

# CREATING STANDARDS: ORTHOGRAPHY, SCRIPT AND LAYOUT IN MANUSCRIPT TRADITIONS BASED ON ARABIC ALPHABET

Workshop at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
University of Hamburg  
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Convenors: DMITRY BONDAREV and ALESSANDRO GORI

The workshop will investigate the presence (or absence) of processes of standardisation in orthography, handwriting and page layout in major manuscript traditions written in different variants of Arabic alphabet/Ajami. The workshop will particularly address possible roles of language and religion as triggers of these standards, especially in the traditions where different alphabets and script types were and are used at the same time (e.g. Hebrew, Harari, Kiswahili).

Languages were written in Arabic-based scripts from the very beginning of Islam with varying degree of standardisation in styles, layouts and orthography. Development of standards in orthography is particularly difficult to generalise if we consider the following examples: (a) Persian orthography became standardised very early in its history of writing; (b) Berber developed orthographic consistency at early stage of introduction of writing but the Berber orthography underwent a decline and changed into a different spelling system; (c) Ottoman Turkish and Malay in Jawi script apparently did not develop spelling standardisation, whereas (d) Old Kanembu was written with varying degree of consistency depending, among other factors, on frequency of linguistic items.

In the history of Latin-based orthographies, administrative and political decisions, centralised powers and influential cultural centres are common factors of standardisation. However, in manuscript traditions based on Arabic script these factors, where relevant, were not necessarily the only catalysts of standardisation and therefore it is important to explore other possible conditioning forces. Thus, the workshop will particularly address the positive and negative roles played by language, religion and manuscript production in the formation of standards.

Language and religion are saliently related in Islam through the concept of the highly standardised Classical Arabic as the language of the Holy Qur'an, the Word of God transmitted in Arabic script. Therefore, one of the starting questions to address would be

- The extent to which this language/religion set influenced (non) standardised writing in non-Arabic languages.

Possible influence of manuscript production on standardisation will be explored by addressing

- The existence of specific aspects of manuscript production (such as selection of formats, copying procedures, and dictation practices) that fostered or impeded standards in Ajami.

The workshop will also discuss orthographic standardisation in relation to models of scripts and manuscript layouts. Script styles were either borrowed in "pre-standardised" form (as Nasta'īq borrowed from Persian to Ottoman Turkish, or Barnawī from Old Kanembu to Hausa) or designed and codified locally (like Suqī in Northern Mali) and the standardised scripts were often related to the respective conventional layouts and registers/genres (as, for example, was the case of the Divāni and Siyākat scripts in Ottoman Turkish). However, standardisation of script, layout and orthography (SLO) do not necessarily go in step and the relation between the standard of the script and layout on the one hand and the standard of orthography on the other is not always obvious. The extent to which the three entities of the SLO set are related will be another topic for the workshop exploration.

Thus, we will ask questions such as

- Are there common conditioning factors of standardisation of the SLO as a unified set?
- Are the script, layout and orthography independent from each other?
- Or do they influence each other's standardisation?

An interesting line of discussion would be to consider the opposite direction of influence, i.e.

- Does the process of standardisation induce any salient changes on manuscript production, religion and language?

Finally, we will touch on some typological issues, such as

- Are there universal sets of factors which trigger standardisation? Or are these factors culture-specific?

Speakers to include: ESTHER-MIRIAM WAGNER (Judeo-Arabic), PAOLO LA SPISA (Christian-Arabic), NURIA MARTÍNEZ DE CASTILLA MUÑOZ (Aljamiado), LAMEEN SOUAG (Berber), DMITRY BONDAREV and NIKOLAY DOBRONRAVIN (Kanuri and Hausa), GIORGIO BANTI (Harari), CLARISSA VIERKE (Kiswahili), IRINA KATKOVA (Jawi), ABDURISHID YAKUP (Uyghur), JAN SCHMIDT (Ottoman), PAOLA ORSATTI (Farsi), BRANKA IVUSIC (Ottoman and Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian, German, Latin in Arabic script).