Forms of Urbanity in the Persianate World



Workshop
Organized by
Naveen KANALU (EHESS-CRH)

9:00 Welcome and Introduction

9:15-10:15
Camille RHONÉ-QUER (Iremam & BioArch, Université Aix-Marseille)
Cities and the Amu Darya River in the pre-Seljuk Islamic period: A Fluvial Urbanity?

10:15-11:15
Saarthak SINGH (EFEO)
Persianate and pluralist in the urban fabric of Sultanate India: Building identity and community in Chanderi, c.1300-1550

11:30-12:30
Kathryn BABAYAN (University of Michigan)
Desiring Isfahan: Seeing, Reading, and Writing the Early Modern City

Wednesday, 4 June 2025
9:00-18:00

EHESS-CRH (Salle B04_01)
54, boulevard Raspail
75006 Paris

14:00-15:00
Corinne LEFÈVRE (CNRS-CESAH)
Writing the Built Landscape of Delhi in the Late 18th and 19th Centuries: A Comparative Reading of Some Persian and Vernacular Narratives

15:00-16:00
Zahir BHALLOO (Universität Hamburg)
Legists, Litigants and Rulers: Social and Spatial Dynamics of Persian Fatwa Writing in 19th-Century Bukhara

16:15-17:15
Subah DAYAL (New York University)
A Sea of Scribes: The Imperial Bureaucracies of Bandar Abbas, Surat, and Masulipatnam in Global Comparison



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"Fortified City of Ranthambor", Generation of Bagta ca. 1810–18 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

The workshop explores the processes of urbanization and the forms of lived urbanity in the eastern Islamicate world in the medieval and the early modern period. It interrogates the religious, social, economic and cultural dimensions of the urban spaces of Persianate societies in Iran, southern Asia and the Indian Ocean by offering a granular analysis of urban experiences, filtered through a variety of archival, textual, literary and material sources. Through talks on the religious and sacred landscape of urban shrines, commercial and artisan networks as well as imperial mechanisms of governing cities and the social cohabitation of members of different ethnic, religious and caste communities, the workshop maps the dynamic contours of Persianate urbanities in the premodern world.

The workshop engages with a variety of urban relations that were shaped around garrison towns of military contingents, suburban agglomerations, and the rural hinterland. How was city life experienced by diverse social groups such as merchants, poets, scholars and administrators? The workshop will reflect on these issues across a vast space where Persian was the language of elite culture. The workshop also provides an opportunity to compare and contrast the ethnic, social and economic diversities of urban culture. Moreover, it aims to understand how different kinds of cities: imperial capitals, regional centres, religious sites or port cities produced distinct forms of urbanity while also creating inter-urban interlinkages that characterized the Persianate world.

The workshop is sponsored by the ANR project MugUrba: "**The Bureaucratic Rhythms of Imperial Urbanity: Law, Property and Public Life in Mughal South Asia, c. 1650–1750**". (https://mugurba.hypotheses.org/)

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