

Final report on the COMSt Workshop Specific issues in Oriental Philology

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The purpose of my trip to Athens from the 7th-9th December was to attend the COMSt workshop “Specific issues in Oriental Philology”. The workshop focusing on “Edition” hosted 16 presentations on varying topics related to the challenges of editing oriental texts. Some of the presentations were of extra interest for my own PhD research, and I benefited a lot from attending them. In the following short summaries of all the presentations are given.

On Thursday the workshop started with the session on “Dealing with translated texts” and a paper presented by Lara Sels on the “Editing Medieval Slavonic translations of Byzantine Texts”. The basis for her presentation was her critical edition of the Slavonic version of Gregory of Nyssa’s *De Hominis opificio*. For this edition she prepared both the Slavonic and the Greek text. In the comparison of the two texts she discovered that some passages of the Slavonic text were barely comprehensible without the support of the Greek. However also the Greek text was “corrected” in this process as during the collatio “better readings” were discovered and scribal mistakes were eliminated. The Slavonic therefore revealed variations of the Greek text. She tried to reconstruct the text to propose a version as close to the original as possible.

The second paper was presented by Marie Cronier. She discussed “The use of translations for the edition of an original text (Greek and Arabic)”. She raised a number of questions that need to be clarified in order to judge the usefulness of a translation for the edition of the original. In the beginning it is important to list all existing translations (to study the history of the translation) and to make an edition of the translation. Then it should be examined who translated the text when and where? Was there a translation in between or was it translated from the original? Was the translator an expert on the topic? Which was his mother tongue? The results may show that the translation was done complete, selective or word-by-word. Her result was that translations are rarely useful for the edition of an original text.

Andrea Schmidt presented in her paper on “Editing an Armenian text translated from Syriac” the curious case of the History of Michael the Syrian. Michael wrote this text in 1195 and only 50 years after its completion it was translated into Armenian. Moreover, the translation was done from Michael’s autograph and since that time it was constantly transmitted in the Armenian tradition. The Syriac text only survived in one manuscript from the 16th cent. and is thus three centuries younger than the oldest Armenian manuscripts. Two different Armenian translations

exist, both, however, most probably done by the same translator and within two years. The two versions circulated equally numerous and were revised, edified and had features added over the centuries. The two Armenian versions are to such an extent autonomous that they must be treated separately. Therefore the edition needs to be synoptic, in the end it might be compared to the Syriac text.

Johannes den Heijer and Perrine Pilette presented “Translated texts in two or multiple recensions”. The *History of the Patriarchs* constitutes the lives/biographies of Coptic Patriarchs, historical events and social history. The original Greek texts were translated into Sahidic (and even Bohairic?) and later, in the 11th cent. into Arabic. Only very few witnesses of the texts are known. A later vulgate recension of the Arabic text reorganized the internal structure, changing linguistic and stylistic features as well as changing the clarity of the presentation. For the edition the vulgate recension should occasionally be used as a support and can help to reconstruct the original. Yet it shows a mix of internal changes and reading mistakes and should only be used carefully. If the vulgate is used too much there is the danger of creating a kind of “hybrid” text that never existed like that.

The second session was devoted to “Large and fluid traditions” and opened by Alessandro Bausi who proved that there are no fluid traditions in Ethiopic and who continued his presentation about the history and present developments in Ethiopic text editions. In earlier times editions were often produced with only one manuscript, rarely a stemma codicum has been made, text was reproduced in fotos. In the Ethiopian tradition scribes stick very strictly to the Vorlage, also the language is very stable so that the variations are rather few. If there are recensions they show a manuscript tradition in their own. The presenter also recapitulated the methods used in publications like CSCO and PO for editions of Ethiopian texts, in which very often the base-manuscript method was applied, which is rather outdated today.

The second presenter of this session was Hugo Lundhaug who talked on “Fluid vs. authorial/mechanical textual traditions – fluid tradition attested to by very few witnesses (Coptic)” on the basis on several examples. In general no autographs prevail in Coptic traditions and anonymous texts tend to be less stable. Texts of Shenoute of Atripe instead show a very stable textual tradition, they were written in Coptic and had his established authorship. Its copyists, as well as, its readers were mainly monks. These writings helped to standardize the use of the Coptic language. A different example is the *Gospel of Truth* which is found only in Nag-Hammadi Codex 1 and 12. The two versions of the text are in different Coptic dialects and show scribal and textual differences. Only the text in Codex 1 is complete, having the effect that Codex 12 has been less studied. Yet when compared it shows that Codex 12 has less linguistic “mistakes” and that Codex 1 was prepared from a corrupted Greek text. Lundhaug states that

fluid texts are highly valuable due to their revision and additions. He also demands that the paratextual features should be taken more into consideration.

The challenge of “Dealing with a large manuscript tradition” was discussed by Ilse de Vos on the basis of the Greek Pseudo-Athanasius’ *Erotapokriseis*, a collection of Christian question-and-answer texts. So far she had collected 233 manuscripts that contained the text in question, and decided that the number of manuscripts was too large to collate them all. She created a database into which certain parameters were introduced in order to help group the manuscripts and to produce a stemma codicum. Those parameters were, e.g., table of contents (not all manuscripts contain the same questions), age, the existence of chapter numbers, similar extra texts, etc. She was thus able to reduce the number of manuscripts which need to be collated in more detail. Another value of this database is that newly discovered manuscripts can easily be included, and the research is always up to date.

The third session on “Texts with a special religious status or function” was opened by Michael Marx with his presentation of “Exploring the textual history of the Qur’an”. He presented the work of the project “Corpus Coranicum” whose aim it is to document the textual and oral tradition of the Qur’an and to evaluate the Qur’an as a historical document of the Arabian world. The Qur’an has played different roles, as a readable book but it also had a liturgical function in the early days of Islam. Two different databases are created which treat those two aspects. The user can choose a single line out of the Qur’an and will receive an overview of all the other versions of this line from the different manuscripts. In the database for the oral tradition commentaries or variant readings are displayed. Results of this comparability are for example differences between printed, contemporary Qur’ans from West Africa to Asia.

The session was closed by the paper with the title “Editing liturgical texts”, presented by Ugo Zanetti. He stated that liturgical text usually have no archetype. In the beginning every church had its own liturgy, coined by its preacher, over the time only some of these liturgies prevailed – from diversity to unity. In the Coptic tradition there is only one liturgical text for the whole year. It is so large that it covers ten manuscripts on an average. Only in rare exceptions all these manuscripts were written by the same scribe. Also the corpus of manuscripts is very rich in variations. The presenter showed his handwritten tables in which he collated different manuscripts in order to produce an edition. The work, however, is so voluminous that the presenter prefers a digital hypertext. In this way it is easier to display all the variants and also his own comments.

The first session on Friday was devoted to the “Formal aspects of critical editions”. It was opened by Sébastien Moureau who presented the “Options and formats for the apparatus

criticus” with examples for Greek, Latin and Arabic. He presented the possibilities of apparatus as well as their advantages or disadvantages. Oriental studies lack a general coherence, traditions founded by Lachmann, Maas, West and Bédier were applied and enhanced. A language for the apparatus must be chosen and the layout needs to be defined. It needs to be decided if the apparatus should be positive (always note all witnesses, very spacious, good for few manuscripts) or negative (note only the manuscripts with variant readings, less spacious, might lead to confusions). Numbered footnotes are easy to perform and to proof read, but they disturb the fluidity of reading and are very spacious, good for few manuscripts. Line referred footnotes with lemma are easily performed with programs like CTE or LaTech. They are easy to read and save space, however proofreading is complicated and they do not work with Word. Endnotes are good for a big number of witnesses, however, they are almost unusable.

Antonia Giannouli talked on the “Apparatus fontium, similibus etc. (Byzantine Greek)”. This editorial technique for Byzantine texts proofs to be rather difficult to perform. Several authors have coined the tradition of critical apparatus, like Delatte and Severyns (1938) whose work was revised by Bidez and Drachmann the same year. Jean Irigoin (1972) introduced new rules for critical editions, he demanded that introduction and notes should be used for mentioning difficult information, only variants should be in the critical apparatus. The presenter determined some basic rules which should be applied in all editions: a preliminary persecution of methods; a definition of the terminology and the consistent use throughout the edition; the distinct presentation of the material.

The last speaker of this session was Susanna Torres Prieto who talked on “Dealing with traditional editorial approaches” on the basis of Slavonic manuscript tradition – *Slavia Orthodoxa*. In this tradition autographs are rare, as well as glosses, variants or colophons. Scribes strictly stick to original and rarely change things, no reconstruction work is done/needed. The majority of texts are translations but also many false attributions are found (Pseudo N.N.). For the editions of Slavonic texts mostly “old school” methods were applied. Editions were performed with only one manuscript. Attention for the editions of Slavonic text should be laid on the convoy texts (composite texts that accompany a text). As the composition of texts within one manuscript change also their meaning may change.

The fifth and last session of the workshop was devoted to “Various aspects of philology and textual criticism”. Tara Andrews presented her “Edition of the *Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa*”. In the Armenian tradition most manuscripts are post 17th cent. text, studies are therefore extremely important to detect pre 17th cent. elements. For the edition of the *Chronicle of Matthew* 35 manuscripts are known, the oldest is from 1601 and is kept in Venice. The chronicle itself was written in beginning of the 12th cent. Two previous editions were performed

(1886, 1999). The presenter chose 20 manuscripts which can be divided into two groups, in the one group the last events described are from the year 1097, the manuscripts of the other group show chapter numbering. One manuscript contains two portions that are missing in all the other manuscripts. The presenter invented her own computer program, “nCritic”, for the text collation, the results will later be transferred to TEI. However, still today, with modern computer support the texts need to be transcribed.

Zuzana Gažáková talked on “Orally transmitted popular narration preserved in manuscripts”. She used the Arabic *sira* texts as an example for her presentation. These were orally transmitted texts which were even performed in front of an audience. At a later stage the texts were written down in manuscripts and even later were printed. Some of the texts are ascribed to famous persons, often Quranic verses are added. Since the audience that was addressed consisted of “normal” people the language is rather simple, differs from classic Arabic and shows a large number of language peculiarities. In the written form it shows many orthographic mistakes.

The workshop was closed by Mathew Driscoll who presented “Old and new philology”. The old philology, as introduced by Lachmann, used to compare the relationship of all manuscripts in order to identify the earliest recoverable form. Here manuscripts were only of value if they can tell anything about the original. In the new, or material philology it is considered that all manuscripts should be considered important and equal, since each manuscript is a text bearing artifact. The new principles take not only the literary work into consideration but also convey texts, paratextual features (layout, parchment, etc.). Moreover attention is paid, if possible, to the scribe, the producers of the parchment and the history of the manuscript. Also corrupt texts, sociologically or historically facts are of interest. To develop a philological praxis which views texts not as abstract but as artifacts is what the presenter calls “the artifactual turn”.

In conclusion it was stated that a handbook should primarily solve the problem of terminology, a problem which also came up during the workshop. Maybe no clear solution can be found here but one needs to be aware of it. Modern tools and techniques can and should be used for the edition of classical texts wherever applicable. One must be open for compromises and try to learn from other, more experienced, disciplines like Germanistik (German studies).