

The Workshop of the COMSt Team 4 in Uppsala 22-23 September 2010, A Report

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1. Summary

The second workshop of the COMSt Team 4 took place on 22nd and 23rd September 2010 at the Uppsala University, Sweden. It was supported by both the COMSt programme and the Department of Linguistics and Philology of the University (in logistics).

Ca. fifteen members of Team 4 and interested scholars that are attached to COMSt participated in the workshop, and moreover ca. eight-ten scholars, including doctoral students, from the Department of Linguistics and Philology, as well as librarians of the Uppsala University Library and The Royal Library (i.e., the national library of Sweden), Stockholm.

The Workshop was divided into three main parts or sessions:

At Session No. 1 reports on recent and ongoing cataloguing projects were presented. Six Oriental language areas were discussed: Ethiopic, Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, Greek and Old Slavonic.

The second session was devoted to establishing the set of elements that would make up what can be regarded as a standard catalogue description of a manuscript. Although the pattern to be used was accepted (already at the Hamburg meeting, Dec. 2009) to be the rules of the German project *Katalogisierung der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (KOHD), several questionnaires that have been used by various groups (including members of other COMSt teams) for cataloguing work were distributed in advance for comparison.

A separate problem that was presented was that of necessity of iconographic description of the artistic contents of manuscripts.

The third session was devoted to computer technologies as tools of cataloguing manuscripts. Discussions at the workshop of Team 3 (in August 2010, Hamburg) were reported by Paola Buzi, whereupon a presentation the TEI-conformant XML as a form of manuscript description was provided by Matthew Driscoll (Copenhagen, Arnamagianska Inst., Copenhagen U.). Tools like that will be considered in the Team's final suggestions for catalogue description of manuscripts.

In view of possible meeting of all the COMSt teams in Belgium in 2011, no decision as to the venue and time of the next workshop was made.

2. Description of the scientific content of and discussion at the event;

Session No. 1 was planned as a review of the achievements within cataloguing activities in various language traditions during the last 3-4 decades, but often with a deeper historical reflection. A variety of standards were observed to exist in cataloguing, as well as changes that several catalogues in the same language area represent. It is difficult to point to a unified tendency, since the differences often depend on the particular interests as well as competence of the cataloguer.

One tendency that was observed is that over time codicological description grows. In the classical catalogues prepared in the end of the 19th century by cataloguers of the British Museum (today: British Library) and Bibliothèque nationale, the number of codicological elements was minimal, being limited to the writing material (e.g., parchment), the presence or not of the covers, and the dimensions of the pages. In an example within cataloguing of Ethiopic manuscripts a different approach was observable that concentrated very strongly on the codicological description, even providing figures over the set of quires and the number of folios within each of them. On the other hand the description of the contents of the manuscripts was minimal, thus clearly showing personal interest of the cataloguer.

Also some ongoing cataloguing projects were presented. These reports fill the function of checking whether in the individual cataloguing traditions problems appear that would not be taken into consideration if the rules of cataloguing were to be established on the basis of one language tradition only.

Consequently it has been planned to review cataloguing projects of manuscripts in all the languages that are covered by the COMSt project, broadly defined. During the Workshop six reports were presented and discussed: Ethiopic (W. Witakowski, Uppsala Univ.), Arabic (Irmeli Perho, The Danish Royal Library, Copenhagen), Syriac (André Binggeli, Paris, Inst. d'Histoire des Textes), Coptic (Paola Buzi, Rome), Greek (A. Binggeli), and Old Slavonic (Per Ambrosiani, Umeå Univ., Sweden).

It appears that some differences occur in the standards and techniques of the projects reviewed. While most of the language traditions keep to classical form of publishing the catalogues in the form of books, tendencies are discernible to provide "open" catalogues, that can be accessed on-line to be continued and corrected by scholars that initially did not have anything to do with the collections being catalogued (e.g., a collection of Arabic mss at the Univ. of Michigan, USA).

In the case of catalogues of Coptic mss the form of the extant material – which is very often made up of small pieces of mss – caused the cataloguers to use and print, more or less regularly, photographs of the pieces that make it possible to identify other fragments of the same manuscripts or even folios in the possession of other libraries than the one that possesses the collection being catalogued.

Reviewing catalogues of mss in other Oriental languages than those named above will be continued at next workshop(s). It is planned that Hebrew, Persian and Turkish, Armenian and Georgian will be dealt with by specialists who could not be present at the workshop in Uppsala.

The second session was devoted to establishing the set of elements that will make up what can be regarded as a standard catalogue description of a manuscript. Although the pattern to be used was accepted (already at the Hamburg meeting, Dec. 2009) to be the rules of the German project *Katalogisierung der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (KOHD), several other questionnaires that have been used by various groups (including members of other COMSt teams) for cataloguing work were distributed in advance for comparison. This part of the work of Team 4 will be continued to the effect that eventually a standard set of descriptive elements will be provided. Expertise that can be gained from other teams, particularly from Team 1 (Codicology & Paleography) will be sought. The questionnaire that is in the process of elaboration by Team 4 will have to be reformulated and sent out to the members for further discussion.

An additional set of elements that concerns description of various types of illumination of mss will be drawn into the standard. Problems connected with this were presented by Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (Uppsala Univ.). Since the competence in language and literature goes seldom hand in hand with that in iconography, the suggestion that was made is that catalogues should be worked out in cooperation with experts in art history.

A similar solution may turn necessary also in codicological elements of catalogue description. Since full and exhaustive codicological and palaeographical description is a task of a researcher specializing in these areas, rather than of a cataloguer, the suitable proportion of the elements to be provided in a catalogue will have to be further discussed, in consultation and collaboration with members of Team 1 (possibly at a common meeting).

The following discussion showed that both the criteria of description and the procedure itself may gain in depth by a more theoretical insight into our trade. It was suggested to gain this insight by using the extant literature that dealt with the problems we are facing. Discussion of the issues connected with it will be continued, on the basis of the literature that was suggested by Alessandro Bausi (the Chair).

A separate session was devoted to computer technologies as tools of cataloguing manuscripts. Discussions at the workshop of Team 3 (in August 2010, Hamburg) were reported by Paola Buzi, whereupon a presentation the TEI-conformant XML as a tool for or a form of manuscript description was provided by Matthew Driscoll (Copenhagen, Arnamagianska Inst., Copenhagen U.). Tools like that will be considered in the Team's final suggestions for catalogue description of manuscripts.

Electronic means seem to be playing a growing role in cataloguing manuscripts, and therefore will have to be considered more deeply at one of the next workshops.

3. Assessment of the results and impact of the event on the future direction of the field;

The Uppsala workshop showed the growing tendency on the part of the cataloguers towards more and more advanced and detailed description of manuscripts in all the cultural traditions dealt with. Cataloguers are willing to describe many more details than it was the case with “classical” catalogues named above.

The reports on recent and ongoing cataloguing projects that already provided valuable information on the standards used in various catalogues showed how much the members of Team 4 can learn in order not to overlook some cataloguing aspects, that may not be common to all the traditions of manuscript production, but which nevertheless have to be catered for in providing suggestions for generally applicable cataloguing standards. Therefore the review of the recent cataloguing efforts begun at the Uppsala workshop will be continued at the next workshop, particularly as the manuscript producing traditions are concerned that have not been assessed so far. Presentation of the catalogues of mss will be expected in following linguistic-cultural traditions: Hebrew, Persian, Turkish, Armenian and Georgian.

Discussions concerning establishing the set of elements to be regarded as a standard catalogue description of a manuscript showed that there is much to be done. The rules of the German project *Katalogisierung der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* (KOHD), will have to be reviewed and further discussed, but almost certainly developed by adding several aspects concerning codicology. In one way or another expertise that can be gained from other teams, particularly from Team 1 and 5, will be sought. The exact form of the consultations (by correspondence or by common workshop session(s)) will be decided later. That will give us further ideas as to the elements of manuscript description that should be present in the questionnaire.

An additional set of elements that concerns description of various types of illumination of mss will have to be drawn into the standard /questionary. On one side the identification of the miniatures is needed (see § 2 above) but also information on the place that the miniatures have in a given manuscript, since it is necessary to put the miniatures (and, to a lesser extent, other decorative elements) in relation to the text. Since the competence in language and literature (the prerogatives of generations of cataloguers) goes seldom hand in hand with that in iconography, the suggestion was made that catalogues should be worked out in cooperation with experts in art history.

A similar solution may turn necessary also in codicological elements of catalogue description. Since full and exhaustive codicological and palaeographical description is a task of a researcher specializing in these areas, rather than of a textual cataloguer, seeking expertise of specialists in these areas will be recommended.

The questionnaire that is in the process of elaboration by Team 4 will have to be developed and reformulated and sent out to the members for further discussion both before and at the next workshop meeting of Team 4.

Also the discussion showed that both the criteria of description and the procedure itself may gain in depth by a more theoretical insight into our trade. It was consequently

suggested that the team members should devote some time to acquaint themselves with the extant literature that deal with the problems we are facing.

The result of the presentation of the various computer technologies that can be used as tools of cataloguing manuscripts, – in addition to learn more about them – seems to be that our future suggestions as to cataloguing standard will most probably have to be doubled: one for the “classical” way of producing catalogues, and the other for the on-line catalogues that are /will be based on the questionnaires already extant (and used by some libraries) or those to be expected in the future.

4. The Final Programme of the Workshop of COMSt Team 4,

22nd of September 2010:

14:00

1. Welcome address;
2. Presentation of the participants, etc.

Session 1:

Reports on current project of cataloguing Oriental manuscripts;

14:20:

1. Witold Witakowski (Uppsala): Recent catalogues of Ethiopian manuscripts;

14:40:

2. Irmeli Perho (Copenhagen): Recent catalogues of Arabic manuscripts;

15:00:

3. André Binggeli (Paris): Recent cataloguing projects of Syriac manuscripts (in Charfet, Lebanon);

15:20: Coffee break

15:40:

4. Paola Buzi (Hamburg): Recent cataloguing projects of Coptic manuscripts;

16:00:

5. André Binggeli (Paris): Recent cataloguing projects of Greek manuscripts;

16:20:

6. Per Ambrosiani (Umeå, Sweden): Recent cataloguing projects of Old Slavonic & Old Russian manuscripts;

16:40: Coffee break

Session 2:

Discussion concerning the elements of catalogue description of manuscripts;

17:15:

1. Physical (codicological) description;
2. Content analysis;

19:00: Dinner

23rd of September 2010:

Session 3:

Discussion concerning the elements of catalogue description of manuscripts, cntd.:

09:00:

1. Ewa Balicka-Witakowska (Uppsala): Cataloguing manuscripts from the point of view of art historian;

09:20:

2. Further discussion of the elements of catalogue description of manuscripts;
3. Other elements and aspects;

10:30: Coffee break

Session 4:

Computer technologies and their use in cataloguing manuscripts;

11:00:

1. Paola Buzi (Hamburg): A report from the Workshop of Team 3 in Hamburg on July 23-24;

11:10:

2. Matthew Driscoll (Copenhagen): Manuscript description using TEI-conformant XML (with examples);

11:30:

3. Coffee

Session 5:

Business session & organization matters;

12:00:

1. Theoretical issues;
2. Discussion on whether one (“classical”) or two (or more) models of catalogue description is to be recommended;
3. Planning for the next year workshop of the Team;
4. Closing of the workshop.

13:30: Lunch