Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Research Day

21st March 2011
Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Programme

08:45 Refreshments and Pastries on arrival
09:00: Welcome by Prof. Geoffrey Khan

09.30-09.50: Dr Lori Allen: Human Rights and the Palestinian ‘State’ : An Anthropological Approach
09.50-10.10: Prof. Siddartha Saxena: Projected Commonality in Bukhara: A model of Eastern Cosmpolitanism
10.10-10.30: Prof. Hans van de Ven: The Chinese Maritime Customs Service during the Self-Strengthening Movement, ca. 1865-1885
10.30-10.50: Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi: Compelling Cohesion: Varieties of “Liberal” Intolerance in the Obama Era
10.50-11.10: Dr Masaru Tamamoto: Postwar Japan: An Autopsy

Tea, Coffee and Biscuits

11.30-11.50: Dr Adam Chau: The Commodification of Religion
11.50-12.10: Dr Brigitte Steger: Thighs wide open, hair loose: gender specific attitudes towards napping in Japanese public transport.
12.10-12.30: Dr Saeko Yazaki: Islamic Mysticism and Abu Talib al-Makki: The Role of the Heart
12.50-13.10: Prof. Charles Melville: Persian Art in context
13.10-13.30: Dr Gabriele Ferrario: The Sun, the Scorpion and the Eagle. Preliminary Notes on the Alchemical Fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection

Buffet Lunch in the Faculty
14.00-14.20: Dr Josef Meri: Ezekiel’s Shrine In Iraq and Muslim-Jewish Relations


14.40-15.00: Prof. James Montgomery: Some Varieties of ‘Composition’ (Ta’lif) in Ninth Century Arabic Thought

15.00-15.20: Dr Mark Strange: Writing and Reading History in Medieval China: the case of the Zi zhi tong jian


15.40-16.00: Mr Yuval Levri: Translation without Original: Joseph Meyouhas and the Hebrew translation of the Palestinian Bible Tales

**Tea, Coffee, Biscuits**

16.20-16.40: Dr Vincenzo Vergiani: South Asian grammatical traditions, their history within the larger history

16.40-17.00: Prof. John Ray: The alphabet that never was: the possible Egyptian origin of a Near-Eastern writing system

17.00-17.20: Prof. Geoffrey Khan: The Neo-Aramaic Database Project

17.20-17.40: Prof. Yasir Suleiman: Ethnography, Erasure and Folk Linguistics

17.40-18.00: Prof. Peter Kornicki: Script, print and vernacularization in East Asian Buddhism

18.00-18.20: Dr Mike Shin: The Print Industry in Early Modern Korea

18.30 **Reception and Dinner in the Faculty Common Room**
Human Rights and the Palestinian State‘: An Anthropological Approach

Abstract:
In this talk I will discuss my research into the central but ambiguous role that human rights play in the production of a Palestinian "state" in the West Bank. This research is part of a larger study that explores the social, political, and economic work of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories over the last thirty years. I argue that a dialectical interaction operates between, on the one hand, the role of human rights in political claims and their framings for international interlocutors, and on the other, the role of human rights in Palestinian state creation and the formation of local governance and political subjectivity.

Research Interests:
Dr. Allen is an anthropologist whose primary research interests centre on human rights, nationalism, and Palestine. She has written articles that treat the problem of how Palestinians experience, memorialize, and adapt to political violence, published in journals including Cultural Anthropology, American Ethnologist, History and Memory and others. She is currently completing her first book on the history and politics of the human rights world in the occupied Palestinian territories, which explores the social processes by which proof and evidence are produced and mobilized in Palestinian political claim-making. Also in preparation is a second monograph, a history of international investigative commissions that have visited Palestine-Israel throughout the 20th century, as well as articles on the "anthropology of ethics," the 2008 attacks on Gaza, and Palestinian notions of money, corruption and their intersection with nationalist values.
Projected commonality in Bukhara: A model of Eastern cosmopolitanism

Abstract:
I use the experience of Bukhara to propose the idea of Projected Commonality to garner insight and answer the question - how cities ‘work’. This idea articulates the view that in Bukhara the nature of cosmopolitanism is constructed not by the usual means of creating a hybrid society through inter-ethnic and inter-religious mixing, but through building of trade, education, community, and cultural and ritualistic institutions. This Projected Commonality creates spaces for interaction where Bukharan’s have achieved not just mere tolerance but a way to celebrate the differences and coexist peacefully. The experience of Bukhara helps to articulate both a quintessential and practical example of an eastern notion of cosmopolitanism as well as its limitations. It is a model of coexistence which the world has much to learn from and this understanding could be the key that will unlock the door to integration in Europe, America, and perhaps even Japan of the ever increasing migration from the east and the south.

Research Interests:
Prof. Siddarth Shanker Saxena is Chairperson of the Cambridge Central Asia Programme. He trained as an anthropologist, historian and a physicist and holds Phd. Degrees in both Experimental Physics and Social Anthropology. His research interests are in the areas of religion and identity, knowledge systems, social and political development and institutional history in Central Asia and the Middle East. Prof. Saxena has been involved in field-based research in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan with particular focus on Bukhara, Ferghana Valley, Almaty, Kashgar and areas of Afghanistan and Azerbaijan. He has also spent extended periods in Iran and Egypt. He was awarded a medal for service to education in Kazakhstan and was made Honoured Professor of Kazakh-Turkish University. He is also the Director of the Cambridge Kazakhstan Centre.
Prof. Hans van de Ven, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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The Chinese Maritime Customs Service during the Self-Strengthening Movement, ca. 1865-1885

Abstract:
The Chinese Maritime Customs Service was an 'in between' and perhaps even odd organization in the sense that while staffed at its upper levels by foreigners, it was an agency of the Chinese state. Although British-dominated, its foreign staff was cosmopolitan, drawn from all countries with which China traded. In the early Self-Strengthening period, the Maritime Customs Service contributed to China's rapid globalization on the one hand by building facilities for trade in China and by championing large translation projects and in the opposite direction by funding China's legations abroad, organizing Chinese contributions to international exhibitions and fairs, and hiring personnel and purchasing equipment wanted in China for self-strengthening projects. In this talk, I focus on the activities of the London Office of the Chinese Customs Service and its role in China's naval procurement and in the negotiations between China and France during the Sino-French War to illustrate how the London Office linked China into the highest reaches of the British Government and made it a significant topic in European politics as early as the 1880s. One suggestion is that the New Imperialism began to affect East Asia not much later than Africa.

Research Interests:
Prof. van de Ven's research interest is primarily focused on the History of the Chinese Communist Party before 1949; the history of warfare in modern China from the Taiping Rebellion to the Civil War between the Communists and the Nationalists; the history of Chinese globalization in the 1850-1950 period. He is currently working on a book about the Chinese Maritime Customs Service.
Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi, Reader in Politics, University of Westminster
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Compelling Cohesion: Varieties of "Liberal" Intolerance in the Obama Era

Abstract:
The recent concerted assaults on multiculturalism from both official and popular sources in Europe and the US signal a departure from the values of liberal pluralism, or a defence of liberalism against "illiberal" challenges. And how can the alternative policies favouring "community cohesion" be reconciled with liberal values? Is it possible to have a multicultural society without multiculturalism in a democratic context? And does the election of America's first African-American President suggest a triumph for multicultural inclusiveness? This paper attempts to explore the issues thrown up by recent expressions of unease in the West about multiculturalism, sentiments which for the first time appear to unite left and right, and to be directed mainly against the Muslim presence, now seen by many as a potential threat both to security and values. As a leading US Congressman who argues that 85% of American Muslims are "enemies of the US" plans to conduct hearings on American Muslims' support for terrorism, and as David Cameron follows David Blunkett and joins Angela Merkel in announcing the death of multiculturalism, are we witnessing the rise of a new form of "militant liberalism" or something more sinister?

Research Interests:
I am currently working on an ESRC/AHRC-funded project entitled: "Narratives of Insecurity, Democratization and the Justification of (Mass) Violence". The project incorporates three interconnected studies examining the roots and dynamics of mass violence in Darfur in Sudan in comparative perspectives; shifting rhetoric of selected Islamic extremist groups, and the way rhetoric about threats to security undermines democratic politics and strengthens autocratic regimes.
Dr Masaro Tamamoto, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Email: mt464@cam.ac.uk

Post-war Japan: An Autopsy

Abstract:
After suffering a long illness, post-war Japan died literally of old age. In 2009, the people voted out the Liberal-Democratic party, whose almost uninterrupted hold of government had been synonymous with the post-war era. The rise of Japan after 1945 and the current paralysis can be explained by the power of organization, by the way society and everyday life have been systematically bureaucratized. The presentation aims to parse the conformity, deference and risk aversion complex, which upheld the post-war system. Japan today faces another crisis of modernity and is in need of a new social contract.

Research Interests:
Dr Tamamoto is interested in the question of national identity and international relations. He uses the Japanese experience to address this general question. He looks at Japan's relations with the West, Asia and Islam. Dr Tamamoto is now at work on "Post-war Japan: An Obituary/An Encomium," touching, for instance, on how Japan contributed to the redefinition of our understanding of race and culture in international relations.
The Commodification of Religion

Abstract:
This paper examines the cultural logics behind the intimate and explicit link between money and religion in Chinese religious culture. In contrast to the Christian model of the tithe, Chinese worshippers and religious devotees are more like consumers of religious and ritual services, paying various sums of money depending on the ritual occasion and the efficacy level of the ritual specialists or deities (and sometimes ghosts). I will look at the individual, the household and the community as units engaging in religious consumerism and explore the reasons behind the explosive growth of religious commodification in reform-era China in the past thirty years.

Research Interests:
Dr Chau is an Anthropologist whose research interests focus on, amongst others, Chinese religious culture, rituality, modalities of doing religion, religion and technology, religion and materiality (e.g. relics), forms of powerful writing, hosting as a cultural idiom, social and cultural transformations in contemporary China, etc.
Dr Brigitte Steger, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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Thighs wide open, hair loose: gender specific attitudes towards napping in Japanese public transport

Abstract:
Large numbers of both men and women sleep (*inemuri*) on Japanese trains. *Inemuri* is often explained by a high level of public safety in Japan. Media discourse, however, reveals gender differences in attitudes toward public napping. I will discuss how the public space of trains has been negotiated in the Japanese past and present and what makes napping in public safe. In particular, I will elaborate on gender-specific rules of public behaviour and gender relations, as well as the role *inemuri* plays in these negotiations.

Research Interests:
Brigitte Steger specializes in Japanese society, with particular emphasis on the cultural history and anthropology of daily life. In her research, she has always been intrigued by questions of the cultural and social embeddedness of seemingly natural, bodily matters and daily life. She is currently finishing a last book manuscript on social and cultural aspects of sleep (incl. napping). Other research interests include how people measured and experienced time in pre-modern as well as the modernisation of midwifery in modern Japan. In April she is starting a new research project on notions and practices of cleanliness in Japan, particularly in the kitchen.
Dr Saeko Yazaki, Centre of Islamic Studies
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Islamic Mysticism and Abu Talib al-Makki: The Role of the Heart

Abstract:
Both in everyday language and religious metaphor, the heart often embodies the true self and is considered to be the seat of emotion in many cultures. Many Muslim thinkers have attempted to clarify the nature of Sufism using its metaphorical image, particularly in the tenth and eleventh centuries. This paper introduces one of these early mystical writers, al-Makki (d. 996), who elucidates the role of the heart in detail in his work, The Nourishment of Hearts. The paper explores this work as a manual on ethics and examines al-Makki’s influence on later scholars, including the Andalusian Jewish judge Ibn Baquda (d. after 1080). Originally written in Judaeo-Arabic, Ibn Baquda’s famous book, The Right Guidance to the Religious Duties of Hearts, gained great popularity as a moral guidebook in Jewish tradition. This paper touches upon a dynamic interaction between Jewish and Islamic and / or Arabic writings.

Research Interests:
Main research interests include mystical dimensions of religion; comparison between monotheistic and non-monotheistic faiths; theories and practices of Sufism, Shinto and Buddhism; comparative analysis between doctrines of Ibn Arabi, Moses Maimonides, meister Eckhart and Dogen Zenji; cultural exchange via the Silk road; concept of purification in belief; doubts in faith; image of light in religion and religious art; use and role of music in religion; visual and vocal effects of language in religion.
Prof. Roel Sterckx, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies  
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Ecology, philosophy, and early Chinese texts: a medley of methods

Abstract  
In recent years several studies have appeared in China and the West that seek to trace ideas on environmental awareness and sustainable development to the world of thought preserved in classical Chinese texts. Underlying much of this analysis is the stereotypical notion that relationships between human beings and the environment in traditional China were somehow less characterised by an emphasis on the domination and utilisation of nature but instead on ideals of harmonious coexistence. In reality, however, there is a source base that suggests that the Chinese pre- and early imperial state has consistently attempted to harbour natural resources and mould nature. It has done so, for instance, by mobilising populations for collective labour projects, often on a vast scale and with a high degree of compulsion; but also, ideologically, by asserting the primacy of the collective over the individual and by overriding local concerns in the name of the supposedly broader interests of empire. How then does the researcher bridge this seeming gap between ideology and historical reality, and wherein lies the value of using early Chinese philosophical texts to gain an understanding of the cultural ecology of pre-modern Chinese society? Since most of our sources engage in discussions of the natural world as an analogy for human affairs, they present significant challenges in interpretation. To contextualize these challenges I will compare and contrast a number of key ideas that recur in philosophical texts with materials preserved in legal and calendrical records. Such exercise will show how different genres of texts in early China inspired different concepts of nature and proposed different strategies on how humans were to manage its resources.

Research Interests  
Current Projects: I am a cultural historian with an anthropological curiosity in texts and material culture. Some of my work has been inspired by questions raised in the history of science. I am interested in the ways in which knowledge about the natural world was organized in traditional China and, more generally, the cultural ecology of pre-modern China. I also work on the interplay between moral and material values in early China (the Warring States, Qin and Han periods) including the religious economy, gift culture, and ideas about wealth and poverty.
Prof. Charles Melville, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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Persian art in context

Abstract:
My current research focuses on the writing and illustration of history in the Middle Ages in Iran, from approximately the 13th to the 15th centuries but with a significant coda in the Safavid period (16th-17th centuries). The production of historical literature increased enormously in the Mongol period (1258 onwards), together with a florescence of Persian poetry more generally, and the beginnings of miniature/ manuscript painting. This was partly inspired by the so-called Iranian National Epic, the Shahnama (or Book of Kings), by Firdausi (d. 1025). The historiography, and the art, were primarily didactic and exemplary in tone, with the stories of ancient Iran (rather than more specifically Islamic models) being used as a means to promote traditional concepts of kingship and pride in Iranian culture.

Research Interests:
Charles Melville’s main research interests are in the history and historiography of Iran in the Mongol to Safavid periods, and the illustration of Persian manuscripts. Recent publications include edited volumes of Safavid Persia (1996), Shahnama Studies (2006), and ‘Millennium of the Shahnama of Firdausi’ (Iranian Studies, 2010, with Firuza Abdullaeva); The Persian Book of Kings. Ibrahim Sultan’s Shahnama (2008, also with Firuza Abdullaeva) and Epic of the Kings. The art of Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh (2010, with Barbara Brend).
The Sun, the Scorpion and the Eagle. Preliminary Notes on the Alchemical Fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection

Abstract:
In my presentation, I am going to deal with the alchemical fragments preserved in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah collection and show their importance for the study of Medieval alchemy as practiced by Jews in Islamic lands. I will briefly describe the Genizah collection in the UL and underline the prominent role of Egypt in the history of alchemy. I will then concentrate on the contents of some interesting alchemical fragments that were recently brought to my attention and outline the directions of future research in this field.

Research Interests:
As a research assistant at the Genizah Research Unit in the UL, my main duty is to prepare descriptions of fragments of manuscripts that came to Cambridge from the storage room – the genizah – of the Ibn Ezra synagogue in Cairo. The content of these fragments is extremely varied, and they represent the only extant first-hand sources on a wide range of aspects of intellectual and daily life around the Mediterranean basin during the Middle Ages. This is particularly true for the fragments of alchemical treatises and practical recipes for the transmutation of metals that are found in the Collection. Given my expertise in Medieval Arabic and Hebrew alchemy, I have recently embarked on an analysis of the alchemical material preserved in the Genizah, in order to detect its principal features and trace its sources.
Dr Josef (Yousef) Meri, The Centre for the Study of Jewish-Muslim Relations
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Ezekiel's Shrine in Iraq and Muslim-Jewish Relations

Abstract:
The Prophet Ezekiel's shrine located in the Iraqi village of Kifl between Hilla and Najaf was a major Jewish pilgrimage centre throughout the Middle Ages and down to the 20th century. Yet Muslims also venerated the Prophet whom they referred to as Dhū‘l-Kifl or al-Nabī Ḥızqīl and Jewish and Muslim keepers served the shrine from the early Middle Ages. During the 14th century the Mongol ruler Öljeitü seized the shrine. This talk will offer an assessment of the historical significance of the shrine to both communities.

Research Interest:
Dr Meri is a specialist in medieval Islamic history and civilisation and the academic study of Muslim-Jewish relations. His research and teaching interests focus on ritual practice in Islam and Judaism; Jews of the Islamic world; popular religion, pilgrimage and holy persons in Judaism and Islam; travel, Hajj and ziyara; bibliographic methods in the study of Muslim-Jewish relations.
Prof. Nicholas Postgate, Department of Archaeology
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The longevity of Mesopotamian wisdom

Abstract:
Drawing heavily on the work of two distinguished former members of the Faculty (Sebastian Brock and Clive Holes), this short talk will describe how some of the compositions we meet in Sumerian literature all of 4000 years ago are just the first in a long line of a genre of "wisdom" literature which can be followed through later cuneiform sources, with spin off into Classical Greek and Latin literature, into Aramaic and Syriac and even down to the vernacular literature of the modern Arab world.

Research Interests:
Nicholas Postgate works primarily on the society and economy of Mesopotamia in historical times. Currently, while on a Leverhulme Fellowship, he is preparing a book on the nature of government in the Middle Assyrian state. Committed to the value of matching documentary and archaeological evidence, his work exploits the cuneiform sources to complement the results from excavations, previously at a 3rd millennium Sumerian city in South Iraq (Abu Salabikh), and more recently at a rural administrative centre in western Cilicia (Kilise Tepe).
Some Varieties of 'Composition' (Taʾlīf) in Ninth Century Arabic Thought

Abstract:
Taʾlīf as a term emerges in a wide variety of Arabic texts written in the ninth century. I propose to trace some of its occurrences in several burgeoning intellectual disciplines: Greek-Arabic philosophy; music; and dialectical theology. Its primary meanings are 'harmony' and 'affinity' yet it was endowed with an intriguing range of significations: the 'composition' of music as the 'harmony' of the cosmos; the 'affinity' between soul and body; the 'aggregation' of atoms. I will conclude by pondering the implications for its emergence by the middle of the ninth century as the standard term for the 'composition' of books.

Research Interests:
My current research focuses on the extensive corpus of a ninth century intellectual Abū ʿUthmān al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868-9), widely hailed as the 'father of Arabic prose'. He lived and wrote in Basra and Baghdad and was connected with the major power-brokers of his time, from caliphs to elite functionaries, from viziers to chief judges, serving in their retinues in the capacity of counsellor and adviser. His extant works include two foundational texts: The Book of Living Beings, a seven volume survey of God's creation; and the Book of Clarity and Clarification, a three volume dissection of the human communication process and analysis of Arabic as God's chosen language. We also have works on ethics, epistemology, religious and political issues such as the Imamate, and law, to say nothing of debates between blacks and whites, concubines and slave-boys, works on misers, the lame, halting and the blind, and singing-girls. Al-Jāḥiẓ was a master of the newly emergent technology of paper books and his writings figure the crossfertilisation of the Arabic translations of Greek scientific and philosophical works, the development of legal reasoning, exegesis of the Qurʾān and the consolidation of Arabic grammar, the study of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, and dialectical theology. They reveal that for their elite patrons an ʿAbbasid polity was unthinkable without the quest for knowledge.
Dr Mark Strange, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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Writing and reading history in medieval China: the case of *Zi zhi tong jian*

Abstract:
In 1084 the famous Chinese statesman and historian Sima Guang presented to the imperial throne his *Zi zhi tong jian*. It would become the keystone written history of early imperial China. With Sima Guang’s work as its focus, this paper will explore some of the assumptions that underlay the writing and reading of historiography in medieval China. It will investigate above all the extent to which contemporary political concerns informed the historical accounts of Sima Guang and his contemporaries. It will show that works of historiography like *Zi zhi tong jian* served a more nuanced function than much later scholarship suggests.

Research Interests:
My present research is on Chinese traditional historiography. My doctoral thesis examined the construction of the most prominent work of eleventh-century historiography, the keystone written history of early imperial China, Sima Guang’s *Zi zhi tong jian*. I investigated and demonstrated the ways in which that work was coloured by its author’s personal political and social experiences, and his current commitments – by spin, in fact. I addressed questions of historical and literary authority that drive all my research. I continue to work on representations of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (c.317-581), a period that supplied the focus of my doctoral studies. I also have interests in Chinese traditional narrative and textual criticism.
Dr John Swenson-Wright, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
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Trilateralism, Nation-Building and the Limitations of IR Theory: Cold War interactions between Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

Abstract:
The talk will analyse post-1945 efforts by successive US administrations to balance their desire to promote democratization and political reform in the Republic of Korea with the need to maintain strong political and security alliances with both Japan and South Korea.

Research Interests:
John Swenson-Wright is a specialist in the international relations and politics of East Asia, with particular reference to Japan and the Korean peninsula. His current research encompasses contemporary security and political issues in the region (especially in relation to the political challenge posed by North Korea), as well as the Cold War in East Asia as a historical phenomenon.
Mr Yuval Evri, Visiting Scholar, Centre of Islamic Studies
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Translation without Original: Joseph Meyouhas and the Hebrew translation of the Palestinian Bible Tales

Abstract:
The talk will consider the historiographical debate surrounding this issue as well as recently declassified archival material that casts new light on our understanding of this issue in the wider context of Cold War and East Asian studies.

Research Interests:
National Identity, Language and Territory; Imperialism and Nationalism in the turn of 20th century Palestine; Arab-Jews in Palestine. My current research focuses on the Network of Palestinian-Jews that operated in Jerusalem of the end of the 19th century in common associations and networks of knowledge, politics and culture.
South Asian grammatical traditions: their history within the larger history

Abstract:
Ancient South Asia was home to a very sophisticated linguistic tradition, which played a key role in the social, cultural and political history of the region. Despite a considerable bulk of scholarship on this topic, many aspects remain unclear and need to be further investigated and properly understood: among others, the origins of Sanskrit grammar and the social conditions that allowed its development; its bearing on the emergence of Sanskrit as the most important language of intellectual and literary production across the subcontinent for more than two millennia; and its relation with Tamil grammar (the oldest description of a "vernacular" language) and other later grammars of various languages in South and South East Asia.

Research Interests:
My main areas of research are the Sanskrit grammatical traditions and the linguistic and philosophical speculations that stemmed from them, and their place in the broader historical context of early Brahmanism. I am a member of an international team led by Prof. Saroja Bhate (Pune) working on the critical edition of the Kāśikā Vṛtti (7th c. CE), the first complete commentary on the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, the first part of which was published in 2009. I am also preparing an annotated translation of the Sādhanasamuddeśa of Bhartṛhari with the commentary of Helārāja, from the third book of the Vākyapadīya. In recent years I have developed an interest in Classical Tamil and its intellectual traditions.
The alphabet that never was: the possible Egyptian origin of a Near-Eastern writing system

Abstract:
The familiar ABC arrangement of the alphabet has spread over most of the world. But there is a second arrangement which is different, and less well known. What is this second arrangement, and where does it come from?

Research Interests:
John Ray is Herbert Thompson Professor of Egyptology. His research concentrates on the Egyptian language, particularly demotic and Coptic. He is currently working on demotic dream texts and their role in divination. He has also worked on Achaemenid Egypt, the decipherment of the Carian language, and the history of decipherment in general. He is a regular reviewer for the Times Literary Supplement and some other publications.
The Neo-Aramaic database project

Abstract: The North Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects form a very diverse group of Aramaic dialects that were spoken until modern times in Northern Iraq, North West Iran and South Eastern Turkey by Christian and Jewish communities. These are among the last remaining living vestiges of the Aramaic language, which was one of the major languages of the region in antiquity. Unfortunately the dialects are now in danger of extinction and it is an urgent task to study and document them while competent speakers can still be located. In 2004 I initiated the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic database project in AMES, the purpose of which was to document all the surviving dialects of this group. This has involved tracking down the final speakers of the dialects throughout the world. Innovative database technology has been developed to store the material that has been gathered in the field and facilitate its efficient retrieval and analysis. A demonstration will be given of the database in my presentation.

Research Interests: In recent years much of my research time has been devoted to documenting the endangered Neo-Aramaic dialects. I also have research interests in Hebrew and Arabic. My work on Hebrew is concentrated on the medieval period, with particular attention to medieval pronunciation traditions of Hebrew and medieval Hebrew grammatical thought. Many of the medieval grammatical texts are written in Judaeo-Arabic (Arabic written in Hebrew script) or Judaeo-Persian (Persian written in Hebrew script). My work on Arabic relates mainly to early Arabic legal and administrative documents written on papyrus datable to the first three Islamic centuries (7th-9th centuries CE).
Prof. Yasir Suleiman, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and Centre of Islamic Studies
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Ethnography, Erasure, and Folk linguistics

Abstract:
The presentation aims to consider different aspects of my research into the place of language in the social world against the background of identity and conflict. The presentation will argue for a greater use of ethnography in dealing with this topic to reach meanings that quantitative research cannot capture. This will be exemplified by interrogating the folk linguistic conceptualisations of Arabic and how these map onto the findings of empirical linguistics. The notion of erasure will be used as a prism to look at how physical erasure in situations of conflict is coupled with erasure in the sociolinguistic field.

Research Interests:
Professor Suleiman's research covers the cultural politics of the Middle East with special focus on identity, conflict, diaspora studies and modernization in so far as these issues relate to language, modern Arabic literature, translation and memory. He also conducts research in Arabic grammatical theory and the Arabic intellectual tradition in the pre-modern period.
Prof. Peter Kornicki, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

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Script, print and vernacularization in East Asian Buddhism

Abstract
This is part of my research on the use of Chinese texts and the process of vernacularization in East Asia. In this short paper I shall consider how Buddhist texts were transmitted, what the connections with the development of printing were and what the constraints on translation were. In this connection, the Tangut, Uighur, Tibetan and Mongolian versions of Buddhist texts have much to tell us about the transmission of Chinese translations and their reception in Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

Research Interests:
For much of my career I have been studying the history of the book in Japan, in order to get a better idea of how ideas and literature circulated, how books were read and what factors determined their reception. I have published catalogues of the large collection of early Japanese books in Cambridge University Library and of various other collections in Manchester, Lille and Moscow; in 1989 I launched the Union Catalogue of Early Japanese Books in Europe project, which is now accessible on-line. In 1998 I published “The book in Japan: a cultural history from the beginnings to the nineteenth century” which explores a range of issues from censorship to lending libraries, and in 2002 I published a translation of the fourth volume of the diary of the Iwakura Mission, which travelled around Europe in 1872-3 and which observed contemporary Europe from unfamiliar perspectives. Other research interests include: History of the book in Korea, History of the book in Vietnam, Manuscripts in the age of print, Cultural translation in East Asia, Japanese bibliography
Dr Mike Shin, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Email: mds71@cam.ac.uk

The Print Industry in Early Modern Korea

Abstract:
Part of my research has focused on the role that the industrialization of print played in the rise of modern nationalism in the early 20th century. Little research has been done on this topic because of a lack of sources, but enough exists to give the general contours of the industry. My talk will present my findings on the growth of a modern print industry, the social background of its major figures, and its central role in colonial politics. I argue that print capitalism fully emerged in Korea after 1919, a development that led to changes in both class relations and the form of political movements.

Research Interests:
Mike Shin's research focuses on the intellectual history of the colonial period, with a particular focus in using intellectual history to examine the connections between socioeconomic developments and cultural production.

This event is being held with the kind sponsorship of the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and the Centre of Islamic Studies