

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
announces a Lecture

by

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**University of Cambridge**

## **The Illustration of History in Persian Manuscripts**

The lecture will explore the selective illustration of history in Persian manuscript painting; selective in the sense that only some chronicles are illustrated, and then only some scenes or topics are chosen. This raises various questions about the motives underlying these choices, such as the purpose of illustration, the patron, the audience, the context and not least of course, the manner in which the selected scenes are depicted.

Various models suggest frameworks of enquiry into the neglected case of Persian history: a survey of the products of a particular period (such as Emine Fetvacı's study of Ottoman court patronage in the second half of the 16th century); a focus on a single specific manuscript (such as Bernard Guenée on the *Grandes chroniques*, or the *Windsor Padshahnama* by Milo Beach & Ebba Koch); or on a particular text, that was copied and illustrated repeatedly over a substantial period, perhaps being changed in the course of transmission (such as Anne Hedeman on the *Grandes chroniques* or Laetitia Le Guay on Froissart). All to a greater or lesser extent propagate a royal ideology, reflecting contemporary concerns that use ancient texts or visual symbols for present purposes.

I intend to focus here on one particular text, which had a long afterlife and through which it is possible to address some of these considerations. The text is the famous 'universal chronicle' or 'first world history', the *Jami' al-tawarikh* of Rashid al-Din, Ilkhanid vizier, statesman and polymath (d. 1318), interesting both for the fact that it chronicles both the distant past as well as contemporary history, and also as it was conceived from the outset to be illustrated. Where relevant, reference will also be made to the 'Book of kings', the *Shahnama* of Firdausi (c. 1010), the Persian epic poem that was also first illustrated in manuscripts from the early 14th century.

**Thursday, 26 January 2017 at 6 pm**  
**Room 0001, CSMC**