

Marilena Maniaci – ESF Short Visit Grant n. 5840

Final report

The grant was awarded to attend the workshop on *The second(ary) life of manuscripts*, jointly organized by the CSMC – Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, the programme COMSt – Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies, the project Ethio-SPARE – Cultural Heritage of <Christian Ethiopia, and the NGMCP – Nepalese-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project.

The workshop addressed a variety of issues related to the life/lives of manuscripts after their manufacture, that is to the use/uses that have been made of them in the course of time, due to various social, cultural, and practical factors, and to the evidence allowing to trace and interpret them.

The eleven contributions included in the programme, although not all exactly focused on the topic of the workshop, gave a broad and lively picture of the role(s) of manuscripts in different book traditions, and of the contexts, occasions and circumstances of their use. Scribal and decorative additions of various nature, physical changes, re-use of writing material were referred to as evidence of the fact that manuscripts were living objects, whose status, function and reception could differ, or even diverge, from that (or those) originally planned by their makers and commissioners.

The conclusions - introduced by Giuseppe De Gregorio and Marilena Maniaci, and enriched with contributions by Paola Buzi, Laura Parodi, Caroline Macé, and Claudine Moulin - insisted on the importance of looking at the manuscript book as the product of a preliminary project, with respect to which subsequent changes may imply a greater or lesser distance, up to the complete denial of its original scope (through the total or partial destruction of the book and consequently of its contents).

The collaboration between different projects working in the same field was as always very stimulating and productive, as confirmed by the comments of the public and particularly of the many young scholars participating to the workshop.

The publication of the workshop's proceedings has been planned, for which I have been asked to contribute with an introductory essay.