

WEBINAR SERIES: INTERCULTURAL HERITAGE DIALOGUES ALONG THE SILK ROADS BETWEEN EGYPT AND CHINA

SESSION III: DOCUMENTS, MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE: TRACING HERITAGE THROUGH ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPTS

Tuesday, 8 September 2026, Zoom Webinar

10:00AM - 12:05PM (Cairo Time)

15:00PM - 17:05PM (Beijing Time)



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INTRODUCTION

Webinar Series:

Intercultural Heritage Dialogues along the Silk Roads between Egypt and China

The webinar series positions UNESCO as a global cultural forum for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and mutual understanding. Convened by the UNESCO Regional Office for Egypt and Sudan in cooperation with the China National Silk Museum, the series also serves as a flagship cultural initiative celebrating the 70th anniversary of Egypt–China diplomatic relations in 2026. Framed around the Silk Roads as both land and maritime corridors of exchange, the webinar series brings together interdisciplinary perspectives to explore four interlinked thematic sessions: (1) agricultural biodiversity and cultural landscapes; (2) desert and oasis cultural heritage; (3) cultural heritage exchanges by museums and archives; and (4) maritime silk roads and cultural heritage exchanges. Together, these sessions highlight how centuries of movement, trade, and cultural interaction shaped shared civilizational legacies across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The webinar series is firmly grounded in UNESCO’s cultural conventions and recommendations, including: (1) the 1972 World Heritage Convention to address cultural landscapes and sites; (2) the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage to reflect maritime exchanges; (3) the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to foreground living traditions, skills, and knowledge systems. The webinar series further aligns with the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, emphasizing creativity and intercultural dialogue, as well as the 2015 Recommendation on Museums and Collections and the 2015 Recommendation on Documentary Heritage, which underscore the role of museums, archives, and digital access in education and research.

SESSION III: Documents, Memory and Knowledge: Tracing Heritage through Archives and Manuscripts

Session 3 explores documentary heritage along the Silk Roads as a foundation for understanding the transmission of knowledge, cultural memory, and intellectual exchange across regions, focusing not only on the preservation of manuscripts, inscriptions, archival records, and audiovisual materials, but also on their role in reconstructing historical connections among communities. It highlights how documentary heritage has preserved the movements of ideas, languages, religions, and administrative practices across ancient China, Central Asia, and Egypt, while addressing contemporary challenges related to fragmented collections, preservation risks, multilingual interpretation, and unequal access to heritage resources. The presentations will examine current approaches to safeguarding documentary heritage through conservation, digitization, database development, and innovative technologies, as well as the importance of collaboration among archives, libraries, museums, and research institutions. By exploring new pathways for digital preservation, open access, and knowledge sharing, the session reflects UNESCO’s vision of documentary heritage as a shared memory of humanity and emphasizes the potential of digital transformation and international cooperation to strengthen the protection, accessibility, and sustainable transmission of Silk Roads heritage.

[Click Here to join the webinar via Zoom](#)

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AGENDA

Time	Activity
10:00am-10:05am	Webinar Introduction by UNESCO Regional Office for Egypt and Sudan/Liaison Office for the League of Arab State
10:05am-10:25am	<i>Documentary Worlds from Cairo to Bamiyan: Rethinking Connectivity across the Islamicate World</i> by Dr. Arezou Azad, Professor of National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilizations/Director of <i>Invisible East</i> Programme, University of Oxford
10:25am-10:45am	<i>Words as Portable Archives: Silk, Wine, and Storytelling between Egypt and China</i> by Dr. Orhan Elmaz, Head of Programme for Digital Humanities, University of St Andrews
10:45am-11:05am	<i>Documents, Memory, and Knowledge: Challenges of Archival Heritage and Manuscript Interpretation in Egypt</i> by Dr. Shreen Mohamed Amin, Head of Scientific Research, Education, and Sustainability at the Egyptian Museum, Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
11:05am-11:25am	<i>Special Exhibition: Museums Promoting Dialogue and Exchange on Chinese and Egyptian Cultural Heritage</i> by Dr. Jin Yang, Head of Programme for Museum Studies, Shaanxi Normal University
11:25am-11:45am	<i>What is "Seidenstrasse": Richthofen and the Silk Road networks</i> by Dr. Lang Xu, Researcher of Faculty of History, Nankai University
11:45am-12:05pm	Q&A session, led by Dr. Feng Jing, Chief of Culture Unit, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific

SPEAKERS

Dr. Arezou Azad is a historian of the medieval Persianate world, specialising in the social, economic, and cultural history of Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia. Her research combines history, philology, archaeology, and digital humanities to recover the lives of people through newly discovered documentary sources, placing the eastern Persianate world more firmly at the centre of the history of medieval Eurasia and the Silk Roads. She is Lauréate de la Chaire et Professeur Junior in the Art and Heritage of Afghanistan at the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (Inalco), Paris, and Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Invisible East Programme at the University of Oxford. She was previously a lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Birmingham (2013-2019). Through Invisible East, she lead an international research programme that edits, translates, digitises, and studies documentary texts in Persian, Judeo-Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Bactrian, Sogdian, Uyghur, and Chinese. Alongside her research, she works with schools, museums, and cultural organisations to make the history of the Persianate world accessible to wider audiences. Before returning to academia, she worked as a civilian peacekeeper with the United Nations in post-conflict societies in Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia, an experience that continues to inform her interest in the relationship between history, cultural heritage, and contemporary society.



Dr. Arezou Azad

Dr. Orhan Elmaz is a Senior Lecturer at the University of St Andrews, where he teaches multilingual Digital Humanities alongside classical and modern Arabic language, literature, and culture. His research brings linguistic traditions into dialogue with digital methods and cultural analysis, spanning linguistics, intellectual history, and transcultural studies. He has published on the Qur'an (including its use and misuse), Arabic and Semitic linguistics, and *One Thousand and One Nights*. His current research examines how Muslim feminist thinkers and reformists have articulated education as a fundamental right and a means of intellectual and social transformation. It traces the movement and transformation of these ideas through processes of translation, adaptation, and cultural exchange across Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority communities in the Middle East, Europe, and Central Asia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The research also considers literary representations of women's knowledge, education, and intellectual agency, including examples from *One Thousand and One Nights*. He is the author of *Studien zu den koranischen Hapaxlegomena unikaler Wurzeln* (Harrassowitz 2011), editor of *Endless Inspiration: One Thousand and One Nights in Comparative Perspective* (Gorgias 2020), and co-editor of *Languages of Southern Arabia* (Archaeopress, 2014) and *New Directions in Digital Modern Languages Research* (Liverpool University Press, 2023)



Dr. Orhan Elmaz

SPEAKERS

Dr. Shreen Mohamed Amin currently serves as Curator and Head of Scientific Research, Education, and Sustainability at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir. In this capacity, she leads initiatives that integrate heritage preservation with innovative educational approaches and sustainable practices, ensuring the museum's role as a dynamic center for cultural dialogue and knowledge dissemination. She is a member of the UNESCO Chair of Heritage Education at Capital University, Helwan, where she contributes to advancing interdisciplinary research and capacity-building in heritage studies. Dr. Amin is also a Fellow of the AIU/UNESCO Fellowship Programme in Heritage Conservation, reflecting her dedication to safeguarding cultural heritage through international collaboration and scholarly excellence.



Dr. Shreen Mohamed Amin

Dr. Jin Yang is Professor, Doctoral Supervisor, and Head of the Museum Studies Program at the School of History and Culture, Shaanxi Normal University. Her research and teaching focus on cultural heritage studies, museum studies, and intercultural exchanges during the medieval period. She also serves as Deputy Director of the Shaanxi Provincial Philosophy and Social Sciences Laboratory for Digital Intelligence in Cultural Heritage and National Studies of *Belt and Road* Partner Countries, Chair of the Museum Studies Committee of the Shaanxi Museum Association, Distinguished Research Fellow at the Humanities Department of the Dunhuang Academy, Vice President of the Chinese Society for the History of Sino-Foreign Cultural Exchanges, and Distinguished Research Fellow at the Belt and Road Institute for Cultural Studies. Previously, she worked in research, education, and museum management at the Emperor Qinshihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum and the Shaanxi History Museum, and also serves as an Adjunct Professor at Lanzhou University. Professor Yang has led three projects funded by the National Social Science Fund of China, three ministerial- and provincial-level research projects, and one provincial key research project. She has published eight monographs, edited three collected volumes, and authored more than one hundred academic articles.



Dr. Jin Yang

SPEAKERS

Dr. Lang Xu is post-doctoral researcher of Faculty of History, Nankai University. She received a PhD in ancient history from the Faculty of Ancient History and Epigraphy, Heidelberg University in 2021. Her current researches focus on ancient Greek political and military history, the political and cultural interaction in the Mediterranean world, the reception studies of classical civilizations, the relations between ancient Greece and China, and the communication of different civilizations along the Silk Road. She has published several papers on journals such as *Anabasis*, *The Western Regions Studies*, *Journal of Ancient Civilizations*, *World History Studies* and *Journal of Historiography*. In 2024 She undertook the Youth Project of the National Social Science Fund of China *A Study on the Relationship between Generals and Democracy in Classical Athens*, and now she is working on the monography concentrating on the activities and roles of Athenian generals in the Greek world. She is also a member of the Center for the Studies of Ancient Civilizations along the Silk Road at Nankai University, participating in a Key Project sponsored by the National Social Science Fund of China *A Study on the History of Relations among the Great Empires along the Silk Road in the period from the Han to the Tang Dynasties*.



Dr. Lang Xu

DISCUSSANT

Dr. Feng Jing was educated in English literature, international studies and the history of architecture in China, at Lanzhou University and Tsinghua University, from which he also holds a Doctorate degree in the history and theory of architecture. He is currently Chief of the Culture Unit of the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok. Prior to this function, he was Chief of the Asia and the Pacific Unit at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (Paris), where he led and managed the overall implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in 47 Member States. He served as Coordinator of the global Capacity-Building programme for the World Heritage Convention, Coordinator of some large-scale Funds-in-Trust cooperation (Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea) with a global and regional projects for Asia and the Pacific. He was also the Coordinator of the Silk Roads World Heritage nomination project from 2003 to 2022.



Dr. Feng Jing

