

Conference & workshop papers, presentations, posters – Maxim Romanov

- **November, 2016:** “Of A Network and A Node: ‘The History of Islam’ of al-Dahabī (d. 1348) and its place in the Premodern Arabic Textual Tradition” @ *Networked Texts: New Ways of Seeing the Arabic Textual Tradition (750-1500)*, a Panel co-organized by Sarah Savant and Maxim Romanov @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Boston, MA
- **September, 2016:** Presentation on Islamic[ate] DH Projects at Leipzig University @ Activism, Advocacy, and Scholarship on Islam in the Digital Realm: Prospects, Progress, and Challenges, a workshop organized by the Institute for the Study of Muslim Societies & Civilizations, Boston University (September 16 & 17, 2016)
- **October, 2015:** “al-Dahabī’s Monster”: Dissecting a 50-Volume Arabic Chronicle-cum-Biographical Collection From the 14th Century CE @ Distant Reading the Islamic Archive, Conference at Brown University (October 16, 2015)

Video recording of this presentation is available @ Brown University’s website: tinyurl.com/IslamicDHatBrown2015 → [Scene 106 \(or timestamp 3:22:00; the Q&A starts right after the presentation\)](#).

- **September, 2015:** The *Ta’rīḥ al-islām* of al-Dahabī (d. 748/1347 CE): Computational Exploration of the Life-Cycle of a 50-Volume Arabic Chronicle-cum-Biographical Collection @ Arabic Pasts: Histories and Historiographies: Research Workshop, co-hosted by the Aga Khan University, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations and SOAS, University of London (September 25–26, 2015)
- **July, 2015:** Cultural Production in the Islamic World (600–1900 CE): mining an Ottoman bibliographical collection from the early 20th century @ The Keystone Digital Humanities Conference, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (July 22–24, 2015)
- **May, 2015:** Analyzing Arabic Biographical Collections at Scale @ Digital Ottoman Platform Workshop, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ (June 8–12, 2015)
- **May, 2015:** The Writing Culture of Nīshāpūr in the 11th Century [In collaboration with Sarah Savant, Aga Khan University, London; paper delivered by Sarah Savant] @ Iranian Cities from the Arab Conquest to the Early Modern Period, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (May 1-2).
- **November, 2014:** Exploring Islamic Written Legacy: Computational Reading of *Hadiyyat al-‘ārifīn* @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C.
- **March, 2014:** Computational Processing of Toponymic Data from classical Arabic Sources @ Working with Text in a Digital Age, A Workshop @ Tufts University (the Perseus Project) (March 29, 2014).
- **February, 2014:** Visualizing Islamic Geography at Scale @ Data Big and Small: Computer Science, the Humanities and Social Science: Conversations between representatives from Leipzig, Northeastern, Princeton Tufts, A Workshop @ Tufts University (the Perseus Project) (February 3-4, 2014).
- **October, 2013:** Abstract Models for Islamic History @ Digital Humanities and Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies, Brown University, Providence, RI (October

24-25, 2013). **Video recording** of this presentation is available @ Brown University's website: tinyurl.com/IslamicDHatBrown2013 → [Day One, Scene 166 \(or timestamp 2:47:50; the Q&A at 3:51:30\)](#).

- **October, 2013:** Islamic World Connected (661–1300 CE) @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA.
- **April, 2013: Poster (not on program):** Toward Abstract Models for Islamic History @ Word, Space, Time: Digital Perspectives on the Classical World, an interdisciplinary conference organized by the Digital Classics Association, University of Buffalo, SUNY, Buffalo, NY (April 5–6, 2013).
- **March, 2013:** Exploratory Analysis of Arabic Biographical Collections: the Case of al-Dahabī's (d. 1347 CE) *Ta'riḫ al-islām* @ 223rd Meeting of the American Oriental Society (AOS), Portland, OR; also @ the 8th Annual Pearl Kibre Medieval Study Conference: "New Media and the Middle Ages", The Graduate Center, CUNY, New York, NY.
- **February, 2013:** 'Connectedness' of the Islamic World (600–1300 CE) @ 7th Annual Near Eastern Studies Graduate Student Colloquium, U of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- **November, 2012:** Social History of the Muslim World in the Digital Age: Making Sense of 29,000 Biographies from al-Dahabī's "History of Islam" @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.
- **November, 2012: Poster:** Social History of the Muslim World in the Digital Age: Making Sense of 29,000 Biographies from al-Dahabī's "History of Islam" @ Cyberinfrastructure Days, U of Michigan, November 7-8, 2012. ["People's Choice Award Winner"](#).
- **October, 2012:** Writing the Digital History of the Premodern Muslim World, 670-1300 CE: Exploratory Analysis of Primary Sources @ Interdisciplinary Workshop under the rubric "Forum on Research in Medieval Studies" (FoRMS), the Medieval Lunch Series, U of Michigan.
- **August, 2012:** Mining pre-Modern Islamic Sources @ "Working with Text in a Digital Age," the summer institute at Tufts U, Medford, MA.
- **April, 2012:** Dreaming Ḥanbalites: Dream-Tales in Prosopographical Dictionaries (in Russian) @ The 34th Annual Session of St. Petersburg Arabists, SPbIOS/IOM of RAS.
- **April, 2012:** Digital History of the Muslim World: Computer-Aided Analysis of Biographical Dictionaries @ "Methods and means for digital analysis of ancient and medieval texts and manuscripts," the workshop at the Katholieke Universitet, Leuven & the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium (KVAB), Brussels.
- **November, 2010:** "Popular" Preaching in the Sunnī Context and the Legitimization of *Wa'z* in the Late 12th Century CE @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- **November, 2009:** Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's (d. 241/855) Argumentative Strategies @ Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meeting, Boston, MA.
- **April, 2009:** Dreaming Ḥanbalites @ Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies, U of Michigan conference.
- **March, 2004:** The Origins of the Term *Ṣūfī* (in Russian) @ 26th Annual Session of St. Petersburg Arabists, SPbIOS/IOM of RAS.
- **April, 2003:** Argumentation with *Ḥadīṭ* Reports in Ibn al-Ġawzī's *Talbīs Iblīs* ("Devil's Delusions") (in Russian) @ 25th Annual Session of St. Petersburg Arabists, SPbIOS/IOM of RAS.

- **December, 2003:** The Paradigm of the Science of Ḥadīṭ (*‘ilm al-ḥadīṭ*) (in Russian) @ Annual Academic Session, SPbIOS/IOM of RAS.
- **April, 2002:** Ibn al-Ġawzī’s Image in the Western Scholarship (in Russian) @ 24th Annual Session of St. Petersburg Arabists, SPbIOS/IOM of RAS.

Invited talks, guest lectures

- **November 17, 2016:** From Text to Map: Arabic Biographical Collections and Geospatial Analysis @ Center for Geographic Analysis, Harvard University
- **2016:** Writing a 50-volume book in 14th-century Damascus: Algorithmic Analysis, Text Reuse & the Arabic Written Tradition. Different versions of this invited lecture @
 - Davidson College (November 9, 2016)
 - University of Michigan (March 10, 2016)
- **2015–2016:** Of Graphs, Maps, and 30,000 Muslims: Premodern Arabic Texts & the Digital Humanities. Different versions of this invited lecture @
 - Center for Digital Humanities/Department of History, University of South Carolina (November 14, 2016)
 - Duke University (November 11, 2016)
 - School of Oriental and African Studies [SOAS], University of London (November 23, 2015)
 - University of Manchester (November 25, 2015)
 - University of St Andrews (November 27, 2015)
 - University of Maryland [MITH] (March 2, 2016) for more details: <http://mith.umd.edu/dialogues/dd-spring-2016-maxim-romanov/>
 - University of Tübingen (May 11, 2016)
- **June 1, 2016:** Future in the Past: Using Modern Computational Methods for the Analysis of Premodern Arabic Texts, Guest Lecture @ “Society and Religion in the Arab World” (an introductory Arabic and Islamic Studies seminar taught by Marie Hakenberg), Leipzig University
- **May 4, 2016:** Annotation of geographical data (together with Chiara Palladino), Session 14 of the Sunoikisis Digital Classics 2016, for more details: <https://github.com/SunoikisisDC/SunoikisisDC-2016>
- **April 26, 2016:** [Discovering] Spatial and Chronological Patterns in Historical Texts @ Unlocking the Digital Humanities, A Seminar organized by Leipzig University & Tufts University, Spring 2016
- **December, 2015:** Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Digital Humanities @ The Brill Workshop on the Digital Humanities (December 2-3, Leiden; May 1-2, Boston)
- **March, 2015:** Introduction to Classical Arabic Through the Words of the Prophet, A “Lightning talk” on DH Topics (over Skype) @ Digital Humanities Institute—Beirut 2015, American University of Beirut. For more details, dhibeirut.wordpress.com.
- **February, 2015:** Digital Humanities the Premodern Islamic World: *Of Graphs, Maps, and 30,000 Muslims*. Invited public lecture @ the University of California—Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA (February 25, 2015). For more details, see information on the website of [The Gustav E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA](http://www.gustav-e-von-grunebaum.com).

- **August, 2014:** The Social Geography of the Islamic World (661–1300 CE): on the Method, Invited presentation @ PROSOP Workshop, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL (August 15, 2014). See, www.prosop.org.
- **April, 2014:** The Social Geography of the Islamic World (661–1300 CE), Invited talk @ the University of Richmond, Richmond, VA (April 10, 2014)
- **April, 2014:** Distant Reading of Arabic Biographical Collections, Guest Lecture @ “Saints and Sinners in Muslim Literature,” (Prof. Mimi Hanaoka) @ the University of Richmond, Richmond, VA (April 10, 2014)
- **April, 2014:** Future in the Past: Using Digital Methods to Study Medieval Arabic Texts, Presentation for the Students of Arabic @ Tufts University (April 7, 2014).
- **April, 2014:** Classical Arabic through the Words of the Prophet: Teaching Classical Arabic in the Digital Age, Brown Bag Presentation for Arabic Instructors @ Tufts University (April 2, 2014).
- **March, 2014:** Studying Classical Arabic Sources in the Digital Age: Social Geography and Social History, Invited talk for Holy Cross Manuscripts, Inscriptions and Documents Club the College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA (March 14, 2014)
- **March, 2014:** Computational Reading of Classical Arabic Sources: the Case of Biographical Collections, Presentation @ the Department of Classics, Tufts University (March 10, 2014).
- **February, 2014:** Building a Historical Gazetteer, Guest Lecture @ “Computational methods in the humanities,” An honors course (Prof. David J. Birnbaum) @ the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA (February, 21, 2014)
- **February, 2014:** Connectedness of the Islamic World (661–1300 CE), Invited Talk @ the European Union Center of Excellence European Studies Center, the University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA (February, 20, 2014)
- **February, 2014:** Computational Reading of Classical Arabic Sources: the Case of Biographical Collections, Invited Talk @ Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson, NY (February 11, 2014).
- **January, 2014:** Computational Reading of Classical Arabic Sources: the Case of Biographical Collections, Invited Talk @ The Center for Digital Research in the Humanities (CDRH) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL), Lincoln, NE (January 30, 2014).

Teaching: Classes

- ***Islamicate Texts, DH: Islamicate World 2.0: Studying Islamic Cultures through Computational Textual Analysis.*** In this new project-based course, students from two universities will come together to learn the basics of computational textual analysis while participating as student researchers in the nascent project of exploring the vast and largely unexplored tomes of textual data about the Islamicate world. It will also introduce students to theoretical and methodological debates in the field of global digital humanities. Like the digital humanities field that inspires its approach, it will be a highly interdisciplinary course that studies texts from multiple genres (lyric poetry to historical chronicles, legal treatises to the Qur’ān) and languages (Arabic, Persian) with the aid of computational textual analysis tools. There are no language prerequisites, but it is preferable if students at least have elementary

knowledge of either Arabic, Persian, Turkish, or Urdu. (<http://islamicate-dh.github.io/>) @ the *U of Maryland (College Park)* and the *Leipzig U*, Fall/Winter 2016-7; co-taught with Matthew Miller (UMD).

- **GIS, DH: *From Text to Map***, A two-week intensive introduction (32 contact hours) to a variety of ways of thinking about and working with humanities data in digital mapping environments; co-taught with David J. Wrisley, American University of Beirut @ “Culture & Technology”—The European Summer University in Digital Humanities, *Leipzig University*, Summer 2016 (www.culingtec.uni-leipzig.de)
- **Classical Language, Religion, DH: *Classical Arabic Through the Words of the Prophet*** (Introduction to Classical Arabic through the Corpus of Ḥadīth), *Tufts University*, Spring 2015
- **Digital Humanities, Methods: *Introduction to Text Mining for the Students of Humanities***, *Tufts University*, Spring 2015; (also as an *independent study* with two students: *Tufts University*, Fall 2014)
- **History, Digital Humanities: *Mapping the Classical Islamic World***, *Tufts University*, Winter 2014; **Digital Project: *Mapping Data from al-Muqaddasī’s geographical treatise (10th century CE)***
- **History, DH: *The First Millennium of the Islamic Near East 600–1600 CE***, *U of Michigan*, Fall 2012 (as a teaching assistant); **Digital Project: *Timemaps***
- **Religion, History: *Introduction to Islam***, *U of Michigan*: Spring 2011, Winter 2011 (as a teaching assistant), Spring 2010
- **Language: *Elementary Modern Standard Arabic***, *U of Michigan*: Fall 2010, Fall/Winter 2009–2010, Fall/Winter 2008–2009, Fall/Winter 2007–2008
- **Classical Language: *Elementary Classical Arabic***, *U of Michigan*, Fall/Winter 2006–2007

Teaching: Workshops

- **December 2016: *Georeferencing Printed Maps @ Analyzing Text Reuse @ Scale / Working with Big Humanities Data*** @ *Leipzig University*, organized by Thomas Köntges & Maxim Romanov (within the framework of Leipzig Workshop Week, 14–18 December 2015).
- **February 2015: *Digital Humanities & Islamic Studies*** @ the University of California, Los Angeles. Organized by Asma Sayeed & The Gustav E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA.
- **October 2014: *Textual Corpora and the Digital Islamic Humanities*** @ *Brown University* as a session leader together with Elli Mylonas; organized by Elias Muhanna. For details: <http://islamichumanities.org/workshop-2014/>
- **May 2009: *Electronic Libraries/Databases of Arabic and Islamic sources*** a part of the Project “The Reviews of / Manuals for Electronic Databases of Arabic and Islamic Sources,” in cooperation with Michael Bonner @ *University of Michigan*.
 - **2008–2009:** detailed reviews and manuals for over 10 different databases / electronic libraries were prepared to be used as instructional materials for the Workshop
- **June 2005: *Sources for Research on Islam: Textual, Visual, Digital***. in cooperation with Professor Marion Katz (*New York University*) @ *SSRC Summer Institute “Teaching Islam in Eurasia,” Kazan, Russia.*

Organizing: Workshops, Panels, Roundtables

- **November 2016:** *Networked Texts: New Ways of Seeing the Arabic Textual Tradition (750-1500)*, a Panel co-organized with Dr. Sarah Savant (Aga Khan University—London) at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Boston 2016
- **November 2016:** *Non-traditional methods for Teaching Traditional Languages*, a Roundtable at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Boston 2016
- **December 2015:** *Analyzing Text Reuse at Scale / Working with Big Humanities Data* @ Leipzig University, organized by Thomas Köntges & Maxim Romanov (within the framework of Leipzig Workshop Week, 14–18 December 2015).
- **December 2015:** *Digital Arabic and Digital Persian Research Workshop* @ Leipzig University, organized by Maxim Romanov (within the framework of Leipzig Workshop Week, 14–18 December 2015).
- **November, 2013:** *Digital Humanities in Middle East Studies* (organized together with Børre Ludvigsen and Will Hanley), a series of two panels and a roundtable: “Traditional Sources, Nontraditional Methods,” “Digital Communication,” and Roundtable at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, New Orleans 2013
- **November, 2010:** *Islamic Preaching, a Panel* at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, San Diego, 2010

Additional training & experience

- **Summer, 2012:** “Working with Text in a Digital Age”, a 3-week summer institute @ Tufts University (Perseus Project)
- **Winter, 2012:** THATCamp @ the Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago
- **Winter, 2011:** Introduction to ArcGIS, a series of workshops @ U of Michigan
- **2009–2010:** Cataloguing Arabic manuscripts @ U of Michigan, Special Collections
- **May, 2009:** Introduction to Manuscript Studies (Dr. Adam Gacek) @ U of Michigan
- **2005–2006:** Digitalization of Manuscripts from the Dunhuang Collection, [SPbIOS/IOM of RAS](#)

Other academic publications in Arabic and Islamic studies

Reference Materials

- **2006:** Girgas, Vladimir. Arabic-Russian Dictionary for the Qur'an and Ḥadīth (*Slovar' k arabskoy khrestomatii i Koranu*). Kazan', 1881; Preparation of the improved reprint edition; in cooperation with Dr. Stanislav M. Prozorov. Cover title: *Arabsko-Russkiy Slovar' k Koranu I Hadisam*, St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers, 2006, ISBN 978-5-88503-555-2.

Translations from Russian into English

- **in progress:** Krachkovskii, Ignatii Yulianovich. *Arabic Geographical Literature*, translation into English. In cooperation with Michael Bonner @ U of Michigan.

Translations from English into Russian

- **2010:** Chittick, William. *Sufism: a Beginner's Guide*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2008 (Moscow: "Vostochnaya Literatura": ISBN 978-5-02-036498-1)
- **2006:** Cook, Michael. *Forbidding Wrong in Islam*. Cambridge University Press, 2003; in print (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers: ISBN 978-5-88503-684-9); translation into Russian, editing.
- **2006:** Watt, W. Montgomery. *Muhammad in Mecca*. Oxford, 1956 (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers, 2006: ISBN 5-88503-507-5); editing, indices, proof-reading.
- **2006:** Burton, John. *Introduction to the Hadīth*. Edinburgh University Press, 1994, (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers, 2006, ISBN 5-88503-461-3); translation into Russian (with a co-translator), editing, indices, proof-reading.
- **2005, not published:** Leaman, Oliver. *Islamic Aesthetic: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press, 2004, (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers); translation into Russian (with a co-translator), editing.
- **2005:** Watt, Montgomery & Richard Bell. *Introduction to the Qur'ān*. Edinburgh University Press, 1970 (first published), (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers, 2005, ISBN 5-88503-385-4); translation into Russian (with a co-translator), pre-editing, indices, proof-reading.
- **2004:** Knysh, Alexander. *Islamic Mysticism: a short history*. Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2000; translation into Russian, indices, proof-reading and cover design (St. Petersburg: Dilya Publishers, 2004, ISBN 5-88503-232-7).

Natural languages

- **Arabic:** modern standard & classical
- **English:** fluent spoken & written
- **Russian:** native
- **other:** reading knowledge of German, French, Indonesian; elementary Persian & Turkish

Formal languages and computer skills

- **Actively using:** Python, R, LaTeX, QGIS, Cluster Computing
- **Learning:** Javascript, D3

Professional membership

- **2016–present:** Middle East Medievalists (MEM)
- **2012–present:** American Oriental Society (AOS)
- **2008–present:** Middle East Studies Association (MESA)

Service to the field

- **2013–present:** I am regularly consulting my colleagues on the design of digital projects—both formally and informally—in the area of historical studies of the Islamic world. Over the past three years I have been in touch with over two dozen junior and senior colleagues in the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Israel and Germany.
- **: Participating in workshops as an invited expert (selected list):**
 - **November 11, 2016:** [Duke University] Jara'id 2.0: Indexing the Early Arabic Public Sphere, A Workshop in Arabic Digital Humanities (organizer: Adam Mestyan)
 - **November 16, 2016:** [Harvard Law School] Digital Islamic Law and History: Resources and Methods @ Harvard Law School, SHARIASource (invited by Intisar Rabb, Founding Editor-In-Chief, SHARIASource, Professor at Harvard Law School)
 - **November 17, 2016:** [Harvard Law School] Resource Sharing Workshop: Comparing and Sharing Digital Archival Projects and Resources @ Harvard Law School, SHARIASource (together with Intisar Rabb, Founding Editor-In-Chief, SHARIASource, Professor at Harvard Law School)
 - **June 20–24, 2016:** [Institute for Advanced Study] Digital Ottoman Platform II, organized by Sabine Schmidtke (IAS) and Amy Singer (Tel Aviv University).
 - **June 8–12, 2015:** [Institute for Advanced Study] Digital Ottoman Platform I, organized by Sabine Schmidtke (IAS) and Amy Singer (Tel Aviv University).

Supervising

- **Leipzig U, 2016–:** Masoumeh Seydi, PhD candidate in Digital Humanities: “Modeling and Visualizing Geographical Information from Premodern Textual Sources”
- **Tufts U, 2015–2016:** Cameron Jackson, BA Honors Thesis (Class 2016): “An Interactive Model of the Classical Islamic World” (<http://cjacks0413.github.io/imiw/>). Defended with highest honors.

References

- >> >>: *available upon request*

Dissertation

- **Title:** **Computational Reading of Arabic Biographical Collections with Special Reference to Preaching in the Sunnī World (661–1300 CE)**
- **Abstract:** A project in the digital humanities, the dissertation explores methods of computational text analysis. Relying on text-mining techniques to extract meaningful data from unstructured text, the study offers an effective and flexible method for the analysis of Arabic biographical collections, the most valuable source for the social history of the pre-modern Islamic world. It uses

the largest collection, “The History of Islam” of al-Dahabī (d. 1348), as a case-study of applying the new method and shows how almost 30,000 biographies can be studied as a whole.

A step toward finding a viable solution for studying the entire digital corpus of classical Islamic texts (400 mln. words), Chapter I offers a detailed explanation of “computational reading” that was built upon existing digital approaches from a variety of disciplines. Chapter II models big data extracted from the main source to further our understanding of the social geography of the Islamic world and its major social transformations, simultaneously providing an important background for the next chapter. Chapter III applies the devised method to the study of Islamic preaching from chronological, geographical and social perspectives that have been overlooked in the academic treatment of this subject. Largely an exploratory overview, it traces long-term changes in preaching practices as well as statuses of preachers within the Islamic élites. This chapter demonstrates how exactly computational reading can contribute to the studies of specific phenomena and practices. The final section overviews broad prospects of the further application of “computational reading” to a variety of genres of pre-modern Arabic literature.

The dissertation heavily relies on the visual display of information in the form of graphs, charts, maps, and tables that are used in the main body and supplied in Appendices. [More details...](#)

- **Committee:** Alexander Knysh, Chair, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Michigan; Michael Bonner, Professor of Medieval Islamic History, University of Michigan; Richard Bulliet, Professor of History, Columbia University; Sherman Jackson, Professor of Religion and American Studies, University of South California; Andrew Shryock, Professor of Cultural Anthropology, University of Michigan

Dissertation: *From Introduction*

My dissertation is a project in the digital humanities. Over the past few years “digital humanities” became an extremely overused buzzword, and one often gets a feeling that, as a Russian saying goes, only the lazy do not speak of themselves as digital humanists. For this reason, some clarifications are in order. The digital humanities still remains a vaguely defined field and DH studies range widely from theoretical inquiries into possible effects of technological developments on the humanities at large to the development and application of digital methods to traditional sources. While the prevailing majority of digital humanists prefer to contribute to the area of theoretical inquiries, this dissertation is primarily about studying traditional sources with non-traditional methods.

The initial plan was to write a dissertation on the history of “public preaching” (*wa‘z*). My sociological background and my overall interest in Arabic biographical literature, which was firmly instilled in me by my Russian mentor [Professor Stanislav M. Prozorov](#), steered me toward the history of “public preaching” through the analysis of biographical collections. In order to study preachers as a social group it was necessary to study *all* their biographies. Unfortunately, conventional close reading was of little help and a different method was necessary. In order to understand how this social group fitted into Islamic society, it was necessary to know what Islamic society was,

i.e. it was necessary to study *all* other biographies as well. Only this would allow to place preachers into a wider context of Islamic society as it is represented on the pages of biographical collections. This also required a different method.

Graduate students in our field often learn additional languages of the Islamicate world in order to advance their research. In order to solve my methodological issues I needed not a different language, but a different *kind* of language—a language that would allow me to work with texts in a radically different manner. It so happened that learning scripting languages—in my case Python and R—was the answer. These *formal* languages indeed allow one to read texts in a completely different way, no matter in what language they are, and no matter how long they are. They enhance and augment our ability to read by allowing us to work with practically unlimited volumes of text. They allowed me to pull together almost 30,000 biographies from al-Dahabī's *Ta'riḥ al-islām*, the largest biographical collection that became the backbone of my study, and start studying them as a whole.

Since digital methods have not yet entered the domain of Islamic studies, the first part of the dissertation offers a detailed explanation of “computational reading” that has been developed over the past two years. This method is built upon existing digital techniques and approaches that were picked from a variety of disciplines and adapted to the analysis of Arabic biographical collections. I fully realize that the reader might find the exposition of the method painfully technical, but since the method is essential for the entire study and largely unprecedented, its inner workings must be explained in sufficient details. Most importantly, I hope that this part will provide young scholars who are willing to step into the still uncharted terrain of digital methods of textual analysis with a desperately needed road map. Something that I, to my own misfortune, did not have.

The first part is also meant to be a step toward finding a viable approach for studying the vast digital corpus of classical Islamic texts which keeps on growing practically by the minute. If Islamicists do not find a way to deal with this big issue, eventually someone else will. In this light it is worth drawing attention to an experimental study conducted by a group of *information scientists*. Published in an American academic journal, this “computer study of the reliability of Arabic stories” attempts to evaluate the reliability of chains of transmitters (sing. *isnād*) in Prophetic reports (sing. *ḥadīth*) using contemporary information reliability theories. Although these scientists are far from producing anything as appealing to reading public as, for example, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, there are no reasons to believe that our field will forever remain immune to those who might want to follow in the footsteps of Jared Diamond, a biologist-turn-historian.

The second part is on modeling. Extracted with digital methods, “big data” still need to be re-organized in some coherent manner in order to be useful for analysis. Modeling is a way to achieve this. As clearly defined systems of assumptions about different kinds of data and their interrelations, models are designed to provide explanations for complex processes. Thus, this part models big data extracted from al-Dahabī's *Ta'riḥ al-islām* to further our understanding of the social geography of the Islamic world and major social transformations that the Muslim community underwent in the course of its early history. Although largely a road map for further

research, this part provides an important chronological, geographical and social background for the last part of the dissertation.

The third part is an application of the devised method to the study of Islamic preaching. It focuses on an exploratory overview of all major forms of Islamic preaching as they feature on the electronic pages of my corpus that covers about 700 years of Islamic history. Partially determined by the current state of the development of computational reading, this part studies the major forms of Islamic preaching from chronological, geographical and social perspectives that have been largely overlooked in the academic treatment of this subject. The choice of establishing the overview, instead of trying to find answers to particular historical questions, was deliberate. Working with big data makes it abundantly clear that there are too many unknowns and that asking specific questions without knowing what is and what is not in the data only leads to wrong answers. At this stage, “exploratory analysis” is much more crucial than specific inquiries. One of the major goals of this part is also to demonstrate how exactly computational reading can contribute to the studies of specific phenomena and practices in the pre-modern Islamic world.

The three parts of the dissertation build upon each other, but ultimately can be treated as separate studies.

