



MOSAIC is funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme (SyG grant agreement no. 101167040).

Call for applications

1 post-doc position at UCLouvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium) as part of the Synergy ERC project MOSAIC, a six-year Synergy ERC project to be conducted from 2025 to 2031 by the four following PIs: Godefroid de Callataÿ (UCLouvain), Matteo Martelli (UniBo), Petra Schmidl (FAU) and Matt Melvin-Koushki (USC); additional partnership with Fatma Sinem Eryılmaz (UAB)

“Mapping Occult Sciences Across Islamicate Cultures” (MOSAIC) is the first major project to investigate Islamic and Eastern Christian occult-scientific sources, spanning from late antiquity to the nineteenth century and from Iberia to India, in a vast continuum of languages (Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Turkish). It is generally acknowledged that occult sciences—alchemy, astrology, geomancy, lettrism, magic and a wide range of other operative and prognosticative disciplines—are integral to any history of science and technology. By including the far larger non-Latinate occult-scientific archive, equally integral to this history, MOSAIC is poised to bring about a paradigm shift. We untangle the term “occult” in all its diversity and test a more expansive definition to account for the specific epistemologies driving its multifarious applications. This dynamic and adaptive heuristic not only opens new avenues in the study of body-mind, nature-culture relationships in the historical construction of natural and mathematical science; it also reveals new paths of dissemination and crosspollination of the occult sciences in Islam and Byzantium, restoring a vast textual and artifactual record largely neglected to date. Retrieving occult science will require an unprecedented degree of synergetic expertise, international collaboration and the training of a new generation of highly qualified scholars. We will (1) identify, investigate, catalogue and interpret a critical mass of highly technical sources, making them available through editions, translations, surveys, studies, exhibitions and conferences; (2) combine, as feasible, the study of scientific theories with their technological practice, including through experimental reconstruction; (3) develop a suite of open-access digital tools of immediate use to specialists and nonspecialists alike; and (4) integrate all our findings in a print and born-digital Master Synthesis as an engine for the field going forward.

As part of this project, a **30-month post-doc position** (to start from 1 September 2026) is offered at the UCLouvain in relation with the following sub-project (SP):

The critical edition, with annotated English translation of: *Musky Aromas: On Meccan Openings (al-Fawā'ih al-miskiyya fī l-fawātiḥ al-makkiyya)* (early 440/1440s), the major encyclopedic work of 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454), a letrist and most influential expert in the occult sciences who served at the Mamluk and Ottoman courts (1 post-doc, Arabist, Y2-4 at UCLouvain, supervision by de Callataÿ/Eryılmaz/Melvin-Koushki)

The qualifications required for this sub-project are:

- a PhD in Islamic Studies, in Middle Eastern Studies, or related fields;
- an excellent command of Classical Arabic (the knowledge of additional languages such as Persian and Turkish is considered an advantage);
- academic writing and presentation skills in English (the working language of the project);
- the ability to work both individually and as part of a team.

This post-doc position is full-time equivalent. It is offered for a period of 12 months, renewable upon good performance. The post-doc retained will be required to reside in Belgium for the whole period of his/her fellowship. He/she will be asked to contribute to the intellectual life of the ERC project and of INCAL research institute of UCLouvain.

What we offer:

- a full-time appointment for 1 year, renewable subject to positive evaluation;
- an attractive salary corresponding to postdoctoral scales in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (net monthly stipend between 3,000 and 3,500 € based on scientific seniority);
- health care is mostly covered by Social Security in Belgium;
- a bus and train season ticket from home to work;
- a planned start date of September 2026, or as soon as possible thereafter;
- a stimulating and supportive research environment at CIOL/INCAL in the vibrant campus in Louvain-la-Neuve, close to Brussels;
- a research budget for conference participation and article processing charges.

How to apply?

Applications should be made via pdf files and contain the following:

- (1) a cover letter setting out the candidate's qualifications and motivation for applying for this position (maximum 2 pages);
- (2) a curriculum vitae, including the detail of research activities: publications, presentations at conferences, etc. (maximum 2 pages);
- (3) a transcript of grades;
- (4) samples of published work (articles, chapters) in pdf;
- (5) the name (with title, affiliation and email) of three people who have accepted to be contacted as potential referees.

Applications should be made electronically and sent to the following address:

godefroid.decaltay@uclouvain.be

The application deadline is 10 June 2026

Candidates selected for the interview will be contacted by mid-June 2026 and asked to write a short research design on a topic to be announced at that moment.

Online interviews will be arranged between 25 June and 30 June 2026.

Employment should become effective from 1 September 2026.