Arabic Pasts: Histories and Historiographies

Research workshop

Co-hosted by the Aga Khan University, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and

SOAS, University of London

6-7 October 2023

London

This annual exploratory and informal workshop offers the opportunity to reflect on methodologies, research agendas, and case studies for investigating history writing in Arabic in the Middle East, North Africa, and beyond in any period from the seventh century to the present.

We are interested in papers that consider the practical and conceptual challenges of working on history writing in Arabic. Papers might elucidate the following sorts of questions:

* How did adherents of different confessional or juristic traditions, men and women, and members of different social classes within societies that became “Islamic” imagine the shape and meaning of their specific societies’ own pasts, and their relation to the universal history of the Islamic community? Which ways of writing, remembering, or commemorating did they develop?
* How can we broaden our scope beyond just textual historiography?
* How can marginalised communities and varieties of Arabic be given due attention?
* How can works of fiction contribute to our understanding of the past?
* How can we explore the past algorithmically? Can digital methods enhance our understanding of the past? Can they also limit or even alter it? Which new digital tools are being developed? What seem to be particularly promising approaches? What is lacking?
* In what ways do educational institutions, museums, media organisations and proponents of heritage use history writing to shape loyalties and senses of belonging in society?
* How is the past used in creative arts, re-enactment, games, and augmented reality?

Contributions are invited from scholars at all career levels, addressing any period and any part of the Middle East and North Africa, broadly defined. This year we anticipate running the workshop from the Aga Khan Centre in London, with the possibility to have an online component featuring participants who are unable to travel to the UK. As in past years, there is a small budget to provide some travel assistance for scholars outside of London.

Arabic Pasts is co-organized by Hugh Kennedy (SOAS), James McDougall (Oxford), Lorenz Nigst (AKU-ISMC), and Sarah Bowen Savant (AKU-ISMC).

Please submit an abstract of 300 words or less in word document by Friday 21st April 2023 to ArabicPastsConf@aku.edu.