

FINAL REPORT OF THE COMSt WORKSHOP, ATHENS 8-9 DECEMBER 2011

SPECIFIC ISSUES IN ORIENTAL PHILOLOGY

Lucia Raggetti (lucia.raggetti@gmail.com)

The purpose of the visit to Athens, which took place between the 7th and the 9th of December 2011, was to take part to the COMSt Workshop “Specific Issues of Oriental Philology”. Here follows a brief relations about the topics discussed during the Workshop by the different speakers, with the contribution of the questions and remarks made by the rest of the participants.

During the initial salutation it was remarked that the workshop was aiming at enhancing the methodology of Oriental philology in comparison with other manuscript traditions.

1ST SESSION: DEALING WITH TRANSLATED TEXTS.

-Editing medieval Slavonic Translations of Byzantine Texts (L. Sels)

Lara Sels, research assistant at Ghent University, started assuming that the Slavonic tradition was shaped by the Greek exemplars used for the translations. In the XIV and XV century a book reform happened in the Slavonic context, characterized by a rigorous approach to Greek sources, the so-called Euthymian approach. The speaker maintained that the Medieval conception of authority and translation should be taken in account in the philological practice. So the work on these texts should follow two directions: realization of the Slavonic Edition and, at the same time, the individuation of the Greek textual originals.

-The use of translations for the edition of an original Greek text (M. Cronier)

The starting question was how useful a translation can be to edit a text. A translation is a part of the indirect tradition and a translation can be older than the most ancient direct manuscript and the conjectured model for the translation as well: this is the most interesting case to the extent of the paper. Firstly, a preliminary work is required: make a list of all the translations pointing out which is the language of each translation, then the manuscript, the scribe, the date and the place of copy should be considered. Then an analysis of the translation, in comparison with the original texts, should be carried out, considering the translation technique and the variant from the original texts. However, a translation may be selective and the origin of the variants may not be clear (reading or understanding mistake or original variant?). In the critical edition a of particular text, its translation could be proposed in the footnotes.

-Editing an Armenian text translated from Syriac

The History of Michael the Syrian starts with the beginning of the world, going on until the time of Crusades. In Syriac, it is preserved in a unique manuscript which is going to be edited by Sebastian Brock. The translation took place in 1246, on the basis of the autograph by a team of native speaker translators. Then, the History became part of Armenian literature and the Armenian translations are more numerous of the Syriac original and this represents a starting point for a bilingual critical edition. However, the Armenian translators readapted the Syriac text producing two different versions: not a single translation, but two Armenian readapted versions. The editorial problems concern the lack of direct comparison with the Syriac version, the speaker thinks about a synoptic edition which may take in account the process of intercultural movement between Semitic and non-Semitic contexts.

-Translated texts in two or multiple recensions (J. den Heijer and P. Pilette)

The History of Patriarchs of Alexandria is the main source for Coptic-Arabic historiography and consists in a series of Patriarchs' lives. The history of this text can be traced starting with Greek sources, then Coptic sources, followed by the compilation of the Arabic translation and, indirectly, the redaction in Arabic. There are two recensions: a primitive one (XI century) close to the Coptic sources and preserved in three manuscripts, and a late recension, a vulgate, which is a XII century rewriting of the text, widely copied and full of adaptations. The speakers gave several examples of case studies, as prolegomena to a critical edition, which demonstrate the role of the vulgate in the reconstruction of the more ancient text. This presentation showed the state of art in a work in progress.

IIIND SESSION: LARGE AND FLUID TRADITIONS

-Purported fluid traditions (A. Bausi)

The speaker made some preliminary remarks on the Ethiopic tradition, his main field of expertise, where there are no fluid traditions, so there is not contribution from a methodological point of view. Often in hagiographic manuscripts, a variation determines a new recension. Ethiopic philology shares the destiny of the rest of Oriental philology, not to be a priority. Taking the initial clue from a quotation by F. Nietzsche, the speaker gave many interesting bibliographical references to define the history and the state of art of the reconstructive methodology, with a particular attention to Syriac, Arabic Studies and Indology. Then he discussed the reviews and series where Ethiopic texts are mainly edited and their philological policies, the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalim* and *Patrologia Orientalis*, inviting the colleagues of different fields to do the same. In both of them the method of the base (and the best) manuscript prevails.

-Fluid vs. authorial/mechanical traditions; fluid traditions attested to by very few witnesses (H. Lundhaug)

The speaker gave different examples to clear the differences between the mechanical and fluid transmission in Coptic traditions. Firstly, *Shenoute of Atripe* represents an authorial textual tradition whose users and producers were almost exclusively monks. On the contrary, in the *Gospel of truth*, preserved in two versions, there are many more differences than expected in two parallel translations of the same text. In the case of the *Apocryphon of John* there is a doubt on which witnesses can be considered as evidences. In these cases, new philology, which has its roots in manuscript culture, suggests that each text should be read in its context, as preserved in the manuscript.

-Dealing with a large manuscript tradition (I. de Vos)

To deal with the ample tradition of the *Erotarokriseis* of Pseudo-Athanasius, a collection of questions on Christianity, the speaker tried to approach the work from different points of view: the collation of the first ten questions, the way in which the text was presented, the continuity of the text. Then she decided to organize a database of all the witnesses; the *stemma codicum* should be established in order to permit the interpretation of all the data. The database permitted to figure out which manuscripts are identical or similar, or have other texts or extra materials in common. The order of the question is rarely distorted, although there is no any strict thematic organization, only references to the previous questions. So, the collation can be done on the basis of external features.

IIIRD SESSION: TEXT WITH SPECIAL RELIGIOUS STATUS OR FUNCTION

-Exploring the textual history of the Qur'an (M. Marx)

The project *Corpus Choranicum* aims at collecting all the manuscripts and the ancient fragments of the Quran and giving a wide portrait of its oral and written tradition. An important point of view is the early liturgical functions which the text had in the first Muslim community. A data base is being prepared. The speaker gave a wide introductory description of the building process of the Muslim sacred book and of the context of its origins.

-Editing liturgical text (U. Zanetti)

The speaker maintained that the Coptic liturgy of the lower Egypt, strongly influenced by Jerusalem, is a good case study for the numerous contaminations of this genre. Then he presented a handwritten collation of some of these lectionaries.

IVTH SESSION: FORMAL ASPECTS OF CRITICAL EDITIONS

-Options and formats for the apparatus criticus (S. Moureau)

The apparatus is a space for information philologically relevant to the text. However, the speaker pointed out that there is a lack of coherence in the editorial technique for oriental texts and other fields with a longer tradition may serve as example. Firstly, a language should be chosen for the apparatus, then there are different possibilities to organise it: line footnotes with lemma, paragraphs and end notes. Each one of them has pros and cons in terms of clearness and realization and the choice is strictly related to the genre of the text and its tradition. Then the apparatus has its own syntax, it can be positive (all the witnesses in each entry) or negative (only the witnesses which give variant readings). The former is longer but avoids any possible confusion, the latter is shorter and easier to read and an apparatus of the available sources on each page may avoid the possibility of confusion and highlight lacunas as well.

-Apparatus *fontium, similia* etc. (A. Giannouli)

This kind of apparatus is quite difficult to organize. The speaker suggested several examples of edition and studies that can be considered as a model (Delatte, Severyns, Irigoien). However, each text stands by itself and represents a different case, so it is not so useful to impose a standard. Some recommendations can be given to the editor: a preliminary presentation of methodology, a clear definition of used terminology and the distinct presentation of the materials.

-Dealing with traditional editorial approaches (S. Torres Prieto)

The speaker focused on the difficulties of the edition of Slavonic texts. This tradition was quite late, dominated by Orthodox church and almost without autographs, the text cannot be changed, so the scribes often created a false attribution to add some changes. Moreover, the manuscripts arrived very late in the Slavic area. The editions were usually carried out on a single copy and the speaker offered some examples: *Hellenistic Roman Chronicles*, *Nicodemus Apocryphon*, *Apocryphal Thomas Gospel*. The approach of the Russian Academy of Science have been triumphant for the last eighty years. Then the speaker introduced a key concept, the convoy: since the codex are usually miscellaneous, copying and pasting gave them a new life, the same text may have a different life. Moreover, in Slavonic tradition quantity is an important factor to be taken in account.

VTH SESSION: VARIOUS ASPECTS OF PHILOLOGY AND TEXTUAL CRITICISM

-The edition of the chronicle of Matthew of Edessa (T. Andrews)

This text is preserved in a large number of copies, as the result of the instruction of monasteries and libraries XVII century. The Chronicle was written in the first half of XII in Syriac by an Armenian priest, in a Syriac city with a majority of Armenian inhabitants. There are 35 manuscripts of this work, the oldest is kept in Venice (1601); the first edition was in 1868, the latest in 1999. This number of manuscripts is too huge to be studied in a PhD, so the speaker dealt with 20 of them. The

speaker divided the manuscripts in two groups (manuscripts ending with the year 1097 and the manuscripts which have a distinctive chapter numbering) and created superbase which gave a huge tables of texts. The edition is realized in TEI, open to a peer revision.

-Orally transmitted popular narration preserved in manuscripts (S. Gažáková)

The *sira* analysed by the speaker belongs to an Arabic fluid tradition. It is not still performed and the text survives in manuscripts and popular adaptations. The manuscripts are written to reproduce the way of speaking of the story teller and were used to perform this text in public. The manuscripts are sometimes attributed to great personalities of the Islamic culture. The language of these texts shows many features of Middle Arabic and many, even if incomplete, quotations from the Quran.

-Old and new Philology (M. Driscoll)

“Old philology” is the genealogic or stemmatic method proposed firstly by Lachmann (1793-1851), that is to establishing relations among the existing witnesses in order to reconstruct an hypothetical original. If the philologist identifies a relation of direct copy between two or more manuscripts, the copied one should not be taken in account. Later Bédier (1864-1938) proposed to work with the best text, called *codex optimus*. For the “new or material philology”, the manuscript is not a mere representation of the text, but a unique artefact, the text cannot be dissociated from its material support: its physical form is part of its meaning. Moreover, there is not just the figure of the author, but a large group of people are involved in the creation of the artefact. This artefact continues to exist through the time and has different readerships (Nichols, 1990, inspired by Cerquiglini). The reaction to this theory was quite negative, probably due to the post-structuralism of literal and cultural studies. However New Philology remains an original paradigm shift.

-Conclusions

The focus of this field of study should be on the dynamics of the text. Attention should be given both to the text and its boundaries to its material support.

The related chapter of the handbook may include some suggestions of method, presenting a compromise between a prescriptive and a descriptive attitude.