

Second Team 1 Workshop Nice October 2011

Final Report

SUMMARY

The second COMSt Team 1 workshop, jointly organised by Françoise Briquel Chatonnet (CNRS – UMR 8167) and Marilena Maniaci (University of Cassino) was designed to explore “The making of the Oriental book”. The ‘invention’ and diffusion of the codex is rightly considered one of the most revolutionary and long lasting events not only for the history of the book, but also for the dissemination, transmission and conservation of cultural heritage in the broadest sense. Despite its apparently simple structure, the codex is indeed a very sophisticated ‘text container’, which has to be carefully conceived, designed and prepared to hold various forms of content (words, images, decorations and notes) and to make their reading and consultation as easy and comfortable as possible. In a comparative perspective, it is very interesting to observe that the solutions given by book artisans to some simple and common problems (how to obtain a quire form one or more papyrus, parchment or paper surfaces; how to keep its bifolia in the right order; how to visualize the organization of written and unwritten spaces onto the surface of the page...) show significant differences among the different book civilizations; they have also undergone important variations according to time, place and book typology within the same book culture.

The invited speakers have defined the state of the art for the various manuscript traditions (Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Old Slavonic, Hebrew and Aramaic, Persian, Turkish). Both the chronological evolution and the diachronic variety of the documented practices were taken into consideration, according to book typologies, contents and functions. As in the first workshop (dedicated to “Book materials”), a special attention was devoted to highlighting similarities and differences and to discussing their possible explanations; an overview of open issues and research perspectives was also included among the main objectives of the workshop.

The following topics were addressed:

- the making and the structure of the quires;
- organizing quires and bifolia ;
- the preparation of the page through pricking and ruling.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONTENT OF AND DISCUSSION AT THE EVENT

The second COMSt Team 1 workshop, jointly organised by Françoise Briquel Chatonnet (CNRS – UMR 8167) and Marilena Maniaci (University of Cassino), took place in Nice, La Maison du Séminaire, on 14th-15th October, 2011.

The workshop was conceived in the form of a roundtable, to encourage the exchange of data and ideas and to facilitate comparison among the various manuscript cultures on the issues concerning “The Making of the Oriental Book”. As already done for the previous Team 1 workshop, selected bibliographies and outlines of the contributions were circulated via e-mail to all the participants in the weeks preceding the event.

The debate was organized into three thematic sessions, each followed by a discussion. The following topics were addressed:

- the making and the structure of the quires (The definition of the quire; How were quires made?; How many sheets are there in a quire (and of what kind)? ; How do quires concretely appear in a codex? (most frequent irregularities) ; How may quires be correctly described? ; How was the quire used by the scribe (The quire as a working unit) ; The codex as a complex object)
- the organization of quires and bifolia (Typologies and functions of various ‘devices’ ; Quires and leaf signatures ; Column, leaf, page numbering ; Navigating devices)
- the preparation of the page through pricking and ruling (Pricking ; Ruling: characteristics and terminology ; Ruling techniques ; Blind ruling systems and methods ; Ruling types and formulae)

Each of the 13 team members and invited speakers (originally 14, but one of them was not able to come) was asked to deliver a short introductory presentation on the three suggested topics, in order to define the ‘state of the art’ for the various Oriental manuscript traditions (Greek, Syriac, Christian-Palestinian, Arabic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Hebraic, Georgian, Coptic, Old Slavonic). Both the chronological evolution and the diachronic variety of the documented practices was taken into consideration, according to book typologies, contents and functions. As in the first workshop (dedicated to “Book materials”), a special attention was devoted to highlighting similarities and differences and to discussing their possible explanations; an overview of open issues and directions for further research was also offered by most of the speakers.

The seminar structure proved very effective and stimulated many relevant questions and lively discussions. It would be too long to summarise here the features of each tradition in regard to the topics which were addressed. In a comparative perspective, it is particularly interesting to observe that the solutions given by book artisans to some simple and common problems (how to obtain a quire from one or more papyrus, parchment or paper surfaces; how to keep its bifolia in the right order; how to visualize the organization of written and unwritten spaces onto the surface of the page...) show both similarities and differences among the different book civilizations: some of them may be at least tentatively explained by geographical proximity and/or cultural contacts, while for other cases the reasons remain to be more deeply explored. The best known example is obviously that of Hebrew codices, which can usually be easily distinguished according to the geographical area – and thus the sphere of cultural influence – in which they were manufactured (Hebrew manuscripts from Byzantium follow the Byzantine model; most of the Oriental scribes follow the Muslim-Arabic model; Ashkenazi scribes follow Occidental models); as for the Coptic and Christian Palestinian Aramaic codices, they seem to be clearly depending on the Byzantine tradition; in other cases, ways and directions of the influences among neighbouring traditions are less easy to define.

The observed practices have also undergone important variations within the same book culture, according to time, place, support and contents. For instance, almost all traditions show an increase in the ‘average quire structure’ with the introduction of paper (from quaternion or quinion to ‘thicker’ structures such as senion or octonion).

As it is well known, the state of research on different manuscript traditions is very uneven. Whereas Greek, Hebrew and in a lesser way Arabic codicology are well advanced, basing on a long and established history of scholarship and possessing an established methodology and a variety of working tools (e.g. palaeographic albums, databases, introductory monographs), the codicological study of many other traditions is still in its infancy, and the physical aspects in which texts were produced and transmitted is extremely limited. Although the facts and assumptions presented by the speakers suggested many inspiring observations and comparisons, the need of a more detailed and systematic knowledge, based on the collection of larger amount of data (possibly concerning dated and/or datable manuscripts), and on their statistical evaluation, was particularly emphasized. Geographical and chronological typologies that may emerge from such classifications based on a representative (let alone complete) corpus of dated manuscripts are for the time being scholarly *desiderata*.

The lack of an adequate English terminology was also highlighted: the technical vocabulary used in the different languages and scholarly traditions displays considerable variations, that hinder effective communication among the scholars and the proper understanding of the addressed phenomena.

Finally, the relationship between the “making of the book” and the transmission of its contents has been strongly underlined: a proper understanding and a precise description of the structure, the preparation and the organization of the quires has been recognized as an essential precondition for a correct approach to the tradition of the texts.

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS AND IMPACT OF THE EVENT ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THE FIELD

Team 1 members and invited speakers provided an updated ‘state of the art’ on the workshop topics, mostly based on personal research in the field. The sharing of bibliographies and presentation outlines among the workshop participants some weeks before the event enhanced the opportunities for lively discussions, relevant questions and fruitful interchange of ideas. Although the knowledge concerning book making remains very uneven for the different Oriental traditions, a common methodological perspective was clearly identified, based on the need to initiate systematic surveys for each of the COMSt related book cultures. The fact that several cataloguing or (re)cataloguing projects of wide MSS collections are currently in progress lets hope for the achievement of significant results in the near future. The large space devoted to comparison and discussion allowed to highlight significant similarities and differences among the various traditions and to open new and challenging perspectives for comparative research in the field of bookmaking. The data (as well as the open questions) which emerged from the presentations and discussions, will feed into the drafting of the handbook chapter in charge of COMSt Team 1. It is worth mentioning that the PhD students and young researchers who attended the workshop as scholarship owners actively participated into the discussions and were highly satisfied with the experience made and very grateful for the opportunity for *sharing experiences and information* and meeting with one another and with more experienced scholars.

FINAL PROGRAMME

Friday, 14 October

9.15-9.30 : Opening address

9.30-11.00 : *1st Session: The Making and Structure of Quires*

Coffee break

11.30-13.00 : *1st Session: The Making and Structure of Quires*

Lunch

14.30-16.00 : *2nd Session: Numbering Quires, Leaves, Pages: Ordering, Referencing, and 'Navigating' Systems*

Coffee break

16.30-19.00 : *2nd Session: Numbering Quires, Leaves, Pages: Ordering, Referencing, and 'Navigating' Systems*

Saturday, 15 October

9.00-10.30 : *3rd Session: The Preparation of the Page: Pricking and Ruling*

Coffee break

11.00-12.30 : *3rd Session: The Preparation of the Page: Pricking and Ruling*

12.30-13.00 : Final Discussion and Conclusions

Lunch

14.30-16.00 Meeting of Team 1