

## **Patterns of Knowledge Circulation in Early Modern East-Central Europe: Tracing Jewish Kabbalistic Textual Units in Multiple-Text Manuscripts**

This presentation will provide initial insights into the first comprehensive study of the networks of production and circulation of Jewish esoteric texts in early modern East-Central Europe (1500-1750). This study, which is funded by the German Research Foundation and has begun in 2019, aims to collect datasets and quantitatively analyse the transmission and reception of Jewish esoteric traditions recorded in manuscript form. In doing so, the study makes use of network analysis methods and utilises digital database environment (provided by LAB 1100) that facilitates analysis and visualisation of data with complex temporal, geographical and relational attributes.

The scholarship on Jewish books, both in manuscripts and in print, and kabbalah has centred chiefly on studying individual figures, narrowing the focus of study to singular individuals and groups. Such an approach, although important, stops short of unearthing broader patterns and dissemination of ideas, which could be available through analysis of a larger selection of sources. Virtually no study has been to date devoted to examining broader networks of esoteric textual knowledge exchange from the perspective of the material evidence of such interactions. Such examination may offer a more comprehensive view on East-Central European dynamics of creating, transmitting, and re-appropriating kabbalistic and esoteric sources.

Of special interest is the phenomenon of copying, transcription and compiling of kabbalistic textual units in multiple-text manuscripts, often of complex codicological structure, which abound as the most universal medium of dissemination for esoteric (kabbalistic) texts. In recent years, substantial methodological changes occurred in the field of manuscript studies, which emphasise positioning and contextualizing manuscripts as material objects within their social and cultural milieus, and rediscovers the network of ‘manuscript cultures,’ i.e. ‘the urban micro-cultures,’ which left their imprints on both the external aspects and the contents of the codices. The current presentation will highlight potentials and challenges of network analysis for the study of circulation of textual units and their variants in multiple complex and composite manuscripts, whose transcription gives evidence to conscious decisions of those involved in their dissemination and subsequent transmission in East-Central Europe. As the study will have run for just over one year by the date of the conference, the presentation will refrain from offering final conclusions, but remain open to discussions and suggestions from scholars deploying similar methods to the study of manuscripts and manuscript cultures.