

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

South Asia and the Neighboring World in the Mughal Period:

Intellectual and Material Exchanges

10th–11th December 2025

EHESS - Marseille



Venue:

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales/School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Centre de la Vieille Charité, 2 rue de la Charité, Marseille.

(Salle A is located on the second floor;
Salle Le Miroir is located on the ground floor)

Organisers:

Asad Q. AHMED (University of California, Berkeley),
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Fabrizio SPEZIALE (EHESS-CESAH, Marseille-Paris)

Supporting institutions:

France-Berkeley Fund,
Center for Middle Eastern Studies (Berkeley),
Centre de recherches historiques (Paris),
Centre d'études sud-asiatiques et himalayennes (Paris),
Centre de recherche sur les circulations,
les liens et les échanges (Marseille),
Ville de Marseille, Musées de Marseille

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PROGRAM AND PANELS

Wednesday December 10th

PANEL 1: INDIA AND THE ISLAMICATE WORLD I

(Room A)

10.00–10.30

Introduction and coffee

Chair: **Aika PATEL**

(Aix-Marseille University – Laboratoire d’Archéologie Médiévale et Moderne en Méditerranée)

10.30

Christopher **BAHL** (Durham University),

“Scholarly Exiles in Mecca – Approaching a Political Practice of the Mughal Court”

11.15

Kaori **OTSUYA** (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies),

“Intellectual Exchanges between the Hijaz and South Asia: Repurposing al-Samhūdī’s (d. 911/1506) *History of Medina* by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlavī (d. 1052/1642)”

12.30

Lunch

PANEL 1: INDIA AND THE ISLAMICATE WORLD II

(Room Le Miroir)

14.00

Farah **AKHTAR** (University of Chicago),

“From Herat to Delhi: Akbarian Metaphysics in the Writings and Praxis of Abdul Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1472) and Khwaja Khurd (b.1601)”

14.45

Nariman **AAVANI** (Harvard University),

“Mind, Knowledge, and Commentary Across Empires: Mīr Zāhid’s (d. 1689) *Sharḥ al-Risālat al-Qaṭṭbiyya* in its Transregional Islamicate Context”

15.30

Coffee-break

PANEL 2: MATERIAL EXCHANGES

(Room Le Miroir)

Chair: **Damien CARRIERE**
(Aix-Marseille University)

16.00

Sara **KELLER** (University Erfurt),

“Mughal Stone Inlays in Architecture Between Circulation and Affordance”

16.45

Mahdieh **TAVAKOL** (Universität Hamburg),

“Material Vehicles of Cultural Exchange: The Transfer of Books from India to Safavid Iran through Endowment”

17.30

General discussion

Thursday December 11th

PANEL 3: EAST ASIAN AND OCEANIC TRAJECTORIES

(Room Le Miroir)

Chair: **Éloi FIQUET**

(École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

10.00

Dror **WEIL** (University of Cambridge),

“An Eastern Gaze: South Asia and the Making of an Islamic Archive in Premodern China”

10.45

Arash **KHAZENI** (Pomona College),

“‘On the Wonders of Islands and the Strangeness of Seas’: Persian Travel Writing and the Climes of the Indian Ocean in the Late Mughal Period”

11.30

Coffee break

12.00

Daniel Jacobius **MORGAN** (Santa Clara University),

“Oceangoing Miracles from Maghrib to Mughal India: Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī’s *Ḥizb al-baḥr* in Eighteenth-Century Delhi”

12.45

Lunch

PANEL 4: INDIC LEARNING ACROSS MUSLIM SOCIETIES

(Room Le Miroir)

Chair: **Carmen SPIERS**
(Aix-Marseille University)

14.00

Eva **ORTHMANN** (University of Gottingen),

“Horse treatises from the Islamic World”

14.45

Shankar **NAIR** (University of Virginia),

“The World within a Word: Global Intellectual Exchanges in the Mughal *Yogavāsiṣṭha* Translations”

15.30

Coffee break

16.00

Victor **BAPTISTE** (École Pratique des Hautes Études),

“The Reception of an Indo-Persian *Maṣnavī* in Iran: Ṣāhīr Kirmānī’s Rewriting of *Mihr-u Māh*”

16.45

General discussion

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 1: INDIA AND THE ISLAMICATE WORLD I

(Room A)

and

INDIA AND THE ISLAMICATE WORLD II

(Room Le Miroir)

“Scholarly Exiles in Mecca – Approaching a Political Practice of the Mughal Court”

Christopher **BAHL**

(Durham University)

This paper builds on a growing Indian Ocean historiography to explore political entanglements between Mecca and Medina with the Mughal imperial dispensation and its scholarly Muslim communities. As Michael Pearson noted in his *Pilgrimage to Mecca. The Indian Experience, 1500-1800*, Mughal Emperors and other South Asian sultans sent courtiers, family members, scholars, and professionals on the *hajj* and ‘into exile’ to Mecca over the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. While recent scholarship on South Asia by Ronit Ricci (2019) has explored Lanka/Ceylon as a place ‘banishment and belonging’ practices of exiling political protagonists remain largely unexplored in the context of the early modern western Indian Ocean. I will study the practice of exiling scholarly and professional elites from the Mughal court to Mecca and Medina and how this positioned scholarly communities in the holy cities vis-à-vis the Mughal court in political, religious and intellectual networks.

In particular, I want to start exploring ‘exile in Mecca’ as a political practice, how and to what end early modern South Asian rulers performed it, and what effects this had on Mecca and courtly politics in the subcontinent. Persian chronicles composed at those courts offer us one perspective on this practice. Arabic chronicles and collective biographies penned in the Hijaz and the subcontinent provide another view. Anecdotal evidence from biographical dictionaries of the period suggests that scholars, for example, often chose Mecca as a place of refuge when relationships with their patrons declined or turned sour. Sending courtiers on *hajj* to Mecca was probably also an offer that a Muslim servant could not easily refuse. However, it is not clear so far what meaning this practice had in the period, how it affected the scholarly community at the court, and what those exiles got up to in Mecca.

CHRISTOPHER BAHL is Associate Professor in South Asian History at Durham University, UK. He is particularly interested in the political, social, and intellectual histories of Muslim communities in early modern South Asia and their links with communities across the western Indian Ocean region. His first monograph, entitled *Mobile manuscripts – Arabic learning across the early western Indian Ocean* was published in 2025. He is currently working on a new book project that studies the history of an ‘Indian community’ in Mecca and Medina from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

“Intellectual Exchanges between the Hijaz and South Asia: Repurposing al-Samhūdī’s (d. 911/1506) *History of Medina* by ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlavī (d. 1052/1642)”

Kaori OTSUYA

(Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

In recent years, researchers have shown an increased interest in transregional cultural exchanges between South Asia and the Red Sea region, particularly from the fifteenth century onwards. For instance, detailed studies have been published on the relevance of Arabic narrative sources of Ottoman Mecca for the history of South Asia or the transregional cultural integration of the Western Indian Ocean through the Arabic language. Nevertheless, while researchers working on the history of South Asia have started paying attention to the role of the Arabic language in the context of transregional connections, there has been little research on the reception of late medieval Arabic histories of the Red Sea region in pre-modern South Asia.

Attempting to fill this research gap, this paper focuses on *Jadhb al-Qulūb ilā Diyār al-Maḥbūb*, a work on Medina primarily written in Persian by the famous South Asian hadith scholar and Sufi ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlavī (d. 1052/1642) based on the late medieval Arabic history of Medina by the Egyptian scholar al-Samhūdī (d. 911/1506). Despite the significance of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq in the intellectual history of South Asia, his work on the history of Medina has not been thoroughly explored. Addressing this issue, this paper first introduces these two historians and their histories of Medina. It then examines how ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq reworked al-Samhūdī’s text through omission, addition, and reorganization of content. In particular, it explores how ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq repurposed the original work into a new context. It thus aims to shed light on the complex nature of transregional cultural exchanges.

KAORI OTSUYA is a project assistant professor at the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Since completing her PhD in 2023, she has been preparing her dissertation on the late medieval historiography of Mecca and Medina for publication. Currently, she is working on a new project about (1) the circulation and reception of Arabic manuscripts on the history of Mecca and Medina, especially in the early modern Persianate world and the Ottoman Empire, (2) translations of local histories of the Hijaz into Persian and Ottoman Turkish, and (3) historiographical practices in the Ottoman Hijaz.

“From Herat to Delhi: Akbarian Metaphysics in the Writings and Praxis of Abdul Raḥmān Jāmī (d.1472) and Khwaja Khurd (b.1601)”

Farah AKHTAR

(University of Chicago)

The titles of Abdul Raḥmān Jāmī's (d. 1472) *Lawā'ih* (*Flashes*) and Khwaja Khurd's (b. 1601) *al-Fawā'ih* (*Fragrances*) indicate a close intellectual connection even as the two texts are separated by almost two centuries and two different empires. While there are several and significant differences in literary form and style, the two texts are, however, intimately intertwined in their vision of the cosmos and its linguistic expression as understood from the teachings of the great Andalusian Shaykh Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1272). Jāmī's *Lawā'ih* is a collection of Persian quatrains, his own and those by the great Persian poets including Rūmī, Sa'dī, Khayyām and Hafez that are punctuated with short elucidating discussions of various metaphysical themes. Khwaja Khurd, writing sometime during the reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāh Jehān presumably in Delhi, composes a treatise in Arabic and includes a rich section combining the Naqshbandī invocative principles with the metaphysics of *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Both texts are recognized as significant engagements with the doctrine, with Khurd, whose teacher included Ahmed Sirhindi (d. 1624), even remarking in the *Fawā'ih* to the naivety of those who conceive of *tawḥīd* to be in *shuhūd* rather than *wujūd*. In this paper, I analyze Akbarian metaphysics with particular attention to the cosmogonical–ontological conception of language expressed by the term, Breath of the all-Merciful (*nafas al-raḥmān*). Through this analysis I argue that though these two texts belong to very different genres of literature, region, language and culture are in fact have at play a shared metaphysics or conceptions of reality and its subsequent relation to language and expression. Additionally, in light of Jāmī's influence in the dissemination of Ibn al-Arabī's thought in South Asia, I address the relevance of Jāmī's thought and poetry to understanding Khurd's articulation of Akbarian metaphysics as contemplative practice.

FARAH AKHTAR is a doctoral student at the University of Chicago's Divinity School where she focuses on Qur'anic hermeneutics, Islamic Metaphysics and constructive Islamic theology. Her research interests include examining the literary form and exegetical function of metaphysical literature and their significance to understanding the life of the Qur'an in Muslim societies with a focus on Mughal South Asia. She is also interested in conceptions and interpretations of scripture in Indo-Persian mystical and philosophical poetry from the period.

“Mind, Knowledge, and Commentary Across Empires: Mīr Zāhid’s (d. 1689) Sharḥ al-Risālat al-Quṭbiyya in its Transregional Islamicate Context”

Nariman **AAVANI**

(Harvard University)

Recent scholarship on Islamic intellectual life under the Mughals has shed light on key networks and debates in logic, *kalām* (theology), and theoretical Sufism. Yet debates on psychology and the philosophy of mind remain largely overlooked. This paper addresses this gap by examining Mīr Zāhid Harawī’s (d. 1689) treatment of mental existence (*wujūd dhihnī*) in his commentary on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s (d. 1365) *Risāla fī l-taṣawwur wa-l-taṣdīq*. I argue that Mīr Zāhid’s position is best understood within the post-Ṭūsī (d. 1274) commentary tradition on *Tajrīd al-i’tiqād*, particularly in relation to sub-commentaries by Timurid philosophers active in Shiraz—Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī (d. 1498) and Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 1502). Within this tradition, the problem of mental existence arises in three main contexts: (a) the existential import of affirmative statements; (b) the truth conditions of essentialist (*ḥaqīqī*) propositions; and (c) the ontology of knowledge. Mīr Zāhid focuses primarily on the third issue, particularly the disjunction between mental representations and extra-mental realities. For instance, although “heat” is essential to fire, our mental concept of fire does not itself burn. Similarly, the concept of a “tree,” which in reality is a substance, exists in the mind as an accident (*‘araḍ*). These examples raise a central question: What kind of ontological continuity, if any, must obtain between a thing and its mental representation for the latter to qualify as a knowledge-event of the former? Mīr Zāhid addresses this problem by critically examining—and ultimately rejecting—four earlier responses by ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Qūshjī (d. 1474), Dashtakī, Dawānī, and Shams al-Dīn Khafrī (d. 1550). The final section of the paper turns to ‘Abd al-‘Alī Baḥr al-‘Ulūm (d. 1810), examining how he responds to Safavid-era interventions—especially those of Mullā Ṣadrā—to formulate his own account. Taken together, this study highlights how commentary traditions and transregional debates shaped the philosophical landscape of Mughal South Asia.

NARIMAN AAVANI specializes in Islamic philosophy and Sufism in Iran and the Indian subcontinent from the 13th to the early 19th century, with a particular focus on the intellectual and philosophical dimensions of Hindu-Muslim relations. One of his current projects, “*Hindu Engagement with Rumi’s Mathnawī in Mughal India*,” examines how two Hindu poets—Banwālidās (d. 1666) and Bhupat Rāy Bīgham (d. 1720)—adapted the Persian *mathnawī* form in creative response to Jalal al-Dīn Rūmī’s (d. 1273) *Mathnawī*. Drawing on Hindu texts such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Śaṅkara’s *Maniṣapañcaka*, their poetry forged a shared literary space that facilitated interreligious engagement during the Mughal period.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 2: MATERIAL EXCHANGES

(Room Le Miroir)

“Mughal Stone Inlays in Architecture Between Circulation and Affordance”

Sara **KELLER**

(University Erfurt)

Inlays of semi-precious stones made the pride of Mughal architecture, which monuments are today understood as a convergence of Indic and Persian artistic and cultural traditions. Recent studies on “Mughal occidentalism” also drew attention to the impact of European objects and aesthetics in Mughal India. It is in this historiographical context that emerged the hotly debated of the origin of the Mughal inlays known as *parchīnkārī*, and controversially referred to as “Indian Pietra Dura”: can the paternity of Mughal *parchīnkārī* works be attributed to the Florentine stone technique of “pietra dura”? The presence of Italian *pietra dura* objects at the court of Shah Jahan seemed to confirm it.

Yet, my building-archaeological field work in Gujarat shows that inlays of semi-precious stones emerged in Western India before the *pietra dura* art developed in Florence. It also brings to light a significant connection between Western India and Mamluk Egypt, connection that encompasses political and diplomatic exchanges, but also the intense circulation of cultural, religious and aesthetical ideas and objects. The impact of Cairene stone decoration techniques in Western India, and subsequently in Mughal India, contests simple and linear paternity theories, and ultimately speaks for the complexity and pluralism of the Mughal cultural and artistic world. Moreover, my work is an invitation to look beyond the material and immaterial transfers, successfully examined by global history, connected history and entangled history, and to turn the focus towards the local field of production. The concept of affordance offers new insights on complex pattern of cultural and artistic innovation. If Mughal India fostered the circulation of works and ideas across long distances, it also owes its vibrancy to local forces.

SARA KELLER works since 2019 at the Max Weber Centre, University Erfurt (Germany) on the spaces and architectural landscapes of South Asian cities. She earned her PhD in the Theory and Praxis of Archaeology from the Sorbonne University and the University of Bamberg. She specializes in the study of architecture and urban centres of Western India and focuses on cultural meanings of built spaces. She has published extensively on the port towns of Gujarat, cities and urbanity of premodern India, *Vāstu śāstra*, architectural knowledge and transmission, and urban waters and waterscapes in historical India.

“Material Vehicles of Cultural Exchange: The Transfer of Books from India to Safavid Iran through Endowment”

Mahdieh TAVAKOL

(Universität Hamburg)

This paper examines the cultural and material entanglements between Safavid Iran and the Indian subcontinent through the lens of manuscript transmission. It focuses on the transfer of books from Iranian Shi'i migrants in India to Iran during the Safavid period (907–1148/1501–1736). Particular attention is given to the books endowed by Mullā 'Alī Gul Astarābādī (fl. ca. 990/1582), a relatively obscure secretary at the Nizam Shahi court, whose endowment was made to the shrine of Imam Ridā in Mashhad. Drawing on the early catalogue of the Āstān-i Quds Library and a few surviving manuscripts from Astarābādī's collection, the paper reconstructs the provenance and trajectory of this endowment—from its origins in India to its preservation in Mashhad, including the eventful histories of some copies following the Uzbek attack on Mashhad in 997/1589. By tracing these manuscripts' movements and reconstructing their provenance, the study demonstrates how book endowments functioned not only as acts of religious devotion but also as instruments of transregional intellectual exchange. It contributes to current scholarship on Persianate manuscript culture by foregrounding the role of books as material agents in shaping early modern Shi'i scholarly and devotional networks.

MAHDIEH TAVAKOL is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), Universität Hamburg. Her work lies at the intersection of Islamic history and manuscript studies, with a focus on knowledge production, libraries, book culture, and the movement of books and people across the Persianate world in the 16th and 17th centuries. She completed her PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2024 with a dissertation titled *Mobility and Cultural Exchange: The Library of Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Āmilī (d. 1030/1621) in Safavid Iran*, supervised by Konrad Hirschler.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 3: EAST ASIAN AND OCEANIC TRAJECTORIES
(Room Le Miroir)

“An Eastern Gaze: South Asia and the Making of an Islamic Archive in Premodern China”

Dror **WEIL**

(University of Cambridge)

My talk will introduce the history of Persian literature in China throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, and the unique Islamicate archive that was produced and studied locally. In that context, it will discuss the richness and particularities of China's Islamicate archive, and the methods of collection, collating and studying Islamicate texts. It will shed light on the role that South Asia played as a source of texts and scholars, as well as a contemporary comparable case of a Persianate literary society.

DROR WEIL is Assistant Professor of History at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. His teaching and research interests focus on scientific and other textual exchanges between the Islamicate world and China during the late medieval and early modern periods. He has published various articles and book chapters on China's participation in the early modern Islamicate book culture, China's reception of Arabo-Persian astronomy and medicine, the role of Chinese-Muslims as agents of scientific knowledge and the methodologies of studying Arabic and Persian texts in late imperial China.

“‘On the Wonders of Islands and the Strangeness of Seas’: Persian Travel Writing and the Climes of the Indian Ocean in the Late Mughal Period”

Arash **KHAZENI**

(Pomona College)

This paper explores graphic descriptions of the Indian Ocean world, its ecology, and its islands in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Persian travel literature. In the late Mughal period, Indo-Persian perceptions of the Indian Ocean and its distant shores were shaped by the enduring literary theme of wonders (*‘ajā’ib*). Indo-Persian travelers crossed an enchanted sea, a vast oceanic environment of tides, storms, and monsoons, and encountered a diversity of marvelous marine life and forms to reach distant island kingdoms (*jazīra*), both real and imagined, across South and Southeast Asia. By the late eighteenth-century, these longstanding wondrous Persian narratives of the Indian Ocean world and its enchanted ecology began to be questioned and offset by new oceanic experiences and knowledge that coexisted alongside the sense of wonder. Through the reading of an illustrated early nineteenth-century Persian manuscript of Zakariyya Qazvini’s *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt* (Wonders of Existence) featuring the wonders of the seven seas, as well as contemporary Persian travel books (*safarnāma*), including Mirza I’tisām al-Din’s *Shigarfnāma-yi vilāyat* (Wonder Book of Provinces) and Mir‘Abd al-Latif Khān Shushtari’s *Tuhfat al-‘Ālam* (Gift of the Universe), this paper traces late Mughal visions of the climes of the Indian Ocean world.

ARASH KHAZENI is professor of history at Pomona College in Los Angeles, California. His research focuses on aspects of the imperial and environmental histories of the modern Middle East, South Asia, and the Indian Ocean, including the monographs *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (University of Washington Press, 2010), *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History* (University of California Press, 2014), and *The City and the Wilderness: Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia* (University of California Press, 2020). He is currently working on a book project on the science of astrology in the late eighteenth-century Deccan.

“Oceangoing Miracles from Maghrib to Mughal India: Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī’s *Ḥizb al-baḥr* in Eighteenth-Century Delhi”

Daniel Jacobius **MORGAN**

(Santa Clara University)

In Sufi circles of eighteenth-century Mughal Hindustan, an Arabic text produced in thirteenth-century North Africa became a sensation. The text, *Ḥizb al-baḥr* (Litany of the Ocean), combined Qur’ānic verses and divine names to form an lengthy invocation credited with alchemically effective apotropaic properties. The individual who recited it properly – and at the correct times – would be protected from dangers at sea, healed from disease, and even have the power to control their enemies. Originally produced by the Maghribi Sufi Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258), *Ḥizb al-baḥr* had, by the 1750s, come to be integrated into the daily devotional practices of Naqshbandi-Mujaddidis and other Sufi lineages of North India, and continued to be deployed into the early colonial period where narratives of its miraculous power feature in (for example) Chishti descriptions of the rebellion against the East India Company in 1857.

Examining Sufi materials from the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, in particular reformist texts produced in the circles of Mirzā Jān-i Jānān (d. 1780) and Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1762), this paper investigates the modes of transmission for *Ḥizb al-baḥr* from the Maghrib to the Mughal domains, considers the social and ritual contexts in which it was used, and asks why it might have gained such traction in this period of political upheaval. In so doing, it questions older paradigms that, on the one hand, have neglected North African-Mughal links and, on the other, posited a binary between an enchanted Persianate Sufism and modes of Arab/Arabic-centred Islamic reform. Instead, it suggests that the popularity of a text like *Ḥizb al-baḥr* indicates renewed interest in Arabic as a ritual language in this period but precisely because Arabic was understood to harness cosmological properties not found in texts written in Persian or other languages.

DANIEL JACOBUS MORGAN received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 2021 with a dissertation examining the applied metaphysics and embodied devotional practices of the eminent eighteenth-century Islamic scholar and Naqshbandī Sufi, Shāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī. Recent and forthcoming articles have appeared in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, and the *Journal of Urdu Studies*. He is currently writing a social and intellectual history of the Naqshbandis of North India.

ABSTRACTS

PANEL 4: INDIC LEARNING ACROSS MUSLIM SOCIETIES
(Room Le Miroir)

“Horse treatises from the Islamic World”

Eva **ORTHMANN**

(University of Gottingen)

The genre of horse treatises has been ubiquitous in the Islamic World. We find horse treatises in Arabic, in Ottoman and Persian, coming from the Mamluk Empire, Central Asia, Iran and India. In India, we observe at least two different traditions existing side by side: the “classical” genre of horse treatises from Iran, and translated texts from the *Salihotra* tradition of Sanskrit origin. These two genres intermingle, with a vast amount of treatises produced between the 15th and the 19th century. It is much less known to what extent the *Salihotra* tradition of horse treatises was also spread beyond the Subcontinent. Interestingly, in quite a few Arabic hippiatric texts, we find information on the good or bad luck of horses, which can be linked to the Indian tradition. We thus have to assume that the veterinary knowledge and the tradition of specific marks indicating the future of a horse’s owner and his fate spread to the Arabic World and found its way to Arabic horse treatises. The lecture will look into this tradition and investigate the reception of *Salihotra* materials in the Middle East.

EVA ORTHMANN is Professor of Iranian Studies at the University of Göttingen. She obtained her PhD in 2000 at the University of Halle-Wittenberg and afterwards worked as assistant professor in Zurich. In 2007, Orthmann has been appointed professor of Islamic studies in Bonn. Since 2018, she is the director of the Institute of Iranian studies at the University in Göttingen. In her research, Eva Orthmann’s special interest is in subjects related to the Mughal Empire, history of science, including astral sciences and mathematics, occult sciences, and Indo-Persian transfer of knowledge and culture.

“The World within a Word: Global Intellectual Exchanges in the Mughal Yogavāsiṣṭha Translations”

Shankar **NAIR**

(University of Virginia)

In the year 1597 CE, the Mughal court commissioned a team of Muslim and Hindu scholars to translate a popular Sanskrit treatise, the *Laghu-Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, into the Persian language; nearly sixty years later, the Mughal prince Dārā Shukōh patronized his own complete translation, composed in 1656. This paper aims to put just a few brief sentences from this Sanskrit text (6:12:7-9) into global intellectual perspective. These three short, seemingly straightforward Sanskrit verses in fact belie a very long, complex textual and philosophical history, starting with their first composition in the tenth-century Kashmir Valley. The verses then undergo subsequent textual transformations as the text encounters new Buddhist (Yogācāra, Madhyamaka) and Hindu (Śaiva, Advaita Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and more) philosophical currents beyond Kashmir, a story that stretches out across numerous regions of South Asia through to the Deccan. The subsequent Persian renditions of these three Sanskrit verses in the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Mughal court, in turn, unveil a tale of near-global scale, as Muslim translators deliberately deploy philosophical resources from seminal Islamic Peripatetic (*mashshāʾī*), theological (*kalāmī*), Sufi, and even ancient Greek thinkers to render the verse’s central Sanskrit concepts – including terms like *śakti* (potency), *spanda* (pulsation), and illusion (*mithyā*) – into intelligible Islamicate Persian prose. To trace only the thinkers from which the Muslim translators *actively* drew (not to speak of an even vaster array of more passive “background” intellectual influences) is to chart out a complex web of intellectual networks spanning classical Greece, Anatolia, Persia, the Middle East, and Central Asia, all stretching vibrantly into the early modern Indian subcontinent.

SHANKAR NAIR is associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies and the Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures at the University of Virginia. His research centers on Hindu-Muslim interactions and the encounter between Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian intellectual cultures in Mughal South Asia, with a particular focus on the many Persian translations of Sanskrit texts that were composed during this time period. He is the author of the book *Translating Wisdom: Hindu-Muslim Intellectual Interactions in Early Modern South Asia* (University of California Press, 2020).

“The Reception of an Indo-Persian *Maṣnavī* in Iran: Ṣahīr Kirmānī’s Rewriting of *Mīhr-u Māh*”

Victor **BAPTISTE**

(École Pratique des Hautes Études)

This paper engages with the diffusion, and the reception in 18th century Iran, of South Asian literary works produced during the 17th century. It focuses on a *maṣnavī* by ‘Āqil Khān ‘Rāzī’ (1026?-1108 AH, 1617?-1696 AD), titled *Mīhr-u māh*, and written in 1065 AH (1654/55 AD). This text is an adaptation of *Madhumālātī*, a romance telling the love story of prince Manohar and princess Madhumālātī, written in medieval Hindi (Awadhi) by Malik Mañjhan Rājgīrī in 952 AH (1545/46 AD). Rāzī’s composition, prompted by the important status that he held at the Mughal court of emperor ‘Ālamgīr, enjoyed a wide circulation in South Asia and many manuscripts of this *maṣnavī* are extant in Indian, Pakistani and European libraries. The circulation of *Mīhr-u māh* was, however, by no means restricted to the boundaries of the Mughal Empire. Among testimonies of its diffusion in Iran, the most striking is that of the *naẓīra* (literary response) composed by Ṣahīr ul-Dīn Ṣahīr Kirmānī, titled *Majma’ ul-baḥrain* (or *Manōhar-u Damālāt*) and written in 1162 AH (1749/50 AD). In Iran only, ten manuscripts of this text are extant. Ṣahīr Kirmānī explicitly mentions *Mīhr-u māh* as his source for inspiration and follows rather faithfully the narrative framework devised by Rāzī. He emulates the fire-imagery – associated with the Indian nature of the subject – that pervades the prologue of *Mīhr-u māh*. This imagery itself derives from *Nal-u Daman* by Faizī ibn Mubārak, making Ṣahīr’s *maṣnavī* a unique case of Indo-Iranian literary transmission and intertextuality. If Ṣahīr misunderstands many South Asian names and references, he shows great interest in using *Mīhr-u māh* and its ‘exotic’ Indian setting as a means to assert his originality. His adaptation offers valuable insights into the literary culture of 18th century Iran, particularly the networks of influence, emulation, and rivalry among Persianate authors. Furthermore, some passages of the text give us further details on the circulation of texts and manuscripts between South Asia and Iran during the Early Modern Period.

VICTOR BAPTISTE is a fourth year PhD student at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His dissertation focuses on the life and work of a 17th-century Indo-Persian poet named Mīr ‘Alī ‘Askarī Khwāfī (1026?-1108 AH, 1617?-1696 AD), bearing the title ‘Āqil Khān and using Rāzī as his nom de plume. Victor Baptiste is currently completing a critical edition and a French translation of a *maṣnavī* written by this author, entitled *Mīhr-u māh*, written in 1065 AH (1654/55 AD), being a rendition of *Madhumālātī*, a romance written in medieval Hindi during the sixteenth century.

