

4<sup>e</sup>

CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds  
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



## Panel 78

### The Intellectual Tools of Muslim Scholars in Pre-Modern Era

Muslim scholars were intellectual workers, in the sense that they produced symbolic goods whose value exceeded that of their medium, the manuscripts that contained them. And like any worker, these scholars used means of production that they owned or not. What do we know about the means of production of a Muslim scholar in the Middle Ages or in modern times? How to describe the concrete process of producing a legal opinion or a scientific book? Where did the scholars go to work, read and write? What part of the books consulted was his, what part that of his colleagues and public or private libraries? Even though studies on libraries are only beginning to develop, studies on their use as a means of production by scholars are hardly visible in archives; very often, only brief notations in the works allow us to understand their production processes.

Secondly, we should ask ourselves to what extent the state of the means of production had an impact on nature, the orientation of intellectual production. For, as Jack Goody had shown in *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, intellectual activity has been, since the appearance of writing, deeply oriented by the technical means available for recording speech. To what extent did the available means of production make the treatment of a given problem visible and possible, or on the contrary prevented from doing so?

**Person in charge : Soler Renaud (Sorbonne University, 19th century history center)**

#### Program

##### **Benyahia Inaâm (EPHE)**

*The library of the Qarawiyyine: a Tool for the Production of Knowledge in Morocco From the 16th to 17th Centuries Under the Saadian Dynasty*

The Saadian Sultan Aḥmad al-Manṣūr (r. 1542-1603) was not only an important political figure but also a leading scholar held in high esteem by his peers. An avid bibliophile, at the end of his reign he bequeathed to posterity two libraries. The first one, a private library, is preserved in El Escorial, Spain; the second one is a public library he founded in the Qarawiyyīn Mosque in Fez. The latter one is of interest for our research, on account of the manuscripts preserved there which bear the traces of their foundation in waqf by the sultan himself.

Our talk will try to identify the path and the techniques adopted by al-Manṣūr to acquire and perfect his scientific training. We will ask the same question concerning all the other scholars of that period. How did they make use of the instruments of knowledge they had at their disposal? And how did they use it afterward as a basis for their own contributions? To this end, we will study a set of manuscripts that belonged to Sultan al-Manṣūr and that he endowed as waqf in the Qarawiyyīn library – fiqh manuscripts and literary manuscripts, the two then-essential disciplines for the training of scholars. The analysis of these manuscripts will allow us to gain a better understanding of their principal characteristics and the influence they exerted on al-Manṣūr and the scholars of the Saadian dynasty, which are reflected in their

works.

### **Bouquet Olivier (University Paris Diderot)**

*What Were the Books for? Reflections on the Practical Conditions of the Transmission of Knowledge in Two Anatolian madrasas (Second Half of the 18th Century)*

The Konya Manuscripts Directorate (Konya Yazma Eserler Bölge Müdürlüğü) brings together collections to which Arabist historians continue to pay very little attention, while thousands of manuscripts are easily available in situ in digital form. For their part, the Ottomanists *stricto sensu* and their colleagues in the Turkish theological faculties follow an approach that compiles the works rather than encouraging an analytical approach to the texts. They strive to identify the available manuscripts and to reconstruct the links between the originals and their commentaries rather than attempting to define what is part of a “complex relationship of intertextuality” (Ahmed) to be located within of a “tradition of commentary” (Van Lit). The insufficiency of the history of texts goes hand in hand with the shortcomings of social history: in order to follow the intellectual flows which irrigate scholarly culture, one would have to study more closely the relational networks woven between the scholars of the time.

The study of library collections based on digitized holdings at the Konya Manuscripts Directorate and the General Catalog of Handwritten Works of Turkey (Türkiye Yazmaları Toplu Kataloğu, TÜYATOK) offers to address the historicity of Islamic sciences downstream from the medieval period, the relationship maintained by the public of readers with reference works, but also the future of scientific and literary productions in spaces of the “Arab logosphere” once considered peripheral and now studied in the light of the intellectual dynamics that cross. She further suggests examining the «Ottoman model» of madrasas no longer from the point of view of institutions or careers as is often the case but from the less explored perspective of the practical conditions for the transmission of knowledge.

In terms of identifying cultural practices, the state of the art is alas! little advanced. Separately rather than jointly, madrasah historians and library scholars have proposed inventories of manuscript resources. Very often, they applied invariable «bibliographical categories», even anhistoric ones, over the whole of the Ottoman period without seeking to trace the evolutions of the respective place of film disciplines since the founding of the first madrasas in the 14th century. To this day, it is still largely unknown how students in madrasas read texts, nor how teachers marked and commented on textbooks. Leafing through the pages of manuscripts kept in the Konya archives, glimpsing all the wealth of marginal annotations, sometimes ordered parallel diagonals, sometimes disorganized concentrations, sometimes brief and spaced indications, one asks oneself a thousand questions about the work of the hand and the thought that guided this one. In my presentation, I will examine the hypothesis according to which the choice of works established in waqf in two Anatolian libraries (at Burdur and Isparta) did not correspond only to the importance they occupied in the hierarchies of the Islamic sciences or in the prestige of the authors who had written them but responded directly to the usefulness they had in the eyes of Ottoman students who hoped to access the careers of judge, teacher or mufti and of the scholars who trained them in this direction.

### **Soler Renaud (Sorbonne University, 19th century history center)**

*What was the purpose of the curricula of the pre-modern scholars ?*

Since the 10th century, Muslim scholars have been accustomed to recording in books information about their masters and the chains of transmission through which they transmitted the prophetic tradition or ḥadīth. We can distinguish two forms: mu‘jam/mashyakha and thabat/fihrist. In modern times (16th-19th century), Middle Eastern scholars (Egypt, Syria, Hedjaz) assiduously cultivated these genres, while modifying them to adapt them to their needs: they generally adopted a short format: we find, in addition to the sheikhs, lists of the main works of the hadith and the sīra with their chains of transmission to their authors, chains of transmission (silsila) of Sufi brotherhoods as well as certain prophetic traditions ritually transmitted because they played an important role in the social and intellectual life of modern Islam. Not all of these chains correspond to actual transmissions: some are idealized representations of the transmission of knowledge. Others refer to actual transmissions which

can be found in biographical sources. I would like to present the first results of my investigation of these texts and discuss methodological perspectives to exploit them in order to make a social history of the transmission of knowledge in modern Islam.

**Warscheid Ismail (University of Bayreuth, CNRS/IRHT)**

*The Art of Jurisprudence: The Making of Fatwa Collections in the Early Modern Saharan West*

The recent renewal of research on Islamic manuscripts from the Saharan West has highlighted the crucial importance of these texts for investigating the region's social and cultural history. In particular, the numerous fatāwā collections have attracted the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Such enthusiasm is quite understandable since the 'cases' (nawāzil) documented in these volumes reflect the diffusion of scholarly Islam among nomadic and sedentary communities in an almost ethnographic manner. Nonetheless, the very process of constituting such collections remains poorly researched, as if their unity and coherence were self-evident. In my paper, I suggest taking a closer look and focus on the various scholarly practices that merge in the making of fatwas in the Saharan context: from the moment of their enunciation by a jurist to their editorial treatment when compiled in a nawāzil volume. To do so, I first draw on the biographical dictionary *Fatḥ al-Shakūr* written by al-Ṭālib Muḥammad al-Bartilī (d. 1805), a scholar from the oasis of Oualata. Then I compare two manuscript copies of the *Nawāzil* of Ibn al-A'mish al-Shinqīṭī (d. 1695). One comes from OMAR collection of the University of Freiburg; the other is kept at the Abdou-Moumouni University in Niamey.