

# Manuscript Practices and the Making of Exile Communities in the Early Modern Period

Date: 15–16 April 2026

Venue: Academic Conference Centre, Husova 4a,  
Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

The conference will focus on the role of manuscript culture in exile communities of diverse religious backgrounds during the early modern period, with a particular emphasis on the 1620s and 1630s. Specifically, it will examine how the written word was used to sustain, transmit, and reshape collective and individual identities amid the pressures of displacement and religious conflict. The discussion will cover the various forms of manuscript production, such as personal notebooks and records, collections of sermons, prophetic and chiliastic writings, polemical tracts and historical compilations, all situated within institutional frameworks and domestic contexts. Particular attention will be given to the act of copying, which will be considered not only as a practical means for the transmission of texts in environments with limited access to print, but also as a practice with symbolic significance and economic value. Copies could serve as a reaffirmation of tradition, a means and strategy for coping with the loss of home and faith. Furthermore, commissioning copies could function as a form of social support, providing employment and sustenance for those in exile who had lost their livelihoods. By examining these practices, the conference aims to shed light on the specific textual corpora of exile and broader issues of communication, such as memory, authorship and textual identity in forced migration situations.

We invite proposals which engage, among others, with the following themes:

1. **The manuscript as a medium of exile experience and identity:** manuscripts written under conditions of repression, displacement, and the loss of institutional frameworks; handwritten texts as an alternative to print, serving both practical and symbolic functions; the transmission and preservation of confessional identity through scribal practices.
2. **Rewriting and copying as cultural practices:** the purposes, methods, and strategies of textual reproduction; the role of manuscript collections in shaping and sustaining memory practices; rewriting and copying as forms of spiritual resilience and solidarity.
3. **The typology of manuscript production by content:** parenetic, chiliastic, prophetic, and polemical writings; sermon transcripts; chronicles and historical compilations; ego-documents and personal testimonies in manuscript form.
4. **Exile centres and their manuscript cultures:** local hubs of manuscript production; institutional and private initiatives in the formation of collections; patrons and commissioners of texts; the circulation of manuscripts within exile communities and their connections to the homeland – networks of manuscript authors, copiers, and recipients.
5. **Between manuscript and print:** the transition of manuscript texts into print – when and why it occurred; printing as an affirmation of newly negotiated identities; the interplay of manuscript and print cultures in exile; the encouragement and supervision of writing and copying practices.

Please submit a proposal consisting of an abstract (100–200 words) and a brief curriculum vitae to **Tomáš Havelka** ([havelka@flu.cas.cz](mailto:havelka@flu.cas.cz)) by **30 October 2025**.

This conference is a part of the research project *Manuscript Practices and Textuality of Exile Communities from the Czech Lands in the 1620s and 1630s*, supported by the Czech Science Foundation (reg. nr. 25-15529S). It is organised in collaboration with the Institute of Philosophy and the Institute of History of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS).