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Epilogue: Archives and Archiving across Cultures—Towards a Matrix of Analysis

Abstract: The essays in this volume explore how writings have been stored and kept available for future use across time and space. They can be regarded as some of the first steps towards a cross-cultural and even global study of archives and archival practices. Taken as a whole, the papers indicate many of the topics (and difficulties) that would need to be addressed in a future global investigation of archives and archival practices.

1 Archives from a cross-cultural perspective

Any attempt at a global investigation of archives will quickly encounter a basic terminological difficulty: there is no denying that 'the archive' is a thoroughly European concept. Following a line of thought harking back to Max Weber's concept of 'bureaucratic rationality', archives are frequently seen as integral components and indicators of well-organised administration, and as such, they count as key elements of the modern nation-state as it evolved in nineteenth-century Europe.[1] National states created national archives, and national archives supported the ideological construction of national histories.[2] In as far as the developing European monarchies and states projected their power overseas, archives can be said to have played a significant role as 'agents' or 'infrastructures' of colonial oppression.[3] To the degree that the politics of archives has become

1 For a nuanced and global perspective on 'bureaucratic rationality' in the nineteenth century, see Osterhammel 2010, 866–882. On the national dimension, see Verschaffel 2012, 29–46.
2 Berger/Conrad 2014.
3 See, for example, Mignolo 2003; Richards 1993; Stoler 2002, 87–109.

identified with the politics of identity-building and collective self-fashioning, the history of the archive is often considered to be quasi-identical with the history of nationalism and the (nation-)state, especially in its European variant.[4]

Classic definitions of 'archives' mirror this state-centred understanding. A widely known Dutch definition first articulated in 1898 states in an authoritative way: 'An archival collection (*archief*) is the whole of the written documents, drawings and printed matter, officially received or produced by an administrative body or one of its officials, insofar as these documents were intended to remain in the custody of that body or that official'.[5] In many ways, this conceptual connection between the state/bureaucracy/administration and archives still remains powerful, albeit in a softened language. Many recent definitions of 'archive' continue to rely on the traditional idea that archival documentation is produced 'organically' as a result of routine protocols of business in public or private 'organisms'—which is, of course, still very close to the Dutch version's 'administration'.[6]

Given this deep connection with the rise of European (nation-) states and their modes of political and cultural operation, it is little wonder that national archives are frequently considered European institutions. The search for archives elsewhere, then, might well seem to be a Eurocentric procedure, and the reservations against simply using the fully developed Western concept of 'the archive' across cultural borders in unreflected ways is understandable. And yet a comparative approach to archives and archiving across cultures is certainly possible and can actually be helpful for several reasons.[7]

Firstly, the classic understanding of archives as modern institutions has lost some of its persuasiveness. Rethinking periodisation and methodology has contributed to two broader shifts: a growing body of recent scholarship on *pre-modern* European collections of documents has revealed the long past of the modern archive (thus also questioning any exclusive correlation to ideologies of nationalism), while other studies have started to seriously question the modernity of archives of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.[8] Moreover, in terms of methodology, scholarly attention has begun to shift away from the history of archives as

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4 Fritzsche 2005, 15–44; Berger 2012.

5 Muller 2003, 13.

6 See Galland 2016, p. 3, for example. Also see Dietmar Schenk's paper in this volume.

7 I have found a useful parallel to my approach in the equally pragmatic globalisation of the term 'philology' in Pollock/Elman/Chang 2015 (p. 1f. in this case). What is quite different from allowing a global use of 'philology' is the question of what one should think of the broader project of a 'future philology'. On a European level, see the recent paper by Head 2017, 433–455.

8 Friedrich et al. 2017, 3–13.

institutions to the history of archiving as a social practice.[9] This development has created the opportunity for a much more flexible use of the terms 'archive' and 'archiving' and also seems to allow their usage in non-European contexts more easily. Thus, specialists working on and in non-European archives now find it possible to call for a 'de-centring' of archival history, by which they mean a shift away from an almost exclusively European history of archives towards a growing incorporation of non-European, 'peripheral' archives.[10]

Secondly, the connection between state-building, bureaucratisation and archival development has been re-evaluated from at least two sides. On the one hand, bureaucratic rationality and archival development are being regarded less and less as genuinely *European* phenomena. A growing body of research stresses that the connection between administrative organisation and archiving was by no means an exclusively Western achievement. Imperial bureaucracies have traditionally been acknowledged for several important polities, including the ancient civilizations of Assur, Egypt and China, but also early modern examples such as the Indian state of Cholon and the Mughals, the Islamic empires of the Safavids or the Ottomans, and Ming and Qing China.[11] More tellingly, similar developments and at least embryonic archival developments are diagnosed elsewhere, too. Even the Ancient Greek cities, traditionally considered to be governed by public debate in a face-to-face mode, are now considered to have been 'more "bureaucratic" than is usually thought', including complex archival arrangements.[12] Pre-modern Ethiopia is another case in point; recent research has started to document a vast increase in land-related record-making and record-keeping after 1700 which seems to have been independent of external influences.[13] Building on such results, a cross-cultural comparative study of the relevance of

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9 For a recent survey of the methodological state of the art (mostly regarding European cases), see Walsham 2016, 9–47. I have proposed such an approach myself in Friedrich 2018 (1st German ed. 2013).
10 See the discussion in Jungen/Raymond 2012, online since 14 May 2012, viewed on 10/11/2017 (URL: http://ateliers.revues.org/9080; DOI: 10.4000/ateliers.9080). The following quotes come from ibid., no. 9. Jungen and Raymond, however, also state the difference between Near Eastern and European 'archives'; ibid., nos 29f.
11 See Crooks/Parsons 2016, for example. Little is said there about the role of archives, however. On other archival developments in the context of complex administrative services, see Zhang 2004, 17–38 in addition to the papers in this volume. There seems to be very little information available about Mughal archives; cf. Ghose 1963, 15–21.
12 Faraguna (forthcoming), pre-print available at http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/ 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199599257.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199599257-e-14), p. 3. Cf. p. 8f. on legal procedure.
13 Habtamu Mengistie 2015, 433–461, who approvingly quotes Guidi 1906, 651–698.

archives for the exercising of bureaucratic power almost seems the next logical step now.

On the other hand, the *rationalising effects* of bureaucratisation and archival developments have become much more doubtful in recent research than a simple Weberian approach would suggest. It is becoming clear that the role of archives in the process of government and as tools of state power is much more complex than we have often assumed. It is well documented by now that archives were frequently *not* used in the process of political decision-making and that they often were *not* facilitators of governance as much as sources of insecurity and ambiguity. Archives are, thus, no longer seen as natural by-products or simple infrastructures of state power; rather, their role in actual government has now been questioned and their efficiency is seen in highly critical terms.[14] In addition, more and more cases have come to light in which archival innovation was not necessarily the result of centralised state power at all, but originated elsewhere. Mikael Adolphson's explorations of medieval Japan are a case in point: archiving occurred in decentralised, regional institutions (monasteries) despite (or, rather, because of) the lack of an overarching political system.[15] In sum, without totally severing the classic connections between archives and the bureaucratised modern nation-state, a much more nuanced assessment of this connection is actually required. With such a re-evaluation firmly on its way, a cross-cultural approach to the study of archives may well be possible.

Finally, the intention to compare archival phenomena across space (and time) need not necessarily be seen as Eurocentric or modernist *per se*. Quite to the contrary: there is a long tradition of cross-cultural archival comparison which is by no means limited to European examples. Consider the case of the Indian empire of Vijayanagar, where, as far as we can tell, a considerable and highly functional collection of state papers existed in the late Middle Ages. Two men from very different cultural backgrounds went to see the collection in 1442 and 1637: the Persian scholar and traveller Abd-al-Razzāq Samarqandī (1413–1482) and the Englishman Peter Mundy (*c*.1600–1667). Both left descriptions of these collections, and their notes clearly show how impressed both visitors were. The Persian al-Razzāq, obviously comparing the bureaucracy of Vijayanagar with his own Persian experiences, simply declared the Indian empire's documents to be a

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14 See Brendecke 2016, for example.

15 For archival practices, see his contribution to this volume. For a more institutional perspective, see Adolphson/Ramseyer 2009, 660–668.

defter-khaneh, that is, a governmental 'archive'.[16] Mundy went even further in identifying the Indian and the European situation:

> The country people write on Palme leaves with an Iron bodkin as before mentioned. They say they will endure 100 yeares. Att my beeing at Eecary [sc. Ikkeri] I was att the Kings Secretaries, where in his house I saw many hundreds (I may say thousands) of those written palme leaves, beeing very long and Narrow, handsomely rouled up, those againe tied into bundles, hung upp in order about his roome or office, soe that he May (not improperly) bee stiled Master of the Roules.[17]

Similarly, early Spanish observers of pre-contact traditions in the Americas had no trouble calling the vast collections of *quipus* that were the basis of Inca administration and the purely oral memories of the Andean highlands *arquivios* (archives).[18] Obviously, people often simply knew when they were looking at an archive and had little difficulty in assimilating parallel phenomena under one category.[19]

2 Manuscript cultures between archival and counter-archival practices

What all the contributions to this volume show is, first of all, a very basic, yet utterly fundamental point: archiving occurred almost everywhere where writing was used. Scholars become more and more aware of the fact that the history of archiving should be seen as a crucial dimension of the history of writing. It is becoming clearer and clearer now that handwritten documents of all kinds were and are carefully and lovingly kept *by many different kinds of people and institutions*. This is why the case for a new 'social history of archives' is currently being made, which would refocus attention on the activities of non-elite players and generally stress the diffusion of archival practices throughout societies.[20] Archiving was and is not restricted to the elites or a few prominent flagship

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16 Narrative of the Voyage of Abd-Er-Razzak 1857, 25.

17 Mundy 1919, 98.

18 De Murúa 2008, fol. 246r (chapter 10, part II). Friedrich 2018, 78f. Burns 2010, 4–11. Also see Hosne 2014, 177–191; and 2012, 30–40.

19 For a similar argument regarding a cross-culturally shared understanding of 'empire' in the early modern world, see Marcocci 2016, 511–525, esp. 516–521.

20 See Friedrich 2016, 49–70. The volume generally attempts to map the social breadth of European archival practices.

institutions; rather, in most societies there was and is a much wider tendency to collect, store and preserve documents and manuscripts. Recent work on Ethiopia, for instance, has started to uncover hitherto unknown local administrative writing facilities and archival deposits.[21] And in the Chinese case, James Robson has forcefully emphasised the fact that substantial bodies of manuscripts existed across China even in highly remote villages.[22] Scholarship on Tibet also forcefully demonstrates the social and geographical reach of archival practices.[23] The papers collected here add significant weight to the impression that practices of archiving were and are deeply integrated into the social fabric of many societies and cultures. It is important to stress that manuscript preservation remains a prominent practice even if new media such as the printing press or the computer screen start providing alternatives to the use of manuscripts. Scholars now realise that such media changes do not eliminate handwriting and do not render assorted technologies (including archiving) superfluous.[24]

This newly established cultural and social prominence notwithstanding, it needs to be stressed that 'archiving' could actually mean some very different things. The typically modern Western notion, for instance, that archives (at least ideally) keep all records permanently ready for almost instantaneous access was by no means shared everywhere at all times and was hardly reality in Europe for most of its history. In fact, the essays in this volume demonstrate over and over again that assumptions about what documents should be available for whom and for how long have differed widely across time and space. There is no uniform balance between the twin goals of preserving documents and using them—some cultures highlight preservation, while elsewhere usability is considered particularly important.

Preservation could lead to forgetting, as the Indian land-grants or deeds on copper show. These documents were forgotten after being buried and only turn up by accident now when peasants plough their fields. It is often only a very fine line that separates archiving from oblivion. In fact, the archival strategy of burying documents seems to border on the 'counter-archival'.[25] This term designates ways of handling documents that (seem to) contradict the archival goals of 'preserving documents' and 'keeping documents available for use'. A wide range of

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21 Bosc-Tiessé/Derat 2011, 85–110.

22 Robson 2012, 317–343.

23 See the paper by Charles Ramble in this volume. In addition, see the many publications by Dieter Schuh, e.g. 2016 and 2014, 311–338.

24 Robson 2012.

25 The term 'counter-archival practices' has been borrowed from Hirschler 2016, 1–28.

activities fall under the category of 'counter-archival behaviour'. Some of them end the existence of documents physically, e.g. by burning them or by washing off the ink. Such intentionally destructive practices may follow very different kinds of cultural logic. Purging records for political purposes, e.g. after a regime change, is one reason for intentional memory loss.[26] Occasionally, acts of ritual destruction are a key part of legal culture, for instance when contracts were rinsed in a 'bowl of justice' in order to be destroyed, as occurred in pre-Mongol and Safavid Persia.[27] In Late Antiquity, documents relating to slaves were occasionally cancelled by crossing them out with lines—hence, the content was preserved, but the document mutilated.[28] Often, it is purely pragmatic considerations that lead to intentional destruction. In fact, routine weeding out of unnecessary documents seems to have occurred almost everywhere, although in very different ways. Some Ancient Egyptian collections show evidence of a 'periodic process of disposal of tablets' (Hagen). In China, as Max Fölster reports, the regional administration emptied out archives roughly once every 13 years during the Han period. And if, in modern Western societies, more than 75 per cent of all public records are methodically singled out for destruction,[29] then archival preservation has become more the exception than the rule, at least quantitatively speaking. In many cultural settings, it seems, people have thought as extensively about how to destroy or mutilate writings as they thought about how to keep them.[30]

Not all counter-archival activities lead to physical destruction or to a loss of information in absolute terms, however. It may seem paradoxical, but in quite a few cases documents survived in spite of—or even because of—counter-archival forms of using them. The best example here is the Jewish *Genizot*.[31] In this case, a great number of documents were intentionally taken out of circulation, but they were nevertheless preserved physically; in fact, modern scholars have been using them to reconstruct old archives. Similarly, in pre-Ottoman Muslim territories, the recycling of used papers or the re-using of parchment for bindings was fairly common, at least partially accounting for the disappearance of larger archives.[32] Again, this can be reversed and the original archives can be reconstructed, as

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26 This is frequently considered to be a major reason for the loss of most pre-Ottoman Islamic archives; see, for example, Bauden 2013, 27–29, 35–38.

27 Al-Hokamaee 2013, 137–154, 138.

28 Feissel/Gascou 1989, 535–561, 544, 558. Also see El-Leithy 2011, 422–425.

29 This figure is taken from Hollmann 2016, 199–206; 203 here.

30 Sadan 2007, 193–218.

31 For some summaries, see Beit-Arié 1996, 407–414; Horowitz et al. 2007, vol. 7, 460–483; Habermann 2007, 460.

32 Bauden 2013, 39–41.

Konrad Hirschler has demonstrated in his recent essay on pre-Ottoman Muslim archives.[33] Furthermore, used material that had some blank space left on it (mostly on the verso sides) was often employed again for a new round of writing—several ancient Egyptian papyri that have survived the course of time illustrate how scrap material could be re-used, for example.[34] Once again, the original archives might well have been destroyed by such practices, but enough traces of them have remained for experts to be able to reconstruct them partially today.

Taking such counter-archival tendencies seriously can serve as a crucial *caveat* against triumphant narratives of archival history. Generally speaking, archival continuity should not be overestimated. Put a little differently, there are very few old archives that still exist today and are living testimonies of their own efficiency, as it were; most of the materials from the European Early Middle Ages, for instance, have not survived in their original archival contexts. Archives and individual collections were scattered and fragmented, and only stray pieces have found their way through time and space—at least partially a counter-archival form of transmission. Often, only literary sources are left to inform us that substantial archives once existed.[35] Archival *and* counter-archival practices are thus crucial aspects of all cultures of writing. Taken together, and *only* taken together, they provide insights into the social and cultural functions associated with writing by different peoples at different times.

The question is therefore not as much *whether* any counter-archival practices existed, but *how they were controlled* and *by whom*. A cross-cultural study of archives and archival practices must be particularly concerned with understanding the specific balance between keeping and destroying documents and making them available for use or withdrawing them. The difference between preservation and disappearance was (and still is) often one of originators, i.e. who first produced them—the chance of documents surviving depended on factors like gender, for instance. Documents from male originators are often said to be more likely to survive, while those written by females are considered particularly vulnerable to counter-archival practices. This is at least partly due to the fact that gender roles in many contexts intersected with a distinction between private (or personal) and public (or political/administrative/legal) writing. Private documents written by women, it is generally assumed, were least likely to become part of routines of long-term preservation, while public writings by men had the best

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33 Hirschler 2016.

34 Luiselli 2008, here 686f. with a list of examples.

35 For more on the Carolingian period, see the collection of evidence in Mersiowsky 2015, 904–933.

chance.[36] These factors affecting document survival may intersect with issues of class and social standing, although it was not necessarily the elites who used the most advanced archival routines—in Europe, for instance, the nobility was not necessarily the avant-garde of record-keeping. Archival practices were layered in multiple ways, it seems.

In all this, it is important to understand the terms 'archival' and 'counter-archival' not as 'either/or' categories, but rather as two extremes that allow for a wide variety of possibilities. Documents can easily move back and forth from fairly archival to more counter-archival states of existence, and vice versa. What is a throw-away object of writing in one cultural context may be (or become) a treasured possession in another environment. Keeping seemingly worthless stubs of entrance tickets or local bus tickets obtained on trips to places is a widespread practice among tourists today, for instance. Many documents 'live' complicated lives, moving in and out of cultural contexts, hence their status can easily shift back and forth between attention and neglect, high value and low regard, and archival and counter-archival status.

3 A matrix for describing and comparing archival practices

The papers in this collection suggest several ways of relating archival practices from across time and space to each other in a meaningful way. At least five topics or analytical perspectives may be identified according to which comparison is used. If, as Jürgen Kocka has argued, 'one cannot compare totalities', then it would not make sense to simply juxtapose two or more 'archives' from different cultures.[37] 'Rather, one compares in certain respects', Kocka continues. This should also hold true when comparing archival practices. Here it might help to recall that the word 'archive' and its offshoots usually mean different things, albeit related ones: a body of documents, a building, an institution, a profession, a group of experts, and so on.[38] While all of these dimensions may be present in the classic case of Western state or national archives, in other historical situations

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36 To my knowledge, the gendered aspects of archival practices have only been discussed very recently, mostly in connection with the Western world; see Daybell 2017, 25–45, and 2016, 210–236, for example. On South-East Asia, see Lambert-Hurley 2013, 61–84, and Burton 2003.

37 Kocka 2003, 39–44; here: 41f.

38 See Galland 2016, 3f, for instance.

only a few or maybe even only one of these dimensions can be addressed meaningfully. In most cases, it is simply impossible to compare archives in their ideal totality of implications, even though it is perfectly possible to detect at least family resemblances between archival practices and to compare segments and individual elements of what constitutes an archive. Moreover, Kocka's plea to only compare limited phenomena fits in well with current methodological claims that archival history should generally apply a 'micro-historical lens' and be highly alert to the 'historical specificity' of individual archives and their contexts, as Tamer El-Leithy has written regarding pre-Ottoman Arabic archives.[39] Since historians have recently become wary of broader narratives of archival progress and professionalisation, they realise that what archives do and what they don't do for a given context can only be assessed by detailed investigation of individual cases. The papers in this collection, with their empirical basis and general reluctance to making broad generalisations, fit this bill perfectly.

The five aspects that follow allow for a meaningful comparison of archival developments across time and space:

1. Material and spatial dimensions
2. Tools and routines for organising and navigating multitudes of documents
3. Intended purposes of archiving
4. Environment of institutions and practices
5. Any concepts of time, history or memory that are implied.

1. The papers in this volume highlight the importance of the material and spatial dimensions of archives. Collecting and storing handwritten documents requires buildings or spaces, boxes, containers and additional materials to be used (like string, pins, wrappings, etc.). These aspects deserve close scrutiny, as they indicate and influence the ways in which archives are embedded in society. Assyrian merchants, for instance, set up archive-rooms in their private homes so as to keep the complex clay objects that contained contracts and letters readily accessible. Presumably, the records played a significant role in everyday life. But the idea that archival rooms should be specifically designed to serve the purposes of reading, searching and working with documents should not simply be regarded as self-evident: Fredrik Hagen refers to one Egyptian archive that was narrow and without any windows, which would have made its actual usage 'extremely difficult'.

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39 El-Leithy 2011, 389–434; 393 here.

Seen from a global perspective, the basic set of spatial techniques involved in archiving was ultimately fairly limited. Many of them, such as stringing together documents and hanging them up in the air to protect them from vermin, have been found helpful at different times by different people, as the cases of Tibet, Pharaonic Egypt and pre-modern Europe show. Special ways of folding documents were well known in many places, too.[40] Regarding archival furniture (if any specialised furniture was used at all), it seems there were mainly two alternatives: large, box-like chests without any internal dividers or shelves of one kind or another. Also regarding containers, wooden boxes such as the one from Pharaonic Egypt described by Fredrik Hagen (Figs 2a–c) could also be found in use centuries later and hundreds of kilometres away. Nevertheless, some physical storage facilities used for archiving documents were highly specific and regional.[41]

The essays in this volume also show that archival practices may have strongly influenced people's preferences for certain writing forms and writing materials. Sometimes, archiving went hand in hand with the selection of especially durable writing materials. This point has been illustrated well by Emmanuel Francis, who demonstrates that in India, writing on palm leaves was copied onto copper, which was much more durable, in order to increase the chances of an archive's survival. There is no clear direction here, though.[42] Daniel Soliman, for example, highlights the opposite media change in his contribution: he shows how fairly durable ostraca were copied onto easily perishable papyri for the sake of archiving. According to his interpretation, such copying might have occurred because it enabled the aggregation and synthetisation of information into higher-order documents—in this particular case a yearly account-book (in the form of a 'daybook').

Soliman's evidence hints at a point that is even more significant: archiving usually implies aggregating individual documents into larger objects. Files of some sort were and are created in many cultural contexts, and the operation of filing has rightly been called a fundamental archival practice, as the logic of filing strongly determines how archival documentation can be accessed and used.[43] The practical creation of files, in turn, must necessarily take the material aspects of writings into account. Roman administrators, for instance, who were required

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40 For an Arabic example, see Regourd 2008, 13–16.

41 Although it is not motivated by 'archival' considerations in a proper sense, but by motives of religious veneration, the Buddhist tradition of placing religious texts in statues (in India, Korea, Japan and China) still deserves mentioning here; see Robson 2012.

42 Faraguna (forthcoming) highlights the fact that in ancient Athens the same writing materials could be used both for public display and archival storing (p. 1f. of the pre-print).

43 For general statements and European case studies, see especially Vismann 2008. See Gitelman 2014 as well.

to store their official letters and documents, created 'files' out of their papyrus letters by glueing numerous documents together to form lengthy sheets that could be rolled up and stored in official archives. Private administrations of great *latifundia* followed this public example as well.[44] All writing materials have advantages and disadvantages when it comes to filing and archiving, and it will be the task of a future global history of archives to illustrate in detail just how the usage and usability of archives was purposefully managed by adjusting the materiality of manuscripts.

Hence, the examples and cases presented in this volume allow us to develop a thought further that was expressed by Harold A. Innis back in 1972. In his classic book *Empire and Communication*, Innis suggestively linked cultural preferences for certain writing materials (stone-based vs. paper/parchment-based societies) to cultures of communication and cultures of power.[45] Nowadays, what with the advances in our knowledge about the global history of archives, it is possible to add a further dimension: cultural preferences concerning writing materials might, in addition to Innis's points, also rest upon assumptions about the purposes, requirements and necessities of archiving, which, in turn, are closely connected to the management of power.

2. Once larger bodies of documents have been accumulated, keeping track of what is available and where can be a daunting task. In principle, actors involved in handling these archives could rely on their memory and mnemonics, and in actual fact, there are several examples available to show that this was the case. Very often, however, specific forms of writing were employed to organise and structure the collected documents. 'Writings about writings', one might say, are a key element of most attempts to manage documents. Again, some solutions to the common problem of handling large quantities of documents appear to be fairly universal. Dorsal notes and the use of paratexts both helped archivists in Amarna in Pharaonic Egypt as well as medieval monks in Western Europe, for instance. In some cases, in fact, the paratext *is* the archive; in Ethiopia, to give just one example, record-keeping actually meant writing records in other manuscripts such as religious texts, which were highly venerated and thus had the greatest chance of survival.[46]

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44 Significantly, personal letters were rarely treated in such ways; see Luiselli 2008, 712f. Also see Clarysse 2003, 344–359. Some examples are available at www.trismegistos.org/arch/archives/pdf/548.pdf

45 Innis 1972.

46 In cases such as this, newly applying the terminology of 'archiving' helps to re-evaluate scriptural phenomena otherwise classified as 'annotation' or 'marginalia'. In fact, strictly

Aids to finding documents that have been stored somewhere—inventories, indexes, catalogues, etc.—can be found in many different archival cultures, and their shared features and dissimilarities can both be studied as a result. Their investigation could be particularly important from a comparative perspective, as catalogues can reveal a great deal about a given manuscript culture's perception of itself. Arrangements of archival organisation and the production of aids of this kind were strongly linked to concepts of power, territory and governance, for instance, as Peter Rück and Randolph Head have both demonstrated for central European cases.[47] While a considerable amount of effort has already gone into analysing the ordered knowledge underpinning European library catalogues and archival inventories, much less of an effort has been made to evaluate non-Western parallels so far.[48] Max Fölster's paper on China in this volume demonstrates what can be learned from applying such methods to other contexts.

Inventorying what information is available frequently involves assessing what is missing as well. Historically speaking, surveys of extant library holdings, for instance, have frequently been triggered by an overwhelming 'sense of loss', as was the case for most of the many Chinese state-sponsored bibliographies compiled since 6 BCE.[49] A similar sense of melancholy also spurred the hunt for lost books during the European Renaissance. What is obvious in the case of books and libraries and their catalogues also seems to hold true for archives. The Chinese emperors, for instance, were not only able and willing to replenish their central libraries by staging vast campaigns involving regional searches for unknown books, but they frequently sent out requests to local or regional office-holders asking for copies of local documents as well.[50] It seems that such campaigns were driven by a sense of incompleteness and a fear of losing (or not possessing) important knowledge that was still available, and yet other examples seem to show that the 'presence [...] and completeness [... of records] were not in [...] themselves meaningful to medieval actors'.[51] Ideals of and approaches to completeness obviously varied.

3. A third line of investigation could seek to establish what purposes and functions were associated with the preservation of documents in different cultures, and what 'hopes and horrors' there were to boot, both by looking at explicit

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speaking, the added texts should not be called 'paratexts' any longer. This point is made well in Wion/Bertrand 2011, vii–xvi (p. x here).

47 See Head 2017 for a summary of this work.

48 On Europe, see Derolez 1979 and Becker 2012, for instance.

49 Dudbridge 2000, 6–8. Also see Max Fölster's contribution to this volume.

50 Wagner 2004, 9–90, 30f. (for the Tang period).

51 El-Leithy 2011, 395 regarding medieval Muslim legal documents.

commentary (where available) and by extrapolating from implicit evidence. 'Archival ideologies'—to adapt a term coined by Matthew S. Hull[52]—are a highly important part of archival history. Some of the hopes that underpinned the creation of archives were widely shared across cultures. One key trope associated with writing and record-keeping was the alleged power of these exercises to safeguard social peace and justice. Documents can supposedly 'prove' what was agreed on in the past and, hence, are thought to be capable of distinguishing correct from incorrect claims to property. This idea can be detected in early Muslim societies, for instance, even though the status of written documents in legal proceedings was highly contested in Muslim law.[53] Nonetheless, several important legal experts such as the ninth-century Egyptian lawyer Al-Ṭahāwī expressed clear their hope that archival record-keeping would have a pacifying function.[54] In Europe, this hope was a central component of legal practice.[55]

The experience that this was frequently nothing more than utopian thinking must have been equally universal, however. Fraud and the forging of documents will no doubt have been a concern from very early on.[56] Quite evidently, legal papers such as contracts, wills or financial documents did not simply end social conflict, but triggered or fuelled it in some cases. Islamic jurists of the early modern period were engaged in long battles over the evidentiary status of specific archival documents, for instance.[57] Complex thoughts about how to guarantee the authenticity of individual documents—whether by examining archival context or analysing material features such as the script, writing material, wording or seals used—were required and put forward, and yet conflict about what documents could and did actually prove remained an everyday reality. Rather than simply safeguarding the law, archives often spurred debate and strife. In the future, one might ask how such discrepancies between the hopes that were

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52 Hull 2012, 14: 'Graphic ideologies are sets of conceptions about graphic artifacts held by their users, including about what material qualities of an artifact are to count as signs, what sorts of agents are (or should be) involved in them, and what the roles of human intentions and material causation are'. Significantly, Hull hardly talks about archives (or other forms of preserving documents) as such.

53 See Christian Müller's paper in this volume on the complex status of written evidence in Muslim law. Also cf. Bauden 2013, 28f. (summarising Jean Sauvaget) and Lydon 2009, 647–659, esp. 654f.

54 See El-Leithy 2011, 393f. (with quotes).

55 Lepsius/Wetzstein 2008.

56 See Calhoun 1914, 134–144, for example.

57 Burak 2016, 233–254, esp. 242, 244 and 250. Burak focuses on debates about the imperial *defter*, but cites in passing early-modern discussions about many other types of documents as well.

focused on writing and archives and the realities of their social and cultural functions were perceived and understood.

4. Archives are frequently described (metaphorically) as 'storage-houses' or 'armouries', receiving documents from outside and housing them until they are claimed again by (new) outside users. While this passive image of the archive as a mere receptacle is far too simplistic, it does hint at the fact that archives and the practices related to them are never isolated, but exist in more or less complex environments of other institutions and/or practices. This is why their relation to and distinction from these different but related neighbouring institutions and/or practices should also be taken into account.

Many possibilities could be explored in terms of overlapping practices, from scholarly to religious and political activities. One example that comes to mind is 'decision-making', a social practice that is currently receiving some scholarly attention again.[58] What role can archives play in the process of deciding on matters? Modern political decision-making, for instance, often claims to be well informed, hence a range of activities have been created (over centuries, in fact) to improve and develop the information base that political actors draw upon. 'Seeing like a state', as the metaphor goes, is now considered a crucial part of modern political decision-making. Archiving has an important role to play in this process, at least in theory.[59] The questions only start at this point, however. How were archives actually used on a day-to-day basis while deliberating and deciding on political options? How did an archive-based information mode of deciding relate to other modes of deciding? The case of pre-Ottoman Muslim government (studied by Jürgen Paul), for instance, which relied strongly on pragmatic literacy, but invested relatively little in coherent archiving, forces us to describe in more precise terms how and in what ways archives were (or were not) crucial cogs in the engine of a well-oiled imperial machine. It seems to me there are enormous possibilities for future research here.

In a parallel line of research, the connection between archival and economic practices should also be scrutinised. Roberta Mazza and Chris Wickham, among others, have suggested, for instance, that the well-developed Greco-Roman economic archives of Late Antiquity must be connected to complex practices relating to accounting and estate management. These archive-based economic and managerial activities, they argue, can best be understood if they, in turn, are

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58 See, for example, Stollberg-Rilinger 2016.

59 The title of James Scott's book *Seeing like a State. How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998) has been turned quite fruitfully into a shorthand expression in archival history. See Sartori 2016, 228–257 and Head 2003, 745–782, for instance.

connected to the specific tax-oriented extractive forms of political organisation in the late Roman Empire.[60] The papers by Charles Ramble on Tibetan and Cécile Michel on Assyrian economic archives raise my hopes that similarly wide-ranging interpretations of the links between archiving and economic practices will eventually be possible in a comparative light.

Archives could and should also be related to a wide range of neighbouring or even overlapping institutions, including obvious ones such as imperial courts, government agencies, monasteries and law courts. There is a particularly pressing need to relate archives to their closest neighbours, i.e. to institutions that are also involved in producing, managing and storing writings. Hence, the culturally diverse relationships of and conceptual boundaries between archives, libraries, museums or scriptoria need to be traced (if they ever existed at all). How these institutions are separated from each other in specific cultural settings is a question that should be answered empirically, not by applying preconceived terminology. Ultimately, a broader integration of archives into networks of institutions could lead to new questions. In the case of the Assyrian archive of Kültepe studied by Cécile Michel, we might ask, for instance, how the creation and meaning of such an archive presupposed the existence of long-distance postal networks. Furthermore, the Kültepe archives also seem to presuppose far-reaching legal institutions, since they appear to have been premised on the assumption that documents held in Anatolia could be meaningfully deployed to safeguard economic transactions in far-away Mesopotamia.

5. If it is a truism to say that archiving is a practice meant to support and create memory, this still leaves room for many more questions. In fact, the simple equation of archives (together with libraries and museums) and memory rather begs the more specific question of what archives precisely do for what kind of memory. In some cases, the relationship between memory and archiving might have been conceptualised in simple and unambiguous ways. Some documents were, indeed, designed and handled with pretension to eternity: 'as long as the moon and the sun exist', to paraphrase the frequent formula found on Indian copper plates cited by Emanuel Francis. And at least some Muslim authors called the practice of archiving 'eternalising'.[61] But in many other cases, the mnemonic intention of archiving is much less totalising and hence much more complicated. If archives were meant to keep documents ready 'for future use', when exactly was this future and how long were the documents meant to lie there waiting? What kind of social approaches to the future were presupposed by or mirrored in the archive? What kind of expectation

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60 Mazza 2001; Wickham 2006, esp. 245–272.
61 Bauden 2013, 34.

for the future was connected to what kind of archive? What kind of *strategies* for future action were associated with archives?[62] How did the memorising of the past that was done through archiving actually work? Was the past that had been memorised in the archive really meant to be read? Or was it supposed to be beheld in awe, as the well-kept silver and gold inscriptions found in Southern India seem to imply? If archival documents were actually read and studied in order to create meaningful images of the past, in what ways was this done and using which criteria? Evidently, different answers were given to these questions in different cultural settings, even if most people would have agreed on the importance of archiving for the cultivation of memory.

On a more specific level, the relationship between archiving and history-writing (understood in a very broad sense) also deserves our attention. If the role that archives served as crucial infrastructures for historiography has become more and more prominent in Europe since the nineteenth century, the historical dimension that archives have should by no means be considered self-evident, as Max Fölster's essay about Han China reminds us.[63] This entire topic could be approached from different vantage points. One aspect concerns social history. In the European case, it would appear that the roles of archivist and historian were only differentiated properly in the eighteenth century.[64] One could ask if similar developments can be observed elsewhere, too. The question could also be approached by looking at the relationship between documents ('sources') and historiography ('history'). Archive-based historiography occurred in many cultures, yet with potentially different implications.[65] While it seems that in the European context the production of historical narratives did not diminish the value and status of the archival evidence (which had to remain available for future historiographical enterprises that were potentially different), in many East Asian contexts the production of official historical narratives frequently led to the destruction of the original sources.[66] If remembering the past through archiving was a shared

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62 The concept of 'archival strategies'—an adaptation of Bourdieu's terminology—is used by El-Leithy 2011, 406. Regarding the seemingly parallel concepts of 'Nutzungserwartung' and 'Überlieferungsabsicht', see Kluge 2014a, *passim*, and 2014b, 86f. Also see Groys 1992 on archives, the future and the concept of 'innovation'.

63 'It would be wrong to assume that the main purpose of the archives was to preserve documents for writing history', Fölster states on p. 218.

64 See de Vivo/Guidi/Silvestri 2015, for example.

65 Wagner 2004, 9–90, speaks about an 'industrial' ('fabrikmäßig', i.e. 'factory-like') work routine transforming archival documentation into historiography in Qing China.

66 Youn 2012; Wagner 2004, 11f., 14.

concern for many cultures, this goal translated into a variety of different outcomes that sometimes seem to be contradictory.

These five dimensions should not be seen in isolation, but rather in a web of mutual relationships. Cultural decisions and assumptions regarding each of the five points are related to decisions and assumptions in each of the other areas —material features relate to and influence organisational strategies, which, in turn, reflect and embody notions of social or political order which are closely related to a society's institutional landscape and its ideas about time and memory. Eventually, then, a comparison should also consider these connections and relationships by asking questions such as these: how did similar social hopes translate into different archival arrangements? How did parallel attitudes to history and historiography go together with different archival arrangements, as was the case with the Ming and Manchu rulers of China?[67] Did certain preferences for writing materials originate from perceptions of society, and how was the intended purpose of archiving related to concepts of the future? Did similar approaches to the past or to empire-building followed by different cultures necessitate similar ideals of the archive, and how were these, in turn, influenced by the writing materials available? Did similarly 'feudal' concepts of society in Tibet and medieval Europe entail similar archival practices? And given the fact that significant changes in the practices of writing and archiving occurred precisely because of changes in land-holding in Ethiopia and Sudan, is a broader trend observable across cultural boundaries connecting archival developments to changes in the economic and legal management of land-holding?[68] Could such private cultures of keeping legal documents lead to employing these written artefacts in acts of resistance against overbearing lords?

This plea for a (cautious) comparison of archival practices on a global level must also include some remarks about the limits of such an approach, of course. By no means all archival phenomena can meaningfully be compared. In particular, we should be extremely reluctant to compare phenomena on different scales. How can we find an adequate parallel phenomenon to private record-keeping in the remote valleys of the Himalayas so vividly described by Dieter Schuh?[69] Comparing that to the state archives of modern Nepal, India or China is perhaps less

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67 Fitzgerald 2015, 75–80.

68 On Ethiopia, see Habtamu Mengistie 2015, esp. p. 443. On Sudan, see Crummey 2011, 1–42 (pp. 29–36 here). On Europe and the medieval connection between land and archives, see the remarks made in Esch 1985, 529–570. See Clanchy 1993 on the relationship between the Doomsday Book and archival improvements.

69 Schuh 2014, 1–4.

appropriate than making a long-distance comparison with the archival situation of modern-day Alpine France, as analysed by Valérie Feschet a few years ago.[70] Obviously, a comparison should not be foiled by the use of superficial parallels. Consider two cases of political forgetting here: in Guatemala City, tens of thousands of pages of torture files produced by the secret police during the civil war were 'accidentally' found in 2005, after being 'forgotten' for more than ten years.[71] Equally recently, several finds looted from Indonesia in 1949 were discovered in the Dutch Rijskarchief, again after decades of convenient oblivion.[72] It might be tempting to assume parallel motives behind such acts of politically convenient forgetting, but the differences should not be overlooked: the time spans are very different, the institutions involved function very differently, and the societies concerned are generally in very different shape. Rather than simply trying to compare apples with pears, researchers should presumably start by asking sceptically in the first place if—and to what degree and on what level—a comparison between such archival events is possible at all.

4 Archival entanglements

Comparative perspectives alone will not suffice to integrate cross-cultural research on archival practices. Rather, archival history is full of episodes of entanglement, especially if seen on a global scale. Cases of archival entanglements are by no means restricted to the era of European expansion either,[73] but they deepened considerably as a consequence of colonialism. Extended contact with and suppression by highly bureaucratised European colonial organisations frequently created significant archival dynamics in extra-European cultures. This started as early as the conquest itself, as Kathryn Burns, for instance, has shown for the creation of Spanish-style archives in Peru during the Early Modern Period.[74] Another case in point is the widespread creation of 'national archives' in the

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70 Feschet 1998.

71 Weld 2014.

72 See Karabinos 2013, 279–294, and 2015.

73 Chinese archival practices were exported to and adopted in Korea ever since the eleventh century. The local Korean tradition, in turn, which had grown significantly more sophisticated since the late fifteenth century, was ultimately changed—dramatically—in 1910, not by direct contact with the West, but because of the military occupation by Japan, which, had started to adopt German archival practices. See Youn 2012.

74 Burns 2010.

former colonial states in the twentieth century, which could in many ways be seen as the result of a cultural export, no matter how incomplete or hybrid the final results may have been.[75] Furthermore, the practice of using archival research as a basis for narrating history has been adopted in many places, but only after contact with European practices, as the cases of the East Indies and Jordan illustrate—in both places, only the twentieth century saw the establishment of indigenous academic historiography and concomitant archival practices.[76]

Frequently, such archival entanglements occur in highly asymmetric power situations which lead to a one-sided appropriation and/or re-valuation of one archival culture by another. Many cases of (forced) European overpowering of indigenous manuscript collections—whether physically or epistemically—are known to us today. The re-conceptualisation of local documents as 'archives' and their ensuing exploitation by colonialists often had a strong imperial function. The transformation of Javanese temple manuscripts into historical archives by Thomas Stamford Raffles and Colin Mackenzie at the beginning of the nineteenth century was one such instance.[77] Other more violent forms of re-purposing indigenous archives occur where documents of all kinds are simply looted or stolen —again, an abundance of examples can be cited from most colonial episodes in world history, right up to the very recent past.[78] And yet this was and is not a one-way street—archival entanglements have been and are still working in multiple directions. It would be entirely misleading to understand post-colonial archival history simply as an imposition of European models.[79] Books like Christopher Bayly's on nineteenth-century India or Matthew Hull's on modern Pakistan's administrative apparatus alert us to the complex mixture of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial technologies that constitute contemporary forms of governance.[80]

Ultimately, a global archival history shares many of the difficulties every global history runs into: difficulties regarding terminology, difficulties of scale, difficulties in defining phenomena. And yet there can be no doubt that storing,

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75 See Punzalan 2007, 381–392, Wright 1965, 511–520, and Schneider 2003, 447–454, for instance. The relative lack of coherence in these activities in much of the Arab world has already been pointed out by Astrid Meier: *s.v.* 'Archives and Chanceries: Arab World', in EI³, 2013–2, 17–22.

76 I rely on Jeurgens 2013, 84–106, and Jungen 2009, online since 18 March 2009, viewed on 10/11/2017. URL: http://ateliers.revues.org/8195; DOI: 10.4000/ateliers.8195

77 Jeurgens 2013, 92f.

78 See Caswell 2011, 211–240 regarding an ongoing and much-debated case.

79 Calls for a 'post-colonial archive' have become louder; see Kurtz 2006, 63–90, for example (in a highly metaphorical use of 'archive'). With a stronger connection to 'traditional' archives, see Bastian 2003. Also see Caswell 2011, *passim*.

80 Hull 2012. Also see Bayly 1996.

handling and using manuscripts were crucial elements of all cultures where writing was (and is) used. While not being exhaustive by any means, the papers presented in this volume amply demonstrate the enormous extent to which archiving was part of writing. It is to be hoped that future research will follow the direction in which these essays point and lead to a host of new insights.

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