

## **Workshop Abstract: “Dissolution of Manuscript Collections”**

**December 7-8, 2012, CSMC, Hamburg**

While working on manuscript collections, one sometimes faces the situation in which a given collection is no longer extant except a few surviving manuscripts or a collection's traces are left solely in inventory lists, catalogues, allusions in writings or oral accounts, and so on. Here, the dimension of dissolution is quite large, but one can also think of examples for a partial dissolution of a collection when some manuscripts are taken/given away or the collection as a whole is incorporated into another one. Dissolution of manuscript collections, whatever dimension it takes, and leaving aside unexpected incidents, such as fire or water damage, very often seems to have been a deliberate measure intended e.g. to found a new collection on the bases of others, to reformulate the given collection according to 'new' criteria (leading amongst other things to the disposal of manuscripts) or to negate the collection as a whole (leading often to its complete destruction). Considering these examples, one cannot avoid regarding dissolution as some sort of 'event' occurring at least once to many manuscript collections during their existence.

During the workshop we would like to have a few case studies presented on dissolved collections. Here we are interested in different approaches to reconstruct a once dissolved collection, but we also want to draw general conclusions concerning different kinds of dissolution, the agents involved and their respective intentions. Last but not least, it is necessary to question whether collections are perceived in manuscript cultures, in some contexts at least, as organic entities that are damaged when being dissolved. In other words, is our idea of dissolution, which has negative connotations such as loss, generally applicable to manuscript cultures?

## Programme

Friday, 7 December 2012

- 2:15–2:30 pm Michael Friedrich: Welcome
- 2:30–3:15 pm Chair: Vito Lorusso  
Paolo La Spisa, Università di Genova:  
“The Christian-Arabic Manuscript Collections: The Examples of the  
Libraries of Paul Sbath and the Balamand Monastery”
- 3:15–3:30 pm Brief coffee break
- 3:30–4:15 pm Dimitri Pauls, CSMC Hamburg:  
“A Buried Collection – The Beginning of the Sakya Tradition of  
Tibetan Buddhism”
- 4:15–4:45 pm Long coffee break
- 4:45–5:30 pm Chair: Max J. Fölster  
Hilde de Weerd, University of Oxford:  
“Textual Loss and Memory in Twelfth-Century Song China: Collecting  
Manuscript Texts in Non-Institutional Contexts”
- 5:30–6:15 pm Ridder Samsom, CSMC Hamburg:  
“The Dissolution of the Collection in Zanzibar of Burhan b.  
Muhammad Mkelle [Mukalla] Mngazija Mwikoni [al-Qamri/al-Qumri]  
(1884–1949)”
- 7:15 pm Dinner

Saturday, 8 December 2012

- 9:30–10:15 am Chair: Janina Karolewski  
Erdal Toprakyan, Universität Tübingen:  
“Religious Foundation Libraries in the Ottoman Empire: A Case Study  
on the Aşir Efendi Library”
- 10:15–11:00 am Martin Delhey, CSMC Hamburg:  
“On the Attempt to Reconstruct Indian Buddhist Manuscript  
Collections from Their Himalayan Traces and Remains”
- 11:00–11:30 am Coffee break
- 11:30–12:30 am Final round, chair: Harunaga Isaacson
- 12:30 pm Lunch

## Abstracts

### **Paolo La Spisa, Università di Genova:**

“The Christian-Arabic Manuscript Collections: The Examples of the Libraries of Paul Sbath and the Balamand Monastery”

In the pre-modern period, Christian-Arabic manuscript (Ms.) collections have known many different degrees of loss. The fragment preserved in the Birmingham Selly Oak Library, indentified as the Mingana Christian Arabic Add 236 (ff. 1–2), is originally part of the dismembered Ms. Sinai Arabic 469. This is only one example of the very widespread phenomenon of dismembered Mss which has been well described by P. Géhin in his three articles on Syriac Mss of Sinai provenance (Géhin 2007, 2008, 2011). However, loss and dispersion of whole Christian-Arabic collections and libraries in the Middle East is another very common phenomenon, well-known to many scholars. In this last case, the reasons for loss are disparate. War, stealing and selling on the black market, purchasing by European libraries and institutions are only some examples.

In this paper, I will give some examples of loss of Christian Arabic collections which are, or were, in the monasteries of the Levantine area. During the civil war in Lebanon, the library of the Balamand Monastery has lost several Mss which only partly reached again their original place. The collection of the Syriac-Catholic priest Paul Sbath is one typical case of dismemberment of a library with great relevance for the field of Christian-Arabic Studies. Nowadays, according to the owner’s will, one part of the Paul Sbath Library is preserved in the Vatican Library in Rome, another part is still in Aleppo (Syria), preserved in the George Salem Foundation. In the last decades, however, this latter part has lost many important codices.

The European missions to the Arabic East since the 15th century were often carried out in order to buy Arabic Ms. collections. During the papacies of Clement XI and Clement XII at the beginning of the 18th century, for instance, the Maronite bishop Joseph Simonius Assemani (1687–1768) brought several Christian-Arabic Mss to Rome which originally belonged to some important collections, among others, probably, those gathered in Aleppo by the Melkite patriarch of Antioch, Macarios Ibn al-Za‘im (1647–1672).

### **Dimitri Pauls, CSMC Hamburg:**

“A Buried Collection – The Beginning of the Sakya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism”

The Sakya School is one of the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Its history is closely linked with the history of the Khon family, which is supposedly traceable back to the time of the great Indian master Padmasambhava in the 8th century. It is said that the members of the Khon clan received from him a set of religious practices. This set was passed on within the family from generation to generation until the 11th century, when Khon Konchog Gyalpo and his elder brother Khonrog Sherab Tsultrim felt the need for reform. They decided to conceal the major part of the family’s religious books in order to start a new tradition. The newly adopted religious practices and doctrines were greatly systematized and propagated by Khon

Konchog Gyalpo's son Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (1092–1158), who, therefore, can be regarded as the actual founder of the Sakya School.

This case study will present the reasons and circumstances which led to the dissolution of a handed down family collection of religious writings, and, finally, gave rise to the foundation of one of the most important traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Further on, the paper will touch upon the present heritage of the collection's minor, undissolved part, and upon the question whether a reconstruction of its major, dissolved part is possible and necessary.

**Hilde De Weerd, University of Oxford:**

“Textual Loss and Memory in Twelfth-Century Song China: Collecting Manuscript Texts in Non-Institutional Contexts”

This paper will first discuss twelfth-century reports of substantial loss in Chinese court and private manuscript collections. It will investigate the varied causes for such losses and examine how reports on the experience of loss coincided with new methods of preservation and reproduction. Lastly, it will draw attention to the proliferation of note taking and the manuscript (and print) publication of notebooks, and show how these practices (in addition to the compilation of court and private catalogs) served not only to document loss but also to re-collect and showcase private collections.

**Ridder Samsom, CSMC Hamburg:**

“The Dissolution of the Collection in Zanzibar of Burhan b. Muhammad Mkelle [Mukalla] Mngazija Mwikoni [al-Qamri/al-Qumri] (1884–1949)”

Apart from the few collections of Swahili manuscripts (SwMSS) that are present in institutionalized libraries, archives or museums in East Africa, no inventory lists, let alone catalogues, of private collections have been identified so far. As such one never knows what a certain collection may have contained and to which extent it has been dissolved. However private individuals are known to have had collections that contained SwMSS. This paper intends to demonstrate how the attempts to reconstruct a presumed collection prove to be instrumental in finding SwMSS at various locations in, and maybe even outside, East Africa.

**Erdal Toprakyan, Universität Tübingen:**

“Religious Foundation Libraries in the Ottoman Empire: A Case Study on the Aşir Efendi Library”

Libraries and manuscript collections (later supplemented by prints) were widespread within the Ottoman Empire, whether at centers of learning or at the Sultan's court and in collections of high officials. A common feature of many libraries was their status as religious foundation. Books, but also the library building and further parts of the infrastructure, were donated by at

least one person, who took the initiative, and in the following decades, further donations enhanced the foundation. This paper illustrates the formation of the Aşir Efendi Library, founded in the 18th century in Istanbul by the then famous foreign secretary Hacı Mustafa Efendi and his son Mustafa Aşir Efendi, a high-ranking Islamic scholar. Studying foundation certificates and other documents kept in Turkish archives, sheds light on various stages of the Aşir Efendi Library, the agents behind it, the books donated and the organization of the library as a whole (e.g. librarians, opening hours, terms of use). While former collections were dissolved to donate books to the Aşir Efendi library, its own fate is far from 'dissolution': It is stored today, together with many other foundation libraries, in Istanbul's central library for book collections from the Ottoman period.

**Martin Delhey, CSMC Hamburg:**

"On the Attempt to Reconstruct Indian Buddhist Manuscript Collections from Their Himalayan Traces and Remains"

Within the framework of an on-going sub-project at the CSMC, Harunaga Isaacson and I are trying to identify a collection from the Indian Buddhist monastery of Vikramaśīla among the relatively numerous old palm-leaf manuscripts which in modern times have been found in Nepal or Tibet. In secondary literature, it has hardly ever been tried before to reconstruct a manuscript collection from the vanished libraries or repositories of late Indian Buddhism. Moreover, areas of Indological research which could be helpful in this undertaking, like e.g. Indian paleography, tend to be still underdeveloped. This paper will deal with these and other difficulties encountered during the reconstruction work and will suggest potentially fruitful methods to overcome these problems.