



The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

cordially invites you to a lecture on

Khiva, 1873: The Archive that Never Was

by Paolo Sartori

Thursday, 17 October 2019

6 pm

Recent theoretical literature on the archive contains critical insights for studies of Islamic documents, while also pushing to move beyond some of the core assumptions of the same literature. There is no question that the fundamental concerns of an “archival turn” are as relevant to studies of Islamic societies, past and present, as they are to European-dominated ones. Yet investigating Islamic “archives” comes with the challenge of coming to terms with a concept – the archive – and an attending theoretical baggage derived almost exclusively from European history. In this lecture, I want to propose that employing the term “cultures of documentation” offers a way of having one’s cake and eating it too. In deploying this expression, I want to signal that there existed multitudes of textual practices and record-keeping activities in the pre-industrial Islamic world, and that it is possible to move away from “archive” as a term without abandoning the core insights and questions of the historical literature built around it. The work I have conducted on documentary collections from Khiva serves as a model for how we might draw upon scholarship associated with the archival turn, without fully capitulating to those suppositions that are derived from the episteme of the modern state and Western governmentality.

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