, poets of blasphemy: caliphal authorship in the construction of the Umayyad past***

Historians of Arabic literature tend to place the Umayyad caliphs (r. 661-750) at the very fount of the Arabic literary tradition, yet more often than not, the Umayyads' role has been portrayed as limited to that of patrons and commissioners of early written works rather than pioneers of literary composition in their own right. Two famous exceptions to this general statement stand out among the Umayyad caliphs: 'Umar II ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 717-20) and al-Walīd II ibn Yazīd (r. 743-44). However, it is also there that the two caliph's commonalities end; their literary and authorial personas otherwise offer a compelling study in contrasts. Whereas 'Umar II gains a reputation in posterity as the paragon of caliphal piety, portrayals of al-Walīd II cast him as an ungodly debauch who shamelessly blasphemes God and the prophets. This study interrogates the role played by the compositions attributed to these two caliphs – theological and legal epistles in the case of 'Umar II and poetry in the case of al-Walīd II – in constructing the image of the two rulers in the literary and historical imagination of belletrists and scholars of the subsequent Arabo-Islamic literary tradition.

**María Luisa ÁVILA (Escuela de Estudios Arabes-CSIC, Granada) and Maribel FIERRO (Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean-CSIC, Madrid)**

***Do caliphs write? The cases of the Cordoban Umayyads, the Hammudids and the Mu'minids***

The Umayyad 'Abd al-Rahman I famously wrote a poem remembering the eastern lands he had to leave never to return. Poetry was composed by many members of the Umayyads who settled in al-Andalus and their descendants. By the time the Cordoban Umayyads proclaimed themselves caliphs (4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century), the ability and the willingness to do so still continued. 'Abd al-Rahman III was a man of the sword, not of the pen, while his son al-Hakam II was trained since his youth to become a 'wise ruler', to the extent that a later Andalusī scholar referred to him as 'one of our own' (i.e. the *'ulama'*). Al-Hakam II is mostly famous for his patronage of the arts and sciences, less known is the fact that he himself is credited with having written a number of works, as well as some verses. The case of the Cordoban Umayyads who were Sunnis will be contrasted with that of the other two caliphal dynasties that ruled in al-Andalus, the Hammudids (Hasanids) and the Mu'minids (Zanata Berbers), both of which had 'Shi'i' leanings.

**Teresa BERNHEIMER (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)**

***'Alī b. Abī Tālib and other imams***

The talk will consider the ways in which 'Alī b. Abi Talib and other Shi'ite Imams, in particular from the Twelver tradition, are reported to have transmitted their knowledge. The central question is what kinds of knowledge 'Alī and the other imams are supposed to have transmitted, and in what form: the Twelver tradition preserves a great number of works about the Imams, including material ascribed to the imams themselves, such as works on Qur'anic exegesis, on the miracles and supernatural signs of the imams, collections of traditions, and of course the Imams' answers to legal questions. But to what extent are the Imams the authors of such works?

Of the works are ascribed to 'Alī b. Abi Talib—such as a recension of the Qur'an, a *kitāb 'Alī* which reportedly included discussions of a great variety of topics (cf. list of early citations in Modarressi, *Tradition and Survival*, pp. 8-12), possibly even a *dīwān*—perhaps the best known is the *Nahj al-Balāgha*, a collection of sermons and testimonials traditionally ascribed to the first Shi'ite imam. While there is still some controversy regarding its authenticity, it is clear that it was not compiled into a book before the fourth/tenth century. Similarly, the *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-kāmila*, a book of supplications ascribed to the fourth imam 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidin, seems to have been collected in the sixth/twelfth century at the earliest. The talk will examine the extent to which the Sunni and Shi'ite traditions differ about the Imams' role as 'authors', and examine the historical context in which the collection of the Imams' works became an important preoccupation of the Twelver community.

**David DURAND-GUÉDY (Independent scholar)**

**The Seljuks**

While many Iranian rulers have remained famous for their mastery of Persian or Turkish letters – one thinks of the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Ziyarid king Kay-Kāvus b. Iskendar (the author of *Qābūs-nāma*) or the founder of the Safavid dynasty Shah Ismā'il (whose quatrains of Sufi inspiration echoes those of his Ottoman foe), this is not the case of the Saljuqs, the first Turkish dynasty of nomadic origin to have ruled over the Iranian world in the 11th and 12th centuries. "They are steppe dwellers and are ignorant of the customs of kings ..." says one of their contemporaries after he visited the court of Sanjar, the greatest Saljuq ruler of the 12th century, conqueror of Ghazna, but also allegedly illiterate. The fact that no Saljuq has sponsored official historiography (in clear contrast with the Buyids, but also from the Mongols) is in this respect eloquent.

Indeed all the Saljuqs were warriors and in this sense they are typical of the militarization of Islamic states and societies from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onward, but unlike their Buyid and Samanids predecessors (10<sup>th</sup> c.), they had because of their origin but also their way of life a more complex relationship with the mainstream Persian culture which held sway in this part of the world. The Saljuq court was quite different from what the classical Iranian court, if only because it remained itinerant and was set apart from the cities which were the cradle of the Irano-Islamic civilization. It is only in the last third of the 12th century that a real learned Saljuq king can be identified. While he was still very active on the battle field, and

connected to the nomads, he is famed for having been versed in calligraphy and produced quatrains. However his death sealed the fate of the dynasty in Iran and it is in the Anatolian branch, which enjoyed a far greater longevity, that the authentic literate Saljuq kings can be found.

This conference will provide us with the opportunity to revisit the corpus of sources concerning the Saljuqs in order to see how the question of the relation of the Saljuqs to the Persian letters (in terms of access and production) can help us both their domination over the local society and their integration to it.

**Anne-Marie EDDE (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)**

***The qalam and the sword: the Ayyūbid princes as authors***

The intense military and political activities of the Ayyūbids (569-658/1174-1260) in a region marked by the Crusades, the presence of the Latin states, the internal divisions, the Mongol threat and the increasing power of the Mamlūks in the army, has not prevented the development of a cultural and artistic life in which many princes participated actively. Among those who composed poetry, treatises on law, historical or geographical books, two branches of Ayyūb's family distinguished themselves: the offspring of his elder son, Shāhanshāh (d. 543/1148), who ruled the city of Hama until 742/1342, and the offspring of his grandson al-Mu'azzam b. al-'Ādil (d. 624/1227), whose power over Damascus, after 1227, was contested and whose members were relegated to Transjordan until the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

From what we know about this literary production and from other contemporary sources, we might question what were the aims of this princely writing? Did these "scholarly princes" receive a specific education? What sources did they use? What were the issues or the regions that interested them mostly? Did their literary work serve their political activity? How and to what extent could they reconcile military action with their literary life?

Answers to these questions, however incomplete they may be, will highlight a number of common aspects with the works of their contemporaries, and also probably some particularities related to their status and their position.

**Maribel FIERRO (Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Mediterranean-CSIC, Madrid)**

***What and why non-caliphal rulers wrote in al-Andalus and the Maghrib***

In my paper I will offer an overview as complete as possible of rulers - who were not caliphs – to whom writings are attributed in the territories corresponding to al-Andalus (Muslim Iberia) and what are now Morocco, Algeria and Tunis, from the times of the conquest up to the eighteenth century CE. The analysis of the context in which such endeavour on the part of rulers took place will shed light on the extent to which it is to be linked to specific personalities or it needs to be integrated into specific conceptions of authority and rulership.



**Adam GAISER (Florida State University)**

***Eloquent Exchange: Asceticism and Shirā' in the Poetry of Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a***

The poetry of the Azraqite-Khārijite leader Qaṭarī b. al-Fujā'a presents an interesting case of a "ruler as author" insofar as his poetry lauds death on the battlefield – specifically the Khārijite practice of *shirā'*, "exchanging" one's life for paradise – as the highest virtue that an Azraqī Muslim can practice. This world-denying ethos seemingly stands in tension with the more worldly implications of the titles *khalīfa* (Caliph) and *amīr al-mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful), both of which are bestowed upon Ibn al-Fujā'a and other Azraqite imams in Islamic textual sources. In addition, Ibn al-Fujā'a name, flanked by Caliphal titular, appears on Azraqite coins from his era, indicating with a greater degree of certainty that the Azraqites associated him with recognizable Muslim forms of leadership. By simultaneously clarifying what purposes his poetic messages of asceticism and *shirā'* might have served, along with the contexts in which they might have operated, and by examining how the Azāriqa might have conceptualized governance (as both succession to the Prophet Muḥammad and military leadership), this paper will argue that Ibn al-Fujā'a and the Azraqites appear to be idealizing the austere aesthetic the Muslim Conquests (*futuḥāt*), with the figure of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb providing a tacit model of exemplary guidance for such conditions. This last point – that the Caliph 'Umar functioned as a (if not the) exemplar of the Azraqite Caliph – is much harder to prove given the state of the evidence. Nevertheless, enough evidence exists to make this contention compelling.

**Hani KHAFIPOUR (University of Southern California)**

***Dreams of a Sufi King: Shah Tahmasb and Visions of the Sacred***

The genre of "true" autobiographies (self-analytical with varied degree of psychological complexity and sophistication) long held to be the domain of the European literary tradition, a general assumption dating back to the eighteenth century, exacerbated by the imperial-orientalist intellectual heritage of the later two centuries (e.g. Georges Gusdorf, Roy Pascal, and Georges May), and inadvertently extended by pioneering works of such figures as Georg Misch (e.g. *Geschichte der Autobiographie*) and Franz Rosenthal (e.g. "Die arabische Autobiographie"), and more recently Marvin Zonis (e.g. "Autobiography and Biography in the Middle East: A Plea for Psychopolitical Studies") to name a few. The views expressed in these classic studies continue to exert considerable influence though have in recent time been accurately critiqued by Nuha Khoury, Dwight Reynolds, Shawkat Toorawa, Jamal Elias, *et al.*

The criticism of the traditional view regarding the dearth and narrowness of Islamicate autobiographical literature in pre-industrial Middle East has for the large part been based on exploration of Arabic language sources with little attention paid to the other two major languages of the region, namely Turkish and Persian, thereby inhibiting the emergence of a more holistic pattern of the genre (e.g. the edited volume, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* that explicitly excludes Turko-Persian tradition is a case in point). Added to this limited scope, fewer studies have engaged in examining "dream narratives" within autobiographies, thereby concealing from our view one of the most

important dimensions of the region's intellectual tradition. Dream was a mysterious realm where the corporeal and the spiritual met, where sinners and saints conversed, and often than not was a dominion in which religio-political authority was sanctified.

My paper attends to these two gaps by analyzing a memoir written in Persian by the Azeri-Turkish speaking ruler of Iran, Shah Tahmasb (r. 1524-1576), the second ruler of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722) with a special focus on his dreams, which he recounts in vivid detail. Although, the Shi'i Safavid rulers of Iran were for the most part great patrons of art and literature, they did not personally engage with the written word. The two exceptions, however, were Shah Ismail the founder of the dynasty who left behind a large collection of folkloric/mystical poetry (*Divan-iKhata'i*), and his son and successor Tahmasb who penned a short memoir known as *Tazkirah-yi Shah Tahmasb* which covers some of the major events of his life occurring roughly between the years (1523-1561). While Shah Ismail's *Divan* has been subject of several thorough studies, Tahmasb's memoir has not shared a similar fate.

The Safavid followers (or disciples) believed that the reigning shah was a Sufi shaykh, a perfect spiritual master (*murshid-ikamil*) as well as the belief that they were descendants of Imam 'Ali and Fatimah, a conviction that secured for the shahs great veneration and religio-political legitimacy. In this paper, I examine this perception of a "Sufi king" through a close reading of the Sufi king's self-perception as revealed through a series of dreams that he experienced and retold to his inner circle. I will discuss the extent to which his dream-revelations correspond to (and differ from) the larger pattern of dream-revelations of medieval and early modern Sufi shaykhs as reported in various hagiographies.

I argue that Tahmasb's dream-revelations (self-interpreted) while conforming to certain patterns found in Sufi hagiographies, his visions of Imam 'Ali, Imam Mahdi, and even "the Divine Light" precisely at times of grave political crises create a dialectic between an interventionist transcendent power (i.e. Shi'i Imams' power of intercession) and their supposed progeny (i.e. Tahmasb as a supplicant king) in which kingship extends beyond the corporeal into the spiritual where power can be negotiated through exchange of "favors" (*ni'ma*). This paper, by closely examining Shah Tahmasb's dreams as interpreted in his own words sheds a rare light on the neglected inner world of a Shi'i king and Perso-Islamic dream narratives of the early modern era.

**Murray LAST (University College London)**

### ***How really 'bookish' were the Sokoto mujahidun?***

In this essay I will focus on the first three rulers in northern Nigeria's Sokoto Caliphate (1804-1903) who wrote over three hundred works, in Arabic mainly but also in Fulfulde. Though these three are very well known, several questions remain: [1] as rulers, why write books rather than just talk, preach, advise, judge, or even read – which are the ordinary, everyday kinds of work and leisure of a ruler? And all this in a milieu that has no electric light for evening bookwork, and where paper is expensive and relatively scarce. How much time did they actually have to spend to finish a book? [2] Were these three men writing as rulers, for public consumption, or as academics writing for personal pleasure? How 'bookish' were their books? If they were for a public readership, why not write more in *a'jami* prose, rather

than in classical Arabic? [3] How ephemeral were some of their books (that is, focusing on topics then 'in vogue', or more like pamphlets), and why were there periods when they gave their books precise dates of composition? Did dates matter, and if so, why at this period and not at other periods? [4] How far were they arguing with each other; they lived in different hamlets, with different coteries of students – so were the audiences they had in mind when writing a work not “the governed” or “posterity” but those within a specific, local intellectual/political dynamic?

In short, were these three rulers primarily scholars, ‘*ulama*’, and not ‘rulers’, *umara*? Trained from childhood to teach rather than to govern, for them wasn’t government a markedly different, separate, perhaps worrisome exercise quite distinct from authorship? Of course, we have the books they wrote but not the details of their day-to-day activities as rulers/judges/warriors. So what is the evidence for any conclusions we might make?

**Todd LAWSON (University of Toronto)**

***An Author as Ruler: The Bāb and his Qayyūm al-asmā’***

The Bābi religion dates its own beginning to the composition of an unusual work by its founder, Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known to history as The Bāb (1819-1850). This presentation will explore the way in which this work challenges existing worldly or *dunyavī* authority, both royal and clerical, and invokes the authority of the hidden Imām of Ithnā-‘ashariyya Shi’ism. Such authority entails a complex and interdependent cluster of notions of loyalty, guardianship, love, covenant, friendship and intimacy in the Arabic word *walāya*. This distinctive notion of authority is invoked at every level of the composition, whether from the point of view of form, which is that of a “new” Qur’ān, complete with *sūras*, *āyas*, and disconnected letters, or from the point of view of content which is a constant proclamation of the imminent appearance (*zuhūr*) of the hidden Imām, the long awaited eschatological savior of 12er Shi’ism. In the course of this proclamation (or Islamicate “annunciation”), forms and motifs of ancient - what some have called “primitive” - Shi’i discourses of authority are invoked. The work is entirely in Arabic and its author was condemned in a *fatwa* issued by a combined court of Sunni and Shi’i ulama in Baghdad shortly after it began to be circulated in late 1844 (1260 AH). Nonetheless, the work acquired an active and committed readership who eventually came to be known as the followers of the Bāb and whose activities left an enduring imprint on Iranian Shi’ism.

**Christian MAUDER (University of Bonn)**

***Legitimizing Sultanic Rule in Arabic, Turkish and Persian— Late Mamluk Rulers as Authors of Religious Poetry***

During the last fifty years of the existence of the Mamluk Sultanate, its rulers were not only confronted with the consequences of a severe economic crisis, recurrent outbreaks of the plague and troop mutinies. They also had to compete with their Ottoman, Safavid and AqQoyunlu rivals who thanks to their military successes and exalted lineages not only effectively countered Mamluk claims for regional supremacy, but also raised doubts about the very legitimacy of Mamluk rule itself. In their attempts to overcome this late Mamluk crisis of legitimacy, the Sultans Qāyrbāy (r. 1468-1496), Muḥammad b. Qāyrbāy (r. 1496-1498) and Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516) broke new grounds in Mamluk political culture by producing sizeable collections of primarily religious poetry in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. In their verses, these Mamluk Sultans presented themselves as not only pious, but also divinely chosen sovereigns who thanks to their linguistic competences and otherworldly insight were predestined to rule the Islamic world. Building on in part unpublished and largely neglected material, the study outlines the multilingual poetic production of these three Mamluk Sultans, explores the religious and political significance of their writings and sheds light on their reception by contemporaries and posterity.

**Matthew MELVIN-KOUSHKI (University of South Carolina)**

***Timurid-Mughal Philosopher-Kings as Sultan-Scientists***

The successors of Amir Temūr (r. 1370-1405), supreme Lord of Conjunction (*ṣāhib-qirān*), developed a distinctive form of saint-philosopher-kingship without precedent in Islamic history. Most notably, as part and parcel of their universalist-imperialist quest to transcend binaries political (caliphate vs. sultanate) and epistemological (*ẓāhir* vs. *bāṭin*) in equal measure, they fashioned themselves absolutist *astrocrats*, capable of talismanically marrying heaven to earth, by means of a personal mastery of astronomy-astrology. Of manifest political utility, the science of the stars had attracted the perennial interest of ruling elites since antiquity, to be sure; but these Timurid ruler were the first to pursue it within an explicitly *lettrist-neopythagorean* framework—whence the dual astrological-lettrist platform undergirding Timurid claims to imperial universalism, which definitively timuridized the very title *ṣāhib-qirān*; and whence the mathematization of astronomy by the members of the Samarkand Observatory, a revolutionary development much feted by historians of science. Thus institutionalized, this same (occult-)scientific platform remained an effective means of performing a specifically Timurid mode of sovereignty throughout the Persianate world until at least the mid-17th century, and especially in Mughal India.

This paper discusses the personal scientific output and patronage programs of two Timurid philosopher-kings: Iskandar Sulṭān b. ʿUmar Shaykh b. Temūr (r. 1409-14), hugely ambitious (if soon foiled) patron of the sciences of stars and letters, who authored the preface to a state-of-the-art manual of mathematical astronomy (and perhaps the manual itself), the *Sultanic Compendium* (*Jāmiʿ-i Sulṭānī*); and his more successful cousin Ulugh Beg b. Shāhrukh b. Temūr (r. 1409-49), founder of the Samarkand Observatory and Madrasa

complex and co-author of the crucial *New Sultanic Star Tables* (*Zīj-i Jadīd-i Sulṭānī*), who was hailed by his astronomer and letrist patronesses as messianic *sultan-scientist* (*al-sulṭān al-faylasūf*). Intriguingly, while the intellectual-imperial projects of both men are indeed unprecedented in the Islamicate context, they may be said to islamize—perhaps consciously—the classical model of Archytas (Arkhūtas, d. 347 BCE), ruler of the powerful Greek city-state Tarentum and leading pythagorean philosopher, who too was a mathematician-astronomer king. Nor do they seem to have had true successors: no subsequent Turko-Mongol Perso-Islamic sovereign is known to have personally authored scientific texts in the quest to mathematize the cosmos.

Nevertheless, the model established by Iskandar Sulṭān and Ulugh Beg ensured that astronomy-astrology and letrism in particular would continue to be heavily patronized by subsequent Timurid, and Indo-Timurid, dynasts (as well as their Safavid and Ottoman competitors). This includes in the first place Emperor Akbar's grandson Shāhjahān (r. 1628-57), self-proclaimed Second Lord of Conjunction (*ṣāhib-qirān-i ṣānī*), who commissioned upon his accession the *Zīj-i Shāhjahānī*, an updated and corrected version of Ulugh Beg's star tables of two centuries prior; tellingly, it features the first preface in the Arabo-Persian astronomical tradition to be explicitly letrist in tenor. The same feature is shared by the preface to the *Supreme Secret* (*Sirr-i Akbar*), a much-celebrated Persian translation of the Upanishads, the first, by Shāhjahān's son Dārā Shukūh (d. 1659), concordist author of a number of other works. This famed but ill-starred saint-prince, who was executed by his more politically and militarily astute brother Awrangzēb after a failed succession bid, did prefer sufism to astral science; but his casting of Hindu *tawḥīd* in letrist terms was similarly calculated, I argue, to signal his performance of Timurid sovereignty.

Such authorial evidence suggests that the neopythagorean worldview of our royal actors must be taken far more seriously than it has been to date; that they held the cosmos itself to be a mathematical text to be riddled by scientists of stars and letters alone explains the contours of their remarkable intellectual-imperial projects. And if the world is indeed a text, it also demands to be *written*, preferably in marble: may we thus not style Shāhjahān himself *author* of the unparalleled cosmographical logogriph (*mu'ammā*)—which poetical genre was made a mainstay of letrist practice precisely by Timurid scholars—that is the Tāj Maḥal?

**Letizia OSTI (University of Milan)**

***Monarchs, kuttāb, orators, epistolographers, land-tax officials, heads of bureaux. Abbasid rulers and their standing as authors***

This paper will look at how 3<sup>rd</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> century historical and literary sources assess Abbasid rulers as scholars, poets and authors, and whether and how such assessment is tied to their legitimacy. Starting from the authors and works recorded in the *Kitāb al-fihrist* by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 380/990) and surveying works of *adab* and historiography, we shall review the production of specific caliphs and rulers, investigating several questions: whether a ruler's works are assessed with the same criteria as other scholars'; whether there are subjects which are deemed more appropriate for a ruler to master and write about than

others; whether prose and poetry are valued differently; how rulers' written works were collected and preserved; and whether being an author, as opposed to being learned, is linked explicitly to being a better ruler. Notwithstanding the importance of culture for good rulership, is there a difference between admiring scholars and poets, learning from them, and being one?

**Jürgen PAUL (CSMC)**

***Epigrammatic quatrains: Versifying Khwārazmshāhs***

In ʿAwfī's anthology of Persian poets *Lubāb al-albāb*, the first chapter is devoted to princely poetry. Among the authors presented, some belong to the Anūshteginid dynasty of Khwārazmshāhs. In historiographic sources as well, some poems allegedly composed by Khwārazmshāhs are on record. Beyond that, Khwārazmian court poets and their contemporaries (e.g. at the

Seljuqid Sanjar's court) lent their pen to direct political contest alongside their masters and patrons. Often, the texts come in pairs, responding one to the other. The quatrain (*rubāʿī*) was the favoured form for both shah and court poet in this context: a short form, easily improvised and even more easily memorised, it served well its purpose in political propaganda and in contests for fame and legitimacy. Moreover, the memory of some figures became widely "romanticised" through reports of exchange. My paper will present this (rather small) corpus and discuss some ways in which to use it as a source for the history of 12<sup>th</sup> and early 13<sup>th</sup> century Iran and Central Asia.

**Petra G. SCHMIDL (Exzellenzcluster *Normative Ordnungen*, Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt)**

***The Rasūlids in Yemen and the Science***

The Rasūlids, a dynasty of most probably Kurd, or Turk descentance, at first in the service of the Saljūqs and the Ayyūbids, eventually ruled over Yemen, or most parts of it, from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. Their interest in promoting and patronizing arts and architecture, learning and scholarship is reflected in artefacts and buildings, instruments and texts accrued during their reign. Aside from this commitment, the Rasūlids emerge also as authors of scholarly texts in different fields of knowledge. Most creative and productive was al-Ashraf ʿUmar (d. 1296), the third sultan, but some of his predecessors and successors also either wrote texts themselves or were closely related to their emergence. After shortly introducing the Rasūlids, this talk will first introduce these examples, and second use them to address the topics of this conference, in particular knowledge, authority, and legitimacy.

**A.T. SEN (Leiden University)**

**A Scholar-Prince in Defiance of Ottoman Practice: The Politics of Şehzade Korkud's Intellectual Output**

Although the House of Osman produced a great deal of poets and composers of classical music, it is a rare find to see a royal member of the Ottoman dynasty devoting himself/herself to authoring scholarly works in the established fields of Islamic learning. Prince Korkud (d. 1513), one of the eight sons of Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), presents such a precious example of a scholar-prince, who wrote, in anticipation of an imminent succession struggle, several works that can be classified as theological and legal treatises. In these texts that have mostly survived as single copies, Prince Korkud not only reveals the extent of his scholarly formation but also, and more importantly, addresses and indeed challenges various contemporary issues related to Ottoman administrative practice that he considers incompatible with Islamic principles. With an eye toward situating Korkud's intellectual production into the immediate politico-historical context of the time during which a fierce succession struggle between the living sons of Bayezid was expected to occur, this presentation aims at revisiting, in light of the recent growing scholarship on Prince Korkud, some of the themes recurring in his extant works, such as the anxiety experienced due to the struggle between establishing an effective rule and living a pious life.