

Team 4 – Cataloguing

IV workshop
Athens, June 6th-7th

Venue:
National Hellenic Research Foundation,
48 Vas. Constantinou, 11635 Athens (Greece)

Towards a final version of the chapter on cataloguing

Scientific Coordination:
Paola Buzi, Witold Witakowski
Local Host:
Zisis Melissakis

Scientific Report

a) Scientific summary

On June 6th-7th 2013, the National Hellenic Research Foundation hosted the fourth (and last) workshop of the Cataloguing Team of the COMSt network (Team 4).

The aim of the workshop was twofold:

- 1) On the one side it aimed to deal with some aspects which had not been taken into consideration in the previous meetings:
 - a) A discussion was stimulated on the subject of what makes of a catalogue a ‘good catalogue’. The purpose of this round table was not that of proposing a model, but rather that of determining ‘ethic practices’ of a cataloguer.
 - b) A further topic which was taken into account was that of palaeography as a dating method. Short papers on different Oriental traditions (Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Slavonic, Georgian and Ethiopic palaeography) were presented. A discussion concluded this session.
- 2) On the other side the workshop was dedicated concretely to the revision of the provisional version of chapter 3.

A visit to the *Historical and Palaeographic Archive of the National Bank of Greece Foundation* concluded the two-days workshop.

b) Description of scientific content

The workshop was subdivided into three sessions, respectively dedicated to the following subjects: 1) Palaeographic description as a dating method 2) ‘Ethic practices’ in cataloguing 3) Editorial work.

Session I

It is superfluous to point out that one of the most important tasks of a cataloguer is to try to date the manuscript or the fragment (s)he is describing.

When the manuscript in question does not contain any clear chronological indication, paleographic analysis may help in the delicate operation of dating.

The six speakers (see below) presented the history of different Oriental paleographies and the way in which palaeographic descriptions have contributed to cataloguing.

Their papers, in a re-worked form, will be incorporated in the chapter.

Session II

The second session of the workshop – introduced by Paola Buzi and coordinated by Patrick Andrist – consisted in a stimulating discussion about the characteristics which make a catalogue a ‘good catalogue’.

Are objectivity and completeness really possible? Is a catalogue just a bunch of data for a bunch of different people? What is the place for interpretation? Can a cataloguer give an information at any cost, or can (s)he admit ignorance? Who cares about mistakes and fuzziness in a catalogue? After all, why should a cataloguer work systematically and avoid making mistakes? Is one’s scholarly reputation at stake when one writes a catalogue? What’s wrong with “quick and dirty” types of descriptions?

These are some of the questions the team members discussed and tried to answer.

Session III – The editorial session

About one month before the workshop the draft of the chapter was sent to the team members and the collaborators, so that everyone could be able to examine the materials well in advance and therefore to be prepared for the editorial work. This made the discussion very fruitful.

The main decisions taken during the session are summarized here:

“Summary History of catalogues”

It has been decided that it would be useful to try to make the contributions – which are all extremely interesting – more homogeneous.

In particular it would be important to give an idea of the general amount of the manuscripts of each scriptorial tradition and of those which have been already catalogued. There should not be overlapping with such information in previous parts of the handbook, since here it is only question of resuming very shortly the estimated or given figures, in order to give an idea of what/how much has been catalogued.

Moreover, it would be useful to add a few lines to mention examples of digital catalogues (some contributions already include them).

The authors who attended the Athens workshop agreed in making these little changes (and others discussed case by case) by the end of August.

As for those who were not present at the meeting, they will receive personally in the next days the suggestions and remarks collected during the meeting.

“Types and kinds of catalogues”

The paragraph has been moved at the beginning of the chapter.

“Catalogues of decorated manuscripts”

Ewa Balicka Witakowska will revise her paragraph by the end of August.

“The physical description”

The paragraph will be re-written by Marilena Maniaci, Patrick Andrist and Paola Buzi. All of those who are interested will be involved in a general discussion (by email) before a final version of the paragraph will be included in the chapter. This will happen after Summer.

“Palaeography”

It has been agreed that the paleographic section will become an independent chapter (which will be produced in collaboration with Team 1). Each contribution should not exceed 5 pages (ca.). Daniele Bianconi accepted to write a methodological introduction.

The articles will be composed of: 1) a short history of the writing; 2) an explanation of the role of palaeography applied to catalogues.

The speakers who were present in Athens agreed in slightly modifying their contributions according to these new indications. The deadline for delivering the new version of contribution is the end of August.

The general structure of this new chapter is as follows:

- Introduction (Daniele Bianconi)
- Greek palaeography (Daniele Bianconi)
- Syriac palaeography (Andrea Schmidt)
- Armenian palaeography (Dickran Kouymjian)
- Georgian palaeography (Tamara Patarizde)
- Coptic palaeography (Paola Buzi??)
- Ethiopic palaeography (Denis Nosnitsin)
- Arabic paleography (Arianna D'Ottone)
- Hebrew palaeography (Maria Teresa Ortega-Monasterio)
- Slavonic palaeography (Ralph Cleminson)

“Syntactical description of manuscripts: a tool for deeper researches on ancient books”

A new paragraph by Patrick Andrist has been added a few days before the meeting. During the workshop the author received several interesting feedbacks.

“The ‘electronic revolution’ ”

It has been decided that Team 3 will have the task to rearrange the section dedicated to electronic catalogues.

It is extremely important to include a theoretical introduction. The delivered texts, therefore, may be used as examples of different ‘philosophies’ of electronic catalogues. As an alternative, a shorter version of them could be incorporated in the “history of catalogues”, according to the linguistic area. A final decision will be taken with Jost Gippert as soon as possible.

c) Assessment of the results and impact on the future direction

The final purpose of the workshop, as is obvious, was contributing to the development of the chapter of COMSt handbook which Team 4 will be responsible for (Chapter 3).

From this point of view it can be asserted that the main goals of the workshop have been reached, both because the role of all participants has been very active and productive and because fundamental decisions have been taken for the next steps towards a final version of the chapter.

d) Programme

Thursday, June 6th

15.00-15.20

Welcome of the participants, introduction to the workshop and practical remarks

15.20-18.30

I session: Palaeographic description as a dating method

15.20-15.40 Paola Buzi, Catalogues and palaeographic descriptions: a complex relationship

15.40-16.00 Arianna D'Ottone, Arabic palaeography

16.00-16.20 Daniele Bianconi, Greek palaeography

16.20-16.40 Tamara Patarizde, Georgian palaeography

16.40-17.00 Ralph Cleminson, Slavonic palaeography

17.00-17.20 Dickran Kouymjian, Armenian palaeography

17.20-17.50 *coffee break*

17.50-18.10 Denis Nosnitsin, Ethiopian palaeography

18.10-18.25 Andrea Schmidt, Johannes den Heijer, "Scripts beyond the borders. Allographic traditions in the Euro-Mediterranean world"

18.25-19.00 discussion

19.00-20.00

II session: What we should expect from a "good catalogue"? "Ethic practices" in cataloguing

21.00

Dinner

Friday, June 7th

9.30-11.15

III session: Editorial work

11.15-11.45

Coffee break

11.45-12.45

III session: Editorial work (continuation)

12.45-13.00

Future steps

13.30-15.00

Lunch

17.00

Visit to the Historical and Palaeographic Archive of the National Bank of Greece Foundation (by metro)

20.00

Dinner

e) Participants

Convenors

1. Dr. Paola Buzi (IT)
2. Dr. Zisis Melissakis (GK)
3. Dr. Witold Witakowski (SE)

Speakers

4. Dr. Daniele Bianconi (IT)
5. Dr. Arianna D'Ottone (IT)
6. Dr. Denis Nosnitsin (DE)
7. Dr. Tamara Patarizde (BE)
8. Dr. Ralph Cleminson (UK)
9. Prof. Dickran Kouymjian (FR)
10. Dr. Patrick Andrist (CH)
11. Prof. Andrea Schmidt (BE)
12. Prof. Johannes den Heijer (BE)

Other participants

13. Dr. Ewa Balicka Witakowska (SE)
14. Prof. Alessandro Bausi (DE)
15. Dr. André Binggeli (FR)
16. Ms. Evgenia Sokolinskaia (DE)
17. Dr. Alessandro Gori (IT)