

17-18 October 2024
International Conference

**Historicizing the Muslim Sensorium:
Toward a Sensory History of Islam in the Early Modern World**



Image: "Interior of a Courtyard with Figures," early 17th c., India (via The Met Collection)

Convened by the SENSIS research project, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Utrecht University (<https://sensis.wp.hum.uu.nl>)

Time & Date

Thursday 17 October 2024 – Friday 18 October 2024
From 9:00 – 17:00

Location

Day 1: Utrecht University, Academiegebouw (Kanunnikenzaal), Domplein 29, Utrecht

Day 2: Museum Speelklok (Transeptzaal), Steenweg 6, Utrecht

Registration

Entrance is free, but registration compulsory since seats are limited (sensis@uu.nl)

Conference Abstract

This conference brings together a multi-disciplinary group of scholars to advance the history of the senses in the early modern Islamic world (c. 1500-1900). Inspired by the “sensory turn” that has enriched numerous areas of the humanities and social sciences in recent years, we will explore how Muslims across different historical, geographical, social, and intellectual contexts experienced sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. How can we conceive of the Muslim sensorium over the course of history? Is there really such a thing as a “Muslim sensorium”? What are the ways in which we could write the history of the senses in the Islamic world? What does Islamic sensory history teach us about the “gunpowder empires” of the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals that conventional history does not? How is sensory history connected to or distinct from the history of emotions? And what are the methods, interpretive stakes, and archival challenges in doing Islamic sensory history? These are some of the questions this conference seeks to address.

This conference is made possible by the NWO Vici Grant (2023-2028), “Rosewater, Nightingale, and Gunpowder: A Sensory History of the Islamic World, c. 1500-1900.” [SENSIS](#), Utrecht University’s Islamic sensory history research project, has also received funding from the Ammodo Foundation for Arts, Architecture, and Science.



Conference Program

Day 1 (Thursday, October 17), 9:00 – 17:00

9:00 Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Panel 1: The Senses, Islamic Law & Intercommunal Relations, 9:30 – 11:00

Chair: **Yusuf Ünal** (Utrecht University)

9:30 **Ari Schriber** (Utrecht University), “Established by ‘Drums and Smoke:’ Sound, Sight, and Memory in Islamic Legal Notions of Hearsay”

10:00 **Ali Atabey** (University of Texas at San Antonio), “Audible Boundaries: Sound and Intercommunal Relations in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul”

10:30 **Hasan Baran Firat** (Koç University), “‘The Wood of Infidels’: Aural Presence of Orthodox Christians Under Ottoman Control”

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

Panel 2: Material Culture and the Senses in Early Modern Islam, 11:15 – 12:15

Chair: **Suzanne Compagnon** (Utrecht University)

11:15 **Mandana Barkeshli** (UCSI University), “The Sensory Dimensions of Iranian Bookmaking: Emotions, Colors, and Mysticism in Historical Treatises”

11:45 **Mrinalini Sil** (Rijksmuseum Amsterdam), “*Muraqqa’* as a Site of ‘Sensory Knowledge’ and Mughal Connoisseurship: An Exploration of Ghulam Hussain Khan Tabatabai’s Album from Eighteenth Century Bengal”

12:15 – 13:15 Lunch Break

Panel 2 (cont.), 13:15 – 13:45

13:15 **Beyza Uzun Kutlay** (Sadberk Hanım Museum, Istanbul), “Olfactory Persona of Ottoman Sultans: The Usage of Incense Burners at the Public Imperial Ceremonies”

Panel 3: Theories of the Senses in Early Modern Islam, 13:45 – 15:15

Chair: **Arash Ghajarjazi** (Utrecht University)

13:45 **Christian Lange** (Utrecht University), “Ismā‘īl Ḥaqqī Bursavī (d. 1137/1725) on Mystical Olfaction”

14:15 **Sümeyye Parildar** (Istanbul University), “Mulla Sadra’s Theory of Perception in the Context of the Unity of the Soul”

14:45 **Rao Mohsin Ali Noor** (Johns Hopkins University), “Ekphrasis, the Sensory Imagination, and the Sacred Body in Ottoman Islam”

15:15 – 15:30 Coffee Break

Keynote Lecture I, 15:30 – 16:15

15:30 **Nil Tekgül** (Bilkent University), “Creation of Meaning: Body, Senses, and Emotions in Ottoman History”

16:15 – 17:00 Q&A and Wrap-up Day 1

17:30 Dinner for speakers

Day 2 (Friday, October 18), 9:00 – 17:00

9:00 Welcome

Panel 1: Sensory Experiences and Mughal Courtly Culture, 9:30 – 11:00

Chair: **David Howes** (Concordia University)

9:30 **Amrita Chattopadhyay** (Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient), “Mughal Illumination in Early Modern India: Material Practices and Sensory Experiences”

10:00 **Shounak Ghosh** (Vanderbilt University), “Sensory Modalities of Diplomatic Encounters: Perspectives from Persianate South Asia”

10:30 **Anubhuti Maurya** (Shiv Nadar University), “‘*Ajab Karnamah-i Taqdir*: Anxiety and Wonder in the Mughal Writings on Kashmir”

11:00 – 11:15 Coffee Break

Panel 2: Islam, Material Culture, and the Senses in Early Modern South Asia, 11:15 – 12:15

Chair: **Gianni Sievers** (Utrecht University)

11:15 **Neha Vermani** (Azim Premji University), “The House of Pleasures: A Sensory Exploration into the Material World of the Mughal Elite”

11:45 **Karen Ruffle** (University of Toronto), “Sensing Muḥarram in Shirazī’s *Ḥadīqat-i salāṭīn*”

12:15 – 13:15 Lunch Break

Panel 2 (cont.), 13:15 – 13:45

13:15 **Usman Hamid** (Northwestern University), “Sensing the Prophet in Mughal Delhi”

Panel 3: Music and the Senses in Early Modern Islam, 13:45 – 15:15

Chair: **Christian Lange** (Utrecht University)

13:45 **Scott Kugle** (Emory University), "The Power of Listening: Sufi Music in 18th Century Delhi"

14:15 **Ines Weinrich** (University of Münster), "The Multi-Sensory Experience of *ṭarab*"

14:45 **Rachel Colwell** (West Chester University of Pennsylvania), "Sensory Histories of *Ma'lūf* Musicking in Ottoman Tunisia"

15:15 – 15:30 Coffee Break

Keynote Lecture II, 15:30 – 16:15

15:30 **David Howes** (Concordia University), "The Sensorial Revolution in Islamic Studies"

16:15 – 17:00 Q&A and Wrap-up

17:00 Borrel (Drinks & Snacks) at Museumcafé Klok