

## The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)

cordially invites you to a workshop on

### **“Tied and Bound”: How to Keep Things Together (or Not?)**

Thursday, 20 May, 03:30pm–06:45pm CEST

Friday, 21 May, 09:00am–06:45pm CEST

Saturday, 22 May, 09:00am–11:30am CEST

### Zoom-Meeting

Assuming that ‘codicological units’ exist in whatever manuscript cultures and that they are composed of discrete elements, the issue of cohesion of these elements is a general and even universal one. Every manuscript culture has therefore developed physical devices to keep writing surfaces together and these devices can be generally categorized under binding. Like other features of manuscript culture, so also cohesion of these elements is placed along a continuum, within which various degrees of cohesion, coherence, and stability are discernible—loose-leaves, *codices disligati*, as well as ‘soft bindings’, as opposed to regularly bound codices in codex cultures, and parallel cases from bamboo slips, palm-leaf manuscripts, rolls, peculiar arrangements of tree-bark manuscripts etc. in other cultures as well. ‘Keeping things together’—or not, that is to be able to disarray and single out quickly and easily one or more discrete elements when needed—is a central concern in archiving, ordering, and preserving as well, and has actual implications in all related practices, like collecting materials, filing cards, making boxes and cases, and retrieving in case. Well including all codex-centred binding topics, the conference also aims to explore cases where binding is either an intermediate stage in the production (for example in the case of ‘tacketing for binding’, as investigated by Johan Peter Gumbert), or a peculiar challenge of its own (for example while excerpting from large collections of manuscripts), or a special kind of binding is required by the peculiar manuscript or artefact in place (for example in case of concertina book forms, like the concertina-like ‘liturgical fans’, Eth. *marawh*, Gr. *rhypidion* or *hexaptérygon*, Lat. *flabellum* etc.). Discussion on the sociology of binding is also welcome—who binds? who are the professional binders? which their tasks and how specialized their skills? And why could binding not be accommodated in the theoretical framework of *La Syntaxe du Codex*? Hang on! It is going to be a ‘dense & tense’ workshop!

## Programme

### Thursday, 20 May, 03:30pm–06:45pm

- 03:30–05:00 Nicholas Pickwood (London): *Concepts of Permanence and Ephemerality in Bookbinding*  
Thies Staack (Hamburg): *Viewing the Whole from its Parts: Bindings of Early Chinese Bamboo and Wood Manuscripts*
- 05:00–05:15 Break
- 05:15–06:45 Francesca Maltomini (Florence): *Papyrus rolls as archives: the tomoi sunkollesimoi*  
Georgios Boudalis (Thessaloniki): *The origin and evolution of the multi-gathering codex sewing in Late Antiquity*

### Friday, 21 May, 09:00am–06:45pm

- 09:00–11:15 Serena Ammirati (Rome): *Bound to be bound: the fate of Latin manuscripts in Late Antiquity*  
Imre Galambos (Cambridge): *Concertina booklets from ninth-tenth century Dunhuang*  
Karin Scheper (Leiden): *Binding arguments – sewn and unsewn manuscript formats in the Islamic world*
- 11:15–11:30 Break
- 11:30–01:00 Giovanni Ciotti (Hamburg): *Some Observations on Binding Pothi Manuscripts in South Asia*  
Patrick Andrist (Munich / Fribourg) & Marilena Maniaci (Cassino, Rome): *Methodological questions about the analysis of the bindings in a “syntactical” perspective*
- 01:00–02:30 Break
- 02:30–04:00 Cécile Michel (Paris): *Binding cuneiform tablets in one unit*  
Dmitry Bondarev (Hamburg): *Loose-leaf Islamic manuscripts of West Africa: retention, adaptation or invention?*
- 04:00–04:30 Break



- 04:30-06:45 Jasdip Singh Dhillon (Oxford): *The Codex in South Asia: A brief study of materials and structures*  
Heather Wolfe (Washington, DC): *Bound, bundled, boxed, and filed: keeping it together in early modern England*  
Alexandra Gillespie (Toronto): *Book Knots*

**Saturday, 22 May, 09:00am–11:30am**

- 09:00-10:30 Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (Hamburg): *Stab-stitched binding in Lao and Thai manuscripts: History, technique and function*  
Nikolas Sarris (Athens): *Binding or rebinding at the St Catherine's monastery of Sinai*  
10:30-10:45 Break  
10:45-11:30 Konrad Hirschler (Berlin) / Discussant: Final discussion

## Abstracts and Contributors

**Thursday, 20 May, 03:30pm–06:45pm**

**Nicholas Pickwood (London):** *Concepts of Permanence and Ephemerality in Bookbinding*

Cheap bindings are sometimes described as temporary when structural features may indicate a degree of permanence, while the opposite may also be true, when apparently permanent structures are presented in a temporary context. In the absence of archival evidence which might make it clear, we are left with the interpretation of the physical evidence presented by the bindings as our only means of understanding what may have been intended. Where the evidence is ambiguous, fine judgements may need to be made. Some books are inherently ephemeral, but their bindings do not always reflect this ephemerality, whereas more serious books may survive in what can only be thought of as temporary bindings.

**Thies Staack (Hamburg):** *Viewing the Whole from its Parts: Bindings of Early Chinese Bamboo and Wood Manuscripts*

With a view to the fact that scrolls of tied-together bamboo or wood slips can be considered the most widely used book form in pre-imperial and early imperial China (fifth c. BCE – third c. CE), the techniques and forms of “binding” in these manuscripts have remained highly under-researched topics. The main reason for this situation seems to be the scarcity of evidence: after all, we only have one or two dozens of manuscripts with intact binding strings in contrast to hundreds, maybe thousands of disintegrated manuscripts for which at most the traces of former bindings remain. Revisiting the available evidence, this paper will focus on yet largely untreated aspects of bindings in bamboo and wood manuscripts. What can we learn from traces of disintegrated bindings about the materials and techniques that were used? Is it possible to identify production patterns, e.g. in the relation between the format of bamboo or wood slips and the number of binding strings used? What does this tell us about degrees of cohesion and what evidence do we have for composite manuscripts? Addressing these and other questions, this paper will cast further light on bindings in early Chinese manuscript culture(s).

**Francesca Maltomini (Florence):** *Papyrus rolls as archives: the tomoi sunkollesimoi*

A filing practice used in Ptolemaic and, mostly, Roman Egypt consists in pasting documents written on single sheets, so as to form a roll that will keep them together. Through a general analysis and some case studies, the paper will explore the different typologies of these composite rolls, their purposes and how they were used.

**Georgios Boudalis (Thessaloniki):** *The origin and evolution of the multi-gathering codex sewing in Late Antiquity*

The paper will trace the origin and evolution of the sewing technique used to sew together the gatherings of the multi-gathering codex in Late Antiquity. The sewing used in the earliest multi-gathering codices that have survived has remained essentially unchanged in the Eastern Mediterranean bookbinding traditions (Coptic, Byzantine, Islamic, Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic) until the seventeenth–nineteenth century and apparently still survives in Ethiopia. This sewing technique is commonly called link-stitch or chain-stitch and in textile technology terms it is a looping technique, a broad category of fabric-making techniques, universally used in one or the other form. The exact same technique was well known around the Mediterranean in Roman and later times for making everyday clothing accessories such as socks, several of which have been unearthed in Egypt. In evolutionary terms there is probably enough evidence, archaeological as well as iconographical, to support the theory that the sewing of the multi-gathering codex derived from a combination of features borrowed and adapted from the wax tablet codices and the single-gathering codices. The research presented here considers the making of the codex as a craft among other crafts and tries to trace the origin and adaptation of its various components in the technological and material culture context of Late Antiquity.

**Friday, 21 May, 09:00am–06:45pm**

**Serena Ammirati (Rome):** *Bound to be bound: the fate of Latin manuscripts in Late Antiquity*

In this communication I intend to present some cases of the reuse of Latin parchment manuscripts from the late antique period (fourth–sixth century) for the preparation and reinforcement of the binding of contemporary or slightly later papyrus manuscripts, of both western and eastern origin. Through a survey of the extant evidence (some only recently enhanced) it will be possible to verify the position, size and shape of the reused parchment strips. The recovery of text portions from the fragments, identified or identifiable with good approximation, will be an opportunity to present some reflections on possible contexts of circulation and reuse of texts and manuscripts in Late Antiquity.

**Imre Galambos (Cambridge):** *Concertina booklets from ninth-tenth century Dunhuang*

As a book form, concertina plays an important role in the Buddhist book culture of East Asia, most notably China and Japan. The earliest examples of such books are Chinese and Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, where the concertina is believed to have appeared in the ninth century. It has obvious connections with the scroll, which is the earlier and much more common book form used in Chinese manuscript culture. A concertina is essentially a scroll that is folded in a zigzag manner into a flat volume, and there are examples where a scroll was re-shaped into a concertina, and vice versa. At the same time, in terms of the shape of the individual pages, the concertina is also related to the pothi book, which is thought to have been introduced to Dunhuang as an influence of Tibetan book culture during the Tibetan control of the region. This paper looks at concertina manuscripts that survive among the Dunhuang manuscripts and analyses their features. One of the aspects I am most interested in is how such manuscripts are kept together both physically and conceptually, and what the role of the covers is in this respect.

**Karin Scheper (Leiden):** *Binding arguments – sewn and unsewn manuscript formats in the Islamic world*

It seems that all possible text carriers and codex formats can be found in the Islamic manuscript culture. What starts with epigraphy and texts on papyrus develops, via a long history on different substrates in oblong, squarish and elongated shaped codices, scrolls, concertinas and loose leaved volumes, fairly late into the era of the printed book. The extended period of time and the vast region in which the manuscript culture flourished allowed this diversity. We see the use of region-specific materials and in certain times and regions a noticeable influx of other manuscript cultures. The occurrence of and relationship between these types and materials is, however, not so easily explained, as a combination of factors such as economy, fashion, technological development, cultural and social milieus, and availability of materials were of influence. This presentation aims to present an overview of the varieties and will focus on codicological characteristics that are not yet quite explained, such as the (sporadic) use of tacketing, the cohesive structures that do not involve sewing and which might have had a temporary function only, and the appurtenant slipcases, satchels and other enclosures that were used to keep the texts together. To understand the ‘codicological unit’, does it matter whether these enclosures are contemporary with the manuscript?

**Giovanni Ciotti (Hamburg):** *Some Observations on Binding Pothi Manuscripts in South Asia*

It could be easily argued that hardly any codicological aspect of the pothi manuscript in South Asia has been less studied than binding. This may be also true due to the fact that, on the one hand, sources concerning the production of manuscripts are rather rare and, on the other hand, modern codicological studies can rely upon neither quantitative nor material analyses. Typologically one can separate the tools/implements for binding pothis into two main categories: (1) thread plus, at times, wooden boards, and (2) “envelops”, may they be paper sleeves or pieces of cloth. This presentation will offer a survey of secondary literature, as well as an account of my personal experience and the experiences of colleagues from the field.

**Patrick Andrist (Munich, Fribourg) & Marilena Maniaci (Cassino, Rome):** *Methodological questions about the analysis of the bindings in a “syntactical” perspective*

While preparing the second edition of the Syntax of the codex, the authors pursued their analysis of the UniCirc and the UniProd around some concepts such as “Content”, “Container” and “Binding”, which are going to be discussed in their paper.

**Cécile Michel (Paris):** *Binding cuneiform tablets in one unit*

The main support of cuneiform writing, a sun-dried clay tablet generally inscribed on all sides, is not *a priori* suitable for binding. Nevertheless, many texts from the ancient Near East, whether literary, mathematical or epistolary in nature, were not limited to the surface of a single tablet, however large it may be. The literary and mathematical tablets were not physically linked. However, in most cases, they were virtually bound through a colophon indicating their incipit and their number within a series. Letters, on the other hand, sometimes written on more than one tablet, had to reach their addressee in a single unit represented generally by an envelope. Several

examples from the second and first millennia BCE have been identified as ‘second page’ of letters, this contribution will envisage how these letters have reached their recipients in one unit.

**Dmitry Bondarev (Hamburg):** *Loose-leaf Islamic manuscripts of West Africa: retention, adaptation or invention?*

In Islamic West Africa, manuscript units are formed by unstitched leaves placed between protective boards, wrapped in a leather wallet and secured with a strap. The extant manuscripts assembled of single leaves are omnipresent. However, judging by traces of production, most of the loose-leaf manuscripts could originally have been made of bifolia or even bifolia gathered in quires. Although unstitched loose-leaf manuscripts are believed to be specific to Islamic West Africa, non-stitched binding could have existed outside West Africa, and thus, West African manuscripts might have had much more in common with the other Islamic manuscript cultures than the current knowledge suggests. The formal similarity of using unstitched bifolia at an initial stage of manuscript production may point to connections of the past, but complete omission of stitching in binding seems to be a clear break: textual cohesion has been kept by catchwords, while wrappers, covers, pouches, leather straps and satchels have prevailed. The presentation will address the following questions: Does unstitched binding retain some features of the past? Or is it adaptation of a specific type of binding to various sociocultural uses? Or was it an entirely West African invention?

**Jasdip Singh Dhillon (Oxford):** *The Codex in South Asia: A brief study of materials and structures*

In the history of western Europe, the arrival of the codex was synonymous with the spread of literacy and writing. In contrast to this, in South Asia, the culture of book production was already ancient when the codex arrived. The codex technology mingled with the ancient and well-established traditions of non-codex book production including the birch bark and palm-leaf traditions. In this way, book-producing communities were able to draw on existing methods of book production and combine them with the technology of the codex to produce new incarnations of the book. South Asian manuscripts have been studied widely by scholars who have mostly focused on the palm leaf tradition or the paintings in Indo-Persian illustrated books. The material history of South Asian codices has only become a focus of research very recently. A straightforward narrative would package the codex alongside with paper-making, the Persian water wheel and the spinning wheel as technological imports from the Islamicate world which arrived in the second millennium CE. However, as with all these innovations it is likely that the actual spread of the technology was a longer drawn out process which began well before the actual Islamic conquest of South Asia. Indeed, socio-economic and cultural links between the Persianate world and Indic world are ancient and pre-date Islam by many centuries. This paper will explore how South Asian/Indic writing traditions incorporated and adapted the codex technology to form hybrid binding structures. The fragmentary evidence for the earliest South Asian codex bindings, in the form of the Kashmiri birch-bark codex, will be shared first. Following this, the Sikh codex tradition will also be used as a case study and other regional traditions will be discussed briefly. Specific features of Kashmiri and Sikh bindings will be explored in order to understand how they can be positioned in relationship to other binding traditions of Asia and, by extension, the Mediterranean and Europe. This will include an analysis of specific binding components such as sewing structure, endbands as well as the covering materials.

**Heather Wolfe (Washington, DC):** *Bound, bundled, boxed, and filed: keeping it together in early modern England*

Most surviving manuscripts from early modern England are not bound in the traditional sense. This talk will explore the full range of strategies that manuscript creators and receivers used to preserve their writings, and suggest that the “bundle” was the primary method for archival control in this period, which involved folding, labeling, and tying manuscripts together. From manuscripts used to bind other manuscripts, to tacketed and tete-beche codices, to tabbed manuscripts, to manuscripts with filing holes, to manuscripts with secondary folds and systematic endorsements, surviving archival traces reveal the intentions and strategies of their creators as they deployed different systems for organizing and preserving their “paperwork”. Recovering and interpreting these archival traces allows us to better understand the long pre-history of our own digital filing strategies, and the difficulties of dealing with information overload.

**Alexandra Gillespie (Toronto):** *Book Knots*

In this paper I will consider some overlooked ways in which early books were sewn, knitted, tied, and decorated with knots: these knots will serve as an entry point for a discussion of the scope of a global, comparative history of premodern book structure. I will focus my attention on the eighth century, and describe knots on book bags from Tang Dynasty Dunhuang, knotted fastenings from Umayyad Caliphate Damascus, knotwork on the cover of the St Cuthbert Gospel from Monk-Wearmouth Jarrow, England, and ties on Shōsōin documents from Nara era Japan.

**Saturday, 22 May, 09:00am–11:30am**

**Agnieszka Helman-Ważny (Hamburg):** *Stab-stitched binding in Lao and Thai manuscripts: History, technique and function*

This talk discusses various aspects of stab-stitched binding in manuscripts of Laos and Northern Thailand, dealing with various binding patterns, their function and the social context of their production. Eighteen bound manuscripts selected from the collections of the Buddhist Archives in Luang Prabang, Laos, and the Chiang Mai Rajabhat University Library in Thailand were studied in terms of their binding style, form and the materials used to make them. Historical and scientific methods were combined to understand this particular binding style better along with the functional and historical aspects of these manuscripts.

**Nikolas Sarris (Athens):** *Binding or rebinding at the St Catherine’s monastery of Sinai*

The monastic library of St Catherine’s is known to hold one of the largest collections of early and undisturbed bookbindings from a number of different East Mediterranean bookbinding traditions, including Greek, Arabic, Georgian, Ethiopic and Slavonic. Yet, how have these books survived to date, what was their use and how does it relate to the need for bookbinding renovations in the monastic environment? This paper examines the major *bookbinding* tendencies in the monastery and discusses the relation between manuscript production, bookbinding and renovation of manuscripts by binders at the St Catherine’s monastery throughout the centuries.