

## **Scientific Report on the 3<sup>rd</sup> COMSt workshop of Team 1 *The Shaping of the Page, the Scribe and the Illuminator at Work***

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The short visit grant that I received from the ESF Research Networking Programme “Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies” enabled me to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> COMSt workshop of Team 1 and joined workshop of Team 1 and 5 which took place on 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October in Arles. The topics discussed during the four main sessions of the workshop were directly related to my work on digitalizing and cataloguing manuscripts within the Ethio-SPaRE project. General theoretical introduction to each session followed by specific and detailed presentations gave me a great opportunity to expand my knowledge on some specific issues pertaining to codicology. In particular, I was interested in the session on scribes expecting that this point might be better elaborated for other manuscript cultures and, consequently, I may obtain some hints and inspiration for my own study. Furthermore, together with my two colleagues from the Ethio-SPaRE project, Denis Nosnitsin, the principal investigator, and Stephane Ancel, I was involved in the programme by presenting the Ethiopic manuscript culture. More specifically, I prepared a talk, assigned to the session on scribes and illuminators at work, which focused on copyist from East Tigray. I shall briefly deal with the objectives and content of my talk further on. In what follows, I shall summarize the content of the sessions and accompanying discussions, highlighting those points which I found especially relevant and interesting.

The main thrust of Team’s 1 meeting was to address the issues of shaping of page as well as scribal and illuminative practices. Hence, the four sessions dealt with such topics as: page layout and spatial organization, structuring of contents, scribe and illuminator at work and colophons in Oriental manuscripts. They were presented on material from Greek Byzantine, Syriac, Palestinian Aramaic, Hebrew, Georgian, Armenian, Islamic, Slavonic and Ethiopic manuscript cultures. At the beginning of each session Marilena Maniaci proposed a theoretical framework for the topic in question, which she applied for her study of Greek and Latin manuscripts. Her introductory speech was followed by talks devoted to similar phenomena in other manuscript cultures. It might be noticed that, at the same time, the scholars also presented their own academic traditions of approaching objects of their research, primarily coded in terminology. At one point, it resulted in a discussion whether there is a need of “universal” language which would provide standard terms.

The first session dealt with page layout and organization of the text. M. Maniaci talked about state of the art concerning the study of sizes, proportions and layout in Latin and Greek codices. Subsequently, she dealt with the size of a book, i.e., absolute dimensions of a codex, which might be the same for codices of different shapes, and about proportion of a book. At that point, she introduced some key terms such as proportion, understood as ratio between the width and the height of a page, filling, i.e., ratio between the surface of the page and the

written area, exploitation, i.e., quantity of signs contained in the written area. Afterwards, she described most common layouts of Latin and Greek codices. Each of the presented concepts was supported by visual and statistical data. Finally, M. Maniaci proposed a definition of a layout recipe. There are 5 such recipes in Greek and Latin cultures which examples she subsequently presented.

It seems that the size, proportion and layout of manuscripts, are best research for Hebrew books. Malachi Beit Arié presented the possibilities which in that respect provides the electronic data base of Hebrew manuscripts. Calculations of book sizes and layouts were given according to the geo-cultural, chronological and typological criteria. Stephane Ancel in his communication entitled *Some Biblical and Liturgical Books from East Tigray (North Ethiopia): Sizes, Proportions and Layouts* also dealt with the three aspects of manuscripts, focusing his study on four types of books: Four Gospels, Psalter, Synaxarion and Missal represented by 157 manuscripts collected within the Ethio SPaRE project. He examined changes in their layout and proportions from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The other speakers in most cases concentrated on one or two features of the manuscript, i.e., book sizes and page layout. François Briquel-Chatonnet, the researcher of Syriac manuscripts, and Jost Gippert, the researcher of Georgian books, remarked that in both traditions copyist were fairly conservative as far as the layout is concerned applying mainly 2 columns. In Georgian manuscripts despite the change of script from majuscule to minuscule, which took place in the 10<sup>th</sup> cent., the layout remained the same. Dickran Kouymjian said that so far the layout of Armenian manuscripts has not been studied, though, according to him, the majority of mss. has 1 and 2 columns. Also, he noted that the size of Armenian manuscripts has diminished in the course of time. Valentina Sagaria Rossi distinguished between standard and variable elements of layout in Arabic manuscripts. She explained what is meant by golden ratio rectangle. Her presentation was very detailed and infested with terms specific for Islamic codicology.

The second part of session was devoted to the size, proportion and layout of manuscripts other than those containing sacred and liturgical texts. Additionally, manuscripts with ‘special’ layouts were discussed. M. Beit Arié focused on Ashkenaz creativity in producing multi-layered scripts whereas Pier Gorgio Borbone on books with “non-standard” layout such as dictionaries (e.g., *Bar-Bahlul’ Dictionary* by Antonio Sionita), bilingual texts (Syriac and Arabic) with space left for interlinear translation (e.g., *New Testament*, Avicenna’s *Book of Remarks and Admonition*), commentaries (e.g., *Metrical Grammar* by Barhebraeus), texts with commentaries (e.g., Mar Filoxen’s treatise) and chronicles. Talking about Armenian manuscripts D. Kouymjian concentrated on presenting the high standardization of the layout of Gospel books. D. Nosnitsin dealt with single-column (10% of all Ethio-SPaRE mss), two column (the vast majority) and three column manuscripts (10% of the Ethio-SPaRE collection). He pointed out that even books containing commentaries and glosses retained their traditional layout and that so far, the project team has not encountered texts having ‘special’ layout. M. Maniaci, in turn, presented a vast spectrum of page layout strategies in Greek and Latin sacred texts containing commentaries and secular texts. Basically, the scribes either kept the traditional layout of a text and adjusted to it the shape and length of commentaries, or they adjusted the layout of a text to the shape and length of

commentaries. An interesting talk, meant to challenge some of the used concepts, was given by Patric Andrist. He asked if it would not be reasonable to distinguish between page layout and text layout since texts frequently contain at least three different page layouts (for a title page, main text and end page). By providing some examples from Greek manuscripts he showed that the concept of the layout is more complex and that it should be thought about in a more flexible way.

The first part of the second session dealt with the structuring of contents through initial letters, titles, rubrics as well as with indexes and tables of contents. Paola Buzi presented the evolution of titles in Coptic manuscripts indicating their enormous, at times, length and little relation to the actual text. Exceptional elaboration of initial letters (e.g., in the shape of birds) in Armenian Gospel books as well as illuminated Christ's genealogies were discussed by D. Kouymjian. D. Nosnitsin described sophisticated structuring of the Ethiopic Gospel text as well as showed the usage of rubrication and dividers for better orientation within the book. Tables of contents are rarely attested for Ethiopic manuscripts. In contrast to Ethiopic manuscripts where the size of letters is uniformed for the whole text, in Georgian and Syriac books the titles are frequently written with majuscule (for Georgian) or with simply bigger letters (for Syriac). Rubrication seems to be the most common way of distinguishing parts of texts attested in all manuscript cultures, including Georgian, Syriac, Syro-Palestinian and Slavonic.

In the next part of the same session the speakers were asked to present how the content was structured by means of decoration and illumination. Ewa Balicka-Witakowska talked about three types of decorations in Ethiopic manuscripts: decorative script, iconic decoration and miniatures and drawings. She mentioned that the style of so called "harägs" (ornamented bands) and miniatures is indicative of the "scriptorium" where the manuscript originated. Claire Bosc-Tiessé focused on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century miniatures in Ethiopic manuscripts. Ornamentation development of various types of Islamic codices in the course of time was discussed by Annie Vernay-Nouri. V. Sagaria Rossi dealt also with decorations of Arabic manuscript dividing them into figurative and non-figurative. M. Beit-Arié described how the inner structure of Hebrew texts became more and more transparent and "friendly" for the readership. P.G. Borbone pointed out to a usual for Syriac books way of structuring the text by enlarging the size of the ultimate letter of the page. Also, he showed the usage of chrysography and the practice of positioning vertically the illuminations. J. Gippert presented, among others, very elaborated 17<sup>th</sup> cent. illuminations of Georgian epic books.

The third session addressed the issue of scribes and illuminators at work. C. Bosc-Tiessé gave an overview of Ethiopic scribal practices, based on the subject literature. More specifically, she dealt with the training of scribes and with the imperial scriptorium established by emperor Menelik II at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> cent. She stressed the fact that despite of the existence of large monastic libraries (e.g., on Lake Tana) we have no traces of scriptoria in that area. Two main objectives of the writer of this report was to present the data concerning the scribes, which have been retrieved from the mss. collected during the Ethio-SPARE missions in East Tigray, and to draft a profile of scribe Wäldä Muse. At the moment,

there are approximately 350 mss. described within the Ethio-SPARE project. Out of them 112 Mss. were originally signed by 85 scribes. The scribes identify themselves in colophons, donation and ownership notes, and, most often, in supplications. The usual explicit elements of self-identification are the baptismal name, title, rank, origin and at times names of family members. So far, the project team has not encountered any establishments in East Tigray which might be considered as scriptoria. Based on the data from the manuscripts it might be suggested that the involvement of monks, and by the same token monasteries, in scribal activities could have been less significant than it is thought. Finally, the writer presented the profile of Wäldä Muse based on what could be learnt about him from his 10 manuscripts collected by Ethio-SPaRE. M. Beit-Arié pointed out that the writing of Hebrew manuscripts has never been an enterprise under the surveillance of an institution. It was initiated by non-intellectuals for their private use. Only small portion of manuscripts were produced for synagogues and religious communities. With the time the copying became an activity of more educated scribes who started to approach critically the texts. They turned into editors using some times as many as 8 exemplars for writing their own copy. As a result, the texts became very eclectic giving no possibility for a modern text critic to find out the archetype. At the end of that part E. Balicka-Witakowska gave a presentation on Ethiopic magic scrolls.

The second part of the third session was devoted to the study of colophons. M. Maniaci proposed a theoretical framework for investigating colophons, based on the Greek tradition. She discussed the structure of colophons listing all their possible elements. Afterwards, she talked about their position within the text and different systems of distinguishing them. Alessandro Bausi concentrated on uncertain points in Ethiopic colophons. First, he remarked that so far, they have not been systematically researched which results in confusing colophons with other types of annotations. For better identification of Ethiopic colophons, A. Bausi called for the cross-checking with their Arabic Vorlage. Coptic and Slavonic colophons have not yet been studied whereas in Islamic codices they are fairly rare. In contrast, 4000 colophons have been identified and described in Hebrew manuscripts. Out of them 85 % are dated (the remaining being notes on the scribe or the owner). Similarly, as D. Kouymjian said, colophons attracted much attention of Armenian scholars who gathered them from all manuscripts written till 1660. Remarkably, the Armenian is probably the only oriental manuscript culture where each manuscript is equipped with a colophon. Usually they are written on the last page and begin with a formula calling for remembrance of the scribe. According to J. Gippert colophons were also common in Georgian manuscripts. Both Armenian and Georgian manuscripts often contain a binder's colophon.

The session scheduled for the last day of the workshop, prepared by Team 1 and Team 5 and entitled "Archeology of Oriental bookbinding", was devoted to the last steps of bookmaking. It was preceded by a shorter session concerning methodology. Within its framework, P. Hepworth presented an electronic dictionary of Arabic manuscripts. One of the novelties of that enterprise is to provide codicological terms and definitions in English as well as in Turkish, Farsi and Arabic. The reason behind that idea is to reach the non-European audience. Claude Laroque started the first part of the session on boards, sewing and endbands with a very detailed comparative presentation of bindings in Armenian, Syriac and Byzantine manuscripts. J. Gippert described binding and decorated covers in Georgian manuscripts. D.

Nosnitsin dealt with all the elements of Ethiopic binding. Karin Scheper (examined the binding of some Islamic manuscripts with a special focus on wrapper bindings unsewn to the textblock. Boards of those manuscripts were made of glued layers of paper. In the second part of the session the speakers presented covers and their decorations. D. Kouymjian showed fairly elaborated covers from Armenian manuscripts (including silver ones) and described their symbolic meaning. Because all Armenian bindings have colophons, it is possible to date the textiles which were used for inlays. Afterwards, Konstantinos Houlis talked about blind tooling of Byzantine books. He remarked that the study of patterns, and consequently, the tools may provide some hints as to the provenance of the binding. K. Scheper presented a whole spectrum of different Islamic bindings which she basically divided into case and non-case bindings. Islamic manuscript covers from one collection were described by Claudia Colini who proposed their typology based on two criteria: material used for their production and decoration. Laura Parodi talked about ornamentations on Persian manuscript covers produced in the aftermath of the Mongol domination. She focused on innovations introduced in that time, mostly under the Chinese influence, like geometrical motifs. She mentioned that the Persian binders elevated their craft to the art as much praised as poetry. Finally, E. Balicka Witakowska described Ethiopic covers. The examples she showed were very elaborated in comparison to the book bindings which the Ethio-SPaRE team encounters in East Tigray. It implies, then, that East Tigray is indeed on the periphery of manuscript production in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, the workshop gave me a valuable load of knowledge on manuscripts cultures including the Ethiopic one in which researching I am engaged. It was a good opportunity to meet colleagues who also deal with Ethiopic manuscripts and study them from a different perspective. I could also realize at how advanced stage are studies of some Oriental manuscript cultures, either in all aspects (e.g., Hebrew) or some aspects (e.g., Armenian illuminations and colophons). Moreover, I visited the CCL laboratories and digitalization section. When it comes to my presentation it will be accessible on the Ethio-SPaRE website. During its preparation a number of questions arose for which an answer I am going to look in the coming Ethio SPaRE mission. It seems to me very important to carry out studies on scribes who left their imprints in their manuscripts and, simultaneously, to investigate what the contemporary scribal practices are. Granted that the Ethiopic manuscript tradition is conservative, we may rightly expect that bookmaking has not undergone considerable changes and, as a consequence, the contemporary scribe at work may throw light on the scribe at work even in the relatively remote past.