

Research and Training Workshop

Reading Sources in Area Studies

*Contribution of biographical data for the social and cultural history
of Turko-Iranian societies (9th-18th c.)*

Lire les sources en études aréales

*L'apport des données biographiques pour l'histoire sociale et culturelle
du monde turko-iranien (IX^e-XVIII^e s.)*

A B S T R A C T S

Panel 1 : 26 March 2021

*From biographical production to history
/ De l'écriture biographique à l'histoire*

14:00 – 18:00 (+1:00 GMT, Paris time)

To register to get the Zoom link / inscription à la visioconférence
<http://www.inalco.fr/webform/ateliers-sources-etudes-areales>



Convenors/Responsables : Maria Szuppe (CNRS / CeRMI), Camille Rhoné-Quer (Université Aix-Marseille / IREMAM), Sacha Alsancakli (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle / CeRMI)

Contact: maria.szuppe@cnrs.fr ou camille.rhone@univ-amu.fr

Sources on the biographies of Sayyid Families in Mashhad, 15th-19th centuries

Christoph U. Werner (University of Bamberg)

Identifying, describing and analysing family networks in a pre-modern historical urban setting often presents particular challenges related to the sources available. The situation for Sayyid families of Mashhad during the Timurid, Safavid, Afsharid and Qajar eras is special as we have a large number and variety of sources at our disposal, ranging from classical chronicles, dynastic histories and biographical works to an overwhelming number of archival sources, primarily written in Persian. The difficulties encountered are therefore not to be found in a lack of material, but rather in the multiplicity of voices to be heard and harmonized. On the technical side, we have to face onomastic difficulties as many individuals appear with different forms of name and address in the sources.

The presentation will focus on the question on how to connect different genres of historiographical narratives, both classical and modern, and how to incorporate specimens of primary archival sources to achieve a balanced perspective.



Biographical Collections from Early Modern Central Asia (16th-17th c.): Sources for contemporary literary and social history of Persianate societies in the Muslim East

Maria Szuppe (CNRS – CeRMI)

Collections of biographies of “famous people” of the past and present, and especially biographical poetical anthologies called *tazkera* in the Persian tradition, count among the literary genres that enjoyed growing popularity since the Timurid period, that is from the 15th c. onwards. Some of these collections describe lives of well-known literary and political figures in a series of biographical entries. But there are also other people mentioned in these works: people that would otherwise remain unknown, and who are only brought to our attention through the *tazkera* tradition. This is particularly true concerning local poets and literati, sometimes originating from middle and lower classes, that were contemporary to these *tazkera* authors. The entries are frequently illustrated by anecdotes of every-day life that bring to light various aspects of social and literary life of that period. Taking as an example several post-Timurid Persian *tazkera*, we will examine the creative stages of compiling such works, and analyse their structure. We will also consider the advantages and shortcomings of methods traditionally used by different writers for the critical gathering of their historical and literary material, as well as examine criteria adopted by them for the selection of the actual individuals considered “worthy” of inclusion in their collections.



Contribution of biographical sources for a history of rivers in pre-Seljukid Iran

Camille Rhoné-Quer (Aix-Marseille Université / IREMAM)

The history of the relationship between societies and rivers in pre-Seljukid Iran is still little known. Apart from archaeological research into irrigation systems, knowledge on the topic is really poor and needs to be updated. What about rivers' presence in the territory, their geographical reality or the way they were perceived? Of course, official chronicles give information about political history, as viewed from the imperial centre (river crossings during Muslim conquests, control of their banks, taxations of merchants when fording). But it is also necessary to understand how rivers were integrated into daily life in the peripheries, both in practice and in representations.

This talk will focus on the Amū Daryā (Oxus) and the way biographical data can or cannot shed light on this topic. We will underline the fragmentation of data as well as some methodological tools to make good use of these scattered clues.



Further readings / Orientation bibliographique

- Azad, A., « The *Faḍā'il-i Balḥ* and its Place in Islamic Historiography », *Iran* 50 (2012: 79-102.
- Hanaoka, M., *Authority and Identity in Medieval Islamic Historiography. Persian Histories from the Peripheries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 301 p.
- Iranian Studies* 33/1-2 (2000), special issue on Persian local histories; 8 articles, including the introductory Melville, Ch., “Persian Local Histories: Views from the Wings”: 7-14.
- Lambton, A.K.S., “Persian Biographical Literature,” in B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (eds.), *Historians of the Middle East*, London-New York, Oxford University Press, 1962: 141-151.
- Marlow, L., (ed.), *The Rhetoric of Biography. Narrating Lives in Persianate Societies*, Ilex Foundation and the Centre for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2011 [Ilex Foundation Series 4].
- Meisami, J. Scott, *Persian Historiography to the End of the Twelfth Century*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, 319 p.
- McChesney, R.D., “The Anthology of poets: *Muzakkir al-Ashab* as a source for the history of seventeenth-century Central Asia,” in M. M. Mazzaoui and V. B. Moreen (eds.), *Intellectual Studies on Islam. Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, Salt Lake City, 1990: 57-84.
- Rhoné-Quer, C., “Notes pour une histoire des fleuves en Orient médiéval. L’Amou Darya, une frontière du monde islamique (VII^e-XI^e siècle) ?,” in V. Allegranzi & V. Laviola, V. (eds.), *Texts and Contexts. Ongoing Researches on the Eastern Iranian World (Ninth-Fifteenth C.)*, Rome, Istituto per l’Oriente, 2020: 53-77 (Pubblicazioni dell’Istituto per l’Oriente C. A. Nallino, 120).
- Szuppe, M., “Lettrés, patrons, libraires. L’apport des recueils biographiques sur le rôle du livre en Asie centrale aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles », *Cahiers d’Asie Centrale* 7 (1999): 99-115 (<https://journals.openedition.org/asiacentrale/571>)