

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

Prof. Dr. Joel Blecher
The George Washington University

**Revision in the Manuscript Age:
New Evidence of Early Versions of Ibn Ḥajar's *Fatḥ al-Bārī***

Despite the fact that multi-volume works of exegesis composed in the Mamluk period (13th-16th century) were often written across several decades, such works have been treated largely as finished products, or static representations of an author's thought. The works themselves strive to achieve this effect, smoothing over the rough edges that inevitably emerge in any compositional process. In many cases, historians can only speculate what early drafts of now renowned commentarial works might have looked like and how its interpreters' priorities and exegetical strategies might have shifted over the years in which it was composed. And yet, archives that preserve the scholarly output of the Mamluk era are littered with examples of notebooks, drafts, revisions and incomplete works. While contemporary editors, publishers and intellectual historians have understandably overlooked these drafts when a completed copy is available, these works-in-progress nevertheless offer precious insights into the cultural history of writing and revising in the Mamluk Period, as well as the evolution of exegetical strategies of key Mamluk interpreters.

As a case study, this talk will explore a recently discovered early dictated copy of Ibn Ḥajar's renowned multi-volume hadith commentary, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, a work Islamicist Norman Calder once called "the most magnificent achievement of exegetical discourse." The manuscript preserves two early versions of the work: Ibn Ḥajar's initial dictation, as well emendations, excisions and elaborations that Ibn Ḥajar later made to text in a second early version. An analysis of the multiple versions preserved in this manuscript not only advances our understanding of how Ibn Ḥajar refined his exegetical strategies as he composed his magnum opus, it also brings to light the way in which exegesis was influenced by the complex social practice of drafting, revising and completing a multi-volume work in the Mamluk scholarly context.

Thursday, 30 November 2017 at 6 pm
Room 0001, CSMC