

Amélie Couvrat  
Desvergnés

## Handmade Papers Used for the Production of Pahari Drawings from the 19th Century-North Western India

The lecture aims to present the intermediate results on the characterisation of local handmade paper used for artistic production in courtly workshops from north-western India. The Museum Volkenkunde (Museum of the World Cultures) in Leiden has around 140 drawings and paintings from the Punjab and the Pahari lands (today Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) commonly referred to as "Pahari miniature painting". The word "*Pahar*", which means 'from the hills', refers to the western foothills of the Himalayas. The collection covers a wide variety of themes (Hindu narratives, vernacular poetry, portraits of rulers and historical figures) and echoes the interactions between indigenous traditions and Mughal culture. In addition, some works reflect Western influences, either in themes and representations or in the making of the so-called 'company paintings' made for Europeans. The entire collection constitutes a considerable visual resource which illustrates the history and traditions of the region and emphasizes Indian techniques and craftsmanship. The different types of drawings, sketches, preparatory studies, unfinished painting or models, reflect workshop patterns and artistic practices. The aim of the project, alongside the conservation of these works, is to study their materiality and particularly the various types of papers used. Indian handmade paper whose production methods were similar to those of Islamic paper, was generally made from recycled materials such as cordage, mat, cloth and bag, manufactured from sunn hemp (*Crotalaria juncea L.*) a local annual of the family Fabaceae. As a result, the paper exhibits specific features which will be explored here. In addition, fibres have been characterised under polarising microscope and the results provide insightful information that complements previous scholarly works and historical studies. In this context, paper is studied as a technical and ethnological commodity to explore more deeply the social and material significance of these artistic works.

Keyword: Pahari drawings, Indian paper, Sunn hemp, fibre identification.