

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter No. 7

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Conference reports

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14-15 October 2013, Berlin, *Editing the impossible: fragments, palimpsests, multiple recensions...*

Conferences and workshops in manuscript studies:

14-18 July 2013, Marburg, *Makhtutat and nosakh-e khatti. Research trends and current developments in dealing with manuscripts. A comparative approach: Iran, Iraq and Germany*

5-7 September 2013, Ghent, *Historical Documents, Digital Approaches*

22-28 September 2013, Hamburg, *VIII^e Colloque International de Paléographie Grecque*

10-11 October 2013, Liège, *Autograph/Holograph and Authorial Manuscripts in Arabic Scripts*

10-11 October 2013, Hamburg, *Creating Standards: Orthography, Script And Layout In Manuscript Traditions Based On Arabic Alphabet*

2-3 November 2013, Oxford, *Ethiopia and the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: The Garimā Gospels in Context*

14-16 November 2013, Hamburg, *Manuscripts and Epigraphy*

4-6 December 2013, Hamburg, *Natural Sciences and Technology in Manuscript Analysis*

11-12 December 2013, London, *Arabs, mawlās and dhimmis: Scribal practices and the social construction of knowledge in Late Antiquity and Medieval Islam*

COMSt workshops

Multiplicity of Oriental bookbinding: traditions and conservation

The COMSt Team 5 Workshop, “Multiplicity of Oriental Bookbinding Traditions and Conservation”, organised by Laura E. Parodi and Nikolas Sarris, took place at the Technological Educational Institute of the Ionian Islands, Department for the Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, in Zakynthos (Greece) on October 9-10, 2013.

The Workshop’s aim was to bring to the table the multiplicity of bookmaking practices within the individual “traditions” covered by the COMSt programme. Since the field of book history and the archaeology of Oriental manuscripts is only just developing, it is not surprising that the various traditions are currently distinguished by seeing themselves as the “standard”. However, conservators responsible for the preservation of Oriental manuscripts need to be aware of the multitude of techniques and structures present in each main “tradition” (Syriac, Byzantine, Islamic, etc.). This awareness must similarly be present in those responsible for the training of conservators in the field in Oriental countries. At the crossroads of scientific research and practice, the conservator’s profession is defined by different standards and different perceptions depending on country (even in the West).

The main theorised traditions of Oriental bookmaking, traditionally classified within the framework of the respective manuscript culture, are largely abstractions; in reality, regional or historical differences may be more important than linguistic or “ethnic” classification. In this context, Hebrew manuscripts, discussed by N. McManus, are particularly illuminating. A manuscript is classified as “Hebrew” not necessarily on the basis of language (besides Hebrew, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian are all languages used in Oriental Hebrew manuscripts), nor – pertinent to this workshop – on the basis of bookmaking practices: even when Torah scrolls and amulets are not considered, and the attention focused only on the codex format, Oriental Hebrew scrolls fall mostly into two categories: those bound according to Islamic or Italian practices. A particularly wide range of sewing practices is observed for the Karaite manuscripts.

The Islamic tradition, even as seen in a single collection, presents comparable variety, including similarly little-known structures. Among the most interesting and often encountered is the sewing based on four stations (rather than the two stations regarded as “classic” in Islamic bindings), as showed by K. Scheper.

The second panel was mostly dedicated to the diversity of bookbinding structures that the conservator should carefully observe, “listening” to each object even when its structure is unusual or never encoun-

traditions, while Bert Van Raemdonck (Ghent University) presented an accessible and instructive introduction to TEI – with “The I in TEI” as a catchphrase.

The keynote speaker on Friday (6 September) was DH veteran Edward Vanhoutte (KANTL, Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature), who answered the question of his title – “Which Digital Humanities?” – with a detailed history of the field, from the early development of computational linguistics through wartime machine translation and cryptanalysis to the numerous and variegated endeavours today gathered under the umbrella term Digital Humanities. In the following presentation David J. Birnbaum (University of Pittsburgh) picked up the thread of the discussion of the first day with his exposition on “Perspectives on the digital edition and publication of medieval manuscripts”, with particular attention to integrating the documentary editing and publication of manuscripts with the critical editing and publication of texts. The two ensuing papers illustrated the application of specific computational linguistic methods to the study of mediaeval textual material: Folgert Karsdorp (Meertens Instituut Amsterdam) discussed and evaluated the Latent Dirichlet Allocation and other computational models for automating the identification and analysis of motifs in modern and medieval folktales, while Mike Kestemont (University of Antwerp) employed stylometric authorship attribution to argue that some works traditionally attributed to Hildegard of Bingen are more likely to have been written by her secretary, Guibert of Gembloux.

The last morning session on Saturday (7 September) began with a thought-provoking keynote lecture by Peter Stokes (King’s College London) on the opportunities and limitations of online representations of material texts. The next speaker, Leah Tether (Anglia Ruskin University), argued that mediaeval reading culture itself can offer direction to our attempts to represent mediaeval texts and to engage readers in a digital environment because it shares certain features (viz. hypertext, non-sequential and interactive reading) with present-day digital reading culture. Finally, Caroline Macé (KULeuven) returned to methodological questions of text edition and thus closed the circle; her presentation was a warning against the pitfalls of purely document-based approaches and a passionate argument for the importance of textual criticism and for the possibility of formalizing and computerizing some parts of that process.

The heart of the event, however, was the practical part of the Ghent workshop, which consisted of three afternoon sessions in the ICT-classroom with Prof. David J. Birnbaum from the University of Pittsburgh as the principal instructor. An introduction to XML

and the general TEI infrastructure (day 1) lead up to two hands-on sessions about TEI-based textual encoding for mediaeval studies, with day 2 devoted to textual transcription and day 3 to the formal analytic description of mediaeval manuscripts. In these sessions, attended by a motivated group of some fifteen PhD-students and young scholars, participants were invited to practice in the <Oxygen/> XML editor with their own materials or with the documents made available on the workshop webpage – <http://ghent.obdurodon.org> – by Els De Paermentier (Latin charters), Tjamke Snijders (Latin Saints’ Lives), and David J. Birnbaum (Slavonic Saints’ Lives). By the end of the workshop participants had acquired a basic understanding of how to transcribe manuscripts for subsequent analysis and publication and how to prepare TEI-conformant descriptions of those manuscripts using <Oxygen/>.

Lara Sels, KULeuven

VIII^e Colloque International de Paléographie Grecque

The Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie in Hamburg, together with the Comité International de Paléographie Grecque organized and hosted the 8th International Colloquium of Greek Palaeography from September 22 to 28, 2013.

Despite the fact that Greek palaeography, as a field of research, is more than 300 years old, starting from the monumental opus *Palaeographia Graeca* by Bernard de Montfaucon in 1708, and about half a century as a proper domain (supporting or autonomous), it is only during the last few decades that relevant international conferences are organized. The first such was held in Paris in 1974, while the second in 1983, and ever since a conference takes place approximately every five years, the proceedings of which make important reference volumes, not counting those of the Fourth in Oxford (1993), which were never published.

This year’s colloquium was specifically titled “Griechische Handschriften: gestern, heute und morgen” (Greek manuscripts: yesterday, today and tomorrow), emphasizing on the antithesis between ‘traditional’ research approaches and the advances that have taken place during the last years in the methodological tools of Greek palaeography, offering a glimpse at the future. This specific concern was obvious in the conference from the names of the panels that hosted approximately seventy papers. There were sessions dedicated to “classic” issues of the history of libraries (“Griechische Bibliotheken und Sammlungen”) and history of the script (“Die Geschichte der Schrift”), but, following the new tendency to separate codicology

from palaeography, two sessions were dedicated to issues concerning the 'construction' of manuscripts, and mainly pagination, under the innovative title *Topographie der Manuskripte*. Philological papers were hosted in separate sessions titled "Paläographie und Philologie". Furthermore, given the rapid advances in the use of new technology in Greek palaeography and codicology, the organizers chose to dedicate an entire day on "Paläographie und moderne Technik", taking one more step further than that at the last conference in Madrid-Salamanca (2008), where relevant papers only concerned codicology. Finally, as in the previous conferences, research fields closely related with palaeography, such as epigraphy and diplomatics, were included, while the conference ended with the presentations of various undergoing projects and individual research.

Thus, in Hamburg, there was a turn in the layout of sessions from the very specialised topics of older conferences (specific types of scripts or manuscripts, scripts of certain periods, manuscripts deriving from specific places, etc) to more general ones. There were papers concerning manuscript collections in the East (Sinai, Jerusalem, Chalki), and in the Balkans (Bulgaria, Romania, various regions of Greece), as well as Italy and Central Europe. The philological sessions were mostly focused on classical writers (Demosthenes, Aristotle, Sophocles) and Byzantine scholars (Michael Psellos, Nicephoros Blemmydes), and various types of texts (medicinal, hymnographical, philosophical, etc.). Script issues were tackled mainly according to specific types (uncial, perlschrift, etc), scribes (Renaissance and Byzantine) or geographical areas (Cyprus, Italy, Mount Athos, Spain). However, even though, according to the title, the topic was dedicated to the eighth to the eighteenth centuries CE, it was obvious that the participants' interests ranged from the fourth century until the sixteenth, with the absence of papers on the post-Byzantine East, except for a small number (such as on Dousikou monastery), which due to their manifold interests had been included into other topics. The sessions on technological issues hosted very interesting papers, both on software applications (mainly databases about all categories of content and innovative tools for the presentation of manuscripts and their texts), and on new methods of problem-solving, such as the reading of palimpsests, timeworn manuscripts and ink analysis.

The presentations of smaller or larger undergoing projects that concluded the conference concerned mostly manuscripts from specific collections or regions (Vatopedi monastery, Leipzig, Spain, Collegio Greco of Rome, etc.), as well as a variety of other palaeographical and philological topics.

The organisers, trying to give time to the recent trend of dialogue between palaeography of various languages, and generally considering the manuscript as a common and versatile medium of knowledge dissemination, included in the program an interesting round table, the topic of which was "Manuscriptology". The participants were researchers working on other manuscript languages, such as Ethiopic or Georgian, and experts on specific books, such as the *Biblia pauperum*, each person relating his or her own experience.

Finally, within the framework of the conference, a magnificent exhibition of Greek manuscripts from Northern German collections took place, under the general title "Von Homer und Aristoteles bis zum Neoplatonismus". Manuscripts, as well as some papyri and prints, had a large variety of content, and covered almost the entire range of Greek script. The exhibition catalogue – a product of cooperation between many researchers – offers thorough descriptions and comments for each exhibit, accompanied by basic bibliography.

Just before the end of this fruitful conference, a new rendez-vous was set for 2018 in Paris. The programme of the 2013 meeting is available at <http://www.cipg.eu/2013>.

Zisis Melissakis, National Hellenic Research Foundation

Autograph/Holograph and Authorial Manuscripts in Arabic Scripts

The conference entitled *Autograph/Holograph and Authorial Manuscripts in Arabic Scripts* was held on October 10 and 11, 2013 at the University of Liège. The organisers (F. Bauden, University of Liège and É. Franssen, F.R.S.-FNRS - University of Liège) chose to open the call for papers to classicists: indeed, classical studies are more advanced than Arabic studies of manuscripts.

The first panel was devoted to "Terminology and Methodology". A. Gacek (Islamic Studies Library, McGill University, Montreal) detailed a series of terms and concepts that guided the discussions all through the conference. For instance, "holograph" should refer to a "manuscript entirely handwritten by its author", whereas "autograph" only designates "the author's signature, or a short statement by him". This first paper led to discussions, notably because the classicists never use the term "holograph", which is not exactly wide-spread till now. M.-H. Marganne (Centre de Documentation de Papyrologie Littéraire, University of Liège) gave an insight into the Greek literary papyrus, and explained which were the clues

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