

Ordering knowledge: listing, shelving, and structuring manuscripts Hamburg, 30–31 January 2015

On 30 and 31 January 2015, the workshop ‘Ordering Knowledge: Listing, Shelving, and Structuring Manuscripts’ took place at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures in Hamburg. Organized by the Centre’s project area C (Collections), it aimed at understanding how manuscripts as material objects are arranged in a three-dimensional space within the different manuscript cultures. It also addressed questions concerning the way in which the knowledge is organized within the single manuscript.

The workshop started with a general introduction by V. Lorusso and A. Brita about the reconstruction of the physical arrangement of manuscripts within a specific collection as well as of texts within a multiple-text manuscript (MTM). Here, lists, catalogues, inventories and indexes play an important role, since they allow to define several aspects of the life of a collection: content, interests of a specific collector, and so forth.

Different manuscript cultures were covered by the workshop: three papers dealt with Europe, two with South Asia (India and Nepal), one with China. On the basis of the medieval catalogues of the Abbey Library of St Gall and the inventories of the Monastery of Lake Constance, A. Ulrich reconstructed the development of these collections during their lifetime. L. Orlandi’s paper was devoted to reassembling the dismembered manuscript collection of Andronicus Callistus (fifteenth century) by considering catalogues, signatures, ownership marks, and written traces left on the manuscripts. A. Lissa presented archival documents dealing with the Conference for the Readmission of the Jews in the Kingdom of Naples (1739–1740). G. Hidas focused on some MTM containing Buddhist spell-texts, the so-called *Dhāraṇīsamgrahas* (Dhāraṇī Collections), that were produced at various points of time in the second millennium CE. He showed that there seem to exist no clear criteria for the inclusion or exclusion of certain texts and their arrangement within the individual manuscripts. A. Krause focussed her attention on the way in which manuscripts were arranged and stored in such old collections in India as the Jain temple libraries in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and other places, both from the spatial and from the conceptual viewpoint. C. Moretti spoke about the organization of the libraries of Chinese Buddhist monasteries, taking into consideration elements such as *sūtra* wrappers, envelops or labels containing codicological devices, e.g. shelf marks, which allow to speculate about the precise location of the manuscripts on the shelves as well as the sequence of the collected texts.

During the final discussion, chaired by M. Delhey, it emerged that both collections and MTMs can be ordered either according to material/formal criteria or according to criteria of contents. Lists do not necessarily follow the order of the manuscripts or texts they are listing. This may have practical reasons (e.g. alphabetical arrangement), but it can also reflect a different way of structuring the contents than can be seen in their actual spatial arrangement in a collection or within a single manuscript. Lists are often our only ways to reconstruct the content of dismembered collections or lost MTMs. But the information they can give us is not as straightforward, and not as limited. On the one hand, lists can be an incomplete or unreliable witness for the contents of collections. On the other hand, they can also give us more information than the collections themselves, for instance regarding the history of the collection or, again, regarding the conceptual arrangement of the collection. Moreover, it became clear during the discussion that the implications of the term ‘composite manuscripts’ can be very different depending on the writing support and manuscript culture to which it is applied. Finally, the choice of texts in a MTM can become very arbitrary, if it is not mainly intended to be read or studied. The best example for this fact was presented by G. Hidas, who found several instances of manuscripts mainly produced for apotropaic purposes, where one and the same text appears several times within one and the same MTM.

For the full programme visit http://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/cal-details/WS_Programme_Ordering_Knowledge_2015.pdf.

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Sephardic book art of the fifteenth century

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There are few areas within Jewish Studies where a methodology based on the study of the cultural and intellectual context is as essential as in medieval manuscript culture and Jewish art. Current comparative approaches in Hebrew manuscript culture are opening up the field to new perspectives and ideas concerning book production, circulation and use. Similarly, the contextual study of Hebrew manuscript illumination can tell us something about networks of artists and craftsmen, collaboration in workshops, and manuscript mobility. Yet, few projects on Jewish manuscript illumination address the general aesthetic trends at a particular place and time and their impact on the artistic features—not only illuminations but all types of decorations as well as