

**RESEARCH NETWORKING PROGRAMME
STANDING COMMITTEE FOR THE HUMANITIES**

COMPARATIVE ORIENTAL MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

Launching Conference

Hamburg 1-3 December 2009

Scientific Report

ANTONELLA BRITA

Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"

The purpose of my visit in Hamburg was to attend the Launching Conference of the COMSt project, whose aim is to find solutions for a standardization of the studies on Oriental manuscript (Mediterranean and North Africa), also thanks to the contribution of non-Oriental disciplines. The project provides for five areas of research, each focusing on a particular aspect of the manuscript study and led by a team leader (t.l.): 1) Material aspects: codicology, palaeography (t.l.: M. Maniaci), 2) Manuscripts as text witnesses: philology as text criticism (t.l.: J. den Heijer), 3) Digital philology: text recognition, encoding, electronic editing (t.l.: J. Gippert), 4) Manuscript Cataloguing (t.l.: W. Witakowski), 5) Manuscript preservation: conservation, restoration, preservation, digitisation (t.l.: S. Ipert).

The meeting enabled many scholars, who are working in their own field of research, to deal with different problems regarding manuscript study, in its different aspects. The core of the conference was the presentation and discussion of some ongoing projects: a starting point to determine the right direction, to find common solutions and to solve problems. M. Friedrich (*Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa*), proposed a project whose aim is to contribute to historical and comparative research on manuscript culture in Asia and Africa by means of exemplary studies. The disciplines involved in the project are: Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Sanskrit, Tamil, Iranian, Arabic, Islamic and Ethiopian studies. An important part of the project involves the computer-based analysis of Asian and African manuscripts. Among other things, he presented a project of cataloguing 180.000 Nepalese microfilmed manuscripts. He discussed the urgent need to establish a technical language related to the cultures of manuscript in Asia and Africa. His project envisaged also the edition of a "Encyclopaedia of Manuscript Cultures in Asia and Africa" published by Gruyter (Berlin). Ch. Brockmann (*Theucos*) presented a digital philology project in alliance with the Hamburg University and the Aristoteles-Archiv of Berlin, whose aim is to set up a research centre for the study of manuscripts and classical texts and for word processing in view of editions, thanks to the development of open-source applications through digital imaging instruments. The goal of this project is to make accessible on-line the images and the data (linked between them) derived by their description and analysis in view of transcriptions, collations, stemmata, variant collections... J. Gippert (*Titus*), the Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text und Sprachmaterialien is a project of on-line database involving Indo-European textual materials. Its goal is to process all linguistic materials that are relevant in questions of Indo-European linguistics into digital form that may be easily analyzed. Among the ongoing topics there is the digitization of texts and manuscripts, the creation of a web-catalogue (HTML text), the digitization of all the Tocarian manuscripts (4th-7th cent.) kept in the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin. Among the Georgian Manuscripts a Sinai lectionary (8th cent.) and the on-line edition of the palimpsest Cod. Vind. Georg. 2. I. Hegenbarth (*KOHD*), proposed a project of cataloguing the Coptic manuscripts kept in German collections. I. Rabin (*Material analysis of Qumran scrolls*), the project aim is to develop a methodology for the study of the Dead Sea scrolls. Ancient parchment manuscripts and inks are scientifically tested using the most modern methods by a community of scientists; in particular X-ray analytical methods can provide informations about geographical origin of the fragments and match individual pieces. Among the topics: indagate if the provenance from different caves is an index of different origins, if it is a case of sectarian texts written in Qumran, if the parchment used was produced locally... V. Klemm (*Islamic Manuscripts Database*) project is a part of KOHD project and its aim is to create a database of Islamic manuscripts kept at the Leipzig University Library (almost 1700). The cataloguing system follows the guidelines of the KOHD. The database includes the complete digitization. The scanned images and the metadata are processed using the MyCoRe system. M. Beit-Arie (*SfarData*), proposed a codicological database of Hebrew palaeography where are gathered the quantitative codicological variables and the digital images of the manuscripts. The corpus includes at the present 6694 manuscripts. W. Clarysse (*Trismegistos*), T. is a portal of papyrological and epigraphical resources dealing with Egypt and the Nile Valley. The text section includes texts not only in Greek, Latin and Egyptian (Demotic, hieroglyphic, hieratic, Coptic) language, but also in Meroitic, Aramaic, Arabic, Nabatean, Carian and other languages. Metadata are supplied by partners projects. The collection database contains texts coming from 1200 institutional and private collections. The Place database includes ca. 3600 toponyms. Z. Uhlír (*Manuscriptorium*), M. (provided by National Library of the Czech Republic) is a system for collecting and making accessible historical book resources linked to a virtual library of digitized documents, especially manuscripts, aimed to the manuscripts studies, codicology, bibliography and cultural history. An important part are digital copies of historical documents scanned with high and sensible resolution, but provided of different quality levels (5). Another part are full texts data, prepared according to the TEI standard. The full text content consists of

transcription of historical documents. M. Driscoll (*TEI*), the aim of this project is to apply the TEI standards to the study of manuscript. In particular the current version of the TEI guidelines - TEI P5 - shows a potential interest to manuscript scholars since it provides mechanisms for encoding in XML (description of the text bearing objects; multi-layered transcription of the texts; informations about aspects related with the manuscript: people, places of production, diffusion...). The TEI manuscript description modul finds different kind of applications (electronic catalogue record; metadata within a digital edition; tool for codicology). The TEI transcription modul provides instruments for encoding the text but also page layout, orthography, capitalization, punctuation, word divisions, abbreviations, scribal errors, omissions, variant letters form. S. IPERT (*Manumed*), it is a project of virtual library whose aim is the preservation and the valorization of the rich patrimony of manuscripts kept in the Mediterranean libraries. In the course of this project has been created the platform e-corpus that proposes a large quantity of digital documents presented by numerous organizations and countries. It offers a direct access to a rich collection of resources. A. Velios (*Ligatus*), L. is a research unit at the University of Arts in London whose objective is the study of historic bookbindings through the development of digital tools and resources, with particular interest to conservation. One of its current project is the consevation of the rich patrimony of manuscripts in St. Catherine monastery (Sinai). There are kept ca. 3306 mss. in 6 languages and 12.000 printed books. The project envisages also the moving and the storage of the books in occasion of the rebuilding of the monastery, with an area for the construction of a conservative studio. M. Maniaci (*MaGi*), M. is a project (in collaboration with Nuova Biblioteca Manoscritta) of cataloguing Greek manuscripts kept in Italian libraries. The aim of this project is to realize a census of the identifying data of all Greek manuscripts present on the Italian soil (ca. 6500 plus 4700 from Vatican), with almost one image for codex and an updated bibliography. W. van Peursen (*Turgama*), it is a project concerning a computer-assisted linguistic analysis incorporating matters of text-historical interest and translation of the Peshitta. It covers two topics: the language and the textual history of the Aramaic translation of the Bible and the language of classical Syriac documents. D. Nosnitsin (*EthioSpare*), E. is a project whose aim is the salvation and preservation of the cultural heritage of Ethiopic manuscripts. Among the objectives of this project: identify the most representative monastic libraries, create digital copies of the precious witnesses, classify the texts, create a database, create a virtual manuscript library, create a catalogue, make critical editions of the texts... E. Balicka (*Mazgaba Seelat*), it is an on-line database of images related to Ethiopia. K. Heal (*Syriac Electronic Corpus*), the aim of this project is to create an electronic corpus of Syriac texts by acquiring electronic copies of all Syriac literature starting from printed editions and manuscripts. The start point will include a transcription of Syriac texts written beetwen the 2th and 4th cent. and of the Lexicon of J. Paine-Smith turned into a lexical database. Two projects of cataloguing Syriac manuscripts presented by F. Briquel-Chatonnet (*Syriac manuscripts cataloguing*) and M. Farina (*Syriac manuscripts cataloguing*), the latter concerning the Assemani collection preserved in the Biblioteca Medicea of Florence. T. Orlandi (*Corpus dei mss. copti letterari*), it is a project dedicated to the study of Egyptian Christian culture (1th-12th cent.) especially based on Coptic documents. It concerns an electronic database containing (1) a list of authors and works of the Coptic literature with informations on manuscripts, content and critical problems, (2) a list of manuscripts of the individual collections and of the Coptic codices, especially from the White Monastery (Shenute), (3) electronic editions of Coptic texts, with italian translation, (4) a history of literature, (5) a computational grammar of Sahidic with a list of words according to the grammatical categories and (6) a complete bibliography for Coptic studies. D. Kouymjian (*Projects in Armenian mss studies*) outlined a presentation of the ongoing project involving Armenia manuscripts. Some of them can be mentioned here: (1) Material aspect: a computer database made by the author of inscribed Armenian leather bindings; (2) Text criticism: a critical edition, using digital technology, of the Book of Canons based on 76 manuscripts; (3) Digital Philology: a project called LALT (Leiden Armenian Lexical Textbase) which provides texts and lexica for the study of Armenian from the classical period; (4) Manuscript cataloguing: an electronic manuscript catalogue, Matenadoran, Erevan (CD containing the description of mss. 1-1500 appeared in 2009); (5) Manuscript preservation: the digitization of the manuscripts of the Matenadoran, Erevan (800 mss. digitized in the past two years).

During the parallel group session I attended the meeting of philology. Our team leader, Johannes van Heijer, asked each of us to sketch our ongoing works and to underline the emerging problems. Together we discussed about problems linked to the textual criticism and text editions and drew up a scheme of work.

In the last part of the conference results were presented. Some of them can be summarized below. Most of them are questions to whom answers will be given in the next four years.

- How to define the material of study: manuscripts, inscriptions (monumental or smaller objects); what is a manuscript?
- Chronological limitations need fine tuning.
- Regional scope: what is oriental?
- Solve problems linked to dating the text, dating the manuscripts (by the criterion of internal and external evidences).
- Solve the problems linked to palaeography, orthography, language and prosopography of the scribes.
- Unifying the approach to manuscript cataloguing incorporating the description of texts.
- New relations between description and edition?
- How to deal with old catalogues?
- Ultimate purposes of conservation and cataloguing.
- Find out more about «new philology» applied to text criticism and complementary to «old philology» (Lachmannian).
- Seek inspiration from other language disciplines (medieval English, Romance philology...).
- Address to access problems.
- Develop ideas on printed editions vs. on-line editions.
 - readership, costs, fundings, logistics.
 - unicode as the only standard, necessary for data exchange.

- Develop ideas on others technical matters (OCR, stemmatology, corpus linguistics, tools).
- Guidelines for manuscript preservation: action plan.
- Production of a glossary (with translation) of bookinding terms.
- Create a model form for a condition survey.
- Produce basic information for manuscript collections security (to preserve them from thieves, disasters...).
- Gather informations about illicit traffics (in connection with Interpol, Unidroit, Unesco...).

Output (team 2):

- Wiki sections.
- Next team 2 workshops.
- Communication channels with other teams.
- Language specific cross-team communication.
- Blog: separate spaces for teams.

About the projected publication/articles, during my visit in Hamburg both Professors Mariella Maniaci (Università degli Studi di Cassino, Italy) and Alessandro Bausi (Asien-Afrika Institut, Hamburg) gave me the idea to undertake a catalogation of Ethiopic manuscript kept in Casamari monastery (Cassino). The project, still in embryo, will be directed by both of them. It could be developed in short time and the publication of the catalogue could be made resulting from ESF grant.