

**Scientific Report**  
**Oriental Textual Traditions and 21st-cent. Philology: New challenges**  
**Leuven, 5-7 September 2012**  
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The purpose of my visit was to attend COMSt workshop *Oriental Textual Traditions and 21st-cent. Philology: New challenges* in Leuven, Belgium, from September 5 to 7, 2012. The topic of the workshop is closely connected to that of my dissertation thesis (educational field: general linguistics / Arabic), on which I am working within my doctorate studies at Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Arts, and whose main aim was to edit the Arabic text of *Kitāb ʿaḡāʾib al-malakūt* written by al-Kisāʾī some time around 1000 AD. At the workshop I wanted to avail myself of the opportunity to get familiarized with the techniques of editing and computational methods that would help me proceed more effectively with the edition.

The following is a brief description of the work carried out during the workshop.

Wednesday, 5 September, 2012

Session 1, chaired by Alessandro Bausi, was devoted to scientific contributions by individual philologists in their respective fields of specializations within the topic of multilingualism and translated texts.

**Sever Voicu** in his contribution *The diffusion of John Chrysostom in Oriental languages* spoke about processes of editing, in which also various translations of the same texts or at least topics may help to reconstruct the archetype.

He was followed by **Valentina Calzolari** with her contribution entitled *The edition of apocryphal literature* and **Emilio Bonfiglio** with *The Armenian Versions of the Martyrium of Philip: Status Quaestionis and Editorial Issues*, in which he spoke about his work on an edition, which is to be based on much larger number of manuscripts than the existing one. He is preparing the new one because according to his words, the existing edition is very uncomprehensive and does not include several passages of the Martyrium because of ethnic reasons. Moreover, in Syria there are quite different texts about the same subject. As for the technique of editing, Mr. Bonfiglio suggests to arrange texts, translations and commentaries into columns. He also pointed out that editions should rather be made and preserved in computational methods than in books as digital editing facilitates making editions more effectively and as close to originals as possible. In this way, for example, texts do not have to be divided into pages where it does not match the original divisions of texts on manuscripts.

All the contributors were then asked questions in a discussion panel.

Among the questions that arose was whether it is even possible to compare between different languages as each has its own ways of transmission. The next question was how to deal with texts that were ascribed to John Chrysostom only to gain prestige because of his reputation. It was suggested that distinction be made between spurious and original manuscripts. However, there is no proof of them being spurious on purpose. Moreover, how can we know whether John Chrysostom or any other such person is the real author or not? This phenomenon appears also in the Arabic text in the focus of my attention. A lot of well-known folk narrators are alluded to directly in the text and ascribed quotations widely spread in folk Islam only to increase their credibility and one may never know whether

they were actually uttered by the narrator in question. I suggest that this be pointed out, when the editor feels it is necessary or can prove that the alleged authorship is highly improbable. However, the editor should keep these allusions included in the edition and let the readers decide whether to believe its authorship or not.

The meeting continued by Session 2 in the same manner with **Caroline Macé**, **Gregory Kessel** and **Alessandro Mengozzi** and their essays *Dealing with an overabundant textual tradition - stemmatology and beyond*, *Syriac Monastic Anthologies: Mediators or Obstacles in the Study of Monastic Literature in Syriac? Some methodological considerations on transmission of the texts*, and *History of transmission and publication of Syriac dialogue poems* respectively.

**Gregory Kessel** dealing with Syriac monastic anthologies promoted a project of:

1. discovering new witnesses to known texts to enhance knowledge of transmission of Syriac literature
2. discovering new texts
3. reconstructing the “real“ history of the texts and detecting possible transformations the texts may have undergone being transmitted in the anthologies
4. providing with materials that would help to trace the development of the monastic intellectual culture synchronically and diachronically.

To underline its importance he pointed out the case of a brief, otherwise unattested, text attributed to Abba Isaiah that was published and considered his but the core of which was later on discovered in several anthologies.

**Alessandro Mengozzi** spoke about various methodological choices in editing, among them being Draguet’s method, i.e. editing of base manuscripts with any and all faults included, the so-called “diplomatic“ editing. This position is what I basically incline to because of educational purposes as one can better learn how to read older Arabic texts only by seeing what types of mistakes or rather deviations from Modern Standard Arabic were made and repeatedly made. The next editorial choice mentioned by Mengozzi is to correct the mistakes as no manuscript presents the text free from corruption and if the edition is to be readable, the modern editor is compelled to produce an eclectic text. Anyway, as was later aptly remarked, different views are appropriate for different purposes.

Ten minutes were then given to junior researchers (**Sophia Dege**, **Lucia Raggetti**, **Cornelius Berthold** and others) for their presentations each. From **Cornelius Berthold** I learned for example about Arabic footnotes apparatus used for the editing of Arabic texts. Berthold remarked that the problem is that Arabic functional terms used in edition apparatus differ, there is no system of these terms standardized in Arabic tradition.

Thursday, 6 September, 2012

The next day continued from 9 AM by Session 3: *Establishing the Text : Traditional and Digital approaches* chaired by Jost Gippert.

**Jan Just Witkam** shared his experience from editing and spoke about the problems that have to be expected when one wants to work on this type of philological output in his contribution *The philologist's stone. The continuing search for the stemma*.

**Lara Sels** in cooperation with **David Birnbaum** deal with how to prepare a digital edition that can answer specific research questions. In their contribution entitled *Editing Medieval Slavonic Translations of Byzantine Texts: a Digital Edition of the Vidin Miscellany, between Artifact and Origin (or The Words on the Page and How they Got There)* they presented their digital edition of the Vidin Miscellany

(<http://bdinski.obdurodon.org/>), in which one can view the original text and transcription and browse the original text also with the help of a magnifying glass. Editions made in this way can be useful not only for wide circles of scientists, but also for anyone interested. By the help of such editions normalized texts can be derived from diplomatic ones without letting readers unaware of the corruptions in the original texts, these editions are thus subject to verification. They eliminate also the dilemma of whether to normalize variant letters or not because this can be done without removing of this characteristic feature of the text as one can see the variant letters directly in the original. They may as well be easily distinguished by colour codes.

Session 3 was followed by *Round Table on Oriental Textual traditions and 21st-cent. Philology: New challenges* chaired by Caroline Macé. In this part it was remarked that digital tools will not solve all the problems. The question arose of what the exact definitions of stemma and archetype are as these terms may be perceived differently by individual researchers and editors. There also arises a clash between ideal and pragmatism. If ideal is to be achieved, one has to collect all the manuscripts he or she is aware of (this idea is supported e.g. by Vitkam). On the other hand, for pragmatic purposes, if not all manuscripts are available, at least those which are could be used as bases for their edition not to wait for something which may never be gained. From this point of view, the advantage of digital editions lies also in the fact that they can be updated once a new manuscript is found. On the other hand, it was pointed out that printed editions guarantee prevention of data from being deleted by another person without the editor's permission.

Within *COMSt – Interedition Schooling programe* and the *Presentation of Classical Texts Editor* on Thursday late afternoon specific digital tools enhancing and simplifying automated text collation and further work with manuscripts and their usage were presented by tutors **T. Andrews, J. van Zundert, G. Middell, T. Griffiths, F. Willems** and **Stefan Hagel**, who deal with evolving and spreading new methods of text editing. This part of the workshop was of a significant importance for practical needs of those who are working or begin to work on editions of various manuscripts.

#### Friday, 7 September

Within *Part II of COMSt – Interedition Schooling programe* the above mentioned tutors were at our disposal to answer questions regarding stemmatic, stylistic and linguistic analysis of collated text by using digital tools presented by them the day before. A discussion arose about whether to shift completely to using digital tools or not and about the reasons for not using them if such a decision is to be taken.

As far as the scientific outcomes of attending the workshop relevant for my research are concerned, I got acquainted with the most important computing methods and tools for text editing which I will undoubtedly make use of in a significant way. I gained new suggestions of how texts can be edited in much more comprehensive way. I obtained pieces of information very important for my future research such as data on websites, databases, etc. I also acquired a basic overview of researchers dealing with this issue and places where to search for sources, manuscripts etc. During the meeting I also made up some ideas and possible solutions of how to arrange texts and apparatus in my future edition. However, I will be able to describe my final solutions in detail only after my work reaches the point of a greater elaboratedness as my research is only in its initial phase per now. Each work needs a different approach. Thus, the most appropriate way of editing and

shaping the critical apparatus can be decided only after some time of working with the particular manuscripts according to various factors, among them being e.g. the number of witnesses, the ratio of individual types of commentaries needed etc. By types of commentaries I mean e.g.:

1. those referring to mistakes (deviations from the literary language) present in both or one of the manuscripts in the given word
2. those referring to grammatical or orthographic differences between words in individual manuscripts including cases when a word in one of the manuscripts exists with another meaning but which does not make sense in the particular place (yet, sometimes, both versions could be considered, however, one of which is more probable)
3. those referring to lexical differences between individual manuscripts and missing words including differences in the word order
4. hypotheses about the correct forms of supposedly the same words written differently in individual manuscripts and hypotheses about whether the extra or different signs are punctuation or only stains, etc.

Last but not least, the attendance to the workshop helped me find out that the Arabic work in the focus of my attention (*al-Kisā'ī: Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-malakūt*) was already published by Harrassowitz Verlag<sup>1</sup>. However, the contents of the workshop and the information obtained was by no means useless as I will make use of them also in the following proceedings with my doctorate studies. Namely, I will examine the above mentioned edition to find out what sources and which manuscripts were used as bases for it and evaluate this publication with the aim to find out whether the new one or any amendment is needed or not. If not, I will search for other ones out of the many unedited Arabic manuscripts, of which I also learnt during the workshop. Thus, the attendance of the workshop is and will be very helpful no matter what my final edition project will be. Anyway, the outcomes of the workshop are applicable not only for that particular work of Arabic art but for any edition project I may choose as a substitution for the one I was originally working on.

As for the projected publications or articles to result from my grant, the main project is the proposed dissertation thesis. Apart from this, I was kindly invited to contribute to the COMSt Newsletter which I also intend to do after reaching the needed quantity of specific scientific outcomes within working on the above mentioned project. I would very gladly collaborate with the host institution in the future as well.

Bratislava (Slovak Republic), September 28, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Abīdallāh al-Kisā'ī: *Kitāb 'ajā'ib al-Malakūt*. Shmuel Tamari, Yoel Koch (eds., tr.). Vol. 1: *Introduction and Annotated Edition of the Prime Chapters*. Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz Verlag 2005, 155 p.