

Scientific report for a short visit grant

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My current research project deals with the emergence and transmission of the Judaeo–Arabic Pentateuch Translation of Rav Saadiah Gaon. It is exclusively based on manuscripts, stemming from a variety of collections. The text and its dissemination are analysed in close consideration of the material forms in which it has been produced and transmitted over the centuries. Since Saadiah's translation was used not only among Jewish, but also Samaritan, Syriac-Orthodox, and Coptic communities, it is attested in many different text types and codices that pertain to distinct codicological traditions. Carving out pertinent features of each branch of transmission, both textually and codicologically, will permit me a better understanding of the social and cultural environments the translation was used, one of the core questions of the project.

The 'Making of the Oriental Book' workshop took place timely at the beginning of my research project. In being particularly dedicated to chronological evolution and diachronic variety in preparing book materials, it addressed the diverse techniques of book production among Oriental communities. The workshop was held in a comparative way. Experts of different traditions presented characteristic features of the manuscript productions of their specialisation, followed by a summarising and comparative plenary session. Observations, such as to the making and structure of quires, organising quires and bifolia, and the preparation of the page by ruling and pricking, were discussed and compared by all members of the team.

In my research such details are not only of purely codicological importance, but may in fact assist my study of the transmission history of Rav Saadiah Gaon's Judaeo–Arabic Pentateuch Translation. They are therefore essential. For example, whereas the text in its original Judaeo-Arabic form is found in codices exhibiting the specific hallmarks of Jewish book production, codicological features would change with its adaptation to Syriac-Orthodox and Coptic contexts. As it were, each

absorbing community would apply its own specific techniques. Once these distinctive characteristics may be distinguished, also valuable information in regard to unattributed manuscripts may be obtained. The various contributions during the workshop have thus equipped me with the necessary tools for a promising direction in research.

My participation at the workshop will serve as a stepping-stone toward a larger, long-term collaboration with scholars working in the field of Oriental codicology. I hope to attend future workshops both of Team 1 (material aspects) and Team 2 (manuscripts as text witnesses) and ideally contribute the outcome of my own research.