

CONFERENCE

Collecting the Muslim World

2-3 November 2017 | 09:30-17:00 hrs
University Library | Heinsius Room | Witte Singel 27 | Leiden

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COLLECTING THE MUSLIM WORLD

Collecting has been an important strategy for scholars to study the history, languages and cultures of the Muslim world since the Renaissance. Understanding these “foreign societies” started with accumulating sources to be used as documents for studies. The stress on collecting in oriental studies was part of a more general current in the burgeoning humanities and social sciences, especially in history, philology, archaeology and anthropology. This approach to research reached its apogee in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, with scholars leaving on expeditions and bringing back massive collections to be stored and displayed in imperial museums of antiquities, arts, and ethnology. Nowadays scholars generally take a much more critical view at their predecessors’ acquisitive ethos, questioning the epistemological, political and ethical dimensions of these practices.

The present workshop focuses on studying scholarly collecting as a research strategy embedded in a specific intellectual and political context, hence understood as a historical and social phenomenon. A certain number of studies on the histories of collecting exist, but they are often rather straightforward stories. We would like to explicitly look at collecting as a process and as a social relationship, addressing the power dynamics and

the agency of the parties concerned. Who should and could collect what materials, from whom, for what purposes? What could people not collect? We intend to move beyond stereotypical accounts of “plunder” by systematically analyzing the social relations between the parties involved. This not only means looking at the classical orientalist issue of the power-knowledge nexus, but also scrutinizing the epistemological underpinnings. What did scholars consider to be proper knowledge, and hence what kind of “sources” and “documents” did they look for? How should these sources be acquired, stored, organized, displayed, published, and analyzed?

Collecting has many dimensions. In this workshop we primarily focus on cognitive aspects. But this should not discourage participants from including aesthetic, psychological, social, political, or economic dimensions. We would like to concentrate on the relationship between collecting and scholarly research in the broadest sense. This means that we include art historical, philological, and ethnographic forms of collecting, paying attention to materials as diverse as art objects, manuscripts and printed books, archaeological and ethnographic objects, but also images and sound recordings.

The present workshop is a sequel to an earlier meeting with the same title at Leiden University in 2011. In the first meeting the collecting of books was our primary interest was, as it was organized at the

occasion of the retirement of Jan Just Witkam as professor for the study of manuscript culture in Muslim societies. In this second meeting we will again pay attention to the collection of written materials, but also focus on other objects, such as images. We would appreciate it if participants would relate their research to existing literature, for example the volumes *Discovering Islamic Art* edited by Stephen Vernoit (2000) and *Archives, Museums and Collecting Practices in the Modern Arab World* edited by Sonja Mejcher-Atassi and John Pedro Schwartz (2012).

At the same time we would like to encourage participants to build on important insights produced by scholars in other fields. The history of collections, taste, and display has flourished in the study of European art, going far beyond the more traditional interest in the “pedigree” of art works, or the anecdotal history of collections. Dominique Poulot’s books on the notion of “patrimoine” and the multiple linkages between museums and politics are seminal in the field. Another important influence comes from anthropology, with its recent interest in “materiality” and “the social life of things” (Appadurai 1988). Research done on the history of ethnographic collections, primarily from Oceania and America, but also from Asia and Africa, stimulates us to look at collecting as a process and a social relation, taking place in specific contexts of power relations, politics, economics, and cultural

understandings. Nicholas Thomas has identified many of our current concerns in his work on art, material culture, and collecting in the Pacific, starting with his book *Entangled Objects* (1991).

Contributors to the workshop at Leiden University are encouraged to address these issues in the social and intellectual history of collecting in and of the Muslim world through the study of specific cases, linking these to more general issues.

All speakers will have 30 minutes to present their papers. At the end of each session there will be 30 minutes for discussion.

A publication of the papers, together with other materials presented at the earlier workshop, is envisaged as an edited volume in the series *Leiden Studies on Islam and Society*, published by Brill in Leiden, in honour of our colleague, friend, and passionate professional and private collector Jan Just Witkam.

Thursday 2 November 2017

University Library, Heinsius Room

9.30 – 11.00 Session 1: Collecting Images and Ethnographic Objects

9.30 – 10.00 **Mercedes Volait**, *Collecting
Cairo through Drawing,
Photography and Artifact:
Amateur Arthur-Ali Rhoné and
the Production of Antiquarian
Knowledge on the “Well-
protected” in the 1880s*

10.00 – 10.30 **François Pouillon**, « *Bons
baisers de Titaouine...* »
*Collecting Postcards of the
Maghreb as a Source for
Academic Research*

10.30 – 11.00 Discussion

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 – 13.00 Session 2: Reconstructing a Past, Collecting in the Orient

11.30 – 12.00 **Deniz Türker**, *Abdüllatif
Subhi Paşa’s Cabinet of Coins:
Ottoman Bibliophilia, History,
and Egypt*

- 12.00 – 12.30 **Alain Messaoudi**, *Collecting and Production of Knowledge in Algeria: Paul Eudel and the Jeweler's Craft*
- 12.30 – 13.00 Discussion
- 13.00 – 14.45 *Lunch at the Faculty Club*
- 15.00 – 17.00 Session 3: Collecting and Exhibiting, Public and Private**
- 15.00 – 15.30 **Mohammed Saïd El Mortaji**, *Collecting Islamic Arts: First Exhibitions and Contemporary Reframing in France and Morocco*
- 15.30 – 16.00 **Jan Just Witkam**, *Collecting as Profession*
- 16.00 – 16.30 Discussion
- 16.30- 17.00 Concluding remarks for the first day
- 19.00- *Dinner at Restaurant Puur, Pieterskerk Choorsteeg 9*

Friday 3 November 2017

University Library, Heinsius Room

- 9.30 – 11.00** **Session 5: Libraries and Book Collectors in the Muslim World**
- 9.30 – 10.00 **Annabel Teh Gallop**,
Collecting Impressions of the Muslim World: Islamic Seals from Southeast Asia
- 10.00 – 10.30 **Olly Akkerman**, *Collecting and other Archival Practices: Manuscript Biographies of the Bohra Archive in Baroda*
- 10.30 – 11.00 Discussion
- 11.00 – 11.30 *Break*
- 11.30 – 13.00** **Session 6: Monuments and Museums in the Muslim World**
- 11.30 – 12.00 **Virginia Cochin-Cassola**,
Collecting the Muslim World in the Cradle of Islam: An Obvious Process?
- 12.00 – 12.30 **Dina Bakhoun**, *Collecting and Restoring Mamluk Minbars during Egypt's Modern Period*

12.30 – 13.00 Discussion

13.00 – 14.30 *Lunch at the Faculty Club*

**Please note change of venue: National
Museum of Ethnology**

**15.00 – 16.30 Session 7: Scholarly
Collectors and their
Museum Afterlives**

15.00 – 15.30 **Léon Buskens**, *Collecting
Mecca: Snouck Hurgronje, the
Materiality of the Holy City in
1884-1885, and its Afterlife*

15.30 – 16.30 **Annette Schmidt**, Guided
tour of the temporary Hajj
exhibition; Viewing of the Hijaz
and Mecca exhibits at the West
Asia Department, collected by
Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in
1884-1885

16.30 – 17.30 Discussion and concluding
remarks

19.00- *Dinner at Restaurant
BurgerZaken, Breestraat 123*

The order of abstracts is based on the programme

Mercedes Volait, *Collecting Cairo through Drawing, Photography and Artifact: Amateur Arthur-Ali Rhoné and the Production of Antiquarian Knowledge on the “Well-protected” in the 1880s*

The development of object-based or object-oriented research in the formative years of the study of Islamic art and architecture represented another drive for art acquisition in the Middle East. Following the flourishing of antiquarianism during the long 19th c., artefacts and material culture were sought after by antiquarians, initially in Europe but increasingly in the non-Western world, for scholarly purpose. Historians long held negative views of antiquarian knowledge. It was seen as failing to provide, besides meticulous research, an edifying interpretation of the past.



Anciens carreaux de faïence, style persan, collection Arthur Rhoné (author's objects reproduced in his book L'Égypte à petites journées, le Caire d'autrefois, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910, p. 259).

Since the return to careful empirical scholarship, and the recent “material turn” in the humanities, representations have shifted again and antiquarian work is being reassessed. The lecture will discuss along this perspective the work of early Islamicists that studied Middle Eastern material culture for historical purposes, and in particular the research and writing of French “antiquarian” Arthur-Ali Rhoné, who spent some thirty years mapping the architecture and urban fabric of historic Cairo using drawings and photographs, and object-based evidence to contradict existing assumptions.

Mercedes Volait is CNRS Research professor at INHA (Institut national d’histoire de l’art, Paris) and a specialist of Orientalism in architecture and antiquarianism in connection with Cairo during the long nineteenth



century. Her education has been in architecture (Diploma, 1982), Middle Eastern studies (PhD, 1993) and Art history (“Habilitation”, 2007). An associate researcher to the Research Department of the Victoria and Albert museum since 2015, she currently works on the project “19th century Islamic art collecting in Egypt and Syria”.

François Pouillon, *Bons baisers de Titaouin : Collecting Postcards of the Maghreb as a Source for Academic Research*

Collecting postcards of the Maghreb as a source for academic research is as an addiction hiding under a scientific justification. This could probably be said of all research, but in this case it is obvious. With antique postcards we have a superposition of different addictions depending on the time period: an encyclopedic project with publishers wishing to obtain pictures from all around the world: that gave “the golden age of postcards” (1900-1930); the first wave of collectors, assembling images of regions or topics related to them; later, nostalgia and historical recollection drove researchers and finally publishers making books out of albums. I will try to analyze the genealogy of these addictions to shed light on the stochastic constitutions of these archives without



professional archivists. I will use as examples several different corpus about Maghreb at the eve of the 20th Century: colonial conquest (especially Morocco and the Tunisian South during the First World War); geographical and ethnographic documentation; and finally, exotic eroticism.



François Pouillon is an anthropologist at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris), specializing in the Arab World. He has published widely on nomadic society and history of representations of the Middle East. He is the editor of the *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française* (Paris, IISMM/Kathala, third edition 2012) and co-editor of *After Orientalism. Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriation* (Leiden, Brill, 2014). Recent publications: *Exotisme et intelligibilité: Itinéraires d'Orient* (Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2017) & *Bédouins d'Arabie. Structures anthropologiques et mutations contemporaines* (IISMM/Karthala, 2017)

Deniz Türker, *Abdüllatif Subhi Paşa's Cabinet of Coins: Ottoman Bibliophilia, History, and Egypt*

This paper is a biographical study of Abdüllatif Subhi Paşa (d. 1886), a prominent and pioneering Ottoman numismatist of the nineteenth century. The biographical approach reveals that Subhi cultivated an interest in pre-Islamic and Islamic coinage through his private studies as a young bureaucrat-in-training in the court of Mehmed Ali, the governor of Egypt and Sudan. It is my intention to show that coin collections were part and parcel to the intellectual interests of the ministerial members of the early Tanzimat (Ottoman reform period), the men-of-letters who actually designed its new institutions and political entities, because they were



reading the likes of Ibn Khaldun, and his pupil, Al-Maqrizi—historians who approached economic history by studying coins—to aid in governmental restructuring. The paper also intends to reflect upon Subhi and his circle of bureaucrat-scholars as individuals who laid the groundwork of the Ottoman museological movement that Osman Hamdi Bey, the first Muslim director of the imperial museum, inherited.

Deniz Türker

has received her Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies and History of Art at Harvard University. Since October 2016, she has been the Fari Sayeed Fellow in Islamic art at Pembroke College and an affiliated lecturer in the history of art



department at University of Cambridge.

Alain Messaoudi, *Collecting and Production of Knowledge in Algeria: Paul Eudel and the Jeweler's Craft*

Paul Eudel is an important figure in the world of late 19th-century collectors. He is distinguished by his collecting practice, and even more by the fact he wrote about his activities. His column about the auctions at Salle Drouot, along with the profiles he wrote of some of his contemporaries (Champfleury, in particular), indicate that he took an interest in the meaning of the act of collecting, applied to a wide variety of objects. This paper examines the meaning he gave to the collection of jewels and North African objects he created at the end of his life and the way in which he inscribed his collection, carried out primarily in Algeria, as part of a scholarly research on the techniques of making objects and their uses, with an ethnographic dimension.



Alain Messaoudi is

Associate Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Nantes (CRHIA), and is currently working at InVisu a joint research unit of the CNRS in Paris. He worked on the history of Orientalism (Arabists and Colonial France (1780-1930). Scholars, interpreters, mediators, Lyon, ENS Éditions, 2015, grand



prix des rendez-vous de l'histoire du monde arabe 2017). His current research focuses on the development of fine art education and exhibition and the circulation of artists in Egypt and the Maghreb between the 1880s and the 1960s.

Mohammed Saïd El Mortaji, *Collecting Islamic Arts: First Exhibitions and Contemporary Reframing in France and Morocco*

The present communication aims to analyze the system of ideological and institutional representations, by evocating mainly the decisive moment of the appropriation of the Islamic objects through the exhibitions organized in the beginning of the last century. These events coincide with universal and colonial expositions. The French public, like the rest of Europeans, discovered during these exhibitions Islamic arts, which were familiar only to scholars, diplomats, travelers and artists. Islamic art collections were massively introduced into the French cultural life, in particular through these universal expositions. The latter helped to reveal Islamic art and make it known.

The way collections are perceived is conditioned by the political context, the institutional frameworks and the socio-cultural activities that surround them. In fact, the passage of the objects from a specific cultural context to a private collection then to the museum, leads to a detachment of art from its original context and thus exposes it to contemplation as to scientific study. Therefore, we will analyze contemporary reframing in temporary and permanent exhibitions in French museums.

Mohamed Saïd El Mortaji

obtained his PhD in Museology from the University of Avignon et des pays de Vaucluse on the topic “Islamic Art in French museums” and is now University Professor of Museology at the University of Mohammed V in Rabat. He was a curator and coordinator of the program



“Cultural Heritage and the Creative Industries as Vectors for Development in Morocco -2008/2011” at the Directorate of Art, Ministry of Culture. His current field of studies focuses on the issues of studies of evaluation related to Moroccan museums and cultural heritage in Ksar el kebir, a city in north of Morocco.

Jan Just Witkam, *Collecting as Profession*

With a view on his own activities as a collector, Witkam not only discusses how private and institutional collecting go hand in hand, but he also describes the differences between the two different backgrounds. He sketches how his work as a professional collection maker for the Islamica in Leiden University was a logical continuation of his private collecting activities, and, how after his retirement from active service, he continued to collect, albeit in a different way. He describes how scholarly collecting has as a consequence the pursuit of other scholarly specializations, such as bibliography and philology in general, and paleography and codicology more in particular, and he gives an overview of the most basic elements in these branches of science. Finally, he discusses, tongue-in-cheek, a few of the adages that he formulated on the basis of his own personal discoveries in the field of collecting.

Jan Just Witkam

(Leiden, 1945) is a life-long private collector and was for many years a professional collector for Leiden University library. He has widely published on aspects of Islamic book culture (www.janjustwitkam.nl/publications/index.html).



From 2001-2010 he held the chair 'Manuscript Culture of the Islamic World' in Leiden University that was created for him. He is editor-in-chief of the Journal of Islamic Manuscripts, published by Brill's of Leiden. He is compiling the inventory of Oriental manuscripts in Leiden, of which 23 volumes of one thousand descriptions each are now available on-line. (<http://www.islamicmanuscripts.info/inventories/leiden/index.html>).

Annabel Teh Gallop, *Collecting Impressions of the Muslim World: Islamic Seals from Southeast Asia*

The study of Islamic seals involves an inherent dualism as a seal can be investigated either via its three-dimensional matrix, or its (generally) two-dimensional impression upon paper. As small valuable objects, often made of gemstones or precious metals, seal matrices tend to be encountered in museums, where they have been collected, stored and catalogued individually alongside items of similar physical size and appearance such as coins or amulets. On the other hand, Islamic seal impressions – usually stamped in ink or lampblack on letters or in manuscript books – are most commonly found in libraries or archives, but are rarely highlighted or catalogued in their own right. As such, Islamic seal impressions could not be ‘collected’ in the same way as matrices, save through wanton acts of destruction of the document of which they formed an integral part; a notable exception being Ottoman albums of seal impressions compiled by the engravers themselves. This paper will explore the impact of materiality on the collecting and documentation of seals from the Muslim world, focussing on Islamic seals from the Malay world of Southeast Asia, and noting a particular rise in interest in the Netherlands in the second half of the 19th century.



A collection of 14 seal impressions from Kalimantan compiled by J. Semmelink, ca.1870. Leiden, Museum Volkenkunde, 117.

Annabel Teh Gallop is head of the Southeast Asia section at the British Library in London. Her doctoral dissertation (at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, 2002) was on Malay seal inscriptions: a study in Islamic epigraphy from Southeast Asia, and she is currently preparing for publication a catalogue of Malay seals. Her main research interests are in Malay manuscripts, letters, documents and seals, and the art of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia. She was co-director of a British Academy-funded research project (2009-2012), Islam, trade and politics across the Indian Ocean, investigating Ottoman links with Southeast Asia.

Olly Akkerman, *Collecting and other Archival Practices: Manuscript Biographies of the Bohra Archive in Baroda*

The Alawi Bohras, a small but vibrant Ismaili community in India, almost entirely closed to outsiders, hold a secret Arabic manuscript culture that is enshrined and preserved in royal archives or khizānāt. Having had access to one of these khizānāt in Baroda, my presentation unravels the previously unstudied social, material, and scribal practices of this particular archive, focusing on collecting practices and strategies of its clerical custodians: the sacerdotal royal family of the Alawī Bohras.

In my presentation I frame “collecting” as an important archival practice and demonstrate that, through the constant gathering, collating, exchanging, acquiring, gifting, receiving, and endowing of manuscripts as commodities, the main actors of the archive, i.e. the royal custodians of the library, fulfill several roles as infallible religious authorities, scholars, collectors, and manuscript brokers at the same time. The paper thus aims at problematizing categories of collecting the Muslim world as the other and the self.

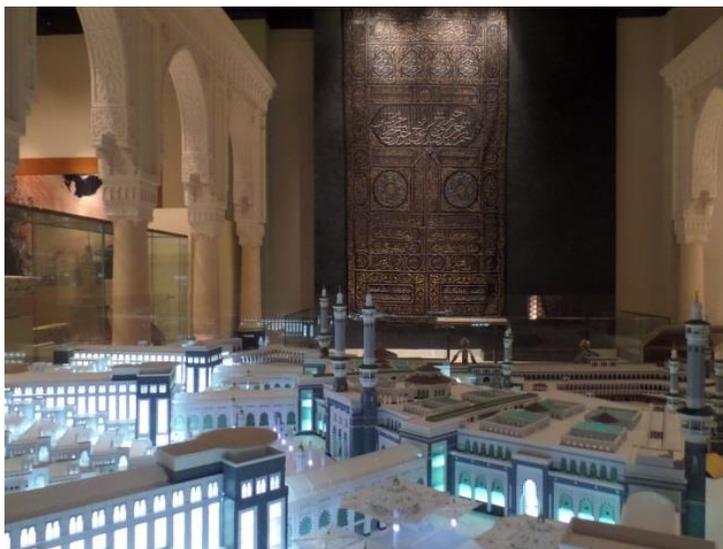
I furthermore argue that these various collecting practices, which can be observed and reconstructed through the biographies of Bohra manuscripts, often contain traces of new scribal practices, cultural and local appropriation, material circulation, and circulation across time, space, and often highly contested borders of communities.

Dr. Olly Akkerman is a University Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. Her forthcoming monograph, titled *The Alawi Bohras and the Making of a Neo-Fatimid Library: A Study in Social Codicology*, focusses on the material culture of Bohra archives, and the archival and codicological practices that surround it. She studied Arabic and Islamic Studies at Leiden and Utrecht University and subsequently obtained a PhD at the Berlin Graduate School for Muslim Cultures and Societies.



Virginia Cochin-Cassola, *Collecting the Muslim World in the Cradle of Islam: An Obvious Process?*

In 2011, the Prince Sultan bin Salman bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Saud, President of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, stated that the “Islamic antiquities in the Kingdom represent main face of antiquities of Islam”. This should not be surprising because the fact that Arabia is the cradle of Islam is a key element of the national identity the Saud family has been disseminating since the creation of the Kingdom in 1932. Nevertheless, the destruction of Islamic sites by the first Saudi rulers in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th centuries along with the recent destruction of archaeological elements caused by the extension of Mecca may raise some questions about the status of



remains and objects of Islam in its territory. On the other hand, the study of collecting and displaying in Saudi Arabia shows those Islamic antiquities have been progressively and definitely included in the heritage policy developed by the authorities for almost fifty years. This paper aims at presenting the processes and stakes of collecting Islamic items in Saudi Arabia at a time when the Kingdom is looking for a regenerate political, economical and cultural legitimacy.

Virginia Cassola-Cochin

holds a PhD in Civilisations and Museum Studies from the Université de Lorraine and the Ecole du Louvre. Her research focuses on the processes of collecting and displaying objects in Saudi Arabian museums. Her methodology is based on the combination of theoretical and practical aspects of the exhibition. She worked as an associate curator at the Musée de l'Homme and the Institut du monde arabe in Paris



Dina Bakhoum, *Collecting and Restoring
Mamluk Minbars during Egypt's Modern Period*

In December 1881, the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe (hereafter Comité) was established in Egypt. It was responsible for inventorying, restoring and collecting Arab (Islamic) art and architecture. By then, sources documenting Egypt's Arab monuments had already been published and antiquarians were collecting a variety of historic objects from mosques, sabîls (water dispensaries), houses, etc.

This presentation, taking the Comité's restoration processes and collection of wooden Mamluk minbars (pulpits) as a case study, will shed light on how the available and relevant sources were consulted and used by the Comité to support its restoration decisions. In addition, it will discuss the corpus of material produced by the Comité including its published bulletins and its non-published archival sources composed of photographs, drawings, correspondence files, specifications and contracts among others. The research aims at demonstrating how these documents along with a number of photographic collections produced during Egypt's modern period are significant resources for studying, researching and analyzing the material culture of the Muslim world and the transformations it went through.

Dina Bakhoum is an engineer and art historian specialized in cultural heritage conservation and management. She managed restoration projects of medieval Islamic architecture in Historic Cairo with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (2004-2012) and collaborates with the American Research Center in Egypt (2001-2004, 2013-present). She teaches courses on heritage conservation, the city of Cairo and Islamic art and architecture at the American University in Cairo and other institutions. Her PhD thesis at l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne in cotutelle with Universiteit Leiden is on the works of the Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe in Egypt (1881-1961).



Léon Buskens, *Collecting Mecca: Snouck Hurgronje, the Materiality of the Holy City in 1884-1885, and its Afterlife*

Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) published an “all encompassing” study of the Holy City of Mecca on the basis of his stay in Jedda and Mecca in 1884 and 1885, helped by later correspondence. The two text volumes give a view of its history and its daily life. The two portfolios of photographs and lithographs present views of the townscape, of its elite, commoners, the ritual of the pilgrimage, and of utensils and some luxury goods. In separate studies Snouck Hurgronje published his gatherings of proverbs and diverse other materials. Underlying these published results we can discern a certain understanding of scholarship in which collecting plays a pivotal role. In my presentation I try to reconstruct this underlying model for research. Snouck Hurgronje encouraged his students to continue this approach. He envisaged to bring together the results of collecting and studying in a series of foundations and institutions, which had both scholarly and political aims. After the Second World War later generations of scholars gradually started to lose interest in this model of research, considering a “collecting” approach to be antiquated, with collections falling into oblivion and institutions fading away. Recently researchers both in the Netherlands and in Arabia “rediscovered” the

collections and started to make use of them in new ways. Their “reinvention” and “recycling” of these collections, and their relationship to the original purposes of the collections, equally deserve our critical scrutiny.

Léon Buskens is an anthropologist studying law and culture in Muslim societies. One of his main research interests is how Muslims shape Islam in everyday life, in relation to other practices and to religious teachings. He has a longstanding interest in Morocco, and has more recently



also started to do some research in Indonesia. H also works on the history of oriental studies and anthropology, especially on the European study of Islamic law. At present he is director of the Netherlands Institute in Morocco (NIMAR), a branch of Leiden University in Rabat.

