

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter No. 7

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Projects in manuscript studies

In this issue:

Biblia Arabica. The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims

Malay manuscripts digitisation project at the British Library

Christian Sogdian Book Culture during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

Biblia Arabica. The Bible in Arabic among Jews, Christians and Muslims

Biblia Arabica is a joint research project directed by Camilla Adang, Meira Polliack (Tel Aviv University) and Sabine Schmidtke (Freie Universität Berlin) with a German Israeli Project Cooperation grant of the German Research Association. The project runs for five years, 2013–2017.

Shortly after the expansion of Muslim rule in the seventh and eighth centuries CE, Christians, Jews, and Samaritans living in the Muslim world began to translate their sacred texts – the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Samaritan Pentateuch – into the new dominant language, Arabic. Many of these translations, from languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Syriac and Coptic, have survived and have come down to us in a vast corpus of manuscripts and fragments that hail from monasteries, synagogues and libraries, especially in the Middle East.

Compared to other translation traditions of the Bible throughout its history, the Arabic versions are the most abundant in terms of the number of surviving manuscripts and later on prints. Moreover, they reveal an unusually large variety in stylistic and didactic approaches, vocabulary, scripts and ideologies. Although originally intended for internal use by the different denominations that produced them, the translations were also quoted and adapted by Muslim writers, who were familiar with many biblical episodes and characters through their own sacred scripture, the Qur'ān.

But whereas much attention has been paid in modern scholarship to the translation of scientific and philosophical works from Greek into Arabic in the early Abbasid period (first half of the ninth century), the parallel endeavour of translating the Bible (in the broadest sense of the term) into Arabic has hardly been studied in any systematic way. The pro-



Ms. Carullah 3 (Arabic translation of the Pentateuch by al-Hārīth b. Sinān (9th-10th century CE) with marginal and interlinear notes in Coptic)

ject *Biblia Arabica* aims to redress this imbalance by way of an integrative and internationally-led study which will uncover and describe the different medieval schools and individuals that took part in this scriptural translation enterprise, their aims and agendas, styles and techniques, as well as the social and cultural implications of their innovative and ambitious endeavour. The nucleus of the project is the study and survey of thousands of early codices and fragments, many of which are lying dormant in monasteries across the Middle East and libraries around the world.

From the study of manuscripts the project will move on to investigate translation as an act and a process, and the manner in which translators from different faiths influenced each other in an inter-religious and inter-cultural context. Most of the results of the project will be published in the recently established book series *Biblia Arabica: Texts and Studies*, published by Brill in Leiden and edited by Camilla Adang, Juan Pedro Monferrer Sala, Meira Polliack, Alexander Treiger, Sabine Schmidtke, and Ronny Vollandt. In addition, the first issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* (Brill, Leiden; cf. <http://www.brill.com/publications/journals/intellectual-history-islamicate-world>) was exclusively devoted to the Bible in Arabic. Contact: Ronny Vollandt, ronny.vollandt@fu-berlin.de.

Web: http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/islamwiss/news/Biblia_Arabica.html.

Malay Manuscripts Digitisation Project at the British Library

The British Library is half-way through a project to digitise all its Malay manuscripts, in collaboration with the National Library of Singapore, generously funded by Singapore-based American philanthropists William and Judy Bollinger. 56 Malay manuscripts, mostly from the historic collections of the British Museum, have been fully digitised and are now accessible online through the British Library's Digitised Manuscripts site <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts> (search with keyword 'Malay'), and copies of the images are also being made available via the National Library of Singapore's BookSG website http://sgebooks.nl.sg/browse/British_Library.htm.

Each week a different Malay manuscript has been presented on the Asian and African Studies Blog <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/> and through the Twitter account @BLAsia_Africa. Some manuscripts are already well-known, such as the earliest of only two manuscripts known of the first Malay history, *Hikāyat Rāg Pāsai* (Or. 13540), and a beautiful illuminated manuscript of the *Tāg al-salāṭīn* copied in Penang in 1824 (Or.

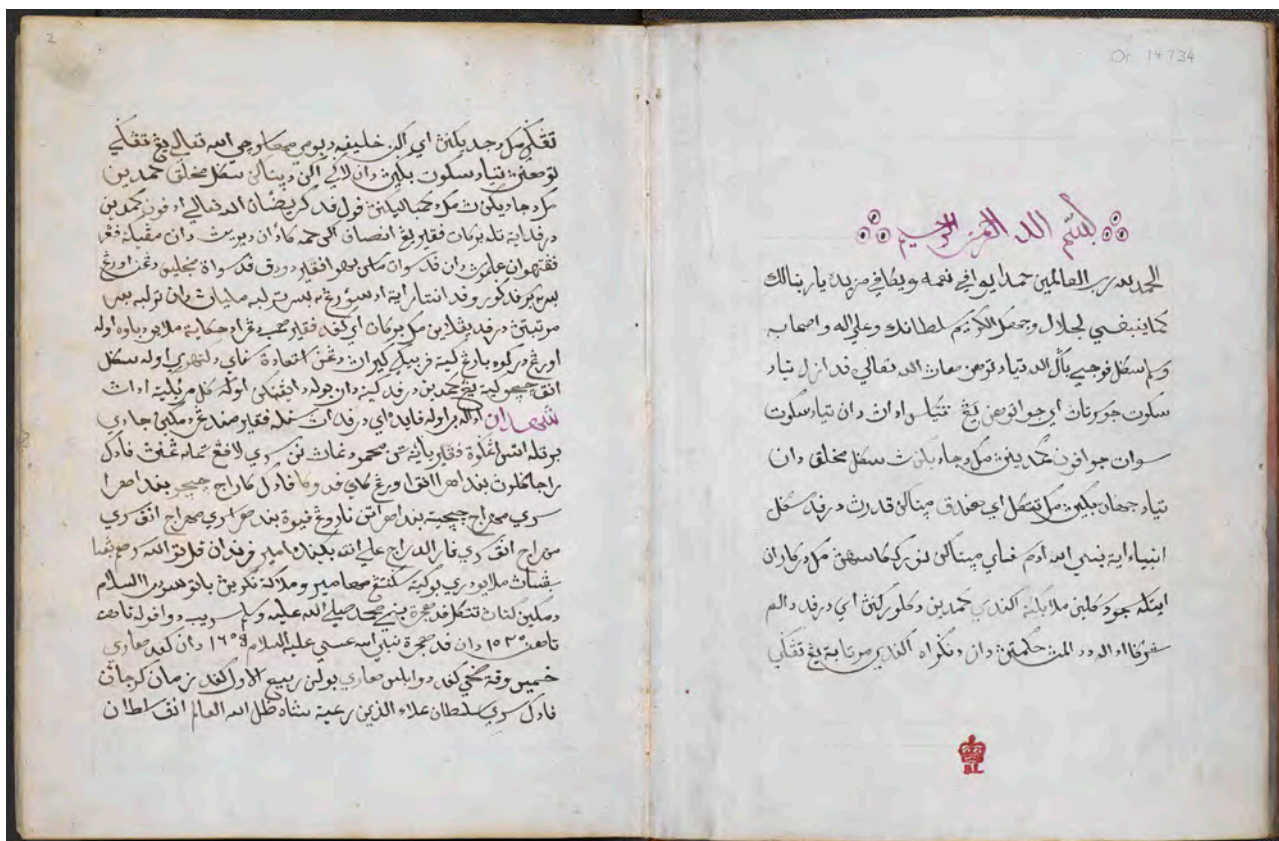


Fig. 1. *Sulālat al-salāṭīn*, popularly known as *Sejarah Melayu*, 'Malay Annals', the history of the sultanate of Melaka, copied in Melaka in 1873. Ms. British Library, Or. 14374, ff.1v-2r. http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Or_14374 (to read the full manuscript go to http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_14374_f001v).

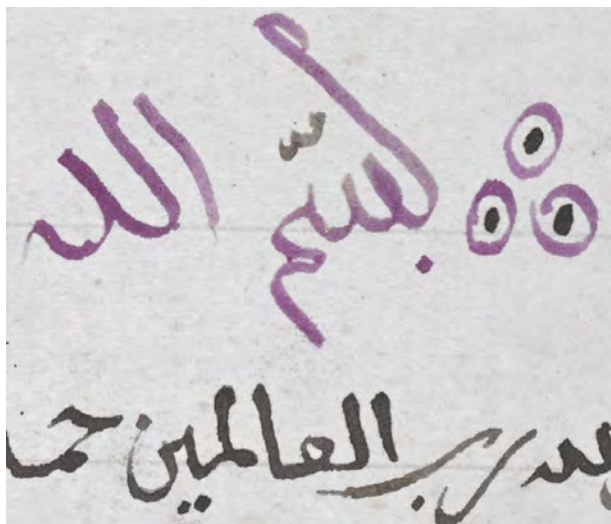


Fig. 2. British Library, Or. 14374, f.1v (detail).

13295), but others less so, including a previously unrecorded copy of *Hikāyat Hang Tuah* (Or. 15214) which had spent most of its life in Wales. We have also highlighted some rather obscure manuscripts, and the intriguingly-named ‘The Malay story of the Pig King’ <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/2013/11/the-malay-story-of-the-pig-king.html>, featuring our unique *Hikāyat Rāġ Bābī* (Add. 12392), became our most popular blog post, receiving over 4,800 page views!

We have now launched a Digital Access to Malay Manuscripts <http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/asian-and-african/malay.html> project page, which lists all the Malay manuscripts digitised so far, and which will be updated in the course of 2014 as we begin to photograph about 60 more manuscripts, mainly from the India Office collections, for the second half of the project (see fig. 1).

The zoom capabilities of the British Library’s Digitised Manuscripts viewer allow close inspection of the pen strokes of the scribe and even the texture of the paper of this manuscript of *Sejarah Melayu* (see fig. 2).

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Christian Sogdian Book Culture during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages

A new project for Christian Sogdian corpus is going ahead at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences, thanks to funding from The Austrian Science Fund (Lise Meitner Program) as well as from The Austrian Program for Advanced Research and Technology (Federal Ministry for Science and Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences, City of Vienna). The project is aimed at identifying the emergence and the development of a Christian

Sogdian book culture resulting from cultural-religious activities carried out by the Christian Sogdian communities in the Turfan oasis (present-day Xinjiang, China) during late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. It focuses on a corpus of nearly five hundred fragments in Sogdian language in East Syriac script and approximately fifty fragments in Sogdian secular script. Because of its nature of translational tradition, it will be studied in comparison with nearly five hundred fragments in Syriac language in East Syriac script mostly coming from the same area and belonging to the same period. All those are part of the Berlin Turfan Collection.

In the *COMSt Newsletter* 5, 2013, pp. 7–9, I already stressed the main peculiarities of this corpus and at the same time the necessity, if not the urgency, for undertaking such kind of work. Below, I am providing a brief description of the project while leaving aside the points which I had already discussed. I would just like to underline once again that the Sogdian and Syriac manuscript fragments that have come to light in the Turfan oasis form the single most important corpus of literary sources for the study of Christian communities in the eighth-eleventh century Central Asia.

The methodology applied in the project combines two main approaches: codicology and translational studies. So far no systematic codicological study has been attempted for this material. The advantage of a codicological approach lies in the fact that it allows to bridge the gap between the texts (well-studied from a philological-linguistic point of view) and the still practically unexplored material aspects of manuscripts in order to look at the book as a cultural product in an extensive way. The second approach tries to expand the field of “translational studies” from a primarily linguistic-philological focus on religious literary translations by extending it to images and symbols. In other words, Christian Sogdian book culture will be analysed by bringing together the study of textual and material aspects and that of the role of translation, interference and innovation of images and symbols in Sogdian and Syriac manuscript fragments from Turfan. During the next three and a half years, I will put all my efforts into understanding the nature of Christian Sogdian book culture by applying these two main approaches.

Moreover, as far as the project is concerned, it will shed new light on the religious and cultural history of Central Asia as well as on cultural encounter and exchange between the Church of the East and the Central Asian religious environment.

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Conference reports

In this issue:

COMSt workshops:

9-10 October 2013, Zakynthos, *Multiplicity of Oriental bookbinding: traditions and conservation*

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-

tered before. As an example, P. Hepworth cited instances where the characteristic flap which covers the bookblock in Islamic bindings does not extend to the whole thickness of the book: often conservators – unaware that the anomaly is present in several specimens across different collections – “normalise” the flap by adding a leather extension so it comes to full thickness, thus obscuring (or in the case of undocumented treatment, removing) relevant information which may one day lead to the recognition of a specific book typology.

A point to the discussion on the perception of conservation as it varies across countries (as also historically), and how work on the field in Oriental countries must take the differences into account was made by M. Di Bella and N. Sarris for Ethiopic and F. Marzo for Syriac and Coptic manuscripts. Conservation and preservation in the field present moreover specific and often unforeseen problems, which require plasticity, quick responses and sometimes creative solutions. The training of staff in Oriental countries faces similar problems – with a necessity to negotiate between different perceptions and a need to raise the local conservators’ awareness. Here, several case studies (I. Zanella for Mauritania, M. Di Bella for Yemen) were presented to show the involvement of national institutions years or decades after the international aid.

Even cutting-edge treatments such as the one introduced by I. Rabin and M. Mayer may tomorrow reveal their limits: hence the importance of conveying key principles rather than being prescriptive in the *COMSt Handbook*.

For a detailed conference report, visit <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/meet5-4.html>.

Nikolas Sarris, Zakynthos
Laura Parodi, Genoa

Editing the impossible: fragments, palimpsests, multiple recensions ...

The last workshop of COMSt Teams 2 and 3 addressed the particular problems posed by fragmentary or complex transmission of texts. Organised by Caroline Macé and Jost Gippert, it was hosted by the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften on 14 and 15 October 2013. The principal host was the Akademienvorhaben Turfanforschung, which circumstance enabled the organisers to introduce the audience to some of the highlights of the Turfan collection.

Most of the workshop presentations were particular case studies that shall find their due place in the *COMSt Handbook*. D. Durkin-Meisterernst spoke about the editorial strategies used for the edition of

the fragments in the Berlin Turfan Collection. This collection contains fragments of texts written in different languages and scripts, and their degrees of preservation vary from one fragment to the other. The participants were offered the possibility to see some of the most important pieces of this collection. A. Cantera presented the specific features of the edition of the Zoroastrian long liturgy. The text is preserved in more than 100 manuscripts written in Avestan script, the oldest one being dated from the fourteenth century CE. It is very difficult to classify the manuscripts since the text does not vary much, except for orthographical and phonetic variations, which can be explained by the fact that those manuscripts were produced in different regions.

The methodological approaches were introduced by G. Kessel who showed the possibilities offered by imaging techniques to make possible the reading of a newly discovered palimpsest of the Syriac translation of Galen, *On Simple Drugs* by the seventh-century Sergius of Res ‘Ayna (possibly books VI-XI). Apart from this palimpsest (the underwriting is dated from the ninth century), there was only one known ms. containing this translation (books VI-VIII): London, British Library, Add. 14661. The parts of the text which are not contained in the British Library manuscript are much more difficult to read, because there is no possibility of comparison. The two witnesses present different readings on certain points. P. La Spisa took the “fluid” tradition of the *Martyrion of Arethas and his companions in Nağrān* as his case study for editorial methodology (see this *Newsletter*, pp. 24-28).

A third session was devoted to techniques and tools which can help scholars in dealing with manuscripts. M. Raaf presented ImAnTo, a software created for the edition of palimpsests. This software helps to link images and texts. I. Rabin showed some of the most recent developments in tools for scientific material analysis of parchments and inks, which can provide valuable information for the dating and localisation of manuscripts, a major issue as well in textual criticism.

For a detailed conference report, visit <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/meet2-4.html>.

Caroline Macé, KU Leuven

Conference and workshops in manuscript studies

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

On 14-18 July 2013 the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) in Marburg hosted a

workshop titled “Makhtutat and nosakh-e khatti. Research trends and current developments in dealing with manuscripts. A comparative approach: Iran, Iraq and Germany”. The aim was to bring together professionals working in the field of manuscript research not only in Germany, but also in Iran and Iraq. Accordingly, the conference was mainly held in Arabic with the occasional help of interpreters from the staff and members assisting one another in the ensuing discussions. The presentations themselves covered the situation of various collections of Oriental manuscripts and dealt with a number of cataloguing and digitising projects. The importance assigned to manuscripts in a society and the access to relevant collections are often influenced by political circumstances and traditional contexts, whether in the West or in the East. While after the Islamic Revolution 1979 in Iran more funds were made available for the field of palaeography, scholars and librarians from Iraq had to wait until after the latest war before getting some support for their manuscript collections.

Allowing access to the originals and making collections visible in the first place was seen by the workshop participants as an important task for the near future. The rich heritage of Islamic culture and literature, as it is documented in these texts, cannot remain hidden. At the same time, we should not underestimate the accessibility and mobility of knowledge during the pre-modern era in the Near and Middle East. The oftentimes peculiar histories of certain collections or the insights into Oriental book culture, as presented at the workshop, served as an inspiration for our dealing with historical manuscripts – and the transfer of knowledge in general – in the future. But how should this much-wanted openness and accessibility be achieved? Most collections today appear to be only in the initial stages of opening up, the individual perspectives naturally being far away from ideas like worldwide interoperability of data as e.g. discussed in the field of Digital Humanities. Nevertheless, even without having such a grand vision for this workshop, the goal to exchange approaches and methods led into the same direction and organizations dealing with Oriental manuscripts on a global scale like TIMA and COMSt did not go unmentioned.

The contact making and socialising, as exemplified at the Marburg workshop, will hopefully help spreading the knowledge of scientific ways and methods in manuscript studies, but also stimulate a discussion for further development, especially with a growing portion of Oriental scholars contributing their own perspectives. Connecting the different specialists on both a professional and personal level was one of the outstanding traits of the “Makhtutat and

nosakh-e khatti” workshop. The initiators and organizers, Leslie Tramontini, Emad Sheikh al-Hokamaee and Christoph Werner – and not least the student assistants – have rightfully earned the sincere appreciation and gratitude of all participants for a thought-provoking and occasionally quite vivid event with a very friendly atmosphere.

Cornelius Berthold, Leipzig University

Historical Documents, Digital Approaches. A Workshop on the Mark-up, Analysis and Representation of Mediaeval Texts

The focus of the three-day Ghent-based workshop/seminar *Historical Documents, Digital Approaches* (5-7 September 2013) was on the application of digital methods to mediaeval documents and texts. The event, organized at the initiative of Prof. Els De Paermentier (Ghent University) with funding of the Ghent Doctoral Schools of Arts, Humanities and Law, was hosted by the Ghent Department of History. The broadly based workshop – supported by the Henri Pirenne Institute for Medieval Studies (<http://www.pirenne.ugent.be>), the Flemish Medieval Studies Workgroup (<http://www.vlaamsewerkgroepmedievistiek.org>), the Ghent Centre for Digital Humanities (<http://www.gcdh.ugent.be>) and the Ghent Center for Slavic and East European Studies – was intended to reach an audience of digital novices as well as more advanced ‘digital humanists’ by wedding the opposite extremes of the spectrum, viz. practice at its most basic and theory at its most general level.

The seminar featured a series of morning lectures, loosely organized around three themes, viz. 1) Issues of mark-up, on the challenges of translating material documents into digital text; 2) Computational data analysis, on novel forms of classifying, comparing and analysing datasets; and 3) Digital representation, on editing and presenting digital text, that is, on different kinds of reader engagement enabled by digitized resources and on the nature and claims of digital text objects.

The opening lecture on Thursday (5 September) by co-organizer Lara Sels (KULeuven/Ghent University) on the role of the editor in the digital age, exemplified by a report on the Vidin Miscellany Digital Edition Project, was followed by a lively discussion of the challenges of digital text editing. The following two papers dealt with issues of markup: Laura Gili (École des chartes, Paris) discussed the markup and formatting of an XML/TEI index of twelfth-century charters, with particular attention to adjusting the presentation in accord with the different expectations of audiences from the French and Italian scholarly

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

indicating that a certain document is a holograph. The following interdisciplinary discussion was especially rich. Finally, Y. Frenkel (University of Haifa) presented various examples of holograph Arabic manuscripts.

The second panel was dedicated to “Codicology”. A. Regourd (CNRS, UMR 7192, Paris) presented a reflexion on the *safīna* – vertical-shaped manuscript, where the writing is parallel to the fold – and showed that many of such manuscripts, used as notebooks or diaries, were holographs. V. Sagaria Rossi (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma) introduced a 13th-century collection of *amṭāl* and showed how the language and “mise en texte” of this holograph manuscript were peculiar and interesting.

The third panel was entitled “Working Method”. C. Macé (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) presented her research on the Byzantine author Georges Pachymeres, and especially on his partly holograph manuscript, Parisinus gr. 1810, a commentary on some of Plato’s works by Proclus, continued by Pachymeres himself. Her paper reconstructed the different stages of the elaboration of the text and addressed the difficult question of the *stemma codicum*. In his paper about the Mamluk encyclopedist an-Nuwayrī, E. Muhanna (Brown University) pointed out the importance of holograph manuscripts in the definition of an author’s methodology. His contribution also showed how difficult it can be to identify a holograph as such. It gave birth to rich discussions among the participants, that continued later, during the cocktail offered by the Museum of the Walloon Folklore.

The “Working Method” panel continued on day two. N. Nakamachi (Konan University, Kobe) presented his work on al-‘Aynī’s chronicles, showing the different methodologies of the historian; indeed, al-‘Aynī does not use the information he disposes of in the same way for past events or for contemporary facts. K. Richardson (Universität Münster) discussed the notebooks of another historian, Akmal ad-Dīn b. Muflīḥ; that was the occasion to evoke *safīna*-shape manuscripts again and to draw parallels with other medieval scholars’ methodology and notebooks.

The second panel of the second day, “Palaeography”, was the longest one. A.-M. Verjans, an expert in handwriting identification, member of the Belgian Legal Experts National College, showed us how to identify a handwriting with a good degree of certainty. While she works on Latin alphabets, the methods are the same. Next, T. Seidensticker (Universität Jena) spoke (via Skype) of audition certificates as a genre, presenting a fascinating case study: five folia of a manuscript preserved in the Gotha Library with twelve audience certificates by seven different

hands. É. Franssen presented her research about the main scribe of the Egyptian Recension of the *Arabian Nights*, named ‘Alī al-Anṣārī, and explained how she identified him in unsigned copies. Finally, F. Bauden (University of Liège) showed the characteristics of Maqrīzī’s handwriting all along his long life and eloquently demonstrated that some of the texts, or notes, attributed to his hand were fake.

The last session of the conference was devoted to Textual Criticism. R. Hashizume (Chiba Institute of Science) presented several manuscripts, holograph or not, of Ibn Ḥaldūn’s autobiography. His research on the author’s script was particularly interesting, notably because Ibn Ḥaldūn’s script changed, and gradually lost his Maḡribī characteristics when the author emigrated to the Mašriq. The last talk of the conference was given by A. Gasimova (Duke University), via Skype, and concerned the marginal discourse on poetry found in Baku manuscript of the dictionary *Tāğ al-luġah wa-ṣiḥāḥ al-‘arabiya* by al-Ġawharī.

During the tour of the University collections the participants could finally discover a dozen of holograph Arabic manuscripts and autograph notes.

The Proceedings are due to be published in 2014.

For the programme visit http://www.facphl.ulg.ac.be/upload/docs/application/pdf/arabic_script.pdf.

Élise Franssen, F.R.S.-FNRS - University of Liège

Creating Standards: Orthography, Script and Layout in Manuscript Traditions Based on Arabic Alphabet

On October 10 and 11, 2013 the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Hamburg University hosted an international workshop organised by D. Bondarev (Hamburg) and A. Gori (Florence) dedicated to the processes of normalisation of orthography, style and punctuation for the Arabic script, in particular when it is used for the languages other than Arabic. As the methodological introduction by A. Gori emphasised, in the history of Latin-based orthographies, standardisation has largely been implemented; however, when it comes to Arabic, the norm has been much more varied and unstable, if any, and has not been explored properly.

In order to broaden the perspective and bring an additional comparative aspect, two Arabic-language traditions were covered by workshop papers. The orthographic standards of Christian Arabic were dealt with in the paper by P. La Spisa (Genoa), on the example of some manuscripts from Palestine. A reverse case, the Arabic language being written with the characters of another alphabet (Judæo-Arabic), was discussed by E.-M. Wagner (Cambridge).

Of such traditions as Persian and Ottoman Turkish (papers by P. Orsatti, Rome and J. Schmidt, Leiden) one would expect a great degree of normalisation. However, as the papers showed, in particular in the case of Turkish, the orthography is far from being standardised, and the Arabic script can sometimes be deciphered with much difficulty. Scholars working with Malay manuscripts in Arabic script face similar problems (I. Katkova, St. Petersburg).

Spanish manuscripts using Arabic script (N. Martínez, Madrid) often show, besides particular transcription conventions, specific layout, often different from that of the contemporary Spanish manuscripts written in Latin script.

Several papers were dedicated to the African *ʿaḡāmī* manuscripts (A. Olalekan Sanni, Lagos, on Yoruba, L. Souag, Paris, on Kabyle, D. Bondarev, Hamburg and N. Dobronravin, St. Petersburg on Kanuri, Hausa and Soninke, G. Banti, Naples on Hara-ri). The attention focus lay with the adjustment of the Arabic script to the phonological necessities (Banti) and on the conventions in the lay-out and palaeography (D. Bondarev).

The workshop programme is available at <http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Creating%20Standards%20Description%20Programme%20Abstracts.pdf>.

ES

Ethiopia and the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: The Garimā Gospels in Context

The two-day conference on Ethiopia and the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity was sponsored by the Ethiopian Heritage Fund and took place in the Ioannou Centre for Classical and Byzantine Studies, University of Oxford, 2-3 November 2013.

The conference was convened by Giorgi Parpulov (Oxford University), Jacques Mercier (CNRS, Paris) and Baye Yimam (Addis Ababa University). The main occasion for the Oxford conference definitely was the firmly established radio carbon dating – a further one after the first coherent results already published by Mercier in 2000 – of the two more ancient Abbā Garimā Four Gospels manuscripts (390 CE to 570 CE for Abbā Garimā 2 Mercier = Garimā III Leroy / Heldman, and 530 CE to 660 CE for Abbā Garimā 1 = Abbā Garimā I Leroy / Heldman). This dating is centuries earlier than any other dating previously attributed to these manuscripts on paleographic ground, ranging between the tenth/fourteenth century (on the manuscripts, see also Alessandro Bausi, “The ‘True Story’ of the Abba Gärima Gospels”, *COMSt Newsletter* 1, 2011, pp. 17–20). The dating of Abbā Garimā

2 in particular would also make it the most ancient Christian manuscript decorated with paintings, even older than the famous Rabbula Four Gospels book of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana of Firenze (Plut. I, 56).

The Late Antiquity background was stressed by the opening remarks of the historian Averil Cameron (Oxford University). It was further detailed in the overview of present-day historical research, with a growing number of contributions on the Pre- and Early-Islamic Red Sea context including Aksum, by Philipp Booth (Oxford University, “Ethiopia and the Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity”). Antonella Brita (Hamburg University, “The Hagiography of Garima”), gave a thoughtful insight into the birth and development of the hagiographical traditions on Garimā, in whose monastery (Dabra Madarā, near ʿAdwa) the Garimā Four Gospels books are presently kept, and on the related narrative of the Nine Saints hagiographic cycle. Getatchew Haile (Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville, MN, “The Historical Notes in the Garima Gospels”) presented a first complete edition and translation of all additional notes contained in the Gospels, fully accomplished for the occasion, and stressed again that no colophon is contained in the manuscripts, yet leaving open the possibility that the famous note mentioning King ʿArmeḥo might be authentic and to be actually attributed to the king’s time. Alessandro Bausi (Hamburg University, “The Language of the Garimā Gospels and the Synod of Qefryā”) compared palaeographic and linguistic features of the Garimā Gospels with the canonical liturgical manuscript known as the “Synod of Qefryā” or the “Aksumite Collection”, possibly the most ancient non-biblical Ethiopic manuscript, and highlighted the textual importance of Ethiopic literary heritage. Mersha Alehegn (Addis Ababa University, “Orature on Literature: the Case of Abba Gerima and His Gospel”, read in absentia) dealt with the oral narrative textures connected to Saint Garimā, as recorded in its own context of the Abbā Garimā monastery. Lester Capon (Gloucester, “Conservation Work on the Garima Gospels”), fascinatingly illustrated his hard work of field conservator and restorer of the Garimā Gospels in extreme conditions at the Dabra Madarā monastery. David W. Phillipson (Cambridge University) drew the conclusion of the first conference day, highlighting the necessity of fruitful interaction between historical, philological, and archaeological research in the study of Ancient Ethiopia.

On the following day, it was the turn of the art historian Marlia Mango (Oxford University) to address the opening remarks, not without talking about Syriac

parallels to decorative features of the Garimā Gospels. Jeffrey Spier (University of Arizona, Tucson, “The Garima Gospel Covers”), focused upon the neglected, yet now much better known metal covers of the Garimā Gospels, suggesting possible parallels within the Byzantine area and stating their compatibility with an early dating. Thomas Mathews (New York University), scheduled for “The Painting Technique of the Garima Gospels”, actually presented an interesting analysis of the iconography of the Evangelists as portrayed while holding a book in their hands, taking into account the liturgical practice. Judith McKenzie (Oxford University, “Late Antique Architecture and the Garima Canon Tables”), came back to possible iconographic parallels to the Canon Tables decoration, taking part for an Alexandrian connection. Marilyn Heldman (Washington, American University, “The Iconography of the Garima Gospels”), one of the few to have claimed an early dating of the Abbā Garimā manuscripts, approached the matter from the point of view of the Ethiopian tradition. Claude Lepage (Paris, École Pratique des Hautes Études, “Palestinian and Sasanian Iconography in the Garima Gospels”), refined his earlier proposal of a possible explanation of the peculiar quadrangular “tempietto” in Abbā Garimā 2 as an imitation of Sasanian iconography, with further examples. Jacques Mercier (“The Legacy of the Garima Gospels in Ethiopian Art”), strongly argued that the Abbā Garimā manuscripts definitely appear to have been produced in Ethiopia, including the paintings, and that therefore a school of painting and a workshop for the production of manuscripts must have been active in Aksum in Late Antiquity; yet he denied any evidence of an influence of these particular manuscripts on the later tradition of the Ethiopian Canon Tables. Cristopher de Hamel’s (Cambridge University) provided the final concluding remarks.

Unfortunately, Baye Yimam, Shiferaw Bekele (Addis Ababa University), and Daniel Seifemicahele (Addis Ababa, Ethiopian Orthodox Church), scheduled with papers on “Linguistic Perspectives on the Garima Gospels”, “Ethiopian Heritage Policy and the Garima Gospels”, and “Pages from the Book of Isaiah in the Garima Gospels”, respectively, could not attend the conference.

This important conference – the first one to have been devoted to single Ethiopian manuscripts – had the historical merit of programmatically re-locating Ethiopian Studies in the world of Late Antiquity, where they also rightly belong, since Ethiopian Studies were consecrated, if not as a discipline (this is hard to say), certainly as a more precisely circumscribed field of studies at least, by the first interna-

tional conference of Ethiopian Studies held in Rome in 1959.

For the full programme visit <http://www.ethiopian-heritagefund.org/conference.html>

Alessandro Bausi, Hamburg University

Manuscripts and Epigraphy

On 14-16 November 2013 the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Hamburg University organised a workshop dedicated to the interplay between manuscripts and inscriptions.

The workshop was introduced by a paper by C. Michel (CNRS) discussing the written sources of Ancient Mesopotamia and concluded by the presentation of J. Gippert (Frankfurt) on the epigraphic monuments from the Maldives. In-between, the proceedings were organized in four panels, Material: Stone (chaired by M. Friedrich), Script (chaired by Ch. Brockmann), Material: Others (chaired by J. Quenzer) and Interaction of Manuscripts and Inscriptions (chaired by B. Reudenbach). The discussion was led by Ch. Bauer (Berlin), G. De Gregorio (Salerno), F. Maltomini (Florence), O. von Hinüber (Freiburg), L. Kalus (Paris).

While many of the papers discussed cultures far from the scope of COMSt (China: L. Ledderose, S. Griessmayer, India: E. Francis, R. Furui, Indonesia: A. Griffiths, Japan: E. van Goethem, Thai: F. Lagirarde) quite a few papers dealt with the Mediterranean and/or Graeco-Roman culture. These included G. Agosti on the layout of Greek epigraphic poems as compared to manuscript layout, J. Bloom on the Arabic inscriptions on Islamic architecture and S. Blair on the use of Kufic script on coins, monuments and in manuscripts, A. Rhoby on inscriptions and manuscripts in Byzantium, P. Kruschwitz with an overview of materials used for inscriptions in the Graeco-Roman world, S. Wittekind on the medieval Latin manuscripts using inscription-like display scripts. Two ancient epigraphic written cultures, Ancient Egypt (J.F. Quack) and South Arabia (P. Stein) were also topics of the workshop.

The papers have shown that the phenomenology is similar across the cultures, and there is, in all traditions, a significant mutual influence between writing styles and layout on different media. The influence is never one-directional (from inscriptions to manuscripts or vice versa): both media have often co-existed over longer periods of time, and cannot be studied independently one from the other.

For the programme and abstracts of the workshop visit http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/register_epigraphy.html

ES

Natural Sciences and Technology in Manuscript Analysis

From 4 to 6 December 2013, an international conference on Natural Sciences and Technology in Manuscript Analysis took place in Hamburg. It was organised by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at Hamburg University and the Federal Institute for Material Research and Testing (Berlin).

In recent years, manuscript analysis has received increasing support from methods based on natural sciences and technology. The conference brought together IT specialists, natural scientists and scholars of humanities providing a forum for discussion and presenting new methods and results.

The first panel, on 4 December, was chaired by B. Neumann and dedicated to the techniques in visual analysis. A series of papers highlighted the various digital tools that have been developed to assist the palaeographic and codicological analysis. L. Wolf (Tel Aviv) illustrated how with the help of the high-end software, disjoined fragments from the Cairo Genizah can be hopefully identified and put together. B. Gottfried (Bremen) and M. Lawo (Berlin) showed the work towards the new tool (Dyptychon) aimed at assisting in diplomatic text editions by helping produce a transcription from the digitised text. P. Vanscheidt introduced the progress of the eCodicology project that develops algorithms for the identification of layout elements in the manuscripts from the virtual scriptorium St. Matthias (<http://stmatthias.uni-trier.de>, s. also <http://scriptorium.hypotheses.org>). L. Dinges (Magdeburg) illustrated quite vividly the challenges in the visual analysis of handwritten Arabic. A. Garz (Fribourg) spoke about the new computer environment that is envisaged to combine various tools for digital palaeography (segmentation, binarisation, scribe identification), assisted transcription and manuscript cataloguing. C. Stokoe (Cambridge) reported how the Cambridge University Library completes the descriptive metadata in its online catalogues of the Genizah collection by text mining in the available publications using, or mentioning, the Cambridge manuscripts and fragments.

The second panel, chaired by O. Hahn in the morning of 5 December, focused on the image analysis methods and their application. The presentations dealt with the techniques to reveal hidden or damaged text (R. Easton, Rochester, USA, M. Gau, Vienna) or to document such codicological aspects as the support or the ink (C. Burrows, Manchester, A. Alexopoulou, Athens), or even with the development of tools towards text and character recognition (word spotting: L. Rothhacker, Dortmund). DIVADIA, a semi-automatic toolkit for labelling historical docu-

ment images was introduced by A. Garz (Fribourg). Colour segmentation can be useful to distinguish the text from the background as well as the various textual and layout elements (W. Pantke, Braunschweig).

The third panel, in the afternoon of 5 December, was chaired by I. Rabin. Here the papers focused on the techniques of material analysis. The speakers (D. Oltrogge, Cologne, S. Fiddymont, York, M. Aceto, Alessandria, A. Maschhadi Rafi, Tehran, A. Masic, Golm) presented a range of non-invasive methods that can assist the scholars in understanding the material composition of parchment, papyrus and inks.

The final panel, chaired by Ch. Brockmann and entitled Interdisciplinary Research, highlighted several projects conducted jointly by philologists, codicologists and scientists. The achievements have been particularly significant in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls research (D. Stöckl Ben Ezra, Paris), where the scientists could ultimately date the scrolls as well as demonstrate that they were really written locally, as the chemical analysis revealed that the inks used the water from the Dead Sea. Palimpsest manuscripts are another case when philologists urgently need help from the scientists, as the cases of the Archimedes Palimpsest (L. Glaser, Hamburg) or music manuscripts (C. MacDonald, Hamburg) illustrate. Scientific analysis can also assist in decoding the manuscript writing history, as it can help the scholar see which texts belong together and which were added later (M. Geissbühler).

The conference was concluded by an overview presentation of the projects and tools at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures.

The full programme is available at <http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/Natural%20Sciences%202013%20Programme.pdf>.

ES

Arabs, *mawlās* and *dhimmis*: Scribal practices and the social construction of knowledge in Late Antiquity and Medieval Islam

The medieval Islamic world consisted of a diverse set of cultures, religions and societies where Arabs, *mawlās* (non-Arab Muslim converts) and *dhimmis* co-existed. Indeed the term “caliphate” itself highlights this diversity.

The contact between different social and cultural groups resulted in the transmission of ideas from across the Empire. Thus how are we to understand the similarities in concept and the differences in practices due to regional traditions? What are the methodologies which we might use to approach these questions? “Arabs, *mawlās* and *dhimmis*. Scribal practices and the social construction of knowledge

in Late Antiquity and Medieval Islam” took place December 11 and 12, 2013 at The Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study (University of London) Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AB.

Organised by Dr Myriam Wissa (University of London) in the context of her Leverhulme funded research project “Bridging Religious Difference in a Multicultural Eastern Mediterranean Society: Communities of Artisans and their Commercial Networks in Egypt from Justinian to the ‘Abbasids (6th-10th centuries)” undertaken in co-operation with Professor Hugh Kennedy (University of London), the colloquium examined the linguistic (lexical and grammatical), political, rhetoric, legal, historical and religious categories of knowledge in the context of Late Antiquity and Medieval Islam from al-Andalus through North Africa, Egypt, and Syria to Iraq, Persia and Bactria as far afield as Turfan and Ethiopia. By fo-

cus on the relationships between the processes of composing, copying, transcoding, archiving, the “construction of meaning” and the transmission and reception of scribal lore within the core of society, the workshop offered a different perspective on the treatment of scribal practices and featured new scholarship. Scholars of Late Antique, early and medieval Islamic history and linguistics were brought together to discuss how written knowledge was constructed and accessed within elite and non-elite communities and how scribal practices converged from al-Andalus to Khurasan.

For more information and the list of symposium speakers, please visit the Warburg Institute website <http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/nc/events/colloquia-2013-14/scribal-practices-and-the-social-construction-of-knowledge-hugh-kennedy-myriam-wissa-conference/>

Myriam Wissa, University of London

Miscellanea

In this issue:

Amélie Couvrat Desvergnès, *Of Books & Men: Past Cultural Practices and Methods of Islamic Manuscripts Preservation in Iran and India. Part 1: Identification of Historical Interleaving Materials.*

Paolo La Spisa, *Contamination, Conflation and “Fluid” Tradition in the Martyrion of Arethas and his Companions in Nağrān.*

Denis Nosnitsin, Emanuel Kindzorra, Oliver Hahn, Ira Rabin, *A “Study Manuscript” from Qāqāma (Təgray, Ethiopia): Attempts at Ink and Parchment Analysis.*

Of Books & Men: Past cultural practices and methods of Islamic manuscripts preservation in Iran and India. Part 1: Identification of historical interleaving materials¹

When we, conservators, scholars, curators, handle manuscripts, we often find random materials inserted between the folia, meant to protect the illuminations and the illustrations from abrasions or pigment offsetting. But regarding the poor quality of those interleaving materials, we are often tempted to remove them as they often damage more than they help. In most cases, they are modern, non-archival materials such as glassine, acidic paper or plastic sheets placed by attentive librarians. It is important to bear in mind that preventive measures are not



Fig.1. Ms. 366.MIAQ, Qur'ān, Iran, 1784, interleaf made of animal skin.

a modern invention; preservation concerns have always reflected the interest in the longevity of the artefacts. In the past, books were often restored by re-sewing. As a result of insufficient knowledge and loss of technical abilities, most of the books kept today in western libraries and museums have been either rebound with recycled Islamic bindings or restored by using western techniques, often meaning inappropriate sewing and binding methods. Consequently any original trace and physical evidence of previous pres-

ervation practices may disappear over time. Clearly, when facing the restoration of a manuscript we have to take into account the alterations which were added and were not parts of the original concept. Those pieces of evidence, even if difficult to date, are absolutely essential to understand the past perceptions of the importance of object preservation. Preservation of collections as implemented in modern institutions encompasses the monitoring of and acting on the external factors, such as light, temperature, relative humidity, and pollutants (dust and chemical fumes) and minimising the human factors of degradations such as inappropriate handling, storage, packing and transportation. However, the modern concept of cultural items care and preservation results from a long

¹ I would like to thank Galina Lassikova, the former textile curator at the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), Doha, Qatar, for editing and advising, Beth Twinn, former paper conservator at MIA, for editing, and Aristoteles Sakellariou, head of conservation department at MIA. All images are property of the author and cannot be reproduced without permission.



Fig.2. Animal membrane as interleaf as seen on a light table.

series of trials and errors. Many repairs or alterations found in the manuscripts, even if they may seem awkward to a modern user, reflect the historical interests and concerns for book preservation. Still, the use of interleaving materials within Islamic manuscripts is rather a recent practice and this is what this paper intends to demonstrate.

Demonstrating the evolution of concerns for book preservation is not an easy task. However, observing diverse materials and tracking historical evidence may enable us to draw few conclusions.

In a luxury Iranian Qur'ān (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar, ms. 366) dated 1784, the illuminated pages are protected by a particular type of interleaves (fig. 1). At a first glance, this material looks like any other glassine paper that has discoloured while ageing. But a closer observation with transmitted light reveals the real nature of the material, animal skin (fig. 2). The strokes and marks are caused by skin processing whilst it was extensively scraped and polished to obtain a very thin and flexible texture. The characteristic round holes result certainly from the manufacturing process itself, while the skin was stretched on the frame. These holes were mended with small patches cut out from the same kind of skin. Those repairs are thus contemporary with the production of the animal membrane. The latter term is used deliberately as the material is not a parchment which is, in Islamic world, a thick support whose hair and flesh sides as well as the animal follicles are easily

identifiable. In our case, the hair and flesh sides are visually identical, only the close-up reveals follicles similar to those found on vellum. The membranes were obtained by extensive scraping of the skin.

The manuscript was most probably restored in Iran: the original binding was replaced by the existing lacquered binding in the nineteenth-century Persian style. At the same time, the entire gutter edges got some paper repairs and the borders were cut out to allow the text block to fit into the new binding. Hence it can be assumed that the interleaves were added during the same restoration, probably during the nineteenth century, since they are not sewn into the text block but pasted along the gutter edges of the illuminated folia. As the membrane was originally transparent and flexible, its use was straightforward. However, with time, the skin has discoloured and became opaque, hiding the underlying text in this Qur'ān.

Another Qur'ān copied in Baghdad² during the thirteenth century (Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, Qatar, ms. 376) was restored and redecorated in a North Indian workshop in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The manuscript was re-bound with a magnificent Indian painted binding. In the interior, the flyleaves extend onto the front and back doublures with a flange cut out with a zigzag motif, typical decorative element often encountered in Indo-Islamic manuscripts. The two final flyleaves bear two watermarks, a crowned bear holding an axe and the



Fig. 3. Watermark featuring a crowned bear with an axe, blazon of the Russian city of Yaroslavl.

² Described in Safwat 2000.



Fig. 4. ЯМВСЯ: “Yaroslavl Factory of the Grandsons of Savva Yakovlev”.

letters ЯМВСЯ which hint to the provenance of the paper used (fig. 3). The abbreviation ЯМВСЯ stands for “Yaroslavskaja Manufaktura Vnukov Savvy Jakovleva” (Yaroslavl Factory of the Grandsons of Savva Yakovlev) and identifies the paper as produced in the Russian City of Yaroslavl in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century (fig. 4). This kind of paper was widely used in Russia, especially in the manuscripts copied in the Volga region and was also exported to Iran. Although in Iran it was rarely used in manuscripts, most of the firmans of Fath ‘Alī Shah of the period of Russo-Persian war of 1804–1813 preserved in the collection of the Russian National



Fig. 5. Ms.376.MIAQ, Qur’ān, Iran, protective animal membranes.

Library were written on the paper from Yaroslavl.³

3 A very similar watermark, within an album datable to 1797, is

Generally Russian papers were widely imported to Iran from the end of the eighteenth to the twentieth century.⁴

Many loose animal membranes have been inserted into the text block of this Qur’ān (fig. 5). It is also interesting to point out that strips of similar membrane were pasted to repair the tears of the folia (figs. 6, 7). One can pinpoint the crude aspect of these interleaves; they were placed into the book without being properly cut according to the size of the page or the writing area. Most of them have



Fig. 6. Repair made with a strip of membrane.



Fig. 7. Repair made with a skin patch with the text rewritten.

published by Uchastkina 1962:272, plate 15. I am grateful to Olga Yastrebova, research follower at the National Library of Russia, Saint Petersburg, who identified the watermarks in MS.376.MIAQ.

4 Floor 2003.



Fig. 8. Purple staining of the membrane.

holes and irregular edges corresponding to the actual animal skin format. By examining those sheets more closely throughout the whole text block, it appears that they come from two different groups. The first group features a thin and crispy support with a network of small wrinkles across the whole surface (fig. 3), whereas the second group shows extremely thin and flabby membranes with purple staining which are not found anywhere on the Qur'ān (fig. 8). We can wonder about the efficiency and the purpose of this material since some of the interleaves do not even cover the text area. Their rough, crumpled surfaces can even cause damage to the original support and paint.

Structurally and physically these interleaves look like goldbeater's skins⁵ rather than parchment or vellum. Nevertheless, the presence of hairs on the surface and the follicles arrangement allow us to think about an epidermal membrane rather than guts (figs. 9, 10). The follicle pattern does not seem to match that of goat, sheep or calf skins. Only DNA analysis would be able to identify the species. Nevertheless, some scientific investigations were recently conducted on two different interleaves with

5 The goldbeater's skin is made from the outer membrane of a calf's intestine which is stripped off and stretched to produce a very thin (0.05–0.01 mm), elastic and long-lasting material. It was initially used to interleave sheets of gold which were then beaten out to form gold leaf.

X-Ray Fluorescence.⁶ The analysis was performed on one blank sheet of skin and one bearing extensive purple stains as shown on fig. 8. The results are not easy to interpret and further investigation needs to be conducted, however, they allow us to draw some conclusions. High concentrations of chlorine⁷ were found in both samples. From the nineteenth century onwards, chlorine was used in the parchment manufacturing process as disinfectant agent.⁸ The high peak of calcium highlights the lime treatment of the skin. The considerable amount of sulphurs is certainly representative of atmospheric sulphur dioxide pollution which forms sulphuric acid so relevant to parchment degradation. The amount of potassium is possibly due to the skin processing as well (fig. 11). On the membrane stained with purple dye, a considerable amount of lead was found in the blank borders whereas no lead was highlighted in the purple areas. The interpretation of this result cannot



Fig. 9. Presence of hair at the surface of the skin (close-up under Leica microscope).

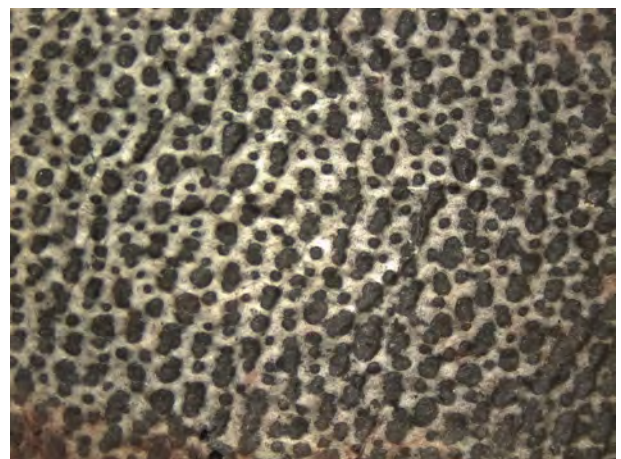


Fig. 10. Follicle pattern of the skin (close-up under Leica microscope).

6 XRF is a non-destructive technique which detects non-organic elements. For this research the Handheld Brucker Tracer IV SERIES was used.

7 Chlorine gas was first described in 1774 by the Swedish chemist Carl Wilhelm Scheele; Sir Humphry Davy identified chlorine as a pure element in 1810.

8 No specific dating is given in literature regarding the first use of chlorine in leather manufacturing process.

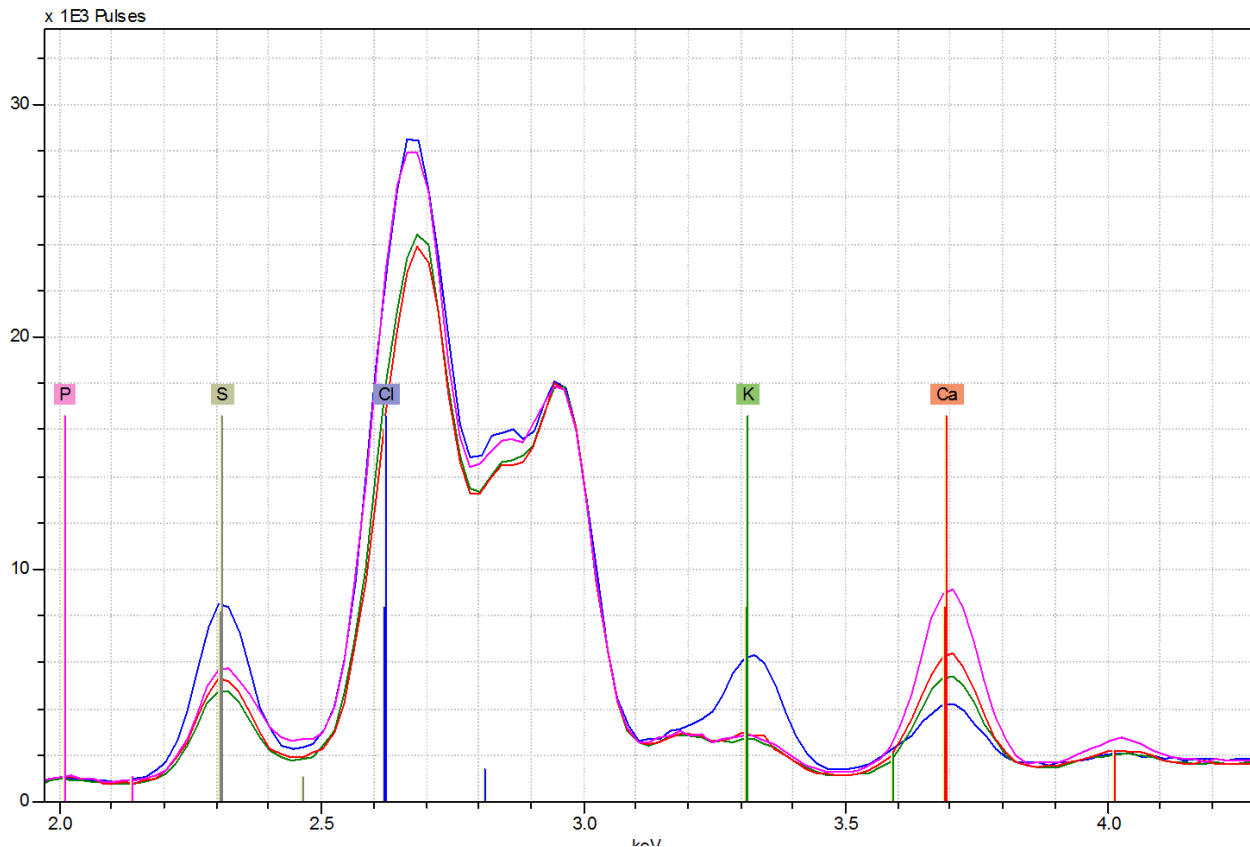


Fig. 11. XRF results for the skins found in ms. 376. (Blue = blank animal membrane without purple ink; Red and Green = analysis of the purple color found in the membrane fig. 8; Pink = blank area of the animal skin with purple colour).

be made at this current stage and further analysis needs to be undertaken on other leaves.

The nature of the purple stains could not be identified with XRF, most probably due to their organic components which are not detectable by this method. Certainly the purple color does not come from mollusc dyes (*Murex Brandaris L.*, *M. Trunculus L.*, *M. Erinaceae*) as no bromine was detected by XRF, dibromindigo being the principal constituent of imperial purple.⁹ Neither was the purple colouring caused by infestation as there is no characteristic UV fluorescence. Those are possibly organic dyes such as folium (*Chrosophora Tinctoria.A.Juss.*), berries or plants juices, lichens, roots such as the common madder (*Rubia Tinctorum L*) or resins such as lac-dye or kermes (scarlet resinous secretion of insects), or a mixture of blue and red organic dyes. Those stains certainly come from the discharge of another colorant placed previously in contact with the skins. That means that those skins were reused from another manuscript.

Using animal skin and membrane is obviously not new. Goat or sheep parchments were used until the eleventh century as the principal writing surface for the Qur'ānic texts. Deer membrane was specifically used by calligraphists and copyists in Iran and North India (fig. 12). Today modern bookbinders still employ this



Fig. 12. Deer membrane used as writing support for a scroll at the Iranian Cultural Centre, New-Delhi, India, 2008.

material as guard leaves.¹⁰ It is called *Hiran Kechelli* and is said to be produced from the connective tissue

¹⁰ Soteriou 2012: image of Muḥammad Bašīr's Lahore bookbinding, "Ambala Bookbinding House" Pakistan, 1990.

⁹ Porter 2002.

of deer. The manufacturing process of deer membrane is kept in secret over centuries and is only taught from word of mouth. The recipe involves the removal of the skin while the dead body is still warm, the stretching and the scraping on a frame, the coating with a solution of various ingredients containing antibacterial, conservative and softening properties and the continuous sanding process.¹¹ However, it is most likely that the skin interleaves were added later, during the nineteenth century and probably in the Indian context, while the manuscript was restored.

One of most accomplished expressions of manuscript preservation is found in the copy of the *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*¹² produced in North India in 1711 (ms. 594. MIAQ). Some very particular paper interleaves were added to protect the illustrations. They are directly sewn into the text-block. The question is to figure out the different additions and restorations which occurred over time in order to trace the practices implemented for its preservation and eventually understand the history of this book. The manuscript was restored at some point, somewhere in Germany, before being auctioned in England in 1999. A new binding of green Morocco leather was added and the folia were mended with museum-grade conservation techniques using Japanese paper reinforcements.¹³ A previous water



Fig. 13. Ms.594.MIAQ, *Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn*, India, 1711. The interleaf facing the Mecca painting is made from reused gold-flecked Indian paper decorated with golden diamonds.



Fig. 14. Ms.594.MIAQ. The guard facing the Mount Ararat illumination is made from reused Indian paper and bears a network of grooved lines and a cut-out floral motif pasted for decorative purposes.

11 The formula is described by Soteriou 1999:167. It states a mixture of a red tree sap, gum Arabic, chloroform, salt and aromatic ammonia. No reference is made regarding any tanning treatment.

12 The *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Ḥaramayn* ("Revelation of the Two Sanctuaries") is a versified description of Mecca and Medina and the rituals of the pilgrimage. It was initially written by Muḥyi 'd-Dīn Lārī in 1506 CE and dedicated to Muẓaffar b. Maḥmūd, Shah of Gujarat. It was used as a guide for pilgrims going on the Hajj. It was especially valued for its paintings, which feature all the important places of Mecca and Medina with titles and captions written in Persian, as well as Arabic and Turkish. Many copies were made, predominantly in India and Turkey, over several centuries up to the modern period.

13 Museum-grade conservation techniques performed by trained paper and book conservators encompass the repair of the mechanical damages of the folia by using Japanese paper made from mulberry fibre (Kozo, Gampi or Mitsumata).

leakage and insect infestation had caused staining, holes and channels through the entire text-block. The water also caused the paint offsetting onto the facing folia, however, the interleaves are free of colouring, meaning they were added later. These leaves are made of different kinds of reused Indian papers probably coming from old piles of recycled paper, as they bear some stains, marks and losses which have been filled in with modern Japanese paper inlays or old Indian paper patches. The paper sheets protecting the two fully illuminated pages of Mecca and Medina are made of gold- or silver-flecked Indian reused paper decorated with gold diamond motifs (fig. 13).

The others guards sheets show an interesting



Fig. 15. Ms. 594.MIAQ: the close-up under Leica microscope reveals the network of tooled grooved lines.

network of grooved lines in the paper structure (fig. 14). This was made on purpose in order to render some translucency to the paper and enable the reader to perceive the pages underneath. The indentations were made mechanically with the help of a tool, a bone folder, a sort of comb or a wheel whose dents had engraved and polished the paper surface (fig. 15). The glossiness of the marks comes from the force of the tool applied onto the paper. This “technique” has never been found or reported in literature so far and it seems to be an exclusivity or originality performed by a creative papermaker or artist.

We can also clearly see that the grooved lines were either oriented horizontally on some sheets or vertically on others. Several pieces of paper were joined together in order to cover a full page. All these are hints that the stock was small and the restorer had to manage with its amount and size.

These interleaved papers also had a decorative purpose as small floral motifs cut out of brown paper were pasted in the middle of the fore edge (fig. 14). Even though those decoupages look rough and slightly naïve, they obviously emphasise the ornamental aspect of these guard leaves.

It does not seem very plausible that a German conservator had access to a stock of old Indian

recycled paper, plain or decorated with gold, pasted motives or even grooved. These guard leaves had most likely already been added in India, probably during the twentieth century, by an owner concerned with the preservation of the illustrations. However, the conservator was well advised to preserve these interleaves while he restored the book. He was conscious that they are part of the history of the object and must be kept as such. He or she even mended them since some bear repairs with Japanese paper.

Interleaves are also encountered in late Ottoman Qur’āns from the middle of the nineteenth century (fig. 16). These thin and translucent loose sheets made of coloured papers and heightened with rich European style golden bouquets were obtained by an extensive beating process of the pulp as well as a calendaring of the sheet. These protection leaves are real works of art and reflect the taste for luxury in late Ottoman book production.

In Europe, during the Middle Ages, the rich ornamentations of deluxe religious books were protected by silk curtains stitched onto the pages. But the very first use of paper interleaves is reported to appear at the end of the seventeenth century. These protective sheets were called *serpentes* for their use of paper known as “*fin à la serpente*”, bearing a snake-shape watermark and datable to 1597.¹⁴ In the eighteenth century interleaves started to be used in western printed books. The printers and book publishers were aware of the damages caused by ink discharge. Hence guard sheets were inserted and sewn into the bindings to protect the facing pages from printing ink transfer. A notable example is *Le Tableau Général de l’Empire Ottoman* by Ignace Mouradja d’Ohsson, published in 1787.¹⁵ In the second volume, full-page illustrations are protected by guard sheets made of very thin semi-transparent paper.

The above survey suggests the dating of the birth of the interleaving practice in the Islamic Orient back to the nineteenth century. The interleaves were not part of the initial bookmaking process but later additions by owners or restorers who, noticing some visible degradation, were worried for their belongings and made efforts to reduce the progression of the damage. Copyists, artists and owners had good knowledge about materials deterioration and implemented several techniques to counteract the harmful actions of external and internal factors. This practice was possibly influenced by European printed books, as exchange was very developed between West and East, and many western printed books were

¹⁴ Laffitte 2007.

¹⁵ One edition is owned by the Qatar National Library, Doha.

imported in the Ottoman, Qajar and Mughal courts. In regard to the Iranian Qur'an ms. 376.MIAQ, for instance, the use of the membranes seems to be quite systematic and tends to imitate the interleaves found in European books with no real knowledge of the purpose and practice. On the other hand, the extremely refined protective sheets found in Ottoman Qur'āns are high-quality but look more aesthetic than practical.

Apart from documentation and history points of view, the essential question for the conservators is to find out whether those later materials can be preserved in the manuscripts considering what is best from the conservationist point of view. The diverse chemical compounds found in the hides interact with each other and with external factors and contribute to the emanations of vapours that may be harmful to the paper and the pigments. As seen earlier, interleaves made out of skins or membranes emit sulphur or chlorine compounds which can cause chemical degradations onto the paper support or some pigments. For instance, vermilion containing mercuric sulphides¹⁶ is affected by sulphur fumes which cause its blackening. In many cases, those materials seem useless as they do not provide the efficient protection they were meant for. As their support is physically deteriorated, they can also cause mechanical damage to the folia and the illuminations. Even though they are part of the object history, it is important to figure out whether membranes or hides are compatible with the other materials found in the manuscripts.

The specific studies of book materiality are at the very beginning and much more in-depth research on a wider corpus should be carried out to get the full comprehension in this field. Manuscripts are not only objects; they are also testimony of history and human evolution. Each piece of physical evidence of cultural practices should be very carefully recorded and it is our duty as conservators, curators and scholars to



Fig. 16. Ms. 413 MIAQ, Qur'an copied by Sayyid Muḥammad al-Šukrī, Ottoman Empire, Shumen, Bulgaria, 1853-54. Green transparent paper interleaf decorated with a European style golden bouquet.

make sure that these materials are kept and properly conserved in order to contribute to the broadcasting of this knowledge.

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Museum of Islamic Art, Doha Qatar

¹⁶ Vermillion is either obtained by grinding the native mineral cinnabar or artificially manufactured by chemical reaction between sulphur and mercury.

Contamination, conflation and “fluid” tradition in the Martyrion of Arethas and his companions in Nağrān¹

Tragic events that occurred in South Arabia in the early decades of the sixth century marked significantly the historiographical and hagiographic literature of pre-modern times. Around 523 CE, the Jewish king of the kingdom of Ḥimyar, Yūsuf (called Masrūq in Syriac sources, Dū Nuwās in Arabic Islamic sources, Finḥās in Ethiopic and Finḥas/Dinḥas in Christian Arabic sources), launched a series of persecutions against the Christians of the region, trying to convert them to Judaism. But the most famous episode was the siege of a group of oases in the area of Nağrān and the subsequent martyrdom of the people who did not recant their faith. Among the notables of the city, the emblematic and legendary Arethas (al-Ḥārīt) died as martyr. The vast resonance of this persecution reached the court of Constantinople, where the emperor Justin I (518–527) decided to encourage and support a punitive military expedition against Ḥimyar, led by the Christian king of Aksum Kalēb/Ella Aṣbeḥā (in Ethiopic sources), Elesbaas (in Greek sources), al-Asbās/al-Safān (in Arabic sources).² Yūsuf was defeated and killed, the Ethiopians replaced him with a Christian king, and Christianity was re-established in the area. These events were documented and attested by an amazing number of documentary, literary and historical texts, inscriptions and manuscripts. We can count at least twenty seven texts that are directly or indirectly related to the tragic story of the Nağrān persecution, without taking into account Synaxarya and Menologia.³ Just to give an idea of the reception and diffusion of the Martyrion of Arethas and his companions in Nağrān, the focus of this case study, we should mention that this text is known in at least five different Oriental traditions: Greek, Arabic, Ethiopic, Georgian and Armenian, and sometimes in more than one version for each language. Some of the versions have already been published in modern critical editions (Greek: Detoraki 2007; Arabic: Gori in Bausi – Gori 2006:21–89; Ḥārīt Ibrāhīm 2008; Ethiopic: Bausi in Bausi – Gori 2006:93–305; Georgian: Imnaišvili 2000).

The Arabic *Martyrion of Arethas and his companions in Nağrān* is attested in at least three different versions or redactions. The ten witnesses known so far can be classified as in table 1.⁴

After having analysed the textual data it might be

Table 1. Classification of witnesses.

Old Arabic Version (Ar1)		
1. Sa = Sin. Ar. 428	(10 th cent.)	ff. 193r-232v
2. Sb = Sin Ar. 443	(12 th CE)	ff. 255r-298v
3. L = Balamand 153	(16 th -17 th cent.)	ff. 63v-85r
4. M = Balamand 131	(18 th cent.)	ff. 73r-92v
5. N = Balamand 154	(19 th cent.)	ff. 22v-36v
Recensio brevis Arabic Version (Ar2)		
6. Or = Brit. Mus. Or. 5019	(11 th cent.)	ff. 85v-96r
7. B = Sin. Ar. 469	(13 th cent.)	ff. 114r-117v (mutilated)
8. C = Ming. Chr. Ar. 236	(13 th cent.)	ff. 1-2 (fragment)
9. D = Sin. Ar. 535	(13 th cent.)	ff. 77v-108r
Recent Arabic Version (Ar3)		
10. V = Vat. Syr. 202	(17 th cent.)	ff. 159v-176

useful to consider some methodological issues about the text critical approach adoptability to hagiographic literature. Regarding this literary genre, one has to bear in mind that it belongs to the so called semi-popular literature, or, let us say to the “Middle Literature”, as was the term used by Chraïbi (2008:15–20) for *One Thousand and One Nights*. Usually such texts were composed by more than one author, who often remain anonymous. For this reason the manuscript tradition is more “fluid” or “active”, by using the terminology of Alberto Várvaro (1970), than in the case of authorial texts. With regard to the hagiographic literature, this is often characterised by three typical features, all present in the *Martyrion*:

1. The tendency to link the Christianisation of a given place where the saint was living and operating to the apostolic times. For example in Ar1: §2,2 (the paragraph order is that of the Detoraki’s edition), the family *SbLMN* shows an important narrative variation according to which the oasis of Nağrān embraced the Christian faith thanks to the preaching of Apostle Simon Cananeus. I also found the same addition in V where the same Apostle is called “the Zealot” as in the Gospel of Luke (6:15) and in the Acts of the Apostles (1:13).
2. The tendency to place the saint’s history within the socio-cultural background in which the copyist lives. This reflects an effort of a given monastic milieu to appropriate the important spiritual heritage. In the *Martyrion of Arethas* it is not hard to find this tendency in the second section of the tale (§29), where we find the list of the places the vessels of the military fleet had come from. It is interesting to remark that in the Arabic and Ethiopic versions we find also warships coming from Faran and Raithou, two important centres of the Sinaitic monasticism, in order to include the Sinaitic Christianity among those who contributed to the Red Sea mission against the Jewish king.
3. The third leitmotif in hagiographies that is also present in other genres of “Middle Literature” is the

1 The following observations have been extrapolated from some preliminary philological and historical investigations in the course of the preparation of a new critical edition of the Arabic versions of the *Martyrion of Arethas*.

2 See Bausi – Gori 2006, Detoraki 2007, Robin 2008.

3 Robin 2008.

4 For more detailed philological remarks concerning the main variants that exist among the three redactions see Binggeli 2007:163–177 and La Spisa 2010.

addition of peculiar narrative variants that belong to the cultural tradition of the language in which the text is translated. This is the case of the very famous tale in which a mother must decide between throwing herself with her baby into the fire or apostatising; eventually the infant she is nursing speaks to her: “O mother accomplish your religion because there is no fire after this fire” (§22). This episode was identified for the first time by Ignazio Guidi (1881) as peculiar to the Arabic and to the Arabic-based Ethiopic versions. Indeed, there is not any trace of this story in the Greek version that had served as the *Vorlage* for the Arabic one. Scholars speculated about the origin of this tale, and we can wonder whether it comes from an Islamic or a Christian influence. It is noteworthy to remark that the same episode already exists in very old Qur’ānic commentaries related to the *Surat al-Burūġ* dealing with “the people of the trench” (*aṣḥāb al-’uḥūd*); as in those by Muqātil b. Sulaymān (8th century), Hūd b. Muḥakkam al-Hawwārī (9th century) and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim (8th century).⁵

Not only all these features are present in the Arabic *Martyrion*: in each Arabic version we can find several relevant variants through the whole tale (for more details see Binggeli 2007 and La Spisa 2010). The text is the result of an uninterrupted reworking activity by copyists, who felt free to manipulate, conflate, add and cut portions of the text they were working with. With respect to the Arabic versions, each new redaction of the *Martyrion* is characterised by a free way of writing / copying its *Vorlage-en*.

It is a rule in philology that the more a text circulates the greater the risk of contamination is and one should wonder what *recensio - recensere* in contaminated traditions means. As Paul Maas (1957:31) noted, “und im Bereich einer Kontamination versagt die strenge Stemmatisierung [...] gegen die Kontamination ist kein Kraut gewachsen”. The mechanical way of retrieving an archetype fails in contaminated traditions, because it is often hard to establish to a reasonable extent a vertical transmission of a text, copyists having used several models in order to compose a new redaction (or “edition”). Actually, the copyist who uses more than one model for drawing up a new version can be considered a sort of editor *ante litteram*. Each edition should have its specific aims, and readers, let us say its target audience. And each edition is a new text created *ad hoc* for a specific public. Moreover the success of the text can explain why in a *scriptorium* there were several copies of the same work: a copyist could thus have the possibility of checking different exemplars. In other words, they might carry out an *emendatio ope codicum* collecting different sources.

Let us see an example from the oldest Arabic version of the *Martyrion* (*Ar1*). In §1 the text mentions

the country where the Ḥimyarite king (Finḥās/Dinḥās) reigns: while *Sa* shows an evident mistake *-tīn* instead of *al-Ūmarīṭīn*, *Sb* reads “Ἀραβία εὐδαίμων” written in Arabic script. Thus we can argue that in the South Palestinian monasteries where the copyist of *Sb* probably operated there were at least an Arabic and a Greek copy of the *Martyrion*. Actually *Sb* is a reworked version of *Sa* not only regarding the improvement of the text itself but also from a stylistic and linguistic point of view. The Arabic of *Sa* is often so close to its Greek model that it is from time to time difficult to understand, and in *Sb* the effort is evident to make the reading of the text more comfortable for Arabic-speaking readers. For these reasons it is advisable to edit the text of *Sa* and to record all the variants of *Sb* in the apparatus, bearing in mind that these variants are not always mistakes made by the copyist: often they are just intentional interventions meant to improve the readability of the text. However, in some passages, where the two versions are too different from each other, it is necessary to edit the text in two different columns. The first such case is in §22 with the added tale of the baby who speaks to his mother in order to accomplish their martyrdom. This is an Arabic innovation where the copyist of *Sb* felt free to follow his own style and way of writing.

Concerning the *Ar2 recensio brevis*, the most relevant witness is *Or* (Brit. Mus. Orient. 5019) because of its antiquity and because it is the only witness having a complete text. *D* (Sinai Arabic 535) is a direct copy of *Or*. *B* is a mutilated homiletic and hagiographic collection where the *Martyrion* interrupts abruptly; the two-folia fragment *C*, now in Birmingham, is the direct continuation of the text of *B*. However, the text in *B+C* is incomplete, lacking the last paragraphs of the tale.⁶ Yet it is possible to notice an interpolation illustrative of the way of copying applied by the scribe. In §5 Arethas pronounces his speech in order to persuade his people not to open the gates of the city to the army of the conqueror Yūsuf. While witness *Or* reads: “al-Ḥārīt suggested them not to trust his oaths and not to open the gates of the town for him”, *B* adds a long exhortation speech by Arethas. When producing an edition, this interpolation of *B* can find its place in a specific apparatus exclusively devoted to narrative variants, since it is not a simple corruption of an archetype but an intentional addition; in other words, it is an important redaction phase of this “active tradition”.

As to the most recent Arabic version (*Ar3*) we can state that sometimes lateral and more isolated witnesses are nearer to the Greek original version than the oldest Arabic translation. This is exactly the case of ms. Vat. Syr. 202 (*V*), which was copied

6 The text of *C* has been edited with an in-depth linguistic analysis by Monferrer Sala (2013).

5 Cook 2008:141–144; Sizgorich 2010:137–140.

in Aleppo in the seventeenth century. Actually, this Karšūnī manuscript is the result of a conflation between the *Sb* family and the old Greek version recently edited by Detoraki (2007). It shares most of its readings with *Sb* but at the same time in certain passages it is closer to its Greek model:⁷ this happens for instance when the Byzantine monetary system is explained (§4). Eventually, it adds some details of its own initiative, for instance, when the Jewish king is labelled Julian II and especially when the Ethiopic king directs ten curses against the Jewish king Yūsuf before killing him (§37).

For this kind of manuscript tradition, *recensio*, that in its Lachmannian meaning is also the reconstruction of a *lectio*, and the history of the manuscript tradition coincide, which practically means that the origin and age of a variant correspond to that of the manuscript in which it is attested – except for the codices *descripti* – because here the copyist is also the author and creator of his text; thus, such variants should be considered as author variants.⁸ Thus, the edition of the text of each version and/or redaction may be carried on as follows: (1) the editor edits the oldest and the more complete witness available, and uses the apparatus for all the variants in a chronological order. (2) The only procedure that should be carried out is the deletion of copies of existing copies (*descripti*). (3) Regarding the *lectiones singulares* they would be considered as special marks of a peculiar reworked version, so they have to be recorded in the apparatus. (4) In case of variants having the same meaning and value, they must be considered as author's variants, and their diachronic relations must be reconstructed. (5) Even the *difficilior* and *facilior* concepts have to be re-interpreted.⁹ In the Greek version there is an example of this last case. The late professor Paolo Marrassini, in his last article devoted to the Nağrān documents and history (2011), criticised the choice of Detoraki to accept in her edition *μονομάχος* (*monomáchos* = combatant) instead of *μοναχός* (*monachós* = monk). In §37, where the battle between the Himyar army and the Ethiopians is described, we read: "And there went out an Ethiopian monk with an iron rod to the boats of the enemy, he took with his left hand the tail of a horse and with the other hand he gutted it with the tip of his spear". *Ar1* as well as the *Gadla Ĥirūt* read "monk" (Bausi 2010). Rather than to interpret *μοναχός* (*monachós*) as simply haplography or *lectio facilior* of *μονομάχος* (*monomáchos*), we should consider it in this very case an intentional choice of the copyist, which gives an obvious hagiographical connotation to the text.

Multiple recensions

All the aforementioned remarks lead us to conclude

7 For more details see Binggeli 2007:169–170 and La Spisa 2010:233–234.

8 De Robertis 1961:122, 125, 137.

9 Balduino 1979:335–340.

that each manuscript is an important witness of a specific phase of elaboration and transmission of the text. By editing the three Arabic versions of the *Martyrion of Arethas* I personally could experiment what De Robertis called "a non-Lachmannian field with a lachmannian previous experience".¹⁰ The editor must first distinguish an author's text from a so called "reader's text", which actually is a fluid text. That is why it is necessary to expound some theoretical considerations about what it means to edit a fluid tradition and multiple redactions of the same text. The first point to be clarified is that the philology of active traditions cannot renounce or neglect the reconstructive method i.e. the "Lachmannian" way of retrieving a reading. Indeed a crucial question of this kind of editing is trying to understand to which extent we can distinguish between innovations, interpolations, improvement of a given text by a single copyist on the one hand, and corruptions, mechanical mistakes and misinterpretations on the other.

As a matter of fact in this kind of literature, that is hagiography and historiography, each innovation is an original act of writing and it should be carefully recorded. But the question here is: is it possible to improve the reading of a single version or redaction? With regard to this point I think that in order to avoid any confusion we should first examine the whole manuscript tradition by: (1) singling out the most relevant phases of redaction; (2) identifying the mistaken lections and the corruptions which were transmitted in a mechanical way; (3) distinguishing between "criticism of forms" and "criticism of variants":¹¹ Middle Arabic features should never be considered as linguistic mistakes but rather should be scrupulously recorded in a specific apparatus.¹²

We should also bear in mind that any textual development is often the intention of a copyist to improve a reading. These are only some of the criteria one should adopt to edit a text belonging to a fluid or a contaminated tradition. Usually, in "active traditions" the New Philology editorial approach and way of editing stresses the fact that each witness is an original and unique sample of a phase of elaboration of a given text; however, we should first be able to know if a codex "B" with a reworked and contaminated text is the result of the reworking activity of copyist "B", or if this one confined himself to mechanically transcribe his model "A" already interpolated. In fact, even in this type of traditions, mechanical copies from other existing codices do exist. In the case of the Arabic version of the *Martyrion of Arethas* they have been well identified.

10 "Esperienze di un lachmanniano in territorio non lachmanniano": De Robertis 1961:119.

11 La Spisa 2012:194–199.

12 La Spisa 2013.

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A “Study Manuscript” from Qäqäma (Təgray, Ethiopia): Attempts at Ink and Parchment Analysis

The library of the remote monastery of Qäqäma Maryam Kidanä Məhrät in Däg'a Tämben (Təgray, North Ethiopia) was investigated by the team of the project Ethio-SPaRe in June and November 2012. A preliminary study of the library showed that the collection was extended and profoundly renovated in the nineteenth century, in the course of the revival the monastery had during the reign of King Yoḥannəs IV (1872–89). The shaping of the collection was apparently linked to the figure of the powerful abbot, Gäbrä Giyorgis, who donated dozens of books of diverse provenance, which he himself gathered or received as gifts.¹ As the result, the extensive library contains a huge amount of information, but its heterogeneity poses a very serious challenge to the researcher.

One of the few items of Qäqäma collection which predate the time of Gäbrä Giyorgis is a manuscript containing New Testament books: the Acts of the Apostles and all Apostolic Epistles. Manuscripts of this type are not common in small rural libraries of North Ethiopia which in most of the cases possess only lectionaries with selections of New Testament readings.

The relatively large (200 ff. in 20 quires) codex, QDGM-010 (C2-IV-629; fig. 1) has dimensions 18.5x16.5x10 cm, with square written area (12.5x12.5 cm). The codex is worn; the text leaves show traces of intensive use; many of them are damaged or are about to fall apart along the ruled lines (impressed quite deeply); on some the text is abraded. The manuscript is not easy to date on palaeographic grounds; one can assume a broad dating span between the early seventeenth and the early eighteenth century. The hand is somewhat irregular; relatively small and broadly spaced script tends to slender forms.² The scribe was consequent

in marking the sections of the texts with numbers in the left margin of the text columns. The same scribe inserted rubrication. The manuscript shows evidence of extensive correcting, glossing and highlighting biblical quotations. Margins of many folia are occupied by additional writing. Passages of the traditional Gə'əz grammar (*sāwasəw*) in the margins confirm the first overall assessment of QDGM-010 as a “study manuscript”, of which the project team collected few examples. However, not Gäbrä Giyorgis, but other persons (Wäldä Giyorgis, Qäšäla Giyorgis), appear in supplications and additional notes as those linked to the history of the manuscript.

The chemical composition of the writing materials of QDGM-010 has been studied because of two reasons. Firstly, these data have been meant for the general description of the manuscript as a part of codicological study. Secondly, it has become possible to check whether samples of the inks and parchment produced in the area of Qäqäma today (also collected in 2012) coincide in their composition with those used for the QDGM-010. The latter question is inherently connected with the probability of shedding some light on the provenance of the manuscript.



Fig. 1. QDGM-010. Explicit of the "First Epistle of Paul to Timothy" (f. 160va), and incipit of the "Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy" (f. 160vb).

Since soot, tannin or plant and iron-gall ink belong to different typological classes that can be distinguished by their optical properties (Rabin et al. 2012) an UV-VIS-NIR usb-microscope was used to establish the ink type in-situ. In figure 2, the

1 Noslitsin 2013:388–96.

2 One of the antiquating features is the shape of numeral “6” (፩) looking like shortened and compressed “7” (፮), numeral

“10” (፲) sometimes appearing in the so-called “form with the ring”.

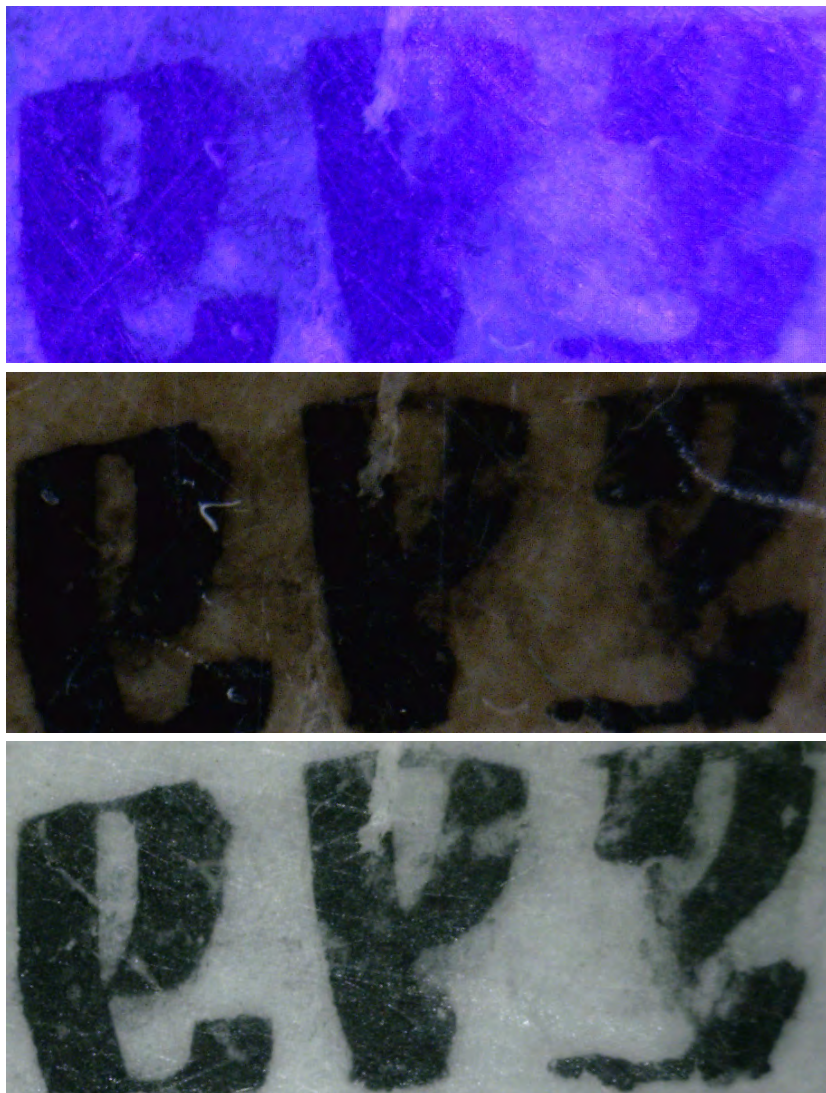


Fig. 2. Micrographs (of f. 44r, intercolumn, section number 26[1]) taken at x50 magnification and different wavelengths: (a) UV (395 nm, top), (b) VIS (middle), (c) NIR (930 nm, bottom).

micrographs from top to bottom were taken with UV, VIS and NIR light, respectively. The intensity of the black colour is not altered by the change of the light wavelength indicating, as expected, carbon ink. This rough typological identification was confirmed directly by Raman and indirectly by XRF spectroscopy. The nature of the red inks could not be determined by the optical properties; for this purpose, Raman and XRF spectroscopy have been used.

Figure 3a shows element profiles obtained with XRF along a line that starts in the parchment, crosses the red spot and black line and ends in the parchment. The intensity of the elements is proportional to their concentration in the spot under investigation. Intensities of mercury (Hg) and sulfur (S) rise in the profile portion corresponding to the red ink indicating presence of cinnabar or its synthetic equivalent, vermilion. Raman spectrum on the right side of figure 3b unequivocally establishes this identity. Inlet of figure 3b shows the trajectory of the line scan and the point of Raman testing. Finding of cinnabar or vermilion is extremely interesting since

neither a source of natural cinnabar nor recipes for production of vermilion seem to be reported for Ethiopia. A. Wion who found cinnabar (vermillion) in the rubrics of a manuscript of the Miracles of Mary (Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. Abbadie 114) concluded that the pigment was imported into Ethiopia.³ It is noteworthy that the red pigment in the spectrum of figure 3a contains Zn (blue curve), as a prominent contaminant. Cinnabar contaminated with zinc, similar to our spectrum, was reported to be found in Syriac manuscripts.⁴

The line scan in figure 3a delivers also information pertaining to the inorganic composition of the parchment. Specifically, high amount of potassium (K) and its profile closely matching that of calcium (Ca) indicate their common source. The corresponding compound was most likely deposited on parchment during the preparation of its surface for writing,⁵ less probably during the process of skin processing, i.e. through soaking in water. We arrive at this conclusion since other matching elements include Si, Al and Fe pointing to silicates.

The chemical composition of the inks and parchment of a fragment of QDGM-010 has been compared with that of the writing materials currently produced in the area of Qäqäma. For the latter, red inks have been found to be exclusively of plant origin whereas the black inks though of carbon type were found to contain large amounts of iron, zinc and manganese. Since none of these contaminants were found in the original black ink of QDGM-010 it is likely that the modern recipe differs considerably from that of QDGM-010. Even more important, the comparison of the parchment additives to the ones produced in the area did not show a correspondence with the unique profile of QDGM-010 parchment. Also, the chemical composition of a stone used today for parchment polishing just before writing does not match that of the parchment of QDGM-010. The traditional technology of parchment and ink preparation at Qäqäma might have changed with the time, and, of course, more manuscripts

3 Wion 2004.

4 Personal communication from Renate Nöller (BAM, Federal Institute for Material Research and Testing, Berlin).

5 Cp. also Richardin et al. 2006:80–81.

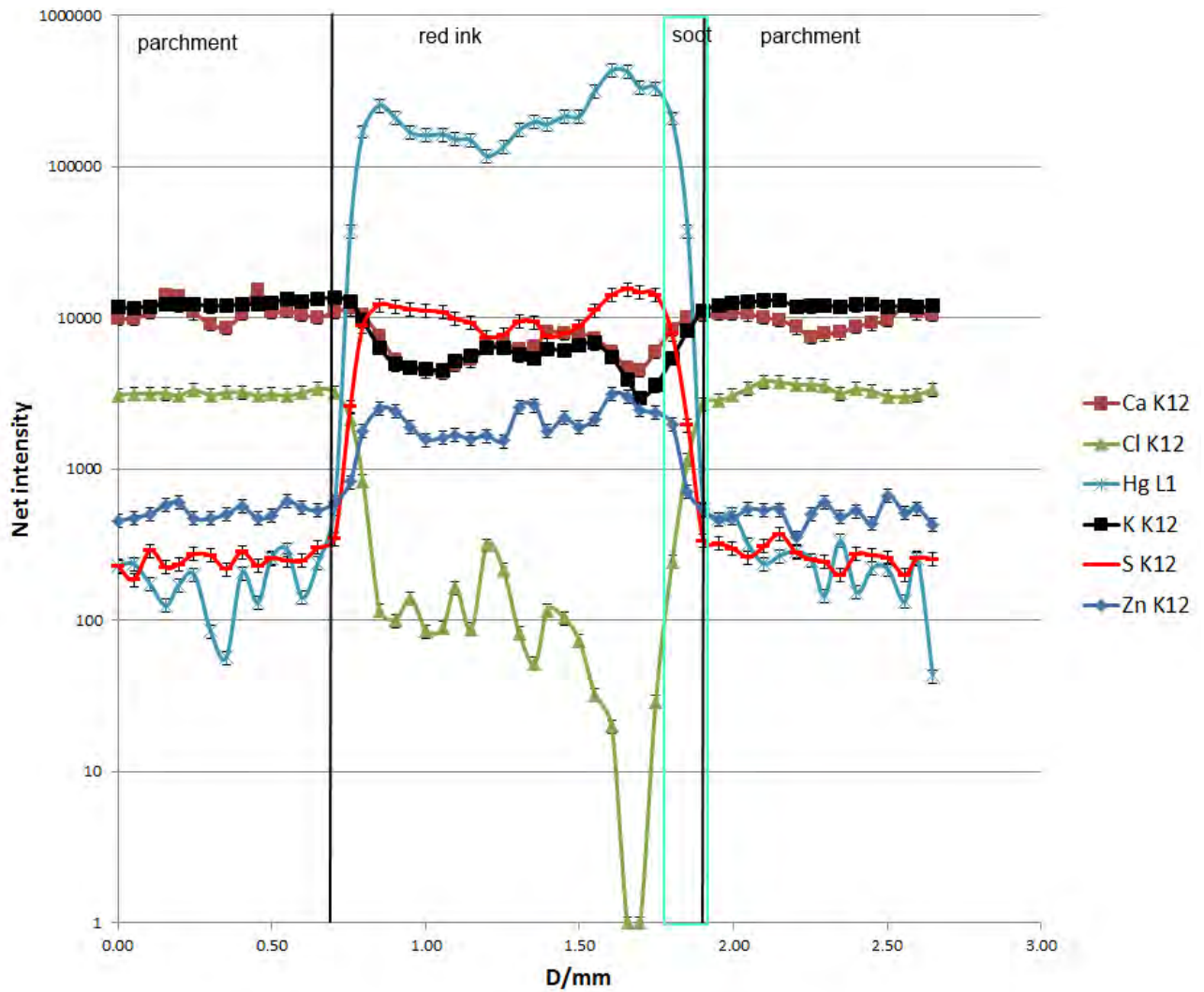


Fig. 3a. Elements profiles corresponding to the XRF (ARTAX, Bruker with Mo tube, 50kV, 600µA, He atmosphere) line scan shown as a blue line in the inlet of the fig 3b. Note the increased intensities of Hg and S in the area of the red ink as compared to that in the parchment. Decrease of the intensities of Cl, Ca and K in the same area does not mean the decrease in the concentration but due to the presence of mercury (Hg).

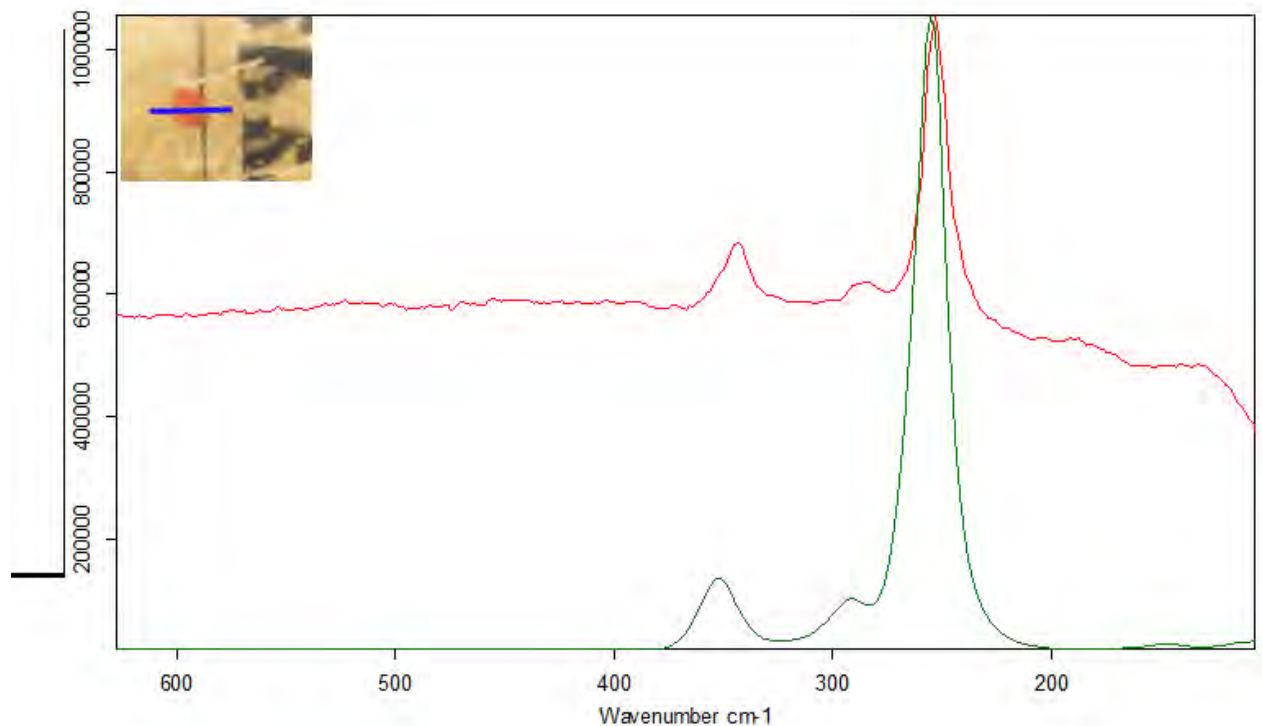


Fig. 3b. Raman spectrum (Renishaw in Via spectrometer) of the red spot shown in the inlet (red curve) compared to a reference spectrum of cinnabar (green curve). The excitation wavelength is 785 nm. Blue line crossing the red spot in the inlet corresponds to the XRF line scan shown in fig. a.

should be studied for clarifying the history of the Qäqäma collection. However, on the basis of the analysis described above one can assume that the QDGM-010 might have been produced and used as “study manuscript” in a different area, and found its way to the collection of Qäqäma, under still unknown circumstances, at some point in the eighteenth or nineteenth century.⁶

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⁶ At least one hint is provided by the content of QDGM-010. One of its owners was Qäşäla Giyorgis, mentioned in a purchase note; a seventeenth-century (?) high-ranking ecclesiastic, known by this relatively rare name, is known to have been the founder of the monastery of May Wäyni (Säḥart; cp. ms. EMMML no. 5000, Getatchew Haile 1993:383; local tradition attributes to him the foundation of at least six other churches and monasteries in Təgray).

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