

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

Lisbon, 25–27 February 2015

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

page layout—present in medieval Hebrew manuscripts. This is precisely the objective of ‘Hebrew Illumination in Portugal during the 15th Century’, a project at the University of Lisbon under the direction of Luís Urbano Oliveira Afonso, who has also organized, together with Maria Adelaide Miranda, the international conference ‘Sephardic Book Art of the 15th Century’. This conference took place at the National Library of Portugal in Lisbon, on 25–27 February 2015, and brought together a group of scholars working on different cultural and artistic questions posed by Sephardic Hebrew manuscripts from the fifteenth century, including aspects relating to production, circulation and, of course, decoration and illumination.

Day 1 started with the presentations by Katrin Kogman-Appel, Sonia Fellous and Sarit Shalev-Eyni. In the opening lecture, Kogman-Appel presented her ongoing research on the famous Farhi Codex and its creator (in both the intellectual and the material sense), Elisha ben Abraham Benvenisti Cresques. According to Kogman-Appel, the cultural context of this Majorcan Jew played a significant role in the conception and production of his codex. In the following session, Fellous stressed the significance of the Iberian cultural and political context as a key concept for understanding illuminated Iberian manuscripts, and Shalev-Eyni offered a brilliant analysis of the use of Mudéjar visual culture in the production of illuminated Iberian Hebrew Bibles. In the afternoon, Helena Alvear and Luís Ribeiro, members of the team of the project ‘Hebrew Illumination in Portugal’, presented their work on Jewish astrological and medical manuscripts produced in fifteenth-century Portugal, and Tiago Moita, another project member, focused on the artistic analysis of the decorations in a Hebrew scientific manuscript kept at the Reynolds Historical Library in Birmingham (Alabama). A third paper, not related to the project but also touching on the analysis of decorative patterns in manuscripts, in this case calendrical tables, was given by Ilana Wartenberg.

Day 2 brought together diverse papers on art, palaeography and codicology. Art was the focus in the early morning, when Maria Portmann opened the first session discussing the topic of identity and otherness in Sephardic book art. After her, Aron Sterk focused on the possible identification of characters in the late fifteenth-century panels dedicated to St Vincent from the Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon and the alleged meaning of one of them, a figure holding a book, identified as Joseph Ibn Yahya. Codicology took over with María Teresa Ortega Monasterio, who offered the results of her research on some fifteenth-century Hebrew Bibles at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. In the afternoon, Javier del Barco presented on questions concerning page layout, Bible study and the transformation of reading practices as reflected in the production of glossed Hebrew Bibles from the thirteenth to the early

sixteenth century, while Aléxia Teles Duchowny focused on the paleographical analysis of a fifteenth-century Sephardic manuscript written in Portuguese with Hebrew letters. The day culminated with the opening of an exhibition at the National Library of Portugal, also organized by Oliveira Afonso and Miranda. Some facsimiles reproducing illuminated Hebrew manuscripts and incunabula editions produced or printed in Portugal were on display, together with the library's famous Cervera Bible—the early fourteenth-century illuminated Hebrew Bible produced through the collaborative efforts of Samuel Ibn Nathan, Joshua Ibn Gaon and Joseph Hatsarfati. This exhibition offered a perfect complement to the conference, providing a visual and material context for the presentations.

Day 3 was dedicated to issues concerning the history of manuscripts and the impact of the invention of printing on their production. In the first session, Tali Winkler and Yitzchak Schwartz presented their work on particular manuscripts—on the history of a Hebrew Bible at the Free Library in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania) and on the decorations of another Hebrew Bible at the Hispanic Society of America in New York, respectively. The history of some Sephardic Hebrew Bibles and the impact of different owners' ways of using and reading the manuscripts was the topic of Andreina Contessa's paper, who rightly stressed the change in meanings and aesthetics that is behind the interventions in some manuscripts once they are already in use. After her, Luís Urbano Oliveira Afonso—whose presentation attempted to account for how one particular Sephardic Hebrew Bible now held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris made its way to Yemen—contributed to a better understanding of the trade routes and commercial networks between Europe, the Middle East and Southeastern Asia in the fifteenth century and their importance in the mobility of manuscripts and aesthetic ideas. In the afternoon, Adelaide Miranda, Catarina F. Barreira, and Paula Cardoso presented a panorama of the little studied art of illumination in fifteenth-century Portugal, by analyzing some illuminated manuscripts from the few known Portuguese scriptoria. The closing lecture by Shalom Sabar, on the first Hebrew printed books, contextualized Hebrew incunabula within a manuscript culture that was still dominant, but on the verge of a radical transformation.

To sum up, this conference stressed how important context and networks are, and that Jewish art, as well as Hebrew manuscript culture, benefits much more from New Historicist and comparative methodologies than from linear and essentialist analyses.

For the conference programme, visit <http://hebrewilluminationinportugal.weebly.com/conference-2015.html>.

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