

Collecting Knowledge in East and West

The History of Oriental Studies

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Armond Vrolijk (Photo: Joke Pronk)

Collecting Knowledge in East and West

Studies in Honour of Arnoud Vrolijk

Edited by

Kasper van Ommen
Maurits van den Boogert



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Preface

For many years, Arnoud Vrolijk has been the curator of Oriental manuscripts and rare books at Leiden University Libraries. His title of *Interpres Legati Warneriani* refers to the role of keeper of the manuscripts bequeathed to the Library of the University of Leiden by Levinus Warner in 1665. Warner's manuscripts and printed books continuing to contribute to the Leiden collection's international reputation until the present day. The scholars and students attracted to Leiden by its Arabic, Turkish, Persian manuscripts and printed works over the years – both the 'core collections' of Scaliger, Golius, Warner, and others, as well as more recent additions to its holdings – came to know Arnoud as an erudite colleague, whose many interests inevitably coincides with theirs. All remember his friendly disposition and Arnoud's willingness to help has enriched the research of innumerable visitors to the Special Collections in his care.

Arnoud is also a scholar in his own right and the author of books, journal articles, and other contributions that either furthered scholarship or made it more accessible beyond the ivory towers of Academia proper. Both the manuscript tradition of Muslim societies, and early printed works from the region have been central to Arnoud's research, which also extended to the history of Western scholarship about the East.

The problem with someone as learned as Arnoud Vrolijk, is that a Festschrift for him is unlikely accurately to reflect his many interest and activities. We have tried, nevertheless, hoping that both Arnoud, and other readers of this collected volume, will forgive us for its unequal coverage of the topics discussed in it.

This volume consists of five parts; the first offers two contributions about print culture in the Netherlands, both relevant to oriental scholarship in the early modern period. The second grouping ('Manuscripts') offers reflections on handwritten texts from the Islamic world – predominantly but not exclusively kept in Leiden – from various genres, covering not just Arabic, but also Persian. Part 3, on scholars and travellers, consists of four chapters that deal with Western collectors of manuscripts and other artefacts (including coins) who travelled to the Muslim world between the seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries. The first two contributions to the fourth section on artefacts and visual culture could just as easily have been grouped under Part 2, but these chapters have a slightly different perspective, the first discussing the preservation of manuscripts, the second chasing the history of one particular seal impression in Islamic manuscripts. A chapter about the nature of ephemera

and their place in the Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries is followed by two chapters on early photography, one in nineteenth-century Persia, the other in the Arabian Peninsula. The fifth and final part, 'Literature', offers two contributions, one about an eighteenth-century Dutch novel about the prophet Muhammad, the other about the use of Arabic poetry in modern music from the Arab world.

Each of these contributions touches upon at least one of the fields that Arnoud is interested in, has worked on, or both. All also deal with the collection of knowledge, and how it has been brought together, been preserved, and has been – and is being – disseminated in East and West.

The first contribution, by PAUL HOFTIJZER, sheds light on printing from stereotype plates in Leiden in the final years of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth. This invention was the work of the Lutheran minister Johannes Müller, working with the metal founder Philip van der Meij, and the publishers Jordaan Luchtman and Cornelis Boutesteyn. In 1700 Müller and Luchtman set up a separate company aimed at commercial printing books from stereotype plates, bringing in Boutesteyn in 1709, but this enterprise was short-lived. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Luchtman publishing house continued to use this technology, but they did not manage to set a trend. Their technological innovation would eventually be reinvented in both England and France and then have a major impact on the pre-modern publishing industry.

In the second chapter of Part 1, the collection of Oriental books of the Court of Holland is studied. Discovered in an attic in The Hague by Janus Dousa in 1594, these volumes, previously a reference collection for the lawyers of the Court of Holland, also included many other books written in Hebrew, Chaldean and Arabic. Efforts to transfer the almost 750 volumes to Leiden proved in vain due to legal disputes about their ownership. Based on the handlist produced by Dousa and his son, KASPER VAN OMMEN discusses the relevance of these oriental tomes, which had once been part of the much larger library of Johannes Harius (d. 1532).

The focus of JAN HOGENDIJK's contribution is the Arabic manuscript Or. 123 (2 or b) in the Leiden University Library. Due its incompleteness – the beginning of the work is missing – Fuat Sezgin initially misidentified it, but he later discovered that it is a fragment of al-Biruni's *Istī'āb al-wujūh al-mumkina fī san'at al-asturlāb* (*The Exhaustive Comprehension of the Possible Ways to Construct the Astrolabe*). The aim of this chapter is to draw attention to the fact that the Leiden library possesses two manuscripts of this important text by al-Biruni, which is generally unknown. Hogendijk describes both manuscripts on the astrolabe, paying attention also to extraordinary diagrams they include.

In ‘Manuscripts matter’, PETRA SIJPESTEIJN examines the Arabic treatise on book-making, entitled *‘Umdat al-kuttāb wa-‘uddat dhawī al-albāb* (A Support for Scribes and a Device for learned Men). It contains detailed instructions on how to produce writing utensils, glue, black, coloured and invisible inks made with carbon, iron-gall, or metals, and includes information on how to produce paper and to bind books. The Leiden University Library holds a copy and a fragment of *‘Umdat al-kuttāb*. Sijpesteijn argues that the fluid tradition of technical manuals like this, whereby texts were constantly added, removed, rearranged, combined or changed, created multiple text recensions besides the usual scribal variation within each recension. The two copies kept in Leiden appear to represent different text recensions which connect them to other manuscript copies of *‘Umdat al-kuttāb*.

In the third contribution of Part 2, REMKE KRUK explains what the authors of medieval Arabic texts about animals imagined a beaver (Ar. *qasṭūriyūn*, ‘sea dog’), which is not indigenous to the Middle East, looked like. Consulting works from the genre of *manafi’ al-ḥayawān* (‘useful properties of animals’), it turns out that its testicles were considered an essential ingredient for a variety of medicaments, and being pursued for them he rips them off with his claws. Many Arab authors repeated this myth of self-castration, but some agreed with Dioscorides that this was nonsense. Kruk’s chapter includes an image of the beaver from the Arabic Dioscorides manuscript preserved in the Leiden University Library, Or. 289.

Offering another example of how difficult it can be to catalogue manuscripts accurately, NICO KAPTEIN discusses an astronomical treatise kept in the University of Michigan Library. Supplementing the original catalogue description, he identifies its author as Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916), a scholar from West Sumatra who moved to Mecca in 1870 and stayed there for the rest of his life. Although the copy kept in Ann Arbor is defective, Kaptein shows that it concerns *al-Jawahir al-naqiyya fi l-‘mal al-jaybiyyah*. He also discusses the short treatise bound together with Ahmad Khatib’s text, and how it came to be include in the same volume.

GABRIELLE VAN DEN BERG offers a discussion of the Leiden Or. 8773, a Qajar manuscript copy of the tragic love story of *Laylī-u Majnūn*, but in a lesser-known version composed in 895/1489–1490 by the poet Maktābī Shīrāzī. After the famous versions authored by Nizāmī, Amīr Khusraw, Jāmī, and Hātifi, many other Persian versions of the story of Laylī and Majnūn were composed, but many remain unpublished and exist only in manuscript form. This chapter draws attention to aspects of Qajar bookbinding and paper. In particular, it focuses on the Leiden manuscript’s painted illustrations, which show how the story was perceived in Qajar times. Van den Berg also provides an inventory of the paintings in the manuscript.

Relatively little of the correspondence of Johann Michael Wansleben (1635–1679) appears to have survived, which makes the three letters in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, written by Wansleben to Francesco Redi between 1665 and 1671, and introduced and published here by ALASTAIR HAMILTON, so valuable. They contain details about Wansleben's life and movements not to be found elsewhere, as do the other pieces included in the appendix of this article – letters from Redi published in 1811 and the epistle dedicatory to the grand duke of Tuscany, Ferdinand II de' Medici, in the manuscript version of Wansleben's *Relazione dello stato presente dell'Egitto* in the British Library.

In his contribution, MAURITS VAN DEN BOOGERT offers a survey of the 20 *alba amicorum* in which Jacobus Golius (b. 1596), the Professor of Oriental languages at the University of Leiden from 1626 until his death in 1667, wrote one or more entries. Golius' contributions to these albums draw attention not only to his personal motto – a fragment from an Arabic poem – but also to his network of friends and colleagues. In one album he wrote a few lines from a poem that was (and still is) very popular in Morocco, but which is not well-known elsewhere. The fact that he wrote two rather lengthy and personal notes for Hottinger within a short period of time confirms earlier research that suggests that their friendship was particularly close.

In a period when few Western students of the Middle East were interested in contemporary Ottoman numismatics, the Prussian envoy to the Ottoman Sublime Porte, Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751–1817) was an exception. Not only did he bring home, in 1790, a collection of circa 2,000 coins, but he had also already catalogued them. On the basis of both the coins and the unpublished catalogue, which are preserved in Berlin's Münzkabinett, CHRISTOPH RAUCH's article offers an initial survey of what we know about Diez's collection and his numismatic knowledge. Both the catalogue as well as his collection.

The renowned Arabist, Islamicist, and Africanist Eugen Mittwoch (1876–1942) undertook two extended trips to the Near East and Egypt, in 1899 and in 1907, travelling to Constantinople, Syria, and Palestine on a mission organized by the Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden to investigate education among Jews in these locations. Upon his return, Mittwoch published extensively about his experiences, and he also gave public lectures. SABINE SCHMIDTKE here offers a critical annotated edition of the manuscript of one such lecture, preserved in the Eugen Mittwoch Archive at the National Library of Israel, that offers insights into his personal encounters on his travels.

In the first chapter of Part 4, KARIN SCHEPER addresses the tension between the practice of collecting manuscripts for study, their actual handling by scholars and students, and the ambition to preserve the manuscripts as

precious artefacts in their own right. For each manuscript, curators and conservators work with a documentation system, in which various aspects of the artefacts condition prior to treatment are recorded. The conservation report which is then made includes information about the reason(s) for intervention, the choices made, and condition and appearance of the manuscript post treatment. Based on her own extensive work on manuscripts from the collections for which Arnoud was the curator, Scheper here shares four case studies that illustrate – also literally – her interactions with manuscripts, why they were necessary, and how treatment changes their appearance.

On a mission to catalogue documentary manuscript notes of owners, readers, and endowers in manuscripts from the Arab world, BORIS LIEBRENZ came across a seal impression left in a manuscript now kept in Leiden by a man called Muhammad ‘Ali al-munajjim, who must have lived sometime between the middle of the tenth/sixteenth century and the early eleventh/seventeenth century in Istanbul. It was the seal’s picture of a bird of prey descending on a snake that caught Liebreznz’ eye. Arguing that this seemingly unique seal imprint actually represents a marginal tradition, this illustrated contribution also makes us aware of just how little we know about the production and use of seals in the Middle East.

In ‘Trash or Treasure?’ BIRTE KRISTIANSEN explores some of the Leiden University Libraries’ collections of ephemera relating to the Middle East. She draws attention to larger collections like the photographs made and collected by Albertus Hotz (1855–1930), a Dutch entrepreneur who lived and travelled through Iran; the holdings brought together under the auspices of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIIM), and institute that no longer exists, but the collections of which remain relevant; and to smaller collections like the Egyptian film posters Arnoud Vrolijk acquired for Leiden in 2016.

Hendrik Dunlop (1867–1944) was a Dutch businessman in Qajar Persia, whose activities there have so far remained in the shadow of those of Hotz, Dunlop’s employer. In addition to leaving extensive travel accounts, parts of Dunlop’s collection of early photographs have also survived. In Tehran he also acquired manuscripts of Bábí and Bahá’í texts, and through both his writings and his photographs, he was the first to spread knowledge about the Bahá’í religion in the Netherlands. Based on these written and visual sources, CORIEN VUURMAN’S contribution gives Dunlop the attention he deserves.

Another valuable photographic collection, here studied by LUIT MOLLS, was produced by the Leiden Arabist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) and the Meccan physician Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ghaffār ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Baghdādī (died ca. 1902). From their experiments with photographic equipment in

improvised studios in Mecca and Jeddah between 1884 and 1889, more than 400 portraits have survived in the Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries. Preserving the images of both Arabian Bedouins and local Sharifs and European diplomats and merchants and Ottoman officers – sometimes even depicting women – this collection of portraits offers a unique late-nineteenth-century visual archive of Western Arabian society.

Although the rise of the historical novel as a literary genre is usually situated in the beginning of the nineteenth century, RICHARD VAN LEEUWEN discusses the Dutch novel *Mohammed, of de hervorming van de Arabieren* ('Muhammad, or the reformation of the Arabs') by the Dutch playwright Johannes Nomsz, which was published already in 1780. Now largely forgotten, the book is an interesting example of the Dutch Protestant view of Islam and Muhammad, while at the same time representing a new discursive and literary form, combining historical evidence with narrative techniques. Furthermore, Nomsz' novel reflects both eighteenth-century debates in the fields of religion and scholarship, and shows traces of literary orientalism in the artistic sense.

The volume's last contribution focuses on the singing of fine poetry, a prominent tradition in Arab culture for centuries that continues to be relevant today. Based on the compositions performed by artists of various Arab backgrounds in the Netherlands over the past two decades, ANNE VAN OOSTRUM discusses two case studies: the Moroccan-Belgium group *Qayna* – the name referring to the singing enslaved girls who sometimes accompanied reciting poets in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula – and Moroccan singer Walid Ben Selim, who, during interviews, shed light on their choice of lyrics and compositions. The chapter includes descriptions of songs that illustrate the intriguing interplay between heritage (*al-turath*) and 'new music' (*al-musiqat-jadida*) which is also open to non-Arab(ic) influences.

Maurits van den Boogert
Kasper van Ommen

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Notes on Contributors

Gabrielle van den Berg

(PhD 1997) is Professor of Cultural History of Iran and Central Asia at Leiden University. She studied Persian language and culture at Leiden University, The Netherlands and at the University of Dushanbe, Tajikistan. She has held positions in Leiden, Cambridge and Brussels. At present, she is principal investigator in the NWO Vici Project 'Turks, Texts and Territory: Imperial Ideology and Cultural Production in Central Eurasia', at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies. Her research interests include medieval Persian literature, the history of Iran and Central Asia, and manuscript traditions of the Persianate world. She has published in particular on the oral traditions of the Ismailis of Tajik Badakhshan and the *Shahnama* manuscript tradition.

Maurits H. van den Boogert

studied Arabic at Leiden University, where he also obtained his PhD in Ottoman history in 2001. The author of two monographs and a dozen scholarly articles, he is now co-Chief Publishing Officer of De Gruyter Brill and the Managing Director of Brill.

Alastair Hamilton

former Dr C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute Professor of the History of Ideas at Leiden University and Professor of the History of the Radical Reformation at the University of Amsterdam, was the Arcadian Visiting Research Professor at the School of Advanced Study, London University, attached to the Warburg Institute. He is now an Honorary Fellow of the Warburg Institute.

Paul Hoftijzer

is emeritus professor of book history at Leiden University. He has published widely on many aspects of the early modern Dutch book, with particular attention to international book trade relations and the history of the book in Leiden. From 2001 to 2007 he was director of the Scaliger Institute of Leiden University Library.

Jan P. Hogendijk

is a retired historian of mathematics at the Mathematics Department of Utrecht University. He studied mathematics in Utrecht and Arabic with Prof. Remke Kruk. Between 2004 and 2009 he was also professor of the history of mathematics at Leiden University. He specialises in the history of the

mathematical and astronomical traditions of antiquity and the Middle Ages, especially in the Islamic world.

Nico J.G. Kaptein

is Professor Emeritus of Islam in Southeast Asia at Leiden University. His research interests are the relations between the Middle East and Southeast Asia in the religious domain, both from a historic and a contemporary perspective. He has held research fellowships at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore; the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin, and the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies. His best known publications are: *Muhammad's Birthday Festival* (1993); *The Muhimmât al-nafâ'is: a bilingual Meccan fatwa collection for Indonesian Muslims from the end of the nineteenth century* (1997); *Transcending borders: Arabs, politics, trade and Islam in Southeast Asia*, eds. with Huub de Jonge (2002); and *Islam, Colonialism and the Modern Age in the Netherlands East Indies: A Biography of Sayyid 'Uthman (1822–1914)* (2014). Currently he is working on a book on Ahmad Khatib al-Minangkabawi (1860–1916).

Birte Kristiansen

holds an MA in Arabic from Leiden University and worked for many years as a subject librarian for Middle Eastern Studies at the Leiden University Library alongside Arnoud Vrolijk. Birte left the library in 2017 and has since been involved in a variety of projects related to research and teaching. She has helped organizing several conferences, co-edited some conference volumes and co-created 'mass' teaching tools in the form of a MOOC and two TED education videos which received over a million views worldwide.

Remke Kruk

is Emeritus Professor of Arabic at Leiden University. Among her major research topics are medieval Arabic natural science and Arabic popular epic. She also translated several Arabic classics into Dutch, among them Ibn Ṭufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzān*.

Richard van Leeuwen

(PhD 1992 University of Amsterdam) was lecturer in Islamic studies at the University of Amsterdam. His main research fields are Middle Eastern history, Arabic literature, the history of orientalism, the Hajj. His publications include *Waqfs and urban structures: the case of Ottoman Damascus* (Leiden: 1999); *The Arabian Nights encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (with U. Marzolph; Santa Barbara 2004); *The Thousand and one nights: space, travel and transformation* (London etc.

2007); *Narratives of kingship in Eurasian empires 1300–1800* (Leiden etc. 2017); *The Thousand and one Nights in 20th century fiction* (Leiden etc. 2018; awarded with the Shaykh Zayed Book Award 2020) and *Hajj travelogues, texts and contexts, from the 12th century until 1950* (Leiden 2024).

Boris Liebreuz

is a senior researcher at the *Bibliotheca Arabica* project, based at the Saxon Academy of the Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig. His main interest is the history of manuscripts, libraries, and readers, also the topic of his *Die Rifā'ya aus Damaskus* (Brill 2016; awarded the *Annemarie-Schimmel-Forschungspreis* 2017). Further monographs deal with merchant letters, a physician's endowment, or the notebook of a weaver in 16th-century Aleppo, while other publications explore documentary sources and social history throughout the Arab world and the Ottoman Empire.

Luitgard Mols

is founder of Sabiel, research and consultancy in the arts and material culture of the Arabic world. In this capacity she has been curating exhibitions and permanent displays, the most recent the new semi-permanent display *Practicing religions in Asia* (2024) with Sarah Johnson and Nitish Soundalgekar for the Wereldmuseum Leiden. She taught art history of the Islamic world at the University of Amsterdam, Leiden University and the University of Leuven. When she worked as the curator of the Middle East and West- and Central Asia at the Wereldmuseum Leiden, she curated several exhibitions on the Hajj and researched the ethnographic objects collected by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, Dutch consuls and their local staff in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This resulted, amongst others, in the publication with Arnoud Vrolijk *Western Arabia in the Leiden Collections. Traces of a Colourful Past* (2016). With Marjo Buitelaar she co-edited the volume *Hajj. Global Interactions through Pilgrimage* (2015). In 2021 she curated the exhibition *Bait Hulanda. Shared Histories* in Jeddah on the Dutch Consulate and the Hajj from Indonesia. Besides writing a book on all the portraits taken by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and Sayyid Abd al-Ghaffar in the Leiden University Collections, she is currently curating an exhibition in the newly to be established visitors centre of al-Balad, Jeddah historic district.

Kasper van Ommen

is curator of early printed and rare books and coordinator of the Scaliger Institute, a special collections research centre at Leiden University Libraries.

In 2020 he defended his doctoral thesis on Scaliger's oriental bequest in Leiden University Library. The thesis was published as *All my books in foreign tongues. The Oriental Bequest of Joseph Scaliger and the University Library of Leiden* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2024).

Anne van Oostrum

is lecturer of cultural musicology in the Department of Musicology at the University of Amsterdam. She studied music at the Royal Conservatory of the Hague and Arabic language and literature at Leiden University, the Netherlands. She is specialized in the music of the Arab world and the Middle East and her scholarship concerns musical instruments (*The Art of Nay Playing in Modern Egypt* (2004), manuscripts on Arab music theory, Arabic poetry set to music, and the wax cylinder collection of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936).

Christoph Rauch

studied Arabic and Religious Studies in Leipzig (M.A.) and Information and Library Science in Berlin (M.A. (LIS)). He has been working at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin since 2004, where he was appointed Head of the Oriental Department in 2010. He is currently leading the DFG-funded project to establish a portal for Oriental manuscripts in Germany (www.qalamos.net). Publications: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2635-1629>.

Karin Scheper

heads the conservation studio in the Leiden University Library, where since many years she focusses her conservation work and book-archaeological studies on the rich oriental collections. She received a PhD on the topic (2014) and published a range of articles on the materiality of manuscripts from the Islamic world. She also teaches, welcomes interns, and gives workshops about this manuscript tradition. A related topic of her interest is terminology, and she is the co-author of an illustrated online terminology for the conservation and description of Islamic manuscripts.

Sabine Schmidtke

is Professor of Islamic Intellectual History in the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ. Her research interests include the intersections between Islam and Judaism, the Muslim reception of the Bible, and the history of Oriental studies.

Petra Sijpesteijn

is professor of Arabic at Leiden University. She has held guest professorships and fellowships in Paris, Munich, Princeton, Doha, Cairo, Alexandria and Tunis. From 2025–2030 she leads the VICI project ‘Land, space and power. Landscapes of the early caliphate.’

Corien J.M. Vuurman

is an historian of photography and history teacher (Middle East/Asia) at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. She is the author of several articles on Western photography in Iran. In 2011 she published *Nineteenth-century Persia in the Photographs of Albert Hotz: Images from the Hotz Photograph collection of Leiden University Library*. As a guest curator she has organised several exhibitions, among others *Fascination with Persepolis* at the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (October 2017–March 2018). More recently, she edited together with Dr Reza Sheikh the book *Putting the Shah in the Landscape (Qajar Studies, 16 [2019])*, on the nineteenth-century photographic collection of Dr Joseph Desire Tholozan, the *hakim bachi* or personal physician of the Iranian ruler Nasir al-Din Shah.