

COMSt Team 1 Workshop - Final report

1) Summary

The seminar addressed in a comparative perspective the study of media and materials used in book-making, in the cultures involved in the project COMSt (Arabic, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, Hebrew, Georgian, Armenian).

Its aims are:

- to evaluate the still very uneven knowledge about book-making in the different geo-cultural areas;
- to individuate, by comparison, similarities and differences in the book production, the times of introduction/coexistence/substitution of materials, the common habits and local peculiarities in the use of different materials, in relation to geographical areas, ages, book typologies, cultural contexts;
- to survey the gaps and to identify the most promising research paths, both for each individual culture and in a comparative perspective.

2) Description of the scientific content of and discussion at the event

The workshop was held under the programme, except for the absence of a speaker (Patricia Roger). The major cultural and geographic areas of the Oriental codicology were all represented in the speeches: Arabic (F. Déroche, P. Sijpesteijn, P. Canart), Armenian (D. Kouymjian), Coptic (P. Buzi, S. Emmel), Ethiopic (E. Balicka Witakowska), Georgian (J. Gippert) Greek-Byzantine (F. Albrecht, P. Canart, M. Maniaci), Hebrew (M. Zerdoun), Palestinian Aramaic (A. Desreumaux), Syriac (F. Briquel Chatonnet, P.G. Borbone, M. Farina).

As for the Arabic book tradition, the use of three kinds of material was illustrated and discussed: papyrus (by Petra Sijpestein: *Arabic Papyrus Codices.*), parchment (by François Déroche: *The use of Parchment in Qur'anic MSS from the 7th to the 10th cent.*) and paper (Paul Canart: *Les papiers orientaux dans les manuscrits grecs: état de la question*). Literary and not-literary Arabic texts are written on papyrus until the 9th century, mainly in Egypt (whence it comes the only complete Arabic papyrus codex known) but also in Mesopotamia. The use of parchment in general (simple folios or quires, hair/flesh position etc.), and specifically for Qur'anic MSS, was discussed with many examples, focusing also on the issue of size and dimension. Canart's paper was related to the Arabic bookmaking because mainly focused on the production and the features of the "oriental" paper, produced in the Near East or in al-Andalus (both in format and production techniques they do not differ significantly)..

The Armenian book tradition was studied by Dickran Kouymjian, focusing on *The Transition from Parchment to Paper and Majuscule to Minuscule: the Codicological Consequence on Armenian Manuscripts*. Kouymjian's paper draws conclusions about material (parchment-paper) and palaeographic (majuscule-minuscule) transition, on the solid ground of statistical data from all the Armenian MSS known, dating back to the 7th-13th century. The transition from parchment to paper (almost complete in the 13th century, when 90% of the Armenian MSS are written in paper) affects also the format of the books and the making of the quires. From the very beginning of Armenian writing cursive and uncial script coexisted.

Paola Buzi and Stephen Emmel (*The Codicology of Coptic Manuscript Books: Papyrus, Parchment, Paper*) illustrated the peculiarities of the Coptic tradition, where also ostraca and wooden tablets were in use. Papyrus as the material, and scroll as the form, are at the beginning of the Coptic book tradition. The earliest codices were manufactured on the basis of existing scrolls; most probably some extremely long scrolls which are preserved were intended to be cut and transformed into codices. The parchment codices appeared in the 4th century.

The Ethiopic book tradition was presented from the point of view of decoration and illumination, focusing on the inks and colours used by the scribes/painters (E. Balicka Witakowska, *Inks and Colours in Ethiopian Manuscript Book: Production and Use*).

Jost Gippert illustrated the Georgian book tradition from the collection of MSS of the St. Catherine monastery (*Georgian Manuscripts on Mt. Sinai - Parchment, Papyrus, and Paper*). Of 3300 MSS of the "Old collection" of Mt. Sinai, 85 are Georgian. Only one Georgian MS on papyrus is known, dating back to the 10th century. Some parchment dated MSS are older: a collection of homilies dated to A.D. 864, and a lectionary (7th-8th century). The "New Finds collection" of Mt. Sinai includes some palimpsests (in one case quires bearing texts in Syriac, Georgian uncial, Armenian and Caucasian Albanian were bound together and covered with Georgian cursive writing; another Georgian palimpsest is written over an erased Christian Palestinian Aramaic text (cfr. the paper by Alain Desreumaux).

In the field of Greek-Byzantine book tradition, three aspects were illustrated: by Felix Albrecht, the problem of palimpsests study (*The Phenomenon of Palimpsesting – Using the example of Codex Ephraemi Syri rescriptus*), which was also alluded to by J. Gippert and considered by A. Desreumaux. By Marilena Maniaci (*Parchment as a Writing Material in Byzantine Manuscripts*), the use of parchment, on the basis of a large-scale analysis of the codicological features of numerous Greek Byzantine parchment manuscripts from various collections (among other findings, it was pointed out that in the second half of 13th century the number of secular texts written on parchment increases in comparison with the previous epochs). And finally, by P. Canart, the use of “oriental” paper in Greek manuscripts.

As for the Hebrew book tradition, Monique Zerdoun (*Les matériaux du livre hébreu au miroir de leurs milieux culturels de production : ressemblances et particularités*) offered a general outlook about the materials used by Jewish scribes and copyists in the different geographical and cultural areas where they were working, then focused on the ink production and receipts. The choice of the material depended on the text to be written (e.g. for some religious texts use of parchment is needed), and in general Jewish copyists made use of the book materials (parchment or paper [with or without watermark]) which were to be found in their milieu.

The lecture of Alain Desreumaux was devoted to the Christian Palestinian Aramaic texts and MSS (*Les manuscrits araméens christo-palestiniens: du papyrus au papier*). Most of the Christian Palestinian MSS (dating back from the 5th to the 13th century) are palimpsests preserved only in fragments. As witness of the liturgy of Christian Melkite communities, they do not convey an original literary production but only translations (mainly from Greek) and consist of New Testament lectionaries, hagiographical and liturgical texts and works of the Church Fathers. As for the materials, papyrus, parchment and paper are used.

Two contributions were devoted to the Syriac book tradition, the first being more comprehensive (Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet, *The Transition from Parchment to Paper in Syriac Manuscripts*) and the second focused on a specific collection of Syriac MSS (Margherita Farina – Pier Giorgio Borbone, *The Syriac Manuscripts in the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence: Forms and Materials*). Briquel-Chatonnet presented a wide perspective on the history of Syriac bookmaking, paying attention to the various materials used (skin, papyrus, ostraca, parchment, paper) in different epochs and/or for different purposes. The earliest dated Syriac parchment codex is from A.D. 411, and the paper enters the Syriac tradition before the 11th century. In the Syriac “Nestorian” (Eastern) tradition parchment is no longer used by the end of the 14th century. Farina and Borbone focused on the materials of the Syriac MSS of the Medicea Laurenziana Library (Florence), which shows some interesting features: among the ca. 70 items, old (A.D. 586) and recent (A.D. 1602) MSS are found, and several were written in Rome in the 16th-17th century. The materials are parchment (6 MSS- at least one being Western parchment datable to the 16th century), oriental paper (30 MSS), western watermarked paper (35 MSS).

The contribution by Ira Rabin (*Manuscript Studies assisted by Natural Sciences*) offered the participants a survey of the application of natural sciences to the study of MSS materials. The dating of undated parchment manuscripts, e.g., could be made possible by various methods and multi-instrumental analysis, to be applied at the same time (grain analysis, DNA analysis, IR reflectography, Raman analysis, XRF analysis). In addition to its invaluable help in dating MSS, the application of natural sciences is promising also for the research about the production of MSS materials. The fact that in most cases such applications are non-invasive and can be done on the place where the MSS are kept opens new possibilities.

Full audio and video recording of the workshop will soon be available on the website of the University of Pisa (iTunes U).

The Proceedings of the Workshop will be published as a volume in 2012.

3) Assessment of the results and impact of the event on the future direction of the field

The contributions were up to date state of art descriptions, presented by scholars actually involved in research. In fact, the preparation of bibliographies by the members of Team 1 for each respective field was an important step before the Workshop, because all members/participants had the opportunity of a survey of the state of art about MSS materials, and this proved to be useful in the discussions. Indeed, about the first goal of the Workshop (*- to evaluate the still very uneven knowledge about book-making in the different geo-cultural areas*), the impression of uneven knowledge about book-making and book materials in the areas of Oriental book culture was confirmed. For instance, a research based on a wide base of data about materials and formats (cf. Maniaci's paper) is not feasible in the field of Syriac MSS study, because the catalogues of the most important collections in general do not give complete information about such issues. Filling this kind of gaps seems now out of the concrete COMSt range of action, as it would involve large projects of (re)cataloguing of wide MSS collections; but as several cataloguing projects in the field of Syriac studies are going on, an improvement in that aspect should be reached in next future.

About the second and third aim of the Workshop (*- to individuate, by comparison, similarities and differences in the book production, the times of introduction/coexistence/substitution of materials, the common habits and local peculiarities in the use of different materials, in relation to geographical areas, ages, book typologies, cultural contexts / - to survey the gaps and to identify the most promising research paths, both for each individual culture and in a comparative perspective*), they were reached, at least for Arabic, Coptic, Greek, Georgian and Syriac traditions (which were treated in a more comprehensive way), mainly through an "implicit" comparison – the structure of some descriptive presentations being similar. The short time devoted to the discussion was used mainly for clarification of specific issues, so a general comparative evaluation of the Workshop was the matter discussed in the Team 1 meeting. After the fresh experience of the Workshop, in the perspective of an "explicit" comparative presentation, the Team 1 decided to shape the index of the COMSt Handbook according to the issues (e.g. use of papyrus, parchment, paper; book format; quires making; etc.) and not according to the cultural/geographical areas. The discussion led to the drafting of the table of contents of the COMSt handbook, for the chapters to be prepared by Team 1. The table of contents will be presented at the meeting of the COMSt editorial board, in Frankfurt, 4th January 2011.

It is worth mentioning that besides members of other COMSt teams and university professors attended the Workshop several PhD students and young researchers involved in different projects (related or not to COMSt, sometimes of very high level) concerning Oriental MSS. Sharing experiences and information was an important outcome of this Workshop.

4) Final programme of the meeting

Friday 26 November

9.15-9.30

Opening

9.30-10.00

P. Sijpestein, *Arabic Papyrus Codices*

10.00-10.30

F. Déroche, *Particularités de l'emploi du parchemin dans les manuscrits coraniques des VIIe-IXe siècles*

10.30-11.00

Coffee break

11.00-11.30

F. Briquel-Chatonnet, *The Transition from Parchment to Paper in Syriac Manuscripts*

11.30-12.00

M. Farina – P.G. Borbone, *The Syriac Manuscripts in the Medicea Laurenziana Library, Florence: Forms and Materials*

12.00-12.30

F. Albrecht, *The Phenomenon of Palimpsesting – Using the example of Codex Ephraemi Syri rescriptus (Cod. Paris. gr. 9)*

12.30-13.00

Discussion

13.00-14.30

Lunch

14.30-15.30

P. Buzi - S. Emmel, *The Codicology of Coptic Manuscript Books: Papyrus, Parchment, Paper*

15.30-16.00

D. Kouymijan, *The Transition from Parchment to Paper and Majuscule to Minuscule: the Codicological Consequence on Armenian Manuscripts*

16.00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-17.00

M. Maniaci, *Parchment as a Writing Material in Byzantine Manuscripts*

17.00-17.30

P. Canart, *Les papiers orientaux dans les manuscrits grecs: état de la question*

17.30-18.00

Discussion.

18.00-19.30

Team 1 Meeting

Saturday 27 November

9.00-9.30

A. Desreumaux, *Les manuscrits araméens christo-palestiniens: du papyrus au papier*

9.30-10.00

M. Zerdoun, *Les matériaux du livre hébreu au miroir de leurs milieux culturels de production : ressemblances et particularités*

10.00-10.30

J. Gippert, *Georgian Manuscripts on Mt. Sinai - Parchment, Papyrus, and Paper*

10.30-11.00

Coffee break

11.00-11.30

E. Balicka Witakowska, *Inks and Colours in Ethiopian Manuscript Book: Production and Use*

11.30-12.00

I. Rabin, *Manuscript Studies assisted by Natural Sciences*

12.00-12.30

Discussion and conclusions.

5) List of speakers

1. P. Sijpestein
2. F. Déroche
3. F. Briquel-Chatonnet
4. M. Farina
5. P.G. Borbone
6. F. Albrecht
7. P. Buzi
8. S. Emmel
9. D. Kouymijan
10. M. Maniaci
11. P. Canart
12. A. Desreumaux
13. M. Zerdoun
14. J. Gippert
15. E. Balicka Witakowska
16. I. Rabin

6) List of participants

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