

**CfP: Oriental Manuscripts in Germany – Collection History Between the Academic Thirst for Knowledge, Antique Trade Across the Globe, and Imperial Claims to Power**  
*International Conference at the Berlin State Library, 29 June – 1 July 2022*

International scholarship has recently intensified its focus on collection history, as current debates about Orientalism, colonial pasts, and provenance demand a more nuanced view on the processes that led to the transfer of knowledge contained in manuscripts from Asia and Africa to European libraries. The importance of the study of the development of collections in libraries and research institutions for understanding the history of the “Oriental disciplines” and intercultural relations is slowly beginning to be acknowledged.

During the past few years, digital databases have made Oriental manuscripts in Germany increasingly accessible while also bringing into focus collections of medium and small size. This enhanced visibility enables new perspectives on the historical development of these collections as well as on potential cross-connections.

**Topic area 1: Collection history**

We welcome contributions that approach collection history from different perspectives. Not only institutions, but also agents, objects, a collection’s reception, or its cataloguing process can serve as starting points for an investigation of the subject. Questions such as whether clear objectives or coincidences played a role in building a collection, handling the acquisition of scholars’ libraries, or accepting donations will be of interest.

Closely related to collection research are matters of acquisition records, provenance documentation, and the accessibility of such information in catalogues and databases, as well as their survey and analysis for research on collection and provenance.

The call covers the entire range of African and Asian script cultures and also allows for contextualising European manuscript culture. All time periods of collection will be considered. The focus is on developments in Germany in a broad international context.

**Topic area 2: Contexts**

This area takes as its starting point social- and cultural-historical questions that go beyond the focus on actual historical collections. This includes market development on a global and local scale and its political and economic catalysts. The differentiation of the Oriental disciplines, scholarly networks, and development of scientific methods (including technological developments such as photography) present further factors that merit study as regards their impact on the development of collections and the market situation. To afford an objective assessment of the mechanisms of transfer of cultural assets from Asia and Africa, it seems worthwhile to also consider antique trade in general and the dynamics of the European art market in particular.

We welcome contributions on networks or individual agents of manuscript trade, different forms of manuscript translocation, and on the (virtual) reconstruction of historical collections.

**SUBMISSIONS**

Interested participants are invited to submit a proposal (email only) including a title, a brief abstract and a short CV by **10 August 2021** to [christoph.rauch@sbb.spk-berlin.de](mailto:christoph.rauch@sbb.spk-berlin.de).

Pending funding agreement, the participants’ travel expenses will be covered.

Successful applicants will be notified by September 2021.

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