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**Report about the workshop “The Making of the Oriental Book” (COMSt Team 1) held in Nice, 14-15 October 2011**

It was a second workshop of the Team 1 (Codicology and palaeography) that followed the first one (in Pisa) that was devoted to different materials used for book production.

Following a standard presentation scheme of the issue, it was absolutely perfect to make a subject of the next workshop a production of the book: that is various techniques and practices that are to be implemented in the course of the making of a book.

The program of the workshop was nicely divided into three thematic parts: the making and structure of the quires; ordering, referencing and ‘navigating’ systems; pricking and ruling.

For every part we could here presentations on peculiarities of ten traditions (Greek, Syriac, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Arabic, Coptic, Georgian, Armenian, Slavonic). It was also a wise solution that every part was introduced by Marilena Maniaci who masterfully outlined standard procedures applied to production of the Greek manuscripts. Due to the fact that a study of production of Greek manuscripts has achieved outstanding results, the Classic tradition of book production as well as its scholarship can serve for all Oriental traditions covered by COMSt as a fine specimen. And it will not be an exaggeration to say that almost every participant felt that in comparison with Classic traditions a study of Oriental book production is only in its infancy. This should be treated, however, as a great and successful achievement of COMSt.

In my opinion this workshop was indeed a success and there are a number of reasons for that:

1. While presenting the features of the book production of particular tradition in the context of what was said before about Greek manuscripts one could clearly detect that some particular issues have not been investigated at all (it concerns most of all pricking, application of the Gregory’s rule). Thus, it was possible to reveal the blank spots in the study of particular tradition.
2. One of the problems related to the study of Oriental book traditions became felt especially acutely. It is a lack of statistical data that would allow to define a norm and a deviation while dealing with particular aspect (e.g. number of folios in the quire). Despite the fact that (contrary to Greek and Latin collections) many collections of the Oriental manuscripts still remain uncatalogued (and if there is a catalogue, it quite often omits codicological data) it is nevertheless possible, relying upon available catalogues, to establish some sort of statistic

database. There can be no doubt only by way of systematization we can come closer to the history of the book production within one particular tradition (this was proposed by Alessandro Bausi).

3. It was acknowledged by many participants that a considerable progress in the study of particular tradition can be achieved by means of collaboration. A history of book production within one particular tradition of course has its open questions because we do not know precisely the way how a production of a book evolved over the centuries. At certain stages some new elements were introduced whereas something was left out. A scholar of particular field can not but lament this miserable state of affairs that prevent from understanding what happened in a certain period. Fortunately, thanks to application of codicological features of other traditions some changes become more clear.

4. A need for collaboration has not only a methodological basis. During some presentations it became clear that there are sound possibilities for influence of one tradition upon the other and vice versa (for example, in case of Christian Palestinian Aramaic tradition that was strongly influenced by the Greek book production). Thus, collaboration reflects in certain cases also the historical development that requires for its proper comprehension an interdisciplinary approach.

5. It became clear that not only a study of Oriental book production can make considerable progress in the light of the revealed problematic, but also some points in the history of the Greek book production can become more understandable.

6. Last but not least, it was a unique possibility to hear and learn first observations on some issues that have been not yet studied at all from experts in the field. It was absolutely fascinating to hear that some aspects (like pricking and ruling, for example) were first approached in the course of the preparation to the workshop! One could indeed observe how new fields and directions of research emerge.

I am sure that an attendance of the workshop will also have a significant impact on my field of research, namely Syriac anthologies. Syriac anthologies were produced over a great span of time (6<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> c.) in quite different regions (modern Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Turkey). One can observe a various (sometimes very considerable) codicological changes in the production of the anthologies. Thanks to an acquaintance with different traditions that coexisted in the same territories (most importantly Arabic and Greek but also Hebrew, Coptic and Armenian) it will be possible to study a history of the Syriac anthologies on a more deep level revealing its interaction with other traditions.

All in all, it can be stated that this workshop revealed more questions rather than proposed answers. However, from the perspective of the study of Oriental manuscripts as a joint field it can be only commended.

I think it was not only my impression that thanks to that workshop it became possible to reveal new possible trajectories for prospective research that will eventually contribute not only to a more deep knowledge of particular book culture but, what is maybe even more important, to a sound interdisciplinary research of the mutual development of the various book traditions within an Mediterranean area.

As the one who attended also the first workshop in Nice, I can witness that the COMSt project already brings fascinating results in both demonstrating a desirable model for a study of particular Oriental book culture and in revealing how fruitful a collaboration between otherwise separated fields of research can be. I am convinced that already that is a groundbreaking outcome that will certainly have far-reaching repercussions on the study of Oriental codicology.