Preface

*Manuscripts and Archives* is not only the name of a reading room at Yale University Library, but also the title of a British Library catalogue, which spans ‘Manuscripts and unpublished documents; Personal papers, correspondence and diaries; Family and estate papers; India Office Records and Private Papers; India Office Prints, Drawings and Paintings; Photographs’. The surprising company of manuscripts, i.e. *single* written artefacts, and archives, i.e. *bodies* of documents, is easily understood once the use of the latter term is not restricted to state institutions such as national archives, but seen as comprising all sorts of materials short of or even including printed books.

Considerations of this kind led scholars at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg (CSMC) to organise a conference entitled *Manuscripts and Archives* from 19 to 22 November 2014. In their announcement, they wrote:

Archives are collections of administrative, legal, commercial and other records or the space where they are located. They have become ubiquitous in the modern world, but came into being not much later than the invention of writing. Following Foucault, who first used the word archive in a metaphorical sense as ‘the general system of the formation and transformation of statements’ in his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), postmodern theorists have tried to exploit the potential of this concept and initiated the ‘archival turn’. In recent years, however, archives have attracted the attention of anthropologists and historians of different denominations attempting to treat them as historical objects and ‘ground’ them again in real institutions.

The conference will explore the complex topic of the archive in a historical, systematic and comparative dimension and try to contextualise it in the broader context of manuscript cultures by addressing the following questions: How, by whom and for which purpose are...
archival records produced? Is there any observable difference between literary manuscripts concerning materials, formats or producers (scribes)? Where are they stored, how organised? Are there other objects stored together with the records? Which practices are involved inside the archive, and how and by whom are they used? Is there a term or a concept of the archive as opposed to library, museum, cabinet (of curiosities) and the like? Is there a relation to historiography? Is there an archival science (archivology)?

Eight of the seventeen original papers have been published in this volume in addition to five other contributions that have been specially commissioned for it. The saddest lacuna here is the paper by Gianfranco Fiaccadori (1957–2015) entitled ‘Archives in Ethiopia and Eritrea: from Antiquity to Early Modern. A Historical Survey’ as the author passed away before he could deliver it to print. As a tribute to him, we have dedicated this volume to the memory of this great scholar.2

The ‘Prologue’ of this work contrasts two contemporary modes of archiving: ‘modern’ institutional practices represented by Archival Science on the one hand and ‘traditional’ ways of keeping documents on the other hand, such as those used in Himalayan villages. This Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen shows that, despite all differences over time and space, the desire to store written artefacts and to do so in a more or less organised manner for at least some time is deeply rooted in many cultures that use the technique of writing. Dietmar Schenk addresses archival practices from a practitioner’s point of view. Drawing on classical authors from Archival Science since the late nineteenth century and on more recent developments in this field, he emphasises a broader interpretation of the famous ‘principle of provenance’, which requires the archiver to keep any items together that come from one and the same source. Since these items may not just include what are traditionally considered to be archival records, but literary manuscripts, non-textual artefacts and other objects as well, he suggests taking this as a starting point for comparison. In stark contrast to these ‘modern’ notions, archival practices in remote areas with their own distinct traditions are little known in the outside world. Charles Ramble provides insights into one of these traditions, namely the archives of Tibetan

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communities in the Himalayas. He illustrates the differences between books and documents with regard to terminology, form, script, content, material and storage. Documents were and are either kept in cloth wallets and in trunks made from leather or metal or in wicker baskets and sacks, which are often suspended from the rafters to protect them from rodents. Recently discovered archives provide important information on social stratification, taxation, jurisdiction and the relationship between people and state. These documents, which are often fragile, offer glimpses of a world otherwise not accessible any more since Chinese communists destroyed most of the archives after China’s occupation of Tibet.

The second section of the present volume, ‘The Ancient World up to Late Antiquity’, covers three millennia and combines case studies with diachronic surveys from the ancient Near East, from ancient and Greco-Roman Egypt, early Imperial China and early Christianity. Dealing with archives and libraries of private households, temples and various levels of administration up to imperial courts, the contributions to this section provide overwhelming evidence of the necessity of taking a fresh look at the seemingly clear-cut distinction between both means of storage. In many cases, it is difficult to uphold this distinction, while in others, especially those connected to state power, there obviously existed institutions serving various functions.

The private archives of Assyrian merchants, unearthed at Kültepe (the ancient town of Kaneš) in Central Anatolia, contained contracts and business letters. Cécile Michel studies this largest group of private cuneiform archives in the history of ancient Mesopotamia, which mainly date back to the nineteenth century BCE. They were arranged on shelves or stored inside containers, with a classification system that allows archaeologists and researchers to reconstruct the use merchants made of their archives. The merchants accumulated documents as long as they considered them to be useful, after which the items were discarded. What kind of archives existed in ancient Egypt and how they were used, is discussed in the contribution by Fredrik Hagen and Daniel Soliman. The authors provide a comprehensive overview of the evidence we have, relating to surviving archives for the period c.2500–1000 BCE using largely unpublished material. Many administrative documents from pharaonic Egypt are essentially stray finds, primarily from tombs, and although they do not always shed light on archival practices per se, they do reveal a great deal about the types of documents drawn up by various institutions. Despite the difficulties posed by the very nature of the evidence, certain features of ancient Egyptian archives emerge: they contained ‘day-books’ recording the activities of administrative, military, religious and other institutions as well as accounts and letters, and were regularly discarded after some time.
According to Jean-Luc Fournet, the traditional distinction between archives and libraries used in papyrology is misleading. This distinction would have made little sense to the ancients since one and the same Greek word, βιβλιοθήκη, designated both a public archive and a library in Greco-Roman Egypt, and individuals would store documents and literary texts in the same place. Fournet proposes the concept of an ‘archive-library’ in order to study the interaction between both, which sometimes resulted in the ‘literarisation’ of documents and the ‘documentarisation’ of literature. In contrast, Max Jakob Fölster shows that the oldest collection of Chinese manuscripts for which we possess a catalogue only contains literary texts. In the first years of the Common Era, this imperial collection clearly excluded certain types of written artefacts: besides those with legal content all administrative records which were kept at other places. It should therefore be identified as a library.

Early Christian authors mentioned archives for apologetic or theological purposes even before their congregations created such depositories. Alberto Camplani argues that the main impulse to create archives came from the bishops, whose synods produced a huge number of written records, which were needed for later reference, for which archiving was essential. Increasingly complex organisation and increasingly autocratic leadership by the bishops led to a new type of archival organisation arising, which Camplani traces in the episcopal sees of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. Thomas Graumann presents a case study of the handling and archiving of documents and acts related to Church councils. A wide range of documents were examined and utilised in a series of inter-related events both before assemblies of bishops and at meetings convened by imperial officials in the run-up to the Council of Chalcedon (451). Administrators of the Church and of the Roman Empire made their staff pay meticulous attention to the characteristic features of the written artefacts and inferred their validity, provenance and previous handling from them. Graumann reconstructs the movement of documents from church archives to government ones and outlines a range of administrative practices underlying their use.

The third section of this volume assembles contributions spanning one-and-a-half millennia under the heading of ‘The Middle Ages’. This term is notoriously unwieldy, especially if transplanted to Asian cultures with distinct social formations and historical patterns, and often betrays the approach taken more than the period under investigation. However, since the term is commonly used in quite a few disciplines and has the charm of suggesting evidence, it has been employed here for the sake of simplicity.

The twelfth century saw the decline of imperial authority and growing disorder in Japan. Parallel to warrior rule, it appears there was increased reliance on documents and literary manuscripts. Mikael Adolphson analyses the cases of Taira no
Kiyomori (1118–1181), the first warrior-aristocrat to control the imperial court, and of Japan’s first warrior government, the Kamakura shogunate (1185–1333). Despite their military background, both of these parties made extensive use of written artefacts. The more competitive the political scene became, the more important was the possession of valuable manuscripts and the handling of documents. The prestige of the written word is also emphasised by Michael Grünbart in his contribution on record-keeping and collecting knowledge in Byzantium. Due to the lack of first-hand evidence, his reconstruction is based on literary sources, which provide evidence of collections generally. Following the precedent of Late Antiquity, no sharp distinction seems to have been made between storing manuscripts and storing documents, although the written artefacts kept by an erudite would certainly have been distributed in a different way from a government agency. Private libraries became symbols of the exclusiveness of their owners, who liked to donate them to monasteries in order to keep their memory alive.

It is evident that most of the documents that have been discovered are not cases of preserved archives, but rather remains of them. What is preserved today are ‘negative archives’ (Fournet), which holds true for much of the pre-Ottoman Islamic world as well. In his critical evaluation of the current debate on the question of why so little remains of a large body of documents from both government and cadis’ offices in the Near and Middle East, including the Persian-speaking lands, Jürgen Paul is concerned with archival practices: who stored which documents where and why? These practices included discarding and ‘thrashing’, which is closely linked to the reuse of paper. Paul’s central question of whether archive-keeping was an institutional task or a private concern is taken up by Christian Müller, who focuses on cadis’ archives and their institutional importance from a long-term perspective. The role of the cadi was long underestimated due to the lack of source material available. In a detailed analysis of a corpus of nearly 2,400 authentic Arabic legal documents from the eighth to the sixteenth century, Müller provides new insights into the evolution of judicial practices and the judge’s role in guaranteeing subjective rights. His paper combines information on the cadi’s archive as reported in documentary sources since the mid-eighth century with an analysis of surviving legal documents and with juridical discussion on the legal status of writing as proof in literature on law (fiqh). The refusal by ninth-century jurists to see a judge being bound by writings from their predecessor’s archive to conduct a lawsuit was eventually replaced by accepting cadi’s certificates as a means of providing proof. Hence, documents from the cadi’s archive acquired the function of a living archive that could safeguard subjective rights for long periods of time.

The last paper in this section, which is by Emmanuel Francis, deals with copper-plate grants from Southern India. At the ends of them, these grants often have
the formula ‘As long as the moon and the sun endure’. Not only this formula but also the material of these title-deeds, which were kept by their owners, expresses the claim to durability. Usually, these copper plates issued from the third century CE onwards were regarded as inscriptions. However, if the main characteristic of an inscription is its being publicly displayed, then copper-plate grants are not inscriptions at all, as they were often found buried for their own safety. On the other hand, copper plates are not archival records either, which were written on palm leaves. Francis’ consideration of this special type of written artefact also demonstrates how closely connected archiving occasionally was to changes in the materiality of writing: palm-leaf documents were copied onto more durable copper in order to increase the chances of an archive’s survival.

The volume is concluded with an ‘Epilogue’ by Markus Friedrich, who read the contributions closely and suggests a ‘matrix for comparison’ stressing the enormous extent to which archiving was part of writing everywhere. After critically evaluating prominent ideas about archives, namely their being modern, related to state power and exerting rationalising effects, he deliberates on the promising concept of ‘counter-archival practices’, that is, recycling, burying and even destroying archives or parts of them. His matrix includes five perspectives which supply terrtia comparationis.

Finally, the editors would like to express their gratitude to all the authors and participants in the inspiring 2014 conference, including those whose contributions have not been included in this volume; to the German Research Foundation (DFG) for its generous support of the Sonderforschungsbereich 950 Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa, and Europe; and last but not least to Carl Carter and Jacqueline Bornfleth for their attentive proofreading of many of the contributions and to Cosima Schwarke, who played an essential role in forming a book out of the individual pieces.

The Editors
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