10 - Dividing Texts: Visual Text-Organization in North Indian and Nepalese Manuscripts by Bidur Bhattarai

The number of manuscripts produced in the Indian sub-continent is astounding and is the result of a massive enterprise that was carried out over a vast geographical area and over a vast stretch of time. Focusing on areas of Northern India and Nepal between 800 to 1300 ce and on manuscripts containing Sanskrit texts, the present study investigates a fundamental and so far rarely studied aspect of manuscript production: visual organization. Scribes adopted a variety of visual strategies to distinguish one text from another and to differentiate the various sections within a single text (chapters, sub-chapters, etc.). Their repertoire includes the use of space(s) on the folio, the adoption of different writing styles, the inclusion of symbols of various kind, the application of colors (rubrication), or a combination of all these. This study includes a description of these various strategies and an analysis of their different implementations across the selected geographical areas. It sheds light on how manuscripts were produced, as well as on some aspects of their employment in ritual contexts, in different areas of India and Nepal.

15 - Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts and Books by Pasquale Orsini

The volume contains a critical review of data, results and open problems concerning the principal Greek and Coptic majuscule bookhands, based on previous research of the author, revised and updated to offer an overview of the different graphic phenomena. Although the various chapters address the history of different types of scripts (i.e. biblical majuscule, sloping potend majuscule, liturgical majuscule, epigraphic and monumental scripts), their juxtaposition allows us to identify common issues of the comparative method of palaeography. From an overall critical assessment of these aspects the impossibility of applying a unique historical paradigm to interpret the formal expressions and the history of the different bookhands comes up, due to the fact that each script follows different paths. Particular attention is also devoted to the use of Greek majuscules in the writing of ancient Christian books. A modern and critical awareness of palaeographic method may help to place the individual witnesses in the context of the main graphic trends, in the social and cultural environments in which they developed, and in a more accurate chronological framework.
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What is a manuscript? A universal definition across eras, languages and traditions seems problematic, if not downright impossible. This is one of the reasons why an interdisciplinary hub for manuscript studies (Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, CSMC, in Hamburg) was established in the first place.¹ Descriptive definitions are difficult to sustain even at the best of times. In the field of philosophy, they have come under attack in recent decades, following the work of the logician Saul A. Kripke in the early 1970s. Kripke argued that names in particular cannot be defined descriptively or only descriptively, for various reasons. Rather, they should be recognised as being rigid designators (with the same reference in every possible world or counterfactual situation), which at the same time, are dependent on a historical chain of semantic transmission:

In general our reference depends not just on what we think ourselves, but on other people in the community, the history of how the name reached one, and things like that. It is by following such a history that one gets to the reference. […] An initial ‘baptism’ takes place. Here the object may be named by ostension, or the reference of the name may be fixed by a description. When the name is ‘passed from link to link’, the receiver of the name must, I think, intend when he learns it to use it with the same reference as the man from whom he heard it.²

Kripke himself was prepared to apply this analysis beyond the domain of names. Without going into detail here, I believe it is well suited to solve some definitory problems of reference surrounding the name-like concept of the manuscript, such as the fact that we also refer to an ‘author’s written, typed, or word-processed copy of a work, as distinguished from the print of the same’³, i.e. to documents which, strictly speaking, are not even written by hand.

If the concept of the manuscript does, indeed, receive its reference by way of a historical chain of designations and practices, it follows that any temporal restriction in either direction would be inadmissible. A research centre devoted to manuscript cultures would have to acknowledge cultures of manuscripts beyond a more or less contingent date. I therefore propose to extend the notion of manuscript cultures to include the modern period. By that I mean the distinct role that manuscripts that were produced and collected after the widespread use (rather than invention) of printing technology in the West around 1500 CE. My arguments are derived from an extensive, comparative study of modern Western European manuscripts (predominantly those of a literary nature), their theoretical and archival status.⁴ While offering a short summary of selected aspects of this study here, I wish to make a case for understanding the persistence of manuscripts in the modern world as a necessary basis for our (literary) culture in a broad sense. Leaving out the theoretical framework and analyses of specific cases, I will concentrate on some historical developments in the history of the semantic charging of the manuscript since the eighteenth century.

The starting point for any research into modern manuscripts must be their continual and, indeed, growing significance in an age often identified as ‘the Gutenberg galaxy’ or as a transitional period of print culture on the way to the digital age. In Europe, manuscripts began to acquire a new prestige from around the mid-eighteenth century. Although they already played a role before then, this is really where a new appreciation of them seems to originate in most literary traditions. Contrary to common assumption, writing by hand and the reading of manuscripts was never wholly superseded by print, and handwritten materials gained specific functions

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¹ See Sonderforschungsbereich 950 ‘Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe’ <www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/index_e.html> and cf. T. Meier, Ott, and Sauer 2015.

² Kripke 1972, 95f.

³ ‘Manuscript’, in OED Online.

⁴ Benne 2015.
unavailable to physical books (in the same way that books have not simply been ousted by digital devices today). Media technologies are embedded in a complex web of factors and are not subject to linear causalities. Instead of disappearing, they are allocated new purposes or niches. This inevitably readjusts the entire field in which they operate.

With the advent of print, manuscripts were freed from the function of dissemination. Writing by hand still remained a dominant practice in many areas, however. Letter-writing is an obvious example, having only recently become part of the typographical universe. (Unlike letters in the form of emails, postcards are still predominantly handwritten.) Handwritten signatures – another obvious case – have not been replaced completely even in an age of digitisation. Signing by hand as a token of a legally binding expression of will in contracts, wills and all manner of documents can in many ways be regarded as symbolic of the status of handwriting as a trace of an identifiable individual’s activities.

Print enforced this gesture of authorisation because it could no longer be linked directly to the body or bodily movement of an author. It is no coincidence that signatures became common literary motifs – most famously Faust’s wager: in mythology, the figure of Faust was, of course, closely related to the invention of print.

Considering signatures as traces of individual authors’ activities has had consequences for all types of handwriting: the autographical manuscript, in particular, became emblematic of authorial intention and a new, more autonomous author function. Autographical manuscripts were the domain of personal or intimate genres such as diaries, excerpts, scrapbooks, autobiographical notes and the like (Figs 1 and 2). They expanded the notion of literature itself and attracted the interest of collectors. This interest was soon extended to the compositional process, sketches, proofs and even calligraphic or stylistic exercises. Traces of handwriting in printed books, such as marginal notes, turned them into unique items on a par with manuscripts and demonstrated the close connection between manual handling and writing, which had made the codex the interactive medium par excellence since its widespread adoption in the Middle Ages.

A clear distinction between books, prints and manuscripts was first established centuries after the invention of movable type although privately circulating manuscripts and officially published manuscripts (ekdosis) were clearly distinguished already in Antiquity.⁶

Professional copying remained a common practice of duplication and dissemination well into the eighteenth century. This also explains seemingly tautological expressions (often found in the German-speaking context) such as ‘eigenhändige Handschrift’ – they refer to individually identifiable autographs. It is precisely the production of individual autographs regarded as functionally succinct compared to printing and other forms of writing and disseminating that made books and manuscripts appear to be distinct categories or ‘media’. In turn, this change in cultural perception had consequences for the individualisation of handwriting itself. Consciously or subconsciously, graphic marks became graphic expressions which would be turned into the object of a new, scientifically controversial

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⁵ See, for example, Campe 1990.

⁶ See already Birt 1882, 1–2; 54, Dorandi 2007 and 2014, and Benne 2015, 22.
discipline: graphology. In the light of these interconnected developments, it is legitimate to speak of the ‘invention’ of (autograph) manuscripts in Europe about 250 years ago. The status and cultural significance of this invention has not diminished yet. On the contrary, the growing demand for manuscripts as collectors’ items and museum pieces is currently leading to new forms of presentation and institutionalisation ranging from genetic facsimile editions to large-scale exhibitions.

Private collections of manuscripts are not a modern phenomenon in Europe. In the Italian Renaissance, the fashion of owning manuscripts from antiquity was soon followed by the fashion of owning examples of contemporary writing. Even before print, manuscripts could be distinguished from books, even though the books were also handwritten. One point in case is the distinction between archives and libraries, which goes back to late antiquity and was stabilised in the early modern era.\(^7\) Libraries typically contained tokens of a type and thus items which circulated, at least potentially. Archives contained unique documents, which were not to be copied and circulated, such as state papers, contracts, protocols or letters. This distinction was valid even where archives were part of a library. It also transcends a simplistic modern categorisation of ‘media’: a rare book belongs in an archive, not a library, and has more in common with manuscripts. On the other hand, despite their name, private prints – sometimes called ‘manuscripts for friends’\(^8\) – are books which may or may not belong in a library, depending on many different factors.

It is thus because of print, the original task of which was to ease the practice of manuscript-copying, that the literary manuscript came to be valued in its own right. The process of differentiation began already in the sixteenth century\(^9\) and first peaked around 1800. In the course of this development, manuscripts came to be identified with attributes connected to their function as originals representing traces of specific

\(^7\) Cf. Schenk 2018 and Friedrich 2018; but see Fournet 2018, Fölster 2018 and Grünbart 2018 for the missing or partial differentiation between library and archive.

\(^8\) For example, see Spoerhase 2014.

individuals. These attributes include exclusivity, authenticity or attentive reception (as opposed to the superficial devouring of novels, in particular). Since manuscripts were not, like books, intended for an anonymous public, the seemingly more intimate relationship between authors and the readers of their manuscripts was ascribed to the fact that it was not affected by the impersonal machineries of book production and book trading.

In addition, the modern literary field established an interface between the archive and literature that had not existed before in any relevant measure. After autographs had slowly disappeared from the literary field with the invention of printing, they reappeared in the archive. Archives of individual authors’ manuscripts are therefore a relatively recent phenomenon. Genres that had not had any general significance before became decidedly literary genres and transposed the private archive into the public sphere. The epistolary novel is a case in point here: letters, the handwritten material with the longest history of collecting and archiving, inspired new forms of writing and literary topics. This, in turn, reinforced the status of letters as objects of general interest.

Yet it was not only epistemological, aesthetic or media-related reasons which brought about the new status of manuscripts. As soon as they became economic factors, directly or indirectly, there arose a need for legal regulation, which itself created the notion of a specific value of handwriting. The concept of labour became instrumental in uniting the many facets of manuscripts.

In the eighteenth century, print piracy became a serious problem. In the past, it had profited from a growing, yet unregulated market with non-existent or at least non-enforceable copyright laws. Up until then, printed books had carried the promise of offering more reliable texts than hand-copied manuscripts, which were prone to individual mistakes by the scribes. With piracy, print increasingly came to be seen as destabilising textual integrity since the pirates often changed the wording wilfully to adapt the pirated works to the assumed taste of their customers. Seemingly identical editions more often than not show major variations for this reason. The autograph, which was traditionally destroyed after printing, now advanced to being the source of authenticity as it pointed directly to the author. Therefore, the formulation of modern copyright law is closely connected to the ‘invention’ and new-found privileging of manuscripts.

The first relevant law protecting intellectual property, the Act of Queen Anne from 1709/10, did not protect authors, but the owners of a given work – typically the printers who had bought the work from the author and were now conceded a copyright for twenty-one years after printing. Authors of unprinted works had fourteen years in which to secure property rights by having them published – these property rights were held by the publishers who paid the authors off. This is also the reason why it was only rational to destroy the manuscript after printing; it had served its purpose and could no longer be misused (e.g. changed and sold off to another publisher).

The revaluation of manuscripts went hand in hand with the revaluation of their creators. The author of each manuscript had a vital interest in claiming his or her right to the text with the help of autograph documents interpreted as traces of an individual and autonomous creative process. A new understanding of copyright only gained acceptance when intellectual property was seen as an act of composition which necessarily materialised in written form. Originating in England, copyright was based on a theory of property developed by John Locke’s Two Treatises of Government (1689). Locke had extended his definition of property as the product of labour to intellectual property. In legal practice, building on this notion, the claim to intellectual property was consequently compared to the cultivation of virgin territories: without any proof of cultivation, a claim to intellectual property could not be made. The more elaborate the author’s working manuscript, i.e. the autograph, the stronger the claim.

Relating the new importance of the literary manuscript to the equally new conception of poetic genius (where the manuscript would be one of its emanations) is clearly insufficient; it is not genius, but labour which legitimately entitled the creator to ownership of his (or her) work. This cannot be stressed enough because it explains an important shift in attitudes towards autograph manuscripts. Since the end of the eighteenth century, these have not just been kept, archived and documented, but very much reflected upon and talked or written about. Written composition came no longer to be regarded in terms of epiphanic inspiration models, for instance, but in terms of crossing out, cutting up or re-combining words and passages. Many authors began to write

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10 See, for example, Clair 2004.

about the act of writing or about writing instruments, paper or their surroundings while they are working. Writing is the production of a manuscript considered as an artefact, a discontinuous merging of practices and institutions, not the linear production of signs.

The insight into the processual nature of artistic creation was not confined to literature, of course, but applied also to painting and music. While Mozart still primarily composed in his head, Beethoven ‘struggled’ with the musical material, sketching and crossing out scores on reams after reams of paper – musical manuscripts written in his own hand are no rarity today. Sketches, drafts and outlines of all kinds were soon valued for giving access to a deeper understanding not just of a work, but of the artist and the context behind it. Many collectors specialised in both modern literary and musical autographs – a manuscript, regardless of area and genre, was a selling point in its own right.

As a consequence, the concept of the author or creator itself was increasingly associated with the existence of manuscripts. The institutionalisation of literary archives was only a logical step, and it changed the reception of contemporary literature radically. In the German-speaking world, Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim was the first to dedicate an archive to contemporary literary manuscripts – both his own and those of his friends and protégés from his vast network (Fig. 3). As his will testifies, he was already aware of the singular character of manuscripts that set them apart from printed formats. But it was Goethe, for whom Gleim’s archive initially served as a model, who first made full use of its potential as a strategic tool in the literary field and as the site of a new form of creativity. His own manuscript archive, founded early in the nineteenth century in connection with the inauguration of a complete edition of his works, did

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12 Cf. Müller 2012.


14 Cf., for example, Rosenthal 2000.
not just serve as a museum of auratic objects; it was supposed to function as an open workshop, enabling the author to constantly generate new writing by reshuffling old sketches. Doing so demonstrated the complexity of an œuvre that demanded admirers and specialist readers. Archive and work merged because the work continually reflects upon the archive whence it came (Figs 4a and 4b).

Only a few decades later, in 1843, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard coined the formula of the ‘art of writing posthumous papers’.¹⁵ Writing literature now meant primarily working towards one’s posthumous manuscripts. The nineteenth century turned this into an imperative. Ambitious authors who wished to leave a mark on the cultural memory of the nation needed a personal archive which could be transformed into a Nachlass and thus a source for expert students of manuscripts and the national memory alike. This solved another strategic problem, too: namely how to persuade philology – traditionally reserved for antiquity and possibly the vernacular Middle Ages – to serve contemporary writing.

The emergence of modern manuscript cultures thus marked the transition from an era of literary criticism, in which published and finished works were assessed according to a fixed canon of aesthetic criteria, to an era of literary philology, in which not the external aesthetic criteria, but the individual work was beyond doubt. Ideals of authenticity replaced those of perfectibility, and an aesthetic of spontaneity or the fragment replaced the ‘file’.

It is therefore no coincidence that authors start collecting their own manuscripts – and put them at the centre of their poetic self-reflection – the very moment philology establishes itself as a paradigm. If modern authors wanted specialised readers to engage as attentively and intensely with their own work as with ancient literature, they had to offer them the material they were used to working with. And the domain of the philologist was precisely the manuscript – in contrast to the printed book, on which the eighteenth-century critic had concentrated. It was the appreciation of the fragments and manuscripts of contemporary writers which allowed the development of modern philology.

By pointing out the long and arduous labour involved in producing literary works through posthumous work strategies, highlighting manuscripts and handwriting in literature, editorial projects and the like, authors offered a ‘genetic pact’,¹⁶ which demands that serious readers should adjust the dedication of their reading according to the


¹⁶ Benne 2015, 350.

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Fig. 4a: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, loose leaf with *Paralipomena to Faust I*, written in ink and pencil. Goethe and Schiller Archive Weimar, GSA 25/W 1399, p. 1.
complexity and length of the work’s formation. Reading then includes a specific capacity to recognise traces of this formation on the work’s surface.

In the course of the nineteenth century, modern autograph manuscripts increased in value so considerably that they, like works of art, began to be traded at auctions. In 1851, a comprehensive catalogue of manuscripts was published in Paris, listing all those autographs that had been stolen from public libraries in France (Figs 5a and 5b).\(^\text{17}\) All of this led, in the second half of the nineteenth century, to an institutionalisation of the modern manuscript beyond the confines of academic philology. This institutionalisation mainly consisted of two innovations: first, the establishment of long-term historical-critical editorial projects, often outsourced to academies and characterised by the chronological arrangement of the manuscripts on which the edition rested and which were thus made available to the wider public and the next generation – and put back into the circulation of cultural capital which had been dormant in the static archive. Second, the establishment of public and national (rather than just private) manuscript archives, often with additional security and curatorial competence in place. Wilhelm Dilthey, important as he was for the acceptance of hermeneutics as the basic methodology underlying the humanities, made an early call for a national manuscript archive designed to safeguard the nation’s cultural memory.\(^\text{18}\) The proliferation of the archive\(^\text{19}\) – even private companies started their own collections – is the material shape of historicism’s victory. Explaining a phenomenon meant the ability to trace its lineage. In a national context, this links up with narratives of national identity – both required stable order as well as storage facilities for autograph manuscripts written by historically relevant individuals.

Once the collections existed, they continued to influence the individual and collective interest as well as the increase in symbolic value for all kinds of manuscripts. Giving manuscripts away as a token of friendship or mutual admiration became as common as including them in wills. Handing over authors’ estates to archives, university libraries and similar institutions has since become a field for specialists and self-conscious acts of self-promotion – but its history is tightly woven into the fabric of modern literature itself.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^\text{17}\) Lalanne and Bordier 1851.


\(^\text{19}\) Hutchinson and Weller 2011; Lepper and Raulff 2016.

\(^\text{20}\) Cf. Sina and Spoerhase 2016.
In Germany, for example, organizations like the Freies Deutsches Hochstift in Frankfurt (founded in 1859), the Goethe and Schiller Archive in Weimar (founded in 1885/1889), or the German Literature Archive (Deutsches Literaturarchiv, DLA) in Marbach (established in 1955 but resuming and expanding the Schiller National Museum founded in 1903) are regional as well as national bodies for collecting sources of literary and intellectual German history – alongside many other similar institutions throughout the country. The German Literature Archive in Marbach alone currently houses c. 1,400 collections of authors, publishers and scholars, among them thousands of manuscripts. These manuscripts, books and objects are regularly exhibited in the adjacent Museum of Modern Literature and the Schiller National Museum.

This development culminates in the current editorial style of the facsimile edition on the one hand, and the explosion of manuscript-related exhibitions on the other. The autograph archive has been turned into a museum, but one that no longer just documents or displays cultural memory, but creates it. The manuscript does not just speak for itself, but in relation to its respective framing: on the desk, in the archive or behind glass. The merging of archives and museums therefore not only changes both institutions, but also their exhibits (Fig. 6).

21 The current fascination with modern manuscripts illuminates some of the consequences changing practices have for the perception of objects. The direct handling of a manuscript is successively restricted on its way from the desk to the archive and, finally, to the exhibition room. Where the working manuscript is part of our natural writing environment, it has to be handled with care by a select circle of experts in the archive, whereas a museum, facsimile edition or online scan does no longer allow any direct handling. On the other hand, they at least partly enable a much larger group of people to access them. Publicity and manual handling therefore seem to correlate negatively – as do anonymity and aura. Or to put it differently, the anonymisation which follows from public display draws an absolute border around the artefact that is not to be transgressed and thereby elevates it to a status beyond its original historical function.
Why exactly are audiences in awe of manuscripts, regardless of their actual value or content? Recent studies in empirical reading research and in cognitive science strongly suggest the importance of our motoric system for human cognition, especially the complex working of our hands. Reading and writing are embodied phenomena and are processed, judged and memorised differently, depending on whether we read or write on loose paper, in a book, on a screen or on a handheld device. Against the backdrop of digitisation, we are becoming aware again of the importance of the artefact character of various ‘textual objects’. Manuscripts are the most radical illustration of the fact that these objects resist a complete recording in terms of metadata. Artists such as Anselm Kiefer – and many others, for that matter – have experimented with the combination of writing and pictures for decades (Figs 7a and 7b); the iconicity of the writing system is not restricted to the calligraphic traditions of the East, but is an everyday feature of such diverse domains as commercials or Instagram accounts.

The rise of the modern manuscript coincided with the debate about the relationship between the spirit and the letter. It belongs to and was, indeed, instrumental in the overcoming of various dualisms, especially of the Cartesian variety. Eighteenth-century authors discussed

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22 This is an exciting new paradigm of research. Cf., for example, Dehaene 2010; Mangen 2016; Mangen and van der Weel 2016; Piper 2012.
the advantages and disadvantages of Blackletter and Antiqua typefaces, romantics enthused about arabesques and hieroglyphs – forms of manuscript writing which could be allegorically linked to the nature of all writing, including (typographical) Western alphabets. Today, it is digitisation which has made it obvious that ‘texts’ are not merely abstract semiotic representations. Sales of expensive notebooks and fountain pens have exploded in recent years. Under these new conditions, new manuscript cultures, complementary to both print and digital environments, might slowly evolve.


24 See, for example, Brocklehurst 2012, Hall 2012, and Cornu 2017.
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The ‘Marriage Charter’ of Theophanu: A Product of Ottonian Manuscript Culture

Bruno Reudenbach | Hamburg

1. Legal document – manuscript – work of art

On the Sunday after Easter in the year 972, Pope Johannes XIII conducted the marriage of Otto II and the Byzantine princess Theophanu in Rome. The date of this day, 14 April 972, and the site, ‘done in Rome among the Holy Apostles’ (actum Rome ad sanctos apostolos), are named in a document that is usually termed the Marriage Charter of Theophanu (Fig. 1). This designation is not accurate, however, because the document is not about the wedding itself or the details of the wedding ceremony. Its text does not mention, for example, whether the marriage celebration was tied to Theophanu’s coronation as co-regent, as would have corresponded with Byzantine custom. All that is mentioned is the Pope’s blessing – ‘in that the blessing of the most holy and universal Pope John XIII follows’ (domnique Iohannis sanctissimi et universalis papae tertii decimi benedictione prosequente) – and so it remains unclear whether the wedding was celebrated with Byzantine or Roman rites and what role Pope John XIII played in the wedding ceremony.

The naming of the site raises questions, since the Church of the Holy Apostles (ad sanctos apostolos) was not the station church for that Sunday (14 April 972), but for the Thursday after Easter (station churches are those churches in Rome that were appointed for a special feast day, when the Bishop of Rome, i.e. the Pope, celebrated the liturgy of this day in the particular church). Since it must be assumed that the wedding celebration with the Pope’s participation took place on 14 April in St Peter’s Basilica, the couple’s betrothal could have been held in the Church of the Holy Apostles on Trajan’s Forum earlier, on Thursday. In the various predetermined phases of the marriage process, this had to precede the marriage itself. Part of the process was the husband’s transfer of a bride price (dos) to the bride. This is precisely the legal content of the Theophanu charter. It is thus not a marriage certificate in a strict sense, which would have documented the marriage of Otto II and Theophanu, but an endowment document with which Otto hands his bride Theophanu her dos, the power of disposal over certain provinces and imperial courts

[...]

1 Lower Saxony State Archive – State Archive Wolfenbüttel, 6 Urk. 11.


4 Goetz 1986, 41.


6 Matthes 1984, 11; Schulze 2007, 95.
In this context, it has been considered whether the Theophanu charter was not presented in the course of the betrothal and wedding ceremony in 972, but was rather a legal act, the transfer of the dos, only documented retroactively. The unusual appearance of the document plays a role in this: its elaborate design as a document of splendour, which is therefore often regarded as a retroactive copy of the original, simpler document. Whether the splendid document was retroactively prepared is not the only thing that is controversial to this day; researchers still do not agree about its actual purpose either, nor has it been possible to identify or localize the writer and artist.

The following elucidations take another look at the unusual – indeed, singular – appearance of the Theophanu document. The goal here is not to make motif- and style-historical deductions about it, as has been extensively done in art-historical papers, nor to identify the author’s and artist’s hands responsible for the document or with other documents that served as direct models for it. That the document doesn’t owe its appearance to the imperial chancellery has always been recognized. It has been regarded as a ‘work of art’ and ‘the most magnificent and splendid document produced in all the Middle Ages’. Thus, the context of its production is not to be sought solely in the Ottonian court chancellery, where the substantial and graphic production of royal and imperial documents generally lay in the hands of high-ranking clergymen. Following the protracted negotiations between the Byzantine and the Ottonian courts, which finally led to Theophanu’s being won as Otto II’s bride, such clergymen will have composed the text of the Theophanu document as well. As regards the external appearance and material production,

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7 Georgi 1991, 154, 160; Ohnsorge 1983, 156f.
8 Ohnsorge 1983, 159-161; Schulze 2007, 39–41; Cutler and North 2007, 172, 180.
10 This is the approach taken by Hoffmann 1986, vol. 1, 103–116.
12 Brühl 1977, 18.
14 Huschner 2006, 366.
however, external competence outside the chancellery was obviously found and mobilized in the Empires scriptoria.

The manuscript culture of that time served the diplomatic activities and political intentions that accompanied the marriage of the Ottonian heir apparent and the Byzantine princess. Imperial documents helped not only to secure the law, but, since the ninth century at the latest, special forms of writing and graphic signs made these documents tools of displaying prestige and of symbolic communication. This is especially true of the elaborate and singular design of the Theophanu document. The thesis of the following considerations is that the document, including its visual appearance, is to be understood in the context of diplomatic exchange between Byzantium and the West. It comprises the function in the symbolic communication between Byzantium and the West.

2. The document and its visual organisation

The text of the document adheres closely to the fixed formula of Ottonian documents. The document’s issuer is Emperor Otto II. At the beginning is the invocatio, the invocation of the Trinity, followed by the intitulatio, the naming of Otto with the title of Emperor: ‘In the name of the holy and indivisible Trinity. Otto, by favour of divine grace Imperator Augustus’ (IN NOMINE S(an)C(ta)E et INDIVIDU[a]E TRINITATIS OTTO DIVINA FAVENTE CLEMENTIA IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS) (Fig. 2). Following the intitulatio is a long arenga, a general theological introduction that bases the holiness of matrimony both on the Old Testament and with reference to the Church as the Bride of Christ. Then, in the promulgatio, Otto proclaims his decision, made after the advice and agreement of his father, the princes of the Empire and the Pope, to wed Theophanu, the niece of the Byzantine Emperor John, and to make her a consors imperii, i.e. a co-regent in the Empire. Only then comes the dispositio, in which the actual legal content of the document is stated, namely the transfer of the dos to Theophanu. The conclusion is the so-called eschatocol (Fig. 3). It comprises the corroboratio, the indication of the document’s sealing, although in this case no seal is actually attached. The subscriptio is the name and signature line with the monogram of Otto the Great and Otto II; in the recognition line, the document is notarized by Willigis, the Archbishop of Mainz.


as cancellarius. Finally the date and site are named, *XVIII kalendas maii anno dominice incarnationis DCCCCLXXII*, the 18th calend of May, i.e. 14 April 972, in the Church of the Holy Apostles in Rome. The document concludes with the benediction *feliciter* (‘favorably’, ‘happily’).

The document consists of three sheets of parchment glued to each other, resulting in a rotulus (vertical scroll) 144.5 cm × 39.5 cm in size. At the outermost edge of the rotulus is a painted frame, a two-toned blue-and-white band with foliage ornamentation between two narrow gold-coloured strips (Figs 1, 2, 3). This makes the frame both the outermost border of the parchment surface and the frame of the written area. Unlike the sides, the upper strip of frame shows no leaf ornamentation, but rather seven small medallions on a gold background (Fig. 2). The bust portrait of Christ appears in the middle position with St John and Mary at his sides and, on either side of them, two prophets and apostles, while pairs of animals facing each other are depicted between them. The writing area extends within the frame, but as a patterned background rather than a monochrome, purple surface. The pattern results from fourteen whole and two half large, circular, purple medallions arranged in pairs, between which lie blue-black spandrels (Fig. 3). Blue-black drawings of pairs of animals are depicted in the circular medallions, alternatingly lions and griffins, each above a second animal that is difficult to identify but could be a horse, a doe or a cow. Purple ornamentation, however, appears in the blue-black interstices. The text of the document is written in gold ink and structured on this symmetrically patterned background filled with ornaments and depictions of animals. The pairs of animals are easily and unambiguously identifiable only where they are not written over, whereas the script, with its brightly gleaming gold, contrasts very legibly from the writing surface. The reverse side of the rotulus is also purple, but monochrome and without any pattern.¹⁷

With this coloration of the parchment, the Theophanu document belongs to the purple documents, even if there are apparently no other examples of documents with a patterned writing area. Today it can no longer be said with certainty whether there were purple documents as well as purple codices in Late Antiquity, because no evidence has been preserved. In Byzantium, purple documents can be inferred fairly certainly from the ninth century on, but original Byzantine imperial documents are extant only since the eleventh century and then only sporadically.¹⁸ It is especially relevant for the Theophanu document that Byzantine foreign missives, of which three examples from the twelfth century have been preserved, were generally written in gold script on purple parchment from the tenth century onwards.¹⁹ This Byzantine practice is also important because purple documents were used in the West extremely rarely, which explains why only nine examples have been preserved from the period from the tenth to the twelfth century.²⁰ The oldest of these is the so-called Ottonianum, which was drawn up on 13 February 962 after Otto the Great’s coronation as Emperor in Rome, which regulated Otto’s relations with Pope John XII, and in which Otto guaranteed the continued existence of the Papal States.²¹ Similar to the Ottonianum, also in terms of its form, is the second-oldest extant example, the Theophanu document of 972. Knowledge of Byzantine purple documents was probably a precondition for producing

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¹⁷ Goetting / Kühn 1968, 21.  
¹⁸ Brühl 1968, 7–9.  
²⁰ Brühl 1968, 7.  
both documents. However, the appearance of the Theophanu charter was not taken solely from a Byzantine model of any kind, nor did its visual organization adhere to the pattern of other Ottonian diplomas.

Although its content was structured like contemporaneous royal and imperial documents, it was anything but a normal document; indeed, its appearance apparently differed consciously and calculatedly from other Ottonian documents. Comparing another document also issued by Otto II in 972 reveals this. In a document from 14 August 927, Otto II confirms that Einsiedeln Abbey holds possessions that his father Otto I had already assigned to it (Fig. 4).22 The format of the document is 54 × 76 cm, so that it, like almost all Ottonian documents, is written on quite a large, horizontally rectangular sheet of parchment that is folded several times for storage. The Theophanu document is designed quite differently: ‘portrait’ rather than ‘landscape’ format, rotulus rather than parchment sheet, rolled rather than folded.

There are other differences as well: as has always been noted, the Theophanu document is not written in the customary italic document script of the chancelleries, but in the minuscule script of contemporaneous Western codices. The writing face of the document’s beginning does not follow the pattern of diplomas, but, by using the common book script, is based on what was customary for the beginning of text in codices. In Ottonian royal documents, the beginning of the text is written with the document’s *capitalis* written in the *litterae elongatae* characterized by large ascenders and descenders. The introductory invocation of the trinitary God and the *intitulatio* are marked with this script. In the case of the document of 14 August 972, this passage reads: ‘In nomine sanctae et individuae trinitatis. Otto iunior, senioris, divina annuente clementia, coimperator augustus.’ This passage extends only to about the middle of the first line. Directly following this, without a caesura or break,

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comes the beginning of the document text proper, which is likewise written in this display calligraphy until the end of the first line: ‘Cum totius studio religiosis, maximeque ecclesiarum sublevatione, ad dei culturam augmentandam nostrae serenitatis excellentiam semper intentare aequum ac prae omnibus dignum fore sciamus […].’ In the second and succeeding lines, the text continues in diplomatic minuscules. All the lines extend as far as the right-hand margin of the document, so the text appears to be a unified, unbroken block whose entire first line is executed in display calligraphy. There is thus no visual distinction between the intitulatio and the beginning of the text, but only between the first and the following lines.

This is significantly different in the Theophanu document. Here, too, the invocation of the Trinity and the intitulatio are written in capitalis, distinguishing them from the rest of the text, written in minuscules. The wording ‘IN NOMINE S(an] C[ta]E et INDIVIDU[a]E TRINITATIS OTTO DIVINA FAVENTE CLEMENTIA IMPERATOR AUGUSTUS’ takes up the entire first and most of the second line (Fig. 2). But here, the following arenge does not follow immediately. Rather, it begins in a new line, with the initial C of the word Creator at the beginning and continuing in the minuscule script of the remainder of the document. As a result, unlike in the document of 14 August 972, in the Theophanu document the rest of the second line remains free after the intitulatio written in capitalis. Thus, contemporary book script was not only used for the document; it was also tied to the appearance customary for the beginning of texts in manuscripts: the title of the work or of a chapter appears in capitalis; the beginning of the text appears in a new line in minuscule script. Ottonian documents schematically write the first line in display script. But in the Theophanu document, the marking with capitalis is related to the content: in addition to the invocatio and the intitulatio at the beginning, in the running text the proper names OTTO, THEOPHANU and IOHANNIS, as well as the subscriptio with the monograms of Otto I and Otto II are emphasized with capitalis.

If the visual organization of the writing on the Theophanu document thus corresponds to that of books, along with the elaborate decoration especially of the splendid liturgical codices of Ottonian scriptoria, then it seems likely that the purple coloration of the parchment is connected not only with Byzantine purple documents, but equally with purple book pages. As is well known, the tradition of purple codices extends back as far as Late Antiquity. In the early Middle Ages, the practice of writing book pages on parchment coloured purple was retained primarily for sacred texts. In the early mediaeval manuscript culture, two different forms of purple coloration must be distinguished: as in purple codices from Late Antiquity, the entire parchment sheet can be coloured purple and inscribed with gold or silver ink. But since the tenth century, it was often customary to colour only the usually framed text area purple or even to give only individual lines a purple background. For example, the so-called Gero Codex, an evangelistary written in 969 in the scriptorium on the island of Reichenau, displays an opening sequence in which pages with pictures alternate with pages with poems. The poems are written with gold ink on framed, purple surfaces (Fig. 5). The Theophanu document with its

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23 Furlan 1998.

24 Darmstadt, University and State Library, Hs. 1948, fol. 2r, 3r, 4r, 5r, 6r, 7r, 8r. <http://tudigit.ulb.tudarmstadt.de/show/Hs-1948/0001> (29 March 2016).
written area surrounded by an ornamental frame would thus seem to be not so much a Byzantine document sent abroad, but at least as closely akin to contemporary Western book pages, especially those of splendid liturgical codices with purple writing surfaces. From these, the scribes adopted the ornamental framing of the purple text area for the document, which is filled with a book script. The frame does not distinguish the written area from the surrounding blank parchment surface, however, as is the case with the Gero Codex, for example; rather, the frame of the written area coincides with the edge of the parchment.

As already mentioned, the Theophanu charter shows a monochrome parchment colouring only on the reverse side, while on the front side the writing surface is ornamentally structured with round medallions. Unlike other documents for which no parallels have yet been found, Ottonian book art is indeed familiar with patterned writing areas on which the writing is laid over the pattern, as in the Theophanu document. Since about 950, we find such pages in liturgical codices prepared in the scriptorium of the Imperial Abbey of Corvey and, since about 970, in those from Reichenau.

The Gospel book from Helmstedt, written around the middle of the century in Corvey, for example, distinguishes each beginning of a Gospel with a double-page designed in this way. The initial words are written in monumental *capitalis* above the ornament; in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (fol. 17'), it consists of three rows, each with two square areas. A circular medallion with a lion (?) is fitted into each square, resulting in a pattern similar to that of the Theophanu charter (Fig. 6).

Inspired by Byzantine foreign missives, the appearance of the document is thus even more like the pages of a book, particularly pages of liturgical codices. Probably modelled on Byzantine documents and distinguished from the horizontally oriented and folded Ottonian diplomas, the vertically oriented rectangular codex page has been extended to the format of a rotulus. Unlike ancient rotuli, on which the lines run vertically, the Theophanu charter is inscribed horizontally, like a book page and like a Byzantine document. Overall, the document owes much more to the manuscript culture and book art of Ottonian scriptoria than to the writing practice of diplomacy.

3. The symbolic communication of diplomacy

Nevertheless, already because of its official occasion, the Theophanu charter self-evidently has its place in a political context, that of the relations between Otto the Great and the Byzantine Emperor. In the competition with the Emperor in the East and in dealings with Constantinople, Otto the Great relied on a double strategy. On the one hand, he claimed territories in southern Italy that were under Byzantine rule, while on the other hand he sought reconciliation with Byzantium and solicited Anna, the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor, as the bride for his son Otto II. As the daughter of Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Anna was a *porphyrogenneta*, a woman born in porphyry. This epithet expressed her descent from the emperor and derived from the purple porphyry cladding of her birth room in the imperial palace in Constantinople. In 968 Otto sent the Bishop of Cremona, Liutprand, to Constantinople to ask for her as bride, but his mission failed. Liutprand reported to Otto

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25 Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Library, Cod. Guelf. 426 Helmst., fol. 17'.
27 Schreiner 2011, 76.
on his failed mission in the notorious Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana, in which he took his failure as the occasion for a vehement polemic against the Byzantines and the Byzantine court. As Liutprand conveys in the Relatio, his solicitation of Anna was refused in Constantinople, and he had to listen to Emperor Nikephoros explain:

Inaudita res est, ut porphyrogeniti porphyrogenita, hoc est in purpura nati filia in purpura nata, gentibus miscetur.

It would be unheard-of, if the porphyrogenneta of a porphyrogenneto, that is, the purple-born daughter of a man born in purple, would be sent among foreign nations.

A year later in 969, after a transfer of power at the imperial Byzantine court, Otto the Great made a new attempt and sent Gero, the Archbishop of Cologne, to Constantinople. But the new Emperor Johannes I Tzimiskes, like his predecessor, refused to pledge the emperor’s daughter. Gero had to abandon the idea of winning a porphyrogenneta as bride once and for all and to content himself with a compromise solution. Instead of Anna, namely, Johannes I Tzimiskes offered his 12-year-old niece called Theophanu as a bride for Otto II. The Ottonian legation began its return trip from Constantinople with her. At Otto the Great’s imperial court, this result of the solicitation was not received enthusiastically, apparently, as Thietmar of Merseburg reports:

Fuere nonnulli, qui hanc fieri coniunctionem apud imperatorem impedire studerent et tandemque remitti consulerent.

There were not a few who spoke to the Emperor to prevent this connection, advising him to send this one [Theophanu] back.

Otto I did not take this advice, however, and so, on 14 April 972, the marriage of Otto II and Theophanu was concluded in Rome.

As a consequence and outcome of this series of events, the Theophanu document was thus a component of political and diplomatic actions between the Ottonian and Byzantine Empires. The charter stated the result of the long process of soliciting the bride with the precise determination of the dos, which was sure to have been preceded by long negotiations. In general, it corresponded with the diplomatic conventions that the addressees also exerted influence over the content and appearance of the document. With a view to the historical and diplomatic context, a Byzantine dimension can thus be identified in the appearance of the Theophanu document, along with its anchoring in Western manuscript culture. Its preparation as a purple document is thus associated, on the one hand, with its kinship to purple manuscript pages, but equally, on the other hand, with the diplomatic conventions in Byzantium, where purple documents were an established ‘stylistic means’ of foreign policy that articulated the issuer’s high rank visually as well.

Purple as a colour and porphyry as a purple stone were used primarily in an imperial context in Roman Antiquity. The Byzantine display of ruling status also adopted this form of marking the imperial sphere with purple and porphyry. Their great significance as signs of symbolic communication can be seen in the epithet porphyrogennetos, which documented imperial descent. The insistent staccato of the repeated mention of purpura and porphyrogenita in the answer, quoted above, that Nikephoros II Phokas gave to the bride solicitation by Liutprand of Cremona is symptomatic in this regard. In this context and in correspondence with Byzantine foreign missives, the purple colour of the Theophanu document must be seen as an imperial marking.

The technical examination of the document published in 1968, however, showed that the Theophanu document was not written on genuine Tyrian purple processed from a secretion of certain murex shells, but on a layer of bright red lead covered with a glaze of madder lake. But this was apparently a common practice in both Western and Byzantine scriptoria when especially important text passages were to be written on a purple substrate. Whenever purple codices have been subjected to material analysis, it

28 Sutherland 1975, Hoffmann 2009.
29 Liutprand of Cremona, 194 (Legatio XV, 252–254).
30 Thietmar of Merseburg, 57 (Chronicon II, 15).
has turned out that, rather than genuine Tyrian purple, other colourants were used for them. But these are not to be understood as a cheap substitute; rather, in the colouring of parchment, the point was clearly more the colour value of purple and its symbolic connotation than the costliness of the material itself. This goes for the Theophanu document also because, as described above, the writing substrate is not monochromatically purple, but formed with a continuous pattern of pairs of medallions.

4. Purple and silk

It has frequently been said that the document with this pattern is reminiscent of Byzantine silk fabrics and textile surfaces. The pattern is not the only thing about the rotulus that reminds one of textiles, though – medallions grouped this way are also found in other objects such as mosaics. The question here is what was the reason for imitating a particular material? It cannot be said with any certainty that a Byzantine appearance of the document was produced for the Byzantine princess because documents designed this way apparently did not exist in Byzantium. What characteristics of the document actually create the association of ‘silk fabric’ and what was the purpose of making a document look like a textile?

A strong indication that the appearance of a silk fabric was intended is the combination of the medallion pattern and the purple colouring. Ancient and late ancient sources on purple coloration, namely, are always about colouring silk. Purple was thus initially and primarily important for silk fabric and only secondarily for purple parchment. But beyond that, the impression of a textile surface that was created in the charter is based not only on the combination of purple and pattern, but also on the precisely calculated disposition of the medallions. It is conspicuous that two medallions were placed at the lower edge only as halves, although the text ends far enough above them that the parchment surface of the rotulus could have concluded precisely with the last two whole circles (Fig. 3). When one is aware of mediaeval scribes’ ability to calculate in advance precisely how to distribute the text on the pages of a codex, it is hard to imagine that the surface left free of script at the bottom could be explained by an original assumption that more space would be needed.

Although the amount of text offers no occasion for them, the two half-medallions were still added to the lower margin. This apparently consciously aimed to allude to a length of fabric and to create the appearance that the fabric was cut in the middle of the medallions. In the West, cutting silk without consideration of how the pattern repeated was customary practice, anyway. Numerous fragments and scraps of silk fabric that are extant as wraps for relics of saints show how the precious silks were cut.

Already since the seventh century, silk fabrics produced in Byzantium itself or that reached it via the trade routes from China or the Sassanid Empire were continuously exported to the Christian West as coveted commodities. The Merovingians and Carolingians esteemed them highly as expensive luxury goods that were as valuable as gold or precious stones. The customers of these fabrics imported from Byzantium were therefore primarily nobles and high-ranking clergymen who had the means to acquire these treasures. Accordingly, silks in large numbers are verifiable almost exclusively in the circles of rulers, the Pope, and in Church treasuries.

Silks dyed purple had the greatest value. As with silk fabrics that were also produced in less-valuable qualities through the admixture of other fibres, so too, in purple colouring, other, less expensive colourants existed in addition to the Tyrian purple won from snails. Diocletian’s price edict of 301 already lists twelve different qualities and hues of porphyra, i.e. of purple coloration: along with Tyrian purple, there are colourants gained from lice, lichens or algae. In the Western Middle Ages, too, different kinds of purple were distinguished as purpureus and coccineus (made of lice). Quite apart from the differences in fabric qualities and colourants, purple silk was one of the greatest treasures in the West and was regarded as the luxury good of societal elites. Part of the reason for this was that, at least in early Byzantine times, the production of purple colourant

36 Oltrogge 2013, 144–146.
37 Ohnsorge 1983, 158; Georgi 1991, 156.
38 Steigerwald 1990a, 1990b.
and the production and wearing of certain pieces of purple silk clothing was a privilege granted by the emperor.\textsuperscript{45} Not least, because they were used in the Byzantine emperors’ court ceremonies, silk fabrics and purple colour conveyed, also in the West, a special proximity to the imperial sphere.\textsuperscript{46}

This imperial charging of material and colour seemed self-evident also because, although they reached the West as trade goods in large quantities, these objects were among the preferred diplomatic presents of the Byzantine court.\textsuperscript{47} Exchanging valuable gifts in the context of diplomatic relations was familiar to both Byzantine and Muslim rulers, as was a culture of dealing with luxury goods.\textsuperscript{48} The emperors in Constantinople also practised this in dealings with the Pope or Emperor in the West. Silk fabrics were especially suited as evidence of power and economy potency because they were not otherwise available in the West. A feeling of cultural superiority that was articulated with precious materials and ceremonial dealings with them may have also played a role; Liutprand’s Relatio, at least, hints at such assessments. Liutprand reports that before his legation departed from Constantinople again, the Byzantines took back silk fabrics he had acquired, to wit:

\textit{[…] quinque mihi pretiosissimas purpuras abstulerunt, indignos vos omnesque Italos, Saxones, Francos, Bagoarios, Suevos, immo cunctas nationes huiusmodi veste ornatos incedere iudicantes. […] prohibita sunt haec […] ut enim divitiis, sapientia, ita et ceteris nationibus praestare veste debemus, ut, quibus est singularis in virtutibus gratia, sit singularis et in pulchritudine vestis.} \textsuperscript{49}

\textit{[…] five items of the most precious purple because they regard You [Otto] and all Italians, Saxons, Franks, Bavarians,}

\textsuperscript{45} Treitinger 1938/1956, 58; Hunger 1965, 84–88; Steigerwald 1990b.

\textsuperscript{46} Muthesius 1997b, 310.

\textsuperscript{47} Muthesius 1992; 1997b; Jacoby 2004, 211.

\textsuperscript{48} Jacoby 2004, 213f.

\textsuperscript{49} Liutprand of Cremona, 211 (\textit{Legatio}, LIIII, 874–876, 891–896); Hoffmann 2009, 173.
Swabians, indeed all peoples, as unworthy to walk about in such raiment [...].

The Byzantines reproached him:

These are forbidden wares [...], for, as with wealth and wisdom, so too with clothing we must distinguish ourselves from other peoples, so that those who are especially gifted with virtues also have a special clothing that is uniquely beautiful in its kind.

The beauty and preciousness of these fabrics was based not only on the material silk and the colour purple, however, but also by the patterns of the textiles. It has been speculated that five fragmentarily preserved silks that show pairs of lions facing each other were produced specifically for diplomatic exchange. Inscriptions testify to a connection between these lion silks and the Emperor, which also suggests that the fabrics were produced under imperial supervision. The lions facing each other in pairs on these silks, however, stand alone rather than being framed in medallions, while a lion silk from the ninth or tenth century that comes from the grave of Saint Julian in Rimini showed the striding lions surrounded by circles that touch each other. The tangents and the triangular surfaces between them are additionally adorned with rosette and star ornamentation (Fig. 7). And the disposition of the ornamentation of this lion silk displays a pattern very similar to that on the Theophanu document. Silks with such patterns, the diameter of whose circles could measure up to 80 cm, could be produced in these dimensions only with great technical effort and were considered especially precious. But in general, this kind of expansive, ornamentally or figuratively filled circular patterns, which today are usually traced to a Sassanid origin, were considered characteristic of silk fabrics from the East. They were associated with ceremonial procedures at the imperial court in Byzantium or with diplomatic exchange, and in this sense they were esteemed as monarchical clothing in the West as well. This is shown, for example, by the donor portrait on the jewelled cross that Mathilde, Otto I’s granddaughter and the Abbess of the Essen convent, donated around 985/990 in memory of her brother Otto, Duke of Swabia, who died in 982 (Fig. 8). On the enamel plate, Mathilde and Otto can be seen holding the staff of a cross as the sign of the donation. Their imperial descent is made apparent by their clothing, clearly tailored from Byzantine silk and thus characterized by large, cross-shaped, square or circular patterns.

In sum, we can note that the Theophanu charter was designed with a repertoire of forms that originated in Ottonian manuscript culture, but that, at the same time, also made use of the symbolic language of Byzantine diplomacy and monarchical display, whose significance was known and could be understood in the West, as well. But in accordance with the considerations presented so far, this does not mean that the document directly copied Byzantine models: neither Byzantine documents and foreign missives,

51 Muthesius 1997a, 182 (M55).
52 Stauffer 2013, 12.
nor Byzantine silk fabrics. As mentioned above, circular patterns and the arrangement of such circles in pairs are frequently observed, as is the accompanying depiction of animals facing each other. However, silk fabrics that show two (fighting or snuggling) animals entwined within a circle, as in the pattern of the Theophanu document, apparently cannot be found in the silks that have come down to us. The silk from the reliquary shrine of Saint Kunibert (Cologne), which is frequently referred to in this context, shows the fighting pair of animals in the context of a hunt. As in comparable pieces, the animal struggle appears under a mounted archer. These depictions are thus completely differently arranged than the medallions on the Theophanu Charter, for whose animal medallions no specific model going beyond the general allusion to silk textile can be identified.

By borrowing the repertoire of signs of Byzantine diplomacy, the Theophanu document thus fits within the historical context for which it was produced. As in Byzantium, so too in the Western Middle Ages it was the practice to employ a marriage as a means of forming an alliance and as a political-diplomatic instrument. Byzantine princesses were prepared from earliest childhood for their role and tasks in this diplomatic system, and their upbringing was oriented towards their requirements. They were not only taught to read and write at an early age, but also familiarized with the ideological, political, theological, and philosophical foundations of acting as a ruler as well as with the procedures of court ceremony and the liturgy. Even if Theophanu was no porphyrogeneta, she must have been similarly trained and prepared for her task as a bride in a politically arranged relationship. Her activity after the marriage, at any rate, permits us to deduce her familiarity with the processes of the practice of ruling. Significant in the context sketched above is thereby also her obvious high esteem for silk, which is also articulated in the donations she made to several churches.

5. The charter as proof of the achievement of Ottonian manuscript culture
There is no doubt that the Theophanu document, too, can be ascribed to the sketched diplomatic-political context on which its components draw their visual design. Yet, it is not appropriate to understand its appearance, which was compatible in many ways with the sign language of Byzantine diplomacy, solely to an accommodation of the Byzantine addressee and a conforming to the world of forms familiar to the Byzantine bride. The document repeatedly deviates from Byzantinizing elements and its design forms are shaped by Ottonian manuscript culture. Against this background, the search for direct models cannot be productive.

It is thus symptomatic that the document, without being a direct copy of a silk fabric, nonetheless conveys the impression of a textile surface. But its visual quality is simultaneously very close to a very different genre of objects and materials, namely the panel of an ivory diptych from the late 8th or early 9th century that has been attributed to Charlemagne’s court school (Fig. 9). This Carolingian ivory has in common with the document that the textile’s pattern repeat is limited to a vertical rectangular surface in which pairs of medallions are arranged to face each other. On the ivory panel, the medallions are formed of vines alternately holding a large leaf and a pair of fighting animals. The structure of this ornamental grid is close to the patterned purple substrate of the Theophanu document. Researchers have debated whether this is also true of the motifs, probably because the document’s script overlays the medallions, making it very difficult to recognize the animal scenes. Thus, some see in the pairs of animals a fight, others the opposite, namely two snuggling animals. Accordingly, the iconographic interpretations of the animal pairs suggested so far, some of which are quite sweeping, go in very disparate directions.

In the context discussed here, these iconographic questions can be ignored. As for the question of the document’s relationship to Western manuscript culture, however, its close kinship to the Carolingian ivory is revealing; quite apart from iconographic determinations, this kinship is...
based on the very similar arrangement of the pattern, which is integrated within a vertical rectangle. The ivory diptych introduces a genre of objects that originally belonged to writing media and had its place in early mediaeval book art, being used especially for book covers. In the Middle Ages, in particular, consular diptychs with carved front covers were splendid objects produced in conjunction with an appointment or service jubilee. They thus genuinely stood in the context of the practice of ruling and displaying prestige and, while they cannot be regarded as documents in the strict diplomatic sense, they can nonetheless be considered a kind of ivory testimony to status and office. The allusion to an ivory diptych was thus not far removed from the design of a rotulus as splendid document, while, on the other hand, pattern arrangements with pairs of medallions were unknown for Byzantine documents.

This permits us to understand the document as a product of a transmission process in which an Ottonian scriptorium took up the elements of the symbolic language of Eastern imperial representation, creatively reshaped them and tied them to forms of its own book culture. The Theophanu document is not to be understood as a simple product of Western–Eastern conciliation in which a Western and an Eastern world of forms were brought into balance. Rather, the preparation of the document by an Ottonian scriptorium reshaped the visual signs of diplomacy and politics and extended them to include a sacred dimension. In early mediaeval book culture, an Ottonian scriptorium’s and an artist’s ingenious invention of inserting textile patterns into a purple writing substrate, the overwriting of a purple substrate with gold ink, and the mounting of ivory diptychs or panels on book covers had an unambiguous functional site, namely the liturgical manuscript. Manuscripts outfitted with purple, gold and ivory were primarily reserved for the Word of God to distinguish sacred texts and the Holy Scripture. In the liturgy, the Gospels represented Christ Himself, and the pages with textile patterns were to be understood as clothing the corpus Christi.

The visual design of the Theophanu document made use of political matters by being bound to the symbolic language of Byzantine diplomacy and the display of rule. As has been shown, however, it was accompanied by a veritably demonstrative distancing from the visual organization of

63 Delbrück 1929.

64 Oltrogge 2013, 155; against this, the assumption of Hoffmann 1986, vol. 1, 106.
both Byzantine and Ottonian documents. The reshaping of the diplomatic symbolic language carried out by the Ottonian scriptorium operated with the kinship with liturgical books, thereby directing attention to the sacred-clerical dimension of the text. This seemed logical in that the introductory *arena* takes as its theme an extensive theological justification of marriage and its being instituted by God. The text thereby takes recourse to the idea of the Church Father Augustine that Christ ‘appeared in human flesh’ (*in humana carne adveniens*) and that the Church had married Christ as His bride. This explicit reference to the Body of Christ may have further enhanced the transfer of the textile symbolism of clothing Christ to the document.

The document rotulus addressed to the Byzantine native Theophanu is thus a highly complex amalgamation in which diplomacy’s symbolic language of gold, purple and silk and the Byzantine document format of the rotulus were fused with forms of objects and designs familiar to Ottonian manuscript culture, with the book cover and the ivory diptych, with book script and a corresponding field of text. Based on individual motific and palaeographic findings and its overall conception, scholars have long regarded the Theophanu document as a work of Ottonian art. This can be made more precise. In the political and diplomatic context, this splendid document was not so much a concession to the Byzantine bride Theophanu, to whom one wanted to make a familiar visual offer. The outsourcing of the production from the field of the chancellery into that of the scriptorium meant that the resulting demonstrative reshaping and overlaying also articulated a shift of accent from legal document to a text charged with sacredness that was presented on the highest aesthetic level. It cannot be ruled out that, in the introduction, the scriptorium formulated also a theological justification for this aesthetic achievement. It states, namely, that God the Creator had arranged the world ‘in perfect beauty’ (*in perfecta elegantia*) and that, ‘as the best Artist’ (*artifex summe*), He had formed humanity in His own image. It can remain open whether, between the lines, this was intended as an appreciation of the Ottonian *artifex*, who acted as the human likeness of the Creator God.

Apart from that, the Theophanu document can be understood as a demonstration of the capability of one’s own Ottonian manuscript culture and book culture. In some ways, we must be reserved about taking Liutprand’s tendentious *Relatio* at face value. But if his report that the Byzantines also articulated their cultural and moral superiority with silk fabrics is accurate, then the Theophanu document seems like the Ottonian court’s retort to that stance. The Ottonian Empire’s own scriptoria were brought into position against the precious silks. They knew how to make virtuoso use of Byzantine diplomacy’s language of signs, since they were able to imitate silk fabrics and to fuse all of this with the world of forms of the book pages of Holy Scripture that they were familiar with.

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Medial Ambiguity: Liturgical Books of the Latin Church and their Changing Status in Mediaeval Tradition*

Felix Heinzer | Freiburg

It is hard to say whether or not Christian believers in the Middle Ages would have accepted the label of ‘People of the Book’, a designation applied in Islamic tradition to the Abrahamic religions that pre-date Islam. Although, as Jeffrey says, it was ‘first intended pejoratively, [such a designation] in Jewish tradition came to be accepted with pride as a legitimate reference to a culture and religious identity rooted fundamentally in Torah, the original book of the Law’,¹ it is likely that Christian theologians of patristic and early mediaeval times would have spoken of a plurality of writings or holy books by using plural forms such as scripturae divinae.² At any rate, rather than speaking of a book-based religion, early Christians would probably have preferred the idea of a religion of the Word, or rather, of the Word of God.³

To prevent any misunderstandings from the outset, I do not intend to insinuate a crude relativisation here, let alone an erosion of the status of the Bible, the central pillar of Christian religion, but rather to campaign for contextualisation. I shall do this by considering two different aspects. First of all, Christians would not regard the book – or rather, the books – of Holy Scripture as the divine revelation in itself, but as a medium of revelation referring to God’s living word, without considering it to be the entirety of God’s self-communication. This is a minefield with regard to theological debates, of course, but if we disregard the intransient partisans of an extreme sola scriptura position, it can be said that Christian theologians of all periods are unlikely to have excluded any additional forms of divine revelation: God personally speaking to individuals such as prophets and saints, and His self-manifestation by means of the world He created. Augustine – who seems to have been the inventor of the long-lasting notion of a second book in addition to the liber scripturae, namely the liber naturae, a metaphor of the ‘readability’ of the world pointing to God as its ‘author’, as it were⁴ – even claimed in one of his letters that the created world serves a role as an instance of verifying the promises made in the Bible:

Certe non chartis veteribus, non archivis publicis, non gestis forensibus aut ecclesiasticis agamus. maior liber noster orbis terrarum est; in eo lego completum, quod in libro dei lego promissum […].

By all means, let us stop arguing from ancient manuscripts, public archives or the acts of courts, be they civil or ecclesiastical. We have a greater book: the world itself. In it I read of the accomplishment of the promise I read about in the Book of God.⁵

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¹ Jeffrey 1996, XIII.

² Even if it now seems less than clear whether the expression biblia, which is at the heart of the corresponding terms in many modern Western languages (bibbia, bible etc.), should really be considered a form of the plural, Greek βιβλίον, it might actually stem from the term bibliotheca used at least until the ninth century to denote the aggregate of holy books. Cf. Stotz 1996–2004, vol. 1, 582 (part IV, sect. 25.10) and vol. 4, 17 (part VIII, sect. 7.6).

³ Jeffrey 1996, XII–XIII.


The mediaeval career of this concept is substantial – allow me to quote the particularly elegant formulation in the famous *Rhytmus alter* of the great twelfth-century poet Alanus ab Insulis (taken up, purposely, by Umberto Eco in the chapter of his novel *The Name of the Rose* concerning the first day):

Omnis mundi creatura
quasi liber et pictura
nobis est, et speculum...

A second contextualisation which is even more relevant to our topic concerns the embedding of the Bible in the realm of Christian cult performance. Angelika Neuwirth recently referred to an analogous situation in Islamic tradition which was more a matter of everyday devotional practice than official cult when she insisted on the fact that the Koran’s presence in the context of daily life would have mainly been one of sound, i.e. of recitation in different forms of *cantilena*, rather than a ‘textual’ manifestation. Hence the Koran – and here I quote from Navid Kermani’s speech in praise of Angelika Neuwirth, given at the award ceremony for the Sigmund Freud Prize of the German Academy for Language and Literature in Darmstadt in October 2013 – is:

a text intended to be read out loud. The written word is secondary, and until well into the twentieth century it was, for Muslims, little more than an aide-mémoire. God speaks when the Koran is recited: in the strictest sense, one cannot read it, one can only hear it. In this context, Angelika Neuwirth speaks of the sacramental character of Koranic recitation. Although Islam does not use this term, it is essentially a sacramental act to take God’s word into one’s mouth, to receive it through the ears, to learn it by heart: the sacred is not simply remembered, the faithful physically take it into their bodies [...] (This, incidentally, is why singers are supposed to clean their teeth before declaiming the Koran.)

Now, an ambivalence of the holy text between the poles of scripturality and silent reading on the one hand and what we might call a physically sounding presence produced by recitation or even singing affects biblical textuality as well, as I would like to show hereafter. This is where liturgy and its books – especially chant books – enter the stage.

1. Christian liturgical books and the Bible

The texts of Christian liturgy – I shall focus on the tradition of the mediaeval Western (i.e. Latin) Church here – are deeply permeated by Holy Scripture, in the Eucharistic celebration and in the Liturgy of the Hours. A statement of this kind is, of course, rather trivial for the biblical readings themselves, both in the Mass Liturgy and in the Liturgy of the Hours, especially in the latter’s nightly readings of biblical and hagiographical sections. It is interesting to note that the shaping of specialised books for the various modes of proclamation of the biblical message superseded an earlier practice of simply using entire manuscripts of the Bible completed by adding lists or other secondary material that indicated the textual passages scheduled for a given liturgical occasion, if not just by marginal signs in the Bible itself. The same is true, yet less evident, for the meditation and appropriation of this biblical message by the liturgical community. The Book of Psalms occupies a dominating position here. Psalmody itself (the singing of psalms, which actually builds on Jewish traditions) is the backbone of Divine Office, which, by its cadence of fixed-hour prayer, structured the life of mediaeval monks, nuns and clerics and deeply informed their spiritual and aesthetical culture.

The role of the Bible goes far beyond this, however, as it affects other fields of sacred chanting as well. Actually, the biblical imprint of the core repertory – not only of Office chants besides psalmody itself, but of Mass Liturgy as well – is simply overwhelming. The so-called ‘Gregorian’ repertory, considered to be a result of inspiration including even the melodies (Fig. 1), is drawing to a large degree on the Bible, or more precisely on the Old Testament (adduced in a typological perspective), and here again, mostly on the Psalter, especially in the context of Holy Mass. The roots of this impressive predominance can be found in what James McKinnon called the ‘psalmodic movement’ of the closing decades of the fourth

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8 Kermani 2014.


10 See the summarising remarks about this in Heinzer 2013, 18–21.
Fig. 1: Abbey Library of St Gall, Cod. Sang. 390 (Codex Harker), Antiphonary, St Gall, end of the tenth century, fol. 13r. Pope Gregory inspired by the Holy Spirit (symbolised by the dove on his shoulder) dictates his notarius Petrus Diaconus neumed chants.
century, which were ‘a time of unprecedented popularity for the singing of biblical psalms’. According to McKinnon, ‘there is no evidence that anything so pervasive and intense existed before this time, nor that anything quite like it would be witnessed again in the history of Christianity’. The phenomenon marked the liturgical chants of the Latin Church persistently, not only in the Roman tradition of Late Antiquity, but up to its reception and redaction in the context of the Carolingian reform movement, which turned out to be determinant for further Western European traditions of liturgy. A few numbers will serve to illustrate this evidence for the most important genres of Mass chanting, borrowed from David Hiley’s Handbook of Plain Chant: more than half of all Communion chants and roughly three quarters of all introits are taken from the Psalter, while the proportion of psalmic texts is even higher for graduals and offertories: 90 per cent for the former and almost 100 per cent for the latter.

Such statistics might give us an idea as to what extent the presence of the Psalter – and to a certain degree that of the Bible as a whole in the cultural life of the Middle Ages, especially in cultic performance – exceeded the boundaries of personal reading and study of it. We might even say that the Bible had its greatest impact in the communitarian context of liturgy, and in fact not only by means of readings, but most of all in association with the performance of chants and thus with a stronger emotional effect thanks to the enhancing alliance with the component of music.

To mention just one random example from the Carolingian period, I would like to point out the repeated use of the wording *angels magni consilii* in John Scotus Eriugena’s treatise on Ps. Dionysius’s Celestial Hierarchy, while he draws on the famous passage about the messianic child in Jes. 9:6 (‘For to us a child is born…’), not following the Vulgata, as one might expect, which has *admirabilis consiliarius* instead, but an older version known as the Vetus Latina. Deducing from this evidence that Eriugena would still have been a staunch adherent of the Old Latin translation of the Bible is untenable, though; he simply had a very prominent liturgical chant in mind: the introit *Puer natus* from the third mass for Christmas taken directly from Jes. 9:6, but as huge layers of the Gregorian mass repertory, drawing on the Vetus Latina. Texts seem to be more ‘appealing’ when they are sung than when they are read from a book!

From this perspective, and bearing the reflections in mind that were mentioned at the beginning of this paper, we might conclude that what Angelika Neuwirth underlines for the Islamic reference book can also be applied to the presence and efficacy of the Bible, which – at least for mediaeval Christianity – is predominantly a matter of textuality becoming bodily resonant in the sense of acoustic performance:


If one chose to speak of an embodiment of the Word […], then one would not look for it in a book that represents Scripture, which is a prerequisite for ‘inlibration’, but in an organic resonance chamber which […] is capable of accommodating the spoken word and cantilena.

This is of substantial importance for the books used in Christian liturgy: if, in their function as a means of cultic response to divine self-communication, they show such a considerable amount of textual overlap with the Bible itself as the material embodiment of this revelation, these books can naturally claim a considerable degree of participation in the sacred status of the Bible, from where they obtain their own dignity.

This is almost self-evident for the Book of the Gospels, which is not only a genuine part of the Christian Bible, but even claims to represent the ‘Logos’, the incarnate Word of God. This representational aspect also explains the notorious material preciousness and artistic quality of most of these manuscripts (Fig. 2). Interestingly, the Evangeliarium’s role on the liturgical stage is twofold: if the reading and hearing of the Gospels is done in the ritually enhanced context of a sacred

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11 McKinnon 2000, 39.
14 Pfisterer (2002) worked out that besides Advent, this repertory is based completely on Old Latin texts for the rest of the liturgical year.
15 For more discussion of these dynamics, see Heinzer 2015.
16 Neuwirth 2015, 238.
space, from the opened codex, which is used as a book for public recitation at that moment, enhanced by musical intoning, then the plethora of ritual actions before and after the recitation address the closed codex as an object, or more precisely the auctorial reality behind it: God’s own Word. Consequently, the material body of the Evangeliary can be promoted to a sign of Christ’s presence even outside Mass Liturgy, for instance in the context of public processions or during a ruler’s ceremonial entry, often in conjunction with other signs of representational claim such as relics and crucifixes.

In this context, we might also mention evidence of magical applications of holy books, be it the Bible as a whole or parts of it like the Gospels – or even smaller snippets such as the highly regarded prologue to St John’s Gospel (In principio erat Verbum – ‘In the beginning was the Word’), particularly popular on account of its apotropaic qualities. Yet the dominating biblical book in such circumstances is, again, the Psalter, used for divinatory practices or as an instrument in the context of ordeals etc., and also worn as an amulet, especially in earlier periods – either attached to a dead person’s body to accompany them in the afterlife, as attested by archaeological finds such as a Coptic Psalter manuscript from c. 400 CE discovered as a burial object near Cairo, or carried by living persons, as in the case of the famous ‘Cathach’ or ‘Battler’ of St Columba, an early seventh-century Irish Psalter traditionally associated with Columba

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19 As the processional conveying of the book to the ambo including its ostentatious elevation in the sense of a mimetical representation of Christ ascending to preach on the mountain, accompanied by various body-language signals such as standing up, kissing the book, veiling the hands of those who hold the book and the like, but also the Byzantine-rooted symbolism of candlelight and incense. Cf. Heinzer 2009, 44–52.


21 An impressive dossier with regard to such practices has been assembled by Schreiner 2002, 315–322.

22 Regarding this aspect, richly documented evidence has, again, been provided by Schreiner 2002, 308–315; see also Vezin 1992.

23 Vezin 1992, 103.
of Iona, enclosed in a shrine by its later owners to accompany them into battle.24 Another very interesting example of such use of the Psalter is in a minuscule manuscript known as the Psalterium sancti Ruperti from the third quarter of the ninth century, now housed in St Peter’s Monastery in Salzburg (Ms. a I O) (Figs 4a, b, c, d).25 The size of this book is a mere 37 by 31 mm, with no less than 18 lines per page. Apparently, this tiny work contained not only the entire Psalter, but also two prologues, a full-page author’s portrait of David and three full-page initials following the standard tripartite division of the Psalter, while the beginnings of the Psalms and of the individual verses are marked by smaller initials in gold. At the principal subdivisions of the text, the scribe employed gold ink for an entire page on several occasions, and in one case, he wrote on a purple background. This miniature book was probably not made for reading at all, but to be worn around the neck or girdle of its owner – perhaps a high-ranking member of the Carolingian royal family – as a talisman. Used in such a way, the small book would probably have been closed most of the time, yet to be magically effective, it had to be a true Psalter with regard to its content, not just its appearance.

2. Hierarchies of sacrality?
Considerations of this kind raise a rather tricky question, which is the object of the second part of my article: is it possible (and reasonable) to scale the ‘degree’ of sacralisation with regard to different categories of liturgical books? Actually, if we roughly differentiate liturgy in terms of its three main sectors or components, viz. reading (and listening), praying, and chanting, it is obvious that the sacrality of the Gospels as a ‘subset’ of the Bible is beyond debate. The same is true of the Epistolary, if only to a minor extent, and, of course, of the Psalter.26 The case

24 De Hamel 1986, 22 and plate 12.
of the Sacramentary is particularly interesting here: despite its general, non-biblical contents, the book enjoyed a similar amount of prestige to the Evangeliary, apparently because the *Canon Missae*, which is considered to be the very core of Mass, and hence of the Sacramentary, is centred on the words of Eucharistical institution spoken by the celebrant in persona Christi to ‘produce’ Christ’s sacramental presence, as it were (Fig. 5). Such a claim was never associated with chant books used as tools of praise and worship. Consequently, the illustration of these ‘practical books’ generally attracted less artistic elaboration and even less material luxury than Gospel manuscripts and Sacramentaries did, as Eric Palazzo has emphasised: a graduation probably depending on different degrees of Christological representation.

Still, there are common features with regard to all these books. I might mention the fact that even in the late Middle Ages, when paper was increasingly replacing parchment, the production of liturgical manuscripts almost always stuck to the traditional (albeit more expensive) writing material, which was usually of the best quality available – clearly an indication of the prestige and dignity ascribed to such books. Equally significant is the generally established practice of storing manuscripts destined for liturgical celebration separately from other books: while the latter were housed in the institution’s library, the usual place where liturgical codices were kept was the treasury of the abbey or cathedral, where these books were stored together with paraments, liturgical vessels and relics, hence in a context of decidedly sacral dignity – a situation which also explains the striking absence of such books in most mediaeval library catalogues we know of. To illustrate this significant differentiation, it may suffice to remember the arrangement in the famous St Gall Monastery plan of the ninth century (Codex Sangallensis 1092), where to the north of the apse the inscriptions indicate a building with two storeys, one for the scriptorium and the other for the library (*infra sedes scribentium – supra bibliotheca*), whereas to the south we have the sacristy (*subtus sacratorium*), which exactly corresponds to the other building in terms of its layout and dimensions (without the windows, though, which were necessary for the scribes, but not for the sacristy, of course) (Fig. 6). Although liturgical books are not specifically mentioned, unlike the paraments (*vestes ecclesiae*) kept on the upper floor, plenty of other sources attest the fact that the sacristy was partly employed as a multifunctional storeroom, mostly so the inventories of mediaeval church treasuries.

A glance at the first volume of the *Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse*, covering the period from Charlemagne until about 1250, is actually very telling in terms of this juxtaposition, but at the same time it reveals evidence of the aforementioned gradation between different genres of manuscripts. Retrieval

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28 Lyall 1989, 12 (based on evidence from English sources, yet applicable to the situation in general).

29 Cf. the general remarks on treasure manuscripts by Palazzo 1997.

30 See *Carolingian Culture at Reichenau & St. Gall*, Tremp 2014.
Fig. 6: Abbey Library of St Gall, St Gall Monastery plan, Cod. Sang. 1092 (detail), ninth century. Library and Sacristy are marked with blue arrows.
of the index focusing on books shows – unsurprisingly, of course – the numerical predominance of lemmata such as Biblia, Evangelium and Plenarium (seemingly indicating in most cases the full liturgical lectionary, at least in earlier lists) and a considerable number of entries for Missalis (most probably indicating the Sacramentary), but significantly less evidence for Antiphonarium and Graduale, i.e. for the two main chant books used for Office and Mass (with the well-known terminological blurring for Antiphonary). An even greater predominance of Gospel books is observable with regard to book covers, as is clearly shown by a look at the index of Frauke Steenbock’s seminal work on luxury bindings. This is particularly evident in the extensive list from the Abbey of Prüm (about 50 km north of Trier) made in 1003 at the behest of Emperor Henri II. Embedded in an extensive series of liturgical garments, tapestries and vessels and an impressive array of highly precious reliquaries, we find a remarkable list of liturgical manuscripts: four Gospels (one of them a gift from Carolingian emperor Lothar I, buried in Prüm), a Mass book (probably a Sacramentary), a Lectionary, and eventually two chant books, namely an Antiphonary and a Troper (including sequences, as the manuscript itself, which is now housed in Paris, shows). The document explicitly mentions the precious bindings (none of which have survived), showing the material luxury of such ‘vestments of the books’ enveloping and protecting the body of the book and at the same time visualising its role and dignity, much as garments do with humans, hence clearly providing evidence of differences in hierarchical status.

While the Gospel bequeathed by Lothar, written throughout in golden ink, as the note totum interius et exterius aureum (‘all golden inside and outside’) indicates, but also the Lectionary and the Sacramentary are mentioned as being covered with gold and gems, and even the everyday Gospel Book (cottidianum) had a silver cover, the chant books were bound in ivory diptychs (cum tabulis eburneis), a choice for a material deemed less precious than gold and gems, which is not an isolated case and seems to indicate a differentiation of sacrality, as it were. This, however, is not only a matter of material value and its semantics, but equally of iconographic features. Consequently, representations of the crucified Christ are predominant in Evangelium bindings (Fig. 2) and also occur on Sacramentary bindings, albeit more rarely.

In the case of chant books, however, Christological iconography almost never occurs, the ivory plaques being mostly Late Antique spolia reused and sometimes reshaped for their new religious purpose. To take just one outstanding example, the venerable Monza Gradual from c. 800, originally from northern France, the oldest known copy of the Gradual, sumptuously written in gold and silver ink on purple parchment, was adorned with a consular diptych of the early sixth century. In the process of ‘recycling’ the plaques, the two dignitaries have been slightly reshaped in some respects, such as Gregory’s tonsure, and explicitly renamed as ‘David’ and ‘Gregory’ in two captions, while the Pope’s representation on the upper cover was additionally accompanied by the first two verses of the famous poem Gregorius presul on his authorship of this body of chants. By employing such a suggestive parallelisation of the two figures, Gregory and the repertory named after him are thus embedded in the reference tradition of cultic praise par excellence, that is, the biblical singing of psalms attributed to David – a remarkable confirmation of what has been said about the psalmic foundations of the normative repertory of Mass chant ascribed to Gregory the Great. We are thus clearly in the presence of an author’s portrait, yet of

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33 Ganz 2015.
34 Mittelalterliche Schatzverzeichnisse 1967, 811–39; Evangelia III* cum eo quod dominus Lotharius dedit, ex quibus unum totum interius et exterius aureum, argenteum... Missale I cum auro et gemmis. Lectionarium I cum auro et gemmis paratum. Antiphonarium I cum tabulis eburneis. Troparium I similiter cum tabulis eburneis. The famous Lothar Gospels still exist (now Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. theol. lat. fol. 733, from Tours). As for the chant books, only the Troper has survived, albeit without the ivories (now Paris, National Library of France (BnF), Ms. lat. 9448); see Wittekind 2011. For some more general remarks on bindings of troparies, see Palazzo 1989, 79–80.
35 Cf. Ganz 2015, 75–76.
36 The binding of the famous Drogo Sacramentary (Fig. 5) is a special example, as the decoration of its binding relates episcopal rites, thus moments of liturgical practice, to episodes of the Saviour’s earthly career, centring the whole arrangement on the risen Christ in the midst of his disciples; cf. Reynolds 1983 and Palazzo 1989.
a divinely inspired human writer and not of the divine Word itself, as in the Gospel book.

3. Compromised dignity?
If, in the understanding of pre-modern culture, liturgical books are considered and venerated as avatars of transcendentality, they are nevertheless historical objects and hence are not exempted from historical change or even from diminution of their meaning and prestige.

A first aspect I shall deal with in this section of my paper (if only briefly) is a crucial phenomenon with a considerable effect on European religious culture: the increasing — and rather controversial — opening of chant repertories to textual elements of a non-biblical character since the ninth century, a discussion which seems to have stirred up the Eastern Church in Late Antiquity as well.40

One of the paradigmatic figures of this debate is Walahfrid Strabo of Reichenau with his *Libellus de exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum*, a kind of *Handbook of Liturgical History* (c. 840–842).41 In a particularly interesting chapter of his work, Walahfrid deals with liturgical hymns as a long-established chant genre, now obviously under siege in the contemporary discussion of non-biblical liturgical poetry.42

Walahfrid underpins his plea for the legitimacy of *ymnium compositum* by adopting an interesting strategy of historicising the innovation which is under discussion. Specifically, he does the following:

1. he highlights the value of the genre by referring to authors of hymns who are above suspicion, such as Ambrose, Hilarius of Poitiers and John Chrysostome,

2. he proposes an understanding of hymns as an emulation of biblical psalms by invoking the semantic identity of *hymnus* and *psalmus* in the Jewish tradition of the Hellenistic age (Philo of Alexandria, for instance) and consequently in the New Testament with Eph. 5:19 und Col. 3:16 as well-known instances of synonymic use of the two terms we may equally observe in the *Laodicea Canon* of 363/4, quoted in note 39,

3. he eventually insists on the position that it is not the biblical origin of the text, but rather its orthodoxy that legitimates a newly composed item: ‘it is clear that there are many things newly composed for the Church which are not to be rejected as long as they are not inconsistent with the true faith’ (‘si a fide veritatis non abhorreant’).

Walahfrid’s focus on hymns might be due to the fact that Carolingian monastic reform, which was actively fostered by his former patron Louis the Pious, strongly promoted hymn-singing.43 Moreover, Walahfrid, without explicitly naming his objective, probably had a specific standpoint in mind, that of Agobard, the Archbishop of Lyon (d.840), who rigorously insisted on banning this practice from his church — an interdiction which lasted until the twelfth century.44 Interestingly enough, the Laodicene canon (see note 40) plays a considerable role in this context if we look at the ‘Liber de divina psalmodia’, a polemical treatise against Bishop Amalar of Metz from c. 835–838, hitherto ascribed to Agobard himself, while the modern editor of the work argues for an attribution to the Archbishop’s influential ‘spin doctor’, Florus. The author, at any rate from Agobard’s inner circle, shows a clear awareness of the terminological overlap between ‘hymn’ and ‘psalm’, but exploits it in a radically different sense: referring to the ‘venerable councils of the fathers’, he admits that there might be some evidence of homonymy between hymns and psalms, even in the biblical tradition itself, but the former had to be branded as plebeios psalmos, i.e. as popular, non-biblical songs, and thus rejected.45 The wording ‘popular psalms’ refers, of course, to the ἰδιωτικοὶ ψαλμοὶ of Laodicea, a text obviously known

40 Bullough and Correa 1990; cf. also, with some critical remarks, Gneuss 2004, 72–74.

41 Hugo 1979, 113. One might remember here that even the traditionalism of the Cistercians did not challenge the legitimacy of the hymn as such, but only implied a restriction to the corpus attributed to Ambrose himself (albeit misinterpreting the term *ambrosianum* in the *Regula Benedicti* — an issue already brilliantly discussed and qualified by Walahfrid: ‘In officiis quoque quae beatus Benedictus abba […] ordinavit, ymni dicuntur per horas canonicas quos ipse [Benedictus] Ambrosianos nominans vel illos vult intelligi quos confessit Ambrosius vel alios ad imitationem Ambrosianorum compositos’, Walahfrid Strabo 1897, 506.

42 ‘Sed et reuerenda concilia patrum decernunt nequaquam plebeios psalmos in ecclesia decantandos et nihil poetice compositum in diuinis
in Lyon thanks to its reception in the Dionysio-Hadriana collection, brought into the Frankish realm from Rome under Charlemagne in 774.⁴⁶

The explicit plea of the Reichenau monk for a dynamic liturgical repertory that harboured not only biblical texts, but poetical additions represents an important and influential cultural opening, which also included musical aspects.⁴⁷ It stands for a thread of aesthetical enhancement of cult and worship in Christian tradition, which was taken up by Walahfrid’s St Gall neighbour Notker I and his Liber Hymnorum⁴⁸ and by many others besides: a subversive momentum which was to put a distinct mark on religious and cultural traditions in Western Europe, even if it was criticised again and again by fundamentalist milieus in different periods. One only needs to think of Cluny or the Cistercians and other monastic groups – even the Tridentine Council, ultimately. ‘In sancto quid facit aurum?’ (‘What is gold doing in the sanctuary?’) asked Bernhard of Clairvaux provocatively in his Apologia,⁴⁹ and although this utterance concerns a different field, namely the pictorial enrichment of the sacred, it goes straight to the heart of what is at issue here: the intricate relationship between cult and culture.

If the outstanding prestige of traditional liturgical books was undeniably challenged by such ‘culturalising’ tendencies, however, we probably have to look for other even more substantial reasons for this increasing diminution, which seemingly gets more and more momentous in later periods of the manuscript era.

4. Text and presence

Even in earlier times, liturgy would never have been reduced to books, as it was not considered to be a matter of text, but rather a dynamic performance that amalgamated the spoken and chanted word as well as ritual action.⁵⁰ Thus, in mediaeval liturgical practice, chant books always had a referential status as a medium which served vocal performance; the voice took priority over the book, as it were. This is also evident with regard to musical notation, at least in the first period of such recording practices. Unlike the modern Western European perspective accustomed to seeing musical notation as a prescriptive tool, early forms of music writing like neumes were rather descriptive – they were part of ‘a practice stored in memory’, as Susan Rankin has emphasised in her recent article on this pivotal issue: ‘These notations remind the reader of sounds that he has heard, but do not provide primary instructions as to how to make those sounds.’⁵¹

It may be interesting in this context to have a look at the well-known Ursprungserzählung linked to the famous Cantatorium, written and neumed around 922–925 in the St Gall scriptorium (Abbey Library of St Gall, Ms. 359), probably the oldest completely notated manuscript of the Gregorian Mass chants (like the aforementioned, but un-neumed Monza codex, a diptych covered with ivory plates)⁵². The adventurous story, told by Ekkehard IV in the mid-eleventh century in his Casus sancti Galli, addresses the topic of the relation between voice and book: the manuscript, allegedly copied in Rome from the authenticum, viz. from the original copy of Gregory’s antiphonary (!) and taken to St Gall by two Roman cantors according to Ekkehard, was placed on a kind of pulpit in the choir of the abbey church – not in order to sing from it, however, but to use this venerable work in cases of doubt about the correctness of a given chant – in cantu si quid dissentitur – as a reference work to consult if need be.⁵³ Again, it is not the book, but the voice – the vocal act of chanting – that it was all about.

Reservations of this kind about the role of books grew in the second half of the Middle Ages, mostly due to an increasing tendency towards privatisation and individualisation of piety.

This is a significant difference compared to what Angelika Neuwirth has observed about the Koran’s role in the daily life of Muslims (see note 7), because what is targeted by the following reflections does not regard the proclamation made

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⁴⁶ The Dionysio-Hadriana collection is a collection of canon law initiated by Dionysius Exiguus (c. 470–c. 540) and revised by Pope Adrian I (c. 772–795); see Mordek 1975, 151–152, and Kéry 1999, 13–20.

⁴⁷ I would like to refer here to the seminal (and still very stimulating) reflections expressed by Arlt 1968.

⁴⁸ See my forthcoming study ‘Authorizing Liturgical Poetry. Notker Balbulus of Saint Gall (d.912) and his Liber Hymnorum between Biblical Tradition and Poetical Innovation’.

⁴⁹ Bernardus Claraevallensis 1963, 104.

⁵⁰ Häussling 1973, 178.

⁵¹ Rankin 2011, 111 (my own italics).

⁵² Ganz 2015, 302.

Fig. 7: Archive of Bishopric Osnabrück, Lower Saxony, Codex Gisle, Gradual, Cistercian Abbey of Rulles, c. 1300, p. 25, initial 'P' of Puer natus est.
in the holy text, as is the case in the Koranic context, but
rather the realm of its meditation and personal appropriation
by the faithful. This might also explain the difficulty of
producing evidence about such ‘anti-book’ dynamics, which
were substantially a matter of unrecorded personal
experience. Hence I am obliged to argue in a very tentative
way here, searching for indications and symptoms of such
trends.

On the level of the book itself, one of these signs seems
to be the substantial increase in the production of individual
collections of prayers in Latin and in the vernacular in
the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, both in a monastic
context and among laypeople: a ‘parallel world’, so to
speak, next to official practices and repertoires of liturgical
prayer. In the field of manuscript illumination, this shift
is emphasised by the fact that official ritual books such as
gospels and sacramentaries were increasingly superseded
by private devotional books as privileged objects of artistic
activities – not so much by the mostly rather modest
und unpretentious prayer booklets, but by deluxe Psalter
manuscripts, which were frequently commissioned by
high-ranking lay customers, many of whom were women,
and eventually by the Book of Hours – a descendent of the
Psalter, as it were.54 This is, of course, an interesting shift
in the history of book art, but it should also be considered
an equally revealing result of a change in religious and
social habits.55 Used as a personal prayer book, the Psalter
became a broadly attested phenomenon in the context of
an emerging courtly culture during the twelfth century,
especially in the hands of women, as we can see if we look
at the destination of a large number of the outstanding Psalter
manuscripts of the twelfth and thirteenth century and also at
numerous pictorial representations of noblewomen browsing
and reading their Psalter. This interest can be seen in
manuscript illumination and other areas of painting, but it
is also evident in the field of sculpture, as in the case of the
marvellous gisant effigy of Eleanor of Aquitaine, the wife
of Henry II Plantagenet, on their joint tomb at Fontevraud
Abbey.56

The increasing desire for internalisation did not spare monks
and nuns living in an environment deeply marked by the
rhythm of Divine Office, and it even seems that among these
‘professionals’ of liturgical celebration, at least since the
twelfth century, the desire to translate into inner experience
and re-enactment what they performed by speaking, hearing
and not least by singing grew significantly.

Again, detection of such phenomena is difficult (and
making a description of them even more so).57 Think, for
instance, of pictorial additions to liturgical codices and of
the aforementioned extensions and interpolations of the
basic layer of the repertory as tropes or sequences. This is
the case with a famous page of the Codex Gisle, a Gradual
manuscript from around 1300 from the Cistercian nunnery
of Rulke north of Osnabrück.58 The wonderful initial of
Puer natus est, which marks the introit for the third Mass
of Christmas Day, presents the mystery of the feast, Christ’s
birth, integrated in a highly suggestive framing: the upper
register shows the angels’ response to the Saviour’s birth
with their singing of Gloria in excelsis, while in the lower
section the nuns are singing together from a chant book
(Fig. 7). A closer look at the book reveals what they are
meant to sing, viz. the Christmas sequence Grates nunc
omnes, which they would actually perform a little later
in the course of the celebration. The subtle point of this
arrangement is the fact that the angelic speech also serves as
the closing words of the sequence: ‘Huic oportet ut canamus
cum angelis semper: Gloria in excelsis’ (‘To him we should
continuously sing with the angels: Glory in the highest!’).
Hence the image suggests virtual unison between the two
choirs and thus an internalising of the heavenly message
by those who receive it in the actual situation of earthly
liturgy.59 While such elements may indeed be interpreted as
records of a specific appropriation of a common canonical
heritage, as it were, they also tell us something about the
cultural memory of a religious community in the long
term. They reveal almost nothing about people’s individual
experiences, however.

What is more promising here is evidence of actualisation
we can find beyond liturgical books, for example in

57 For the following considerations, see my tentative essay ‘Clausivum non manufactum – Innenräume normativen Schriftlichkeit’, Heinz, 2014a.
58 Dolfen 1926. See also Frings 2005, 422.
writings on the interaction between liturgy and people’s own imagination. There is, in fact, a rather narrow, but nevertheless quite vivid strand of tradition regarding this special mode of visionary experience which is ‘triggered’ by liturgy. Its origins go back to the mid-twelfth century and the Rhenish Benedictine nun Elisabeth of Schönau and the first layer of her Liber visionum: the whole of this early part of the work refers directly to the celebration of liturgy, and mostly to specific liturgical chants – a dependence which, as Kurt Köster has put it, lends this first cycle of visions a character of ‘ecstatic participation in the cycle of the ecclesiastical year, intimately linked to monastic liturgy’.

Through such experiences, Elisabeth seems to foreshadow later mystics like Gertrude of Helfta, Mechthild of Hackeborn and the mostly vernacular collections of relations about mystical life in south German Dominican convents, known as Schwesternbücher.

If all these narratives consistently draw on the liturgical celebration and its canonical repertory, they are also linked together by a latent, yet increasing tendency to devalue liturgy both as a communitarian and as a text-based practice – a tendency of leveraging out the official liturgical book, in other words. In a stimulating article from 1938, which has almost been forgotten now, Stephanus Hilpisch, a monk from Maria Laach, tried to detect this trend of internal subversion from its very beginnings in the twelfth century to its full development in the piety of the Devotio moderna. He came to an interesting conclusion about the changing status of liturgy, above all in late mediaeval convents: ‘Liturgical celebration only provides the opportunity for unbound meditation now, without any relation to liturgical functions and prayers’. In a rather flowery, but nevertheless felicitous formulation, which I quote here in its original German wording, Hilpisch also says this about the value of liturgy in the past: ‘Die Liturgie war gleichsam die Musik, die das Liebeslied der Seele begleitete, das diese in ihrem Innersten dem Herrn sang’ – liturgy cut back to the role of accompanying the soul’s intimate love song, as the illustrator of one of the manuscripts of the vernacular poem Christus und die minnende Seele (Christ and the Loving Soul) seems to insinuate while he presents a nun’s nightly rising for the Office as a bedroom scene between the living soul and its divine groom (Fig. 8).

Other rather odd yet interesting symptoms of this paradigm shift are found in evidence of the disturbance and disruption of liturgy by visions that nuns had while attending Mass or Divine Office, which are repeatedly related in the Dominican Schwesternbücher. During the requiem for one

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60 Heinzter 2014a, 156–160.
62 Hilpisch 1938, 269.
63 Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Donaueschingen 106, written and illustrated in Constance shortly before 1500.
of their fellow sisters, for instance, some of the nuns of Engelthal near Nuremberg allegedly heard the angels joining in with the singing of the convent: so loudly, in fact, that they drowned out the nuns’ voices (‘do horten etlich swester daz die Engel die mess uber sungen’). In another case, one of the nuns from the convent of Töss north-east of Zurich ran through the choir while Salve Regina was being chanted, shoving the other sisters as she shouted to them: ‘Singent, singent, Gottes mutter ist hie!’ (‘Sing, sing! God’s mother is here!’).

The second of these two examples is particularly instructive, as it vividly emphasises the desire to overcome the gap of space and time by imagining the presence of the celestial figures invoked by liturgical chants. The desire for immediate perception thus seems to lead to a suspension of discursive distance, hence of a property that is intrinsic to texts, books and language in general. Actually, such attitudes claim to anticipate no less than the quality of eschatological presence, viz. the immediate encounter with the Divine – an experience that cannot be offered by liturgy, but in a mode of promise and foreshadowing.

In extreme cases like the example of frightening literalism related to a nun at St Katharinenthal near Constance, who was allegedly granted to see Christ offering himself as food to her by tearing off flesh from the palm of his hand, such expectations even claimed to transcend the sacramental mode of the Saviour’s real presence in the Eucharist in terms of realism – an experience of communion without liturgy, as it were.

Cases such as this one emphasise the amazing potential of such female counterparts with respect to official, male-controlled (and book-based!) concepts of sacrality. As Caroline Walker Bynum says in her seminal work Fragmentation and Redemption, ‘[t]he alliance of Christ and recipient not only bypassed but also directly challenged the authority of the priest and the monastic discipline’. Statute liturgy seems dispensable, and even more so its books, as – to quote Stephanus Hilpisch again – ‘it was all about the soul’s internal experience’. Such undermining of book-based authority was by no means the prerogative of Dominican nunnery, however. The founder of the other main branch of the mendicant movement, Francis of Assisi, was very reluctant to allow the possession of liturgical books, at least in his first ‘unregulated’ period: his brethren, because of poverty, should not have choir books like the traditional monks, he said.

5. Epilogue

Three centuries later, the epochal turn of the Reformation would bring about a radical sharpening of such critical
attitudes while fundamentally challenging the status of traditional liturgy as a system of cultic mediation. This historically far-reaching caesura also led to wide-ranging dismantling of liturgical manuscripts in the territories which had been conquered by the new faith, especially in the German and Scandinavian areas (Figs 9a and 9b).

Consultation of the huge amount of material in the Database of Medieval Fragments at the Stockholm National Archives has indicated a remarkable ratio in this respect: it lists more than 22,000 fragments stemming from around 6,000 manuscripts, with no less than 75 per cent of the material being of a liturgical nature.

There can be no doubt that this high percentage should be considered a symptomatic manifestation of the changing attitude to inherited liturgy and its books, albeit with two important reservations. First of all, we should not ignore the role of a fairly pragmatic aspect: as already mentioned, the writing material traditionally used for service books was parchment, and such manuscripts used to be of considerable size, at least when designated for common celebration. The coincidence of these two factors – the material and format – predestined liturgical manuscripts to be cut up and reused as archive wrappers (a quality they shared – at least as far as this rather technical aspect is concerned – with the characteristically large-size parchment volumes used in canon and civil law). Secondly, and even more importantly, in terms of the history of ideas, these practices of cutting and reusing the parchment need to be embedded in a broader perspective: if they may actually be seen in the wake of Protestant innovations of what we might call a theology of worship, this rupture with tradition can also be read as a ‘longue durée’ narrative, as it seems to be related to the slow but increasing undermining of the status of liturgical books in the religious mentality of the previous centuries. The medial status of pre-modern liturgical manuscripts is thus unveiled as changing and intrinsically ambiguous, as their promise of conveying divine presence which so thoroughly fascinated Christians of earlier times did not equally satisfy their later followers, especially in contexts of enhanced devotional enthusiasm: sacrality linked to books and texts was substantially jeopardised by the desire for immediate experience of the Sacred.

Fig. 9b: Stuttgart, Central State Archives, A 303 Bd 1328, two fragments of a liturgical manuscript re-used as book covers, still in situ.

73 For the following considerations, I have drawn on my essay ‘Cutting the Tradition – Changing Attitudes towards Liturgy’, 2005.
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Fig. 9a: © Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (Central State Archives, Stuttgart), Fragment A 303 Bd 1328.

Fig. 9b: © Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart (Central State Archives, Stuttgart), Fragments J 522 E I Bü 469 S 1.
Travelling the Time Line: The Visual Organisation of New Spanish Manuscripts about the Mexica

Anna Boroffka | Hamburg

During the Spanish conquest (1519–1521) and subsequent mission of the High Valley of modern-day Mexico, all the local pre-Hispanic manuscripts were destroyed. This destruction was not accompanied by a general halt in regional manuscript production, however. On the contrary, numerous new manuscripts were manufactured in Central Mexico on behalf of the Spanish crown and Christian missionaries. About 500 of these manuscripts have survived to this day. Over the last few decades, scholars have analysed these handwritten and hand-drawn colonial-era documents in an effort to detect traces of erased Aztec manuscript cultures and European influences. This article focuses on a subgroup of Central Mexican manuscripts that were produced during the Early Colonial Period (1521–c. 1600) and dealt with the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica, the inhabitants of the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City). Unlike previous research, the paper focuses on the dialectic of destroying, rewriting and restaging the indigenous heritage. In my article, I take pictorial and alphabetic manuscripts equally into account, as I believe this enables us to see things in a broader perspective and witness shifts and transformation processes within the visual organisation and visual narrative of these manuscripts.

I. Aztec manuscripts

It is known that in pre-Hispanic times, Central Mexico was populated by numerous small and large polities consisting of different groups of people and their territory. Several of the larger communities seem to have been independent city-states ruled by a tlatoani (‘speaker’) and surrounded by smaller, dependent polities. The structure of such an independent pre-Hispanic city-state is not completely known to us today and may have varied, but it seems that it was often centred on a relatively large town and its dependencies, including rural areas or civic and ceremonial centres, for example. Colonial records indicate that in pre-Hispanic times some kind of connection was established between the cities

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1 Only 14 manuscripts have survived from the whole of Mesoamerica that can be dated to the pre-Hispanic period with any certainty (three Maya codices, six codices of the Borgia Group and five Mixtec codices). None of these manuscripts are from Central Mexico. Federico Navarrete Linares connects the dialectic of burning and reproducing manuscripts to pre-Hispanic traditions. He emphasises that due to the pre-Hispanic valuation of orally transmitted knowledge, manuscripts were not regarded as unique and irreplaceable objects, but could be destroyed, reproduced, improved and adapted; Navarrete Linares 1998.

2 Robertson 1959; Cline 1975, 3–252; Boone 1998a.

3 The umbrella term ‘Aztecs’ subsumes the heterogeneous Nahuatl-speaking groups living in the Valley of Mexico between the fourteenth and early sixteenth century. According to legend, these groups (often shown as inhabitants of seven different caves) came from a mythical place known as Aztlan. The term was first used by the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero (1731–1778) and was made popular by Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859).

4 Besides several other studies, see Radin 1920; Robertson 1959; Nicholson 1971; Boone 1994b; Boone 1998a; Boone 2000.

5 When Axayacatl, the ruler of Tenochtitlan, conquered the neighbouring city of Tlatelolco in 1473, both city-states were united.

6 See Elizabeth Hill Boone’s fundamental study for a broader discussion of historiographical manuscripts, including Mixtec documents; Boone 2000.

7 This is also the topic of the sub-project B07 ‘Collecting, Extinguishing, Rewriting and Restaging Cultural Identity and History: Cultural Encyclopaedias on New Spain’ at the Sonderforschungsbereich 950.


of Tenochtitlan (inhabited by the Mexica), Texcoco (home of the Alcohua) and Tlacopan (present-day Tacuba, associated with the Tepanec). Researchers interpreted this connection of the three city-states and their corresponding ethnic groups as a 'Triple Alliance' (Fig. 1).

This alliance was apparently controlled by the Mexica Tenochtitlan and became the foundation of the Aztec empire, the dominant political power in Central Mexico until the Spanish conquest. It is evident that the heterogeneous Nahuatl-speaking groups living in Central Mexico before the conquest maintained an elaborate manuscript-production system. Due to the lack of surviving manuscripts, however, all our conclusions about the content, materiality and form of these pre-Hispanic manuscripts are drawn from colonial sources and examples. The Franciscan friar Motolinía (Toribio de Benavente, 1482–1569), one of the twelve missionaries to arrive in New Spain in 1524, described five types of Aztec manuscripts, including four kinds of religious manuscripts (which were clearly idolatrous in his eyes) and one kind of (much more trustworthy) manuscripts about the years and times. Elizabeth Hill Boone has pointed out that a third manuscript group including Aztec documents for practical use (like tribute and tax lists, pictorial testimonies and land records) must have existed besides these two categories. It can furthermore be assumed that the hand-drawn Aztec documents were either guarded in temples or kept in so-called ‘book houses’ and archives belonging to the palaces of rulers and noble families, depending on their content.

The Aztec writing system is not fully understood any more and has not been entirely deciphered either, but numerous studies about it agree that the Nahuatl-speaking peoples used a recording system consisting of pictures and glyphs (as they are called in Mesoamerican studies) before they were introduced to the Latin alphabet by the Spaniards. There are various calendar and number signs among the glyphs, but also signs used as morphograms (logograms) or phonograms (syllabograms). This notation system, which lived on during the colonial period when it was supplemented with alphabetic glosses, was able to record dates and quantities as well as names of places and persons, including their titles and sociopolitical designations. However, most of the information and the actual narration was not provided via glyphs, but by pictures without defined phonetic values. This way of producing manuscripts, which is called tlacuilolli in Nahuatl, translated by the Spaniards as either ‘writing’ or ‘painting’, was not a general recording system of spoken language, nor did it create a continuous and reproducible text. This is why some scholars have described

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11 Borgia Steck 1951, 74–75.

12 Consisting of ritual calendars or books of the days and feasts of the years; books of dreams, illusions, superstitions and omens; books related to baptism and the names bestowed on children; books of rites, ceremonies and omens relating to marriage; cf. Boone 2000, 22.

13 Concerning the history manuscripts, see Boone 1998a, 152–153; Boone 2000, 22.


16 Marc Zender claimed in 2008 that Alfonso Lacadena’s studies (2008a; 2008b) about the Nahuatl script published in the same year could be considered the final breakthrough; Zender 2008. Gordon Whittaker strongly refutes this opinion, however; Whittaker 2009.

17 Whittaker points out that all signs with a phonetical use are derived from logograms involving a rebus application; Whittaker 2009, 62.

18 On pictorial documents of the post-conquest period up to the end of the sixteenth century, see Boone 1998a.
it as a partial, restricted or limited writing system, while others have criticised this classification, arguing for the general necessity of a broader concept of writing and textual discourse. Due to the character of the Aztec notation system, manuscripts were generally not intended for individual or private reading, but needed an interpreter and – when shown in public – were part of narrative performances and oral traditions. How the interaction between the pictorial document and oral explanation was balanced, whether the drawings were meant to be interpreted as mnemonic devices and scripts for a performance, or if the oral explanations were of a supplementary character is still being debated. But early colonial era sources indicate the status of pictorial manuscripts as verifying documents and evidence, used as a basis for oral accounts and alphabetical writings.

As no pre-Hispanic Aztec manuscripts have been handed down, we can only guess – by analysing colonial era sources and artefacts – what their physical appearance might have been. The extant Central Mexican manuscripts of the Early Colonial Period can generally be grouped into three forms: (1) large, rectangular sheets of paper, (2) long, screenfolded strips and (3) codices bound in quires. The first two book forms are considered to be a continuation of pre-Hispanic tradition, while the third type is an adoption of European codex binding and form. Furthermore, it is known that the Aztecs – like the Mayas centuries before them – used amate (or amatl) sheets produced from the bark of a fig tree as supporting material. In pre-Hispanic times, amate paper was valued as a tribute and also played a significant role in religious rituals. Due to its religious significance, the Spaniards regulated and prohibited the manufacture and use of bark paper. Nevertheless, a great number of surviving Central Mexican manuscripts from the Early Colonial Period are made of amate paper. During the sixteenth century, this material was gradually supplanted by European paper. But until 1575, when a royal concession was granted to open the first paper mill in Culhuacan, European paper used for Central Mexican manuscripts had to be imported, and therefore was generally spared for documents of a certain importance, like the codices sent to the Spanish court.

II. The pictorial manuscripts about Mexica history

The pictorial history manuscripts that are still extant are of a regional character. They do not provide a general historiography of Central Mexico or the Aztec realm, but narrate the history of their respective communities. Given the rivalry of pre-Hispanic polities and their jockeying for power during colonial times, they have to be analysed not only as identity-forming documents, but as media with which to obtain and defend political and economic benefits. This second aspect will be discussed in more detail later on.

The majority of colonial period manuscripts about the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica deal with their departure from the mythical place of Aztlan, their migration to the Valley of Mexico and the founding of Tenochtitlan. Some of them also cover later times and narrate how the Mexica expanded their territory by conquering the surrounding cities until they were defeated by the Spanish army led by Hernán

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19 Barthe 1968, 283.
21 Whittaker 2009.
22 Mignolo 1995, 7–8, 20; Boone 1994a; Boone 2000, 28–63; Boornazian Diel 2008, 8. Also see Lacadena 2008a, 17.
26 See Gumbert 1993 as well.
27 In Mesoamerican studies, all pre-Hispanic and colonial pictorial manuscripts are called codices, although they are not actually bound in quires.
28 The shifts of visual organisation accompanying the replacement of pre-Hispanic with colonial manuscripts are described in Robertson 1959 and Escalante Gonzalibro 1996.
29 All four known Maya codices (the Dresden Codex, Madrid Codex, Paris Codex and Grolier Codex) are made of amate paper. The earliest of them date back to the thirteenth century.
32 Hunter 1978, 479.
34 Also see Levin Rojo 2014.
Cortés (1485–1547). Although the content of the manuscripts is more or less identical, the extant picture manuscripts differ strongly in their appearance. Their visual organisation can be roughly divided into two types, each of which shapes a different kind of historiographical narrative. The first type is the cartographic history or historiographical topography known as a mapa ('map'), painted on large rectangular sheets of amate or European paper. These mapas were read multidirectionally and depict Mexica history embedded in topographic surroundings. The second type is named tira ('strip'); these manuscripts are made of long screenfold strips of amate or European paper glued together, showing Mexica history in relation to a time line running from left to right. Furthermore, a subgroup or modification of the tira manuscripts also exists; these pictorial manuscripts are made of amate or European paper bound in quires like European codices, but they stick to the horizontal page format that tira manuscripts have. Besides these pictorial forms of historiography, numerous alphabetic manuscripts were written about the Mexica and their history during colonial times. These manuscripts will be discussed later on. The categorisation of historiographical manuscripts applied above is based on – and modifies – previous attempts to analyse and categorise extant Mexica history documents. He divided the manuscripts into ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ sources according to their assumed proximity to an indigenous heritage. Following his classification, ‘primary’ sources are the pictorial documents painted in a pre-Hispanic style (as well as some early alphabetic manuscripts based on – and replacing – native pictorial documents that got lost or were destroyed). ‘Secondary’ sources are the alphabetic – and often illuminated – manuscripts written by Spaniards or mestizos. Radin furthermore established three subcategories of ‘primary’ sources, defined by their content: manuscripts dealing with the Mexica migration, manuscripts about the post-migration (or imperial) area, and manuscripts including both periods. His division between pictorial and alphabetic manuscripts and the subcategorisation of pictorial manuscripts according to the period they cover is of fundamental importance without a doubt, although since all existing Central Mexican manuscripts were produced under colonial rule, they all integrate pre-Hispanic and European elements, combining them in unique colonial styles. A division between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ sources is therefore hard to defend. In this context, I believe it is even problematic to speak of ‘pre-Hispanic’ and ‘European’ manuscript elements or traditions, as they might have different stylistic origins, but are all part of the contemporary repertoire. Nevertheless, I have used these terms here, not in an essentialist way or to describe a temporal development, but to mark different aesthetic values mixed together in a hybrid texture. It is important to bear in mind that this texture is more than just the sum of its individual elements; it is a new, multi-layered, transcultural creation.

Analysing the pictorial manuscripts of sixteenth-century Central Mexico, it becomes clear that their heterogeneity is basically in terms of their visual organisation and, thus, a heterogeneity of visual narrative. In the following, these different kinds of visual narratives will not be discussed as different stages of a teleological development, but – taking their time of origin into account – as synchronic phenomena. This is a perspective that has not been regarded sufficiently yet. In 1959, art historian Donald Robertson published a pioneering study on painted manuscripts from the Valley of Mexico. On the grounds of their visual organisation (or ‘style’ as Robertson put it), he divided the historiographical manuscripts into two groups: (a) ‘time-oriented’ manuscripts based on time signs and organising historical events with the aid of a time line, and (b) ‘place-oriented’ manuscripts based on place signs and narrating history embedded in a topography. He furthermore assumed that the ‘place-oriented’ histories had been developed from the older ‘time-oriented’ histories. By doing this, Robertson established a basic distinction regarding pictorial Aztec history manuscripts,


36 Radin 1920.

37 One example of such an alphabetic ‘primary’ source is the anonymous Historia de los Mexicanos por sus pinturas, which is thought to have been written in the 1530s.

38 I am referring to a concept of hybridity which does not emphasise the development of cultural codes, but their usage. This model was elaborated by Homi K. Bhabha, Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, amongst others; Bhabha 1994, Dean and Leibsohn 2003. For further discussion of this topic, see Kern 2010.

39 In doing so, I follow a definition of transculturality used by Wolfgang Welsch; Welsch 1997. Also see Schütze and Zapata Galindo 2007. On processes of transcultural negotiation in Mexico, see Kern 2013.

40 Robertson 1959.

41 Ibid., 62–65.
which was accepted by other scholars and further developed by H. B. Nicholson and Boone.\textsuperscript{42} Up to now, though, no evidence has actually been presented to back up the claim that one form of visual organisation is indeed older than the other. A new contribution to the debate on how to analyse and classify the heterogeneous manuscripts about Mexica history was made in 2000 by Federico Navarrete Linares, who generally refutes Robertson’s hypothesis of ‘place-oriented’ and ‘time-oriented’ manuscripts.\textsuperscript{43} Referencing Mikhail Bakhtin’s literary theory,\textsuperscript{44} Navarrete Linares describes the visual narration of all pictographic migration manuscripts as chronotopes structured by entangled time and space lines. He argues that this kind of visual narrative, which he considers to be a native tradition, was adapted to different manuscript formats during colonial times, but basically kept its intrinsic meaning. In doing so, Navarrete Linares focuses on the similarities of the narrative rather than on its formal attributes. This idea is an interesting new approach to the corpus of pictorial history manuscripts, which shall be discussed in more detail later on. Nevertheless, I will stick to a classification of the manuscripts according to their visual organisation. Aspects like format, materiality, reading direction and structure of content are not only important for orientation guides in an unknown territory, but were made to relate an identity defining legend of origin. Unlike most of the mediaeval and early modern European chronicles or annals we know of today, the narrative of the mapas is not structured according to a sequence of years, but according to changes of place and distances travelled. Their way of recording history is thus based on territories and movements rather than dates. The result could be described as a localised or – as Robertson put it – ‘place-oriented’ historiography.\textsuperscript{46}

One of the cartographic histories is the Mapa de Sigüenza\textsuperscript{47} (Fig. 2), which was produced on a large piece of amate paper (54.5 × 77.5 cm) in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{48} The narrative starts with the migration of the Mexica from Aztlan and concludes with the founding of Tenochtitlan in the Valley of Mexico. Aztlan, according to legend an island in a lake, can be seen in the top-right corner of the map. The island is pictured as a pre-Hispanic mountain glyph, while the rectangular form of the image and the waves of the surrounding water resemble European woodcuts. Two heads with attached name glyphs and a canoe with a human lying in it are floating on the waves. Some effort has been made to interpret the content of the images.\textsuperscript{49} On a tree emerging from the island and painted in a European style, an equally European-style bird is perched, which represents Huitzilopochtli, the god who is said to have guided the Mexica tribe on its long journey.\textsuperscript{50} Pre-Hispanic speech glyphs in front of the bird’s beak indicate it is uttering sounds, but they provide no details or specification about the kind of sound or speech. This creates a kind of ambiguity in the narrative that can also be found in other parts of the manuscript and shows the necessity of additional orally transmitted knowledge provided by an interpreter.

A continuous line and footprints embedded therein show the path travelled by several successive generations of Mexica, establishing a coherent group beyond the individual lifetimes of the travellers. The trail first forms a circle around Aztlan, overview of his new territories (esp. 91–133 for the pre-Hispanic heritage of these maps). Also see Leibsohn 1995. For maps about land concessions, see Russo 2005.

\textsuperscript{46} Robertson 1959, 62–65.  
\textsuperscript{47} Mapa de Sigüenza, sixteenth century, amate paper, 54.5 × 77.5 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.  
\textsuperscript{49} Boone 2000, 166.  
\textsuperscript{50} On the representation of Huitzilopochtli, see Boone 1989.
then leads to the bottom-right corner, from there to the top-left corner and finally to the Valley of Mexico in the bottom-left corner of the map. Unlike the surrounding territory, the High Valley around Lake Texcoco is depicted more in detail (becoming more geographic than toponymic) and is mainly upside down. One has to turn the sheet around to follow the narration, which splits up into three paths. This change of perspective indicates the end of the Mexica migration story. The longest and most important of the three paths runs through the dense vegetation of the plateau and crosses one of the straight canals, referring to the sophisticated drainage system the Mexica created after settling in the valley. The path finally reaches the place where a Nopal cactus, which alludes to the founding myth of Tenochtitlan, marks the future site of the city on an island in the middle of Lake Texcoco – depicted here as the centre of two canals that cross. The setting of the newly founded city is similar to the site of Aztlan, which had been left behind. (That is what the manuscript suggests, at least.) Scholars are still debating about the location of the historical Aztlan – if ever it existed – and the unsolved question of whether the memory of Aztlan was influenced retrospectively by Tenochtitlan or Tenochtitlan was built in the middle of a lake with the purpose of creating a new Aztlan. The existing pictorial and alphabetic histories point out the similarities between both cities. The reason for this, as Navarrete Linares has suggested, might be found in a legitimation strategy used by the Mexica to claim the island of Tenochtitlan as their own, arguing that they came from a place that was nearly identical.

As Navarrete Linares emphasises, the *Mapa de Sigüenza* combines spatial and temporal devices. A closer look at it

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51 Boone divides the depicted areas of the *Mapa Sigüenza* into a sequential space (‘espacio secuencial’), which reaches up to the Valley of Mexico, and a real space (‘espacio real’) depicting the area around Lake Texcoco; Boone 1998b, 28.

52 Levin Rojo 2014.


54 Navarrete Linares 2000, 35.
reveals that the devices are not equally balanced, however. The path from Aztlan to the Valley of Mexico is marked by place glyphs; in accordance with the pre-Hispanic counting system, dots (or disks) indicate how many years the Mexica spent in each place. ‘Year bundles’ alluding to the new fire ceremony called ‘Binding of the Years’ show the closing of a 52-year cycle. Interestingly, both ways of measuring time lead to different results, creating a temporal vagueness: adding up the year signs, it seems the Mexica travelled for less than 200 years, but according to the bundles it was more than 400. As Boone has pointed out, though, this discrepancy is of little importance for the narrative. Other elements of time counting, such as calendar signs, have not been included. Consequently, the actual historiographical narrative is implied in the path: several generations of Mexica travelled over hundreds of years. In which year they started, when they reached which city or on which date they founded Tenochtitlan might also have been part of the additional explanation provided by a narrator, but details of this kind are not revealed by the manuscript itself.

II.2 Screenfold manuscripts containing annals
The second kind of historiographical manuscripts about the Mexica – the tiras, or screenfold annals manuscripts – were geared to time rather than place and movement. A well-known example is provided by the Tira de Tepechpan (Fig. 3) produced in the sixteenth century. The strip is over six meters long and composed of 20 sheets of amate paper. A time line made up of Mesoamerican calendar signs divides the manuscript into a top and bottom half. Each sign symbolises one year. Some of the calendar signs have European year dates written beside them. Based on these calendrical translations, it is assumed that the time line runs from 1298 to 1596. The upper register is devoted to the founding of the minor Central Mexican city of Tepechpan and the history of its inhabitants and regents, while the lower register depicts the history of the Mexica during their migration and the imperial and colonial periods. The beginning of the tira is in a poor condition, but the first miniature on the lower register seems to be a painting of two Chichimec hunters, indicating the nomadic origin of the Mexica. The following miniatures show single events which, according to legend, happened during the migration and conclude with the founding of Tenochtitlan. However, the migration itself is not part of the visual narrative. The succession of miniatures is structured by the ongoing time line, not a path, track, or other territorially embedded movement. The Mexica migration is therefore not a spatial action, but a series of dated historical events.

Robertson considered the tira a prime example of ‘time-oriented’ pictorial history, representing the oldest form of Central Mexican historiographical manuscripts. Boone followed this theory, describing the ‘unbroken ribbon of time’ that the manuscript presents as the original form of Aztec pre-Hispanic annals. She furthermore suggested that the unbroken year account was developed by the Mexica to present their ‘official’ history. Lori Boornazian Diel, who emphasised the hybrid and palimpsestual nature of the Tira de Tepechpan, also classified the layout as shaped by the model of the ‘Mexica annals format.’ As we are ignorant of any Aztec predecessor to this kind of historiography, though, the unbroken ribbon of time could just as well be a colonial invention, aiming to integrate the migration legend into a European chronology. This chronology unites the pre-Hispanic and Early Colonial Period to an ongoing...
narrative supported by several glosses besides the calendar signs and translating them into European dates, suggesting a transcultural equivalence of temporal and recording concepts.

II.2.1 Media of claims to power

In general, Boone described the mapas and annals or tira manuscripts as community pictorials painted to configure group identity. She furthermore emphasises that during colonial times they became an important means of arguing for claims to power. The reason for this lies in the usage of pictorial documents as legal proof and the political situation at the time. After the conquest, the Spaniards installed a ruling system quite similar to the pre-Hispanic political system before the Aztec ‘Triple Alliance’: they divided the existing polities into larger and independent city-states (‘cabeceras’) ruled by a tlatoani and smaller and dependent communities (‘sujetos’). The dependent communities were forced to pay tributes and had to work for the independent city-states, which in turn had the same obligations to the Spanish crown. By doing this, the Spaniards elevated the political position of numerous communities to the status of former members of the ‘Triple Alliance’. Amongst other things, this accelerated the scramble and rivalry among the communities to benefit from the political reorganisation of Central Mexico in early colonial times.

Their claim to power was based on pictorial histories which enhanced and manipulated history, including documents like the Tira de Tepechpan. Lori Boornazian Diel’s comparison of the two registers suggests that the visual organisation was used to assign value and hierarchy to the two narrative strands, evidence of Tepechpan’s rivalry with Tenochtitlan. Thus, the upper register shows people from Tepechpan as being noble, civilised and morally superior, whereas the Mexica are denigrated as uncivilised and insignificant. The colouring of the time line – alternating between red, blue, yellow and green – is likewise based on the succession of regents of Tepechpan, not the changes of ruler in Tenochtitlan. The historically insignificant small town of Tepechpan rather than the leading power of the ‘Triple Alliance’ and capital of the Aztec empire thus became the centre of the historiographical narrative. Consequently, the founding of Tenochtitlan, which took place in the year ‘2 House’ (1325) according to other artefacts, was re-dated on the tira time line to around 35 years after the founding of Tepechpan.

This time shift not only denies the Mexica city-state’s historical status as the older settlement, but it disconnects the founding of the city from the calendar sign ‘2 House’, a very symbolic sign for the Mexica. The plain depiction of
disuse of the original Nahua title made it possible for minor communities, which had been dependent before, to rightfully call themselves cabeceras; Gibson 1964, 36.


Boornazian Diel 2008, 42.
the founding of Tenochtitlan and the comparatively carefully designed miniature of the founding of Tepechpan further accentuate this hierarchy in artistic terms. Elsewhere, too, the *tira* devalues the history of the Mexica and at the same time enhances the value of the inhabitants of Tepechpan. The lower register, for example, shows two people prepared for sacrifice, which are assigned to the year ‘2 Reed’ (and hence the new-year ritual) and who have been identified as a Mexica tribal leader and his daughter.\(^75\) In the upper register, the Mexica human sacrifice is contrasted with an animal sacrifice at the Tepechpan temple.\(^76\) Boornazian Diel argues that this juxtaposition aims to denigrate the Mexica, pointing out that at the time the *tira* was produced, human sacrifice was deemed a comparatively uncivilised, ‘barbaric’ act that was morally inferior to animal sacrifice.\(^77\) Interestingly, the animal sacrifice is ascribed to four Mexica couples who moved to Tepechpan. Their moral superiority is thus defined by the fact that they now belong to Tepechpan and the upper register, not by their ethnic origin.

### II.2.2 Entanglements of time lines and spatial units

Only one screenfold *tira* manuscript is known from the Mexica area of Central Mexico. It is called *Tira de la Peregrinación*\(^78\) and consists of 22 sheets of amate paper glued together to form a strip about five and a half meters long (Fig. 4). The unfinished, monochrome sixteenth-century manuscript shows the events of relevance to the Mexica, starting with their legendary departure from Aztlan in the year ‘1 Flint’ up to the year ‘6 Reed’. In the pre-Hispanic calendar system, a cycle is completed once every 52 years and the counting then starts anew with the calendar sign ‘1 Flint’. As no superordinate counting system existed, further information is required to differentiate between the distinct 52-year cycles. That is why a translation of the depicted dates always bears the risk of misinterpretation if no additional European year dates have been written next to the Mesoamerican signs (like in the *Tira de Tepechpan*). The calendrical deciphering of the *Tira de la Peregrinación* is still being discussed for this reason and scholars’ interpretations vary. Some scholars believe the manuscript to cover the years from 1116 to 1303,\(^79\) while more recent research argues that it most likely spans from 1168 to 1355.\(^80\) Unlike the *Tira de Tepechpan*, the *Tira de la Peregrinación* doesn’t show a continuous but an interrupted year account. Boone explains the broken time line as a consequence of its visual organisation.\(^81\) She argues that an annal’s narrative is unable to present a migration story, which is basically the narrative of ‘the movement of people across the land’.

In the *Tira de la Peregrinación*, the time line was shaped into blocks of time which, like the dots or disks in the *Mapa*

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\(^75\) Ibid., 36–37.

\(^76\) Ibid., 36.

\(^77\) Ibid., 38–40. A transcultural perspective concerning the European construction and strategic appliance of the Mexica sacrificial rituals is provided in a study by Margit Kern; Kern 2013.

\(^78\) *Tira de la Peregrinación* (*Codex Boturini*), sixteenth century, amate paper (22 sheets), 19.8 × 549 cm, Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

\(^79\) Brotherston 1992, 106.

\(^80\) Johansson Keraudren 2007, 8–9. Among other aspects, this hypothesis is based on information from the *Codices Azcatitlan, Mexicanus and Rios*.

\(^81\) Boone 2000, 213.

\(^82\) Boone 2000, 213.
from Sigüenza, show how long the Mexica stayed in a given place. The clusters of calendar signs are only kept together by a thin black line, which is hardly visible anymore and might have been a later addition. In comparison with the Tira de Tepechpan, the interruption of the time line can be read as a power shift between temporal and spatial elements serving to structure the narrative: by dividing the time line, the manuscript creates room for the migration narrative. This spatial narration integrates the temporal elements, but uses them like the cartographic histories to mark an ellipsis or a pause during the journey. This raises major doubts as to the correctness of Robertson’s classification of tira manuscripts generally being ‘time-oriented.’ It rather argues in favour of Navarrete Linares’ theory of temporal and spatial entanglements structuring the visual narrative of Mexica history.

Another variation of a discontinued time line can be found in the Codex Azcatitlan (Fig. 5), which likewise depicts the migration of the Mexica and their arrival in the Valley of Mexico. On a symbolical level, as Pablo Escalante Gonzalbo has shown, the drawings connect the Mexica migration with the Israelites’ leaving slavery in Egypt by including palm trees, following the model of engravings taken from a biblical book of Exodus. This parallel between the Mexica and Israelites, who were both guided through the hardships of their journey into a promised land by their god, is more than an eclectic visual incidence showing the reception of European images during the manufacturing of colonial codices. In fact, it reflects a colonial interpretation and parallel reading of the Mexica and their history: several of the Christian missionaries like the Franciscans Motolinía and Gerónimo de Mendieta (1525–1604) and the Dominican Diego Durán (1537–1587) assumed the Mexica to be one of the Ten Lost Tribes of the Old Testament. As the Apocalypse of John (7, 4–9) tells us that the lost tribes will reappear on the day of the Last Judgment, the identification of the Mexica as being of Jewish descendent also implied the approaching end of the world.

The Codex Azcatitlan is made of European paper and was bound in quires, like European codices. Several sections of the manuscript, which is generally dated to the second half of the sixteenth century or the first half of the seventeenth, are painted in a European style, while other parts try to stay close to pre-Hispanic painting traditions. To explain the diversity of styles employed, Robertson suggested that the manuscript might be a hastily made seventeenth- or even eighteenth-century copy of a lost original. But Navarrete Linares argues that the composition of the codex is coherent, however in a colonial time sense of the word, mixing European and Mesoamerican painting traditions

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83 Robertson 1959.
84 Navarrete Linares 2000.
85 Codex Azcatitlan, sixteenth or seventeenth century (?), European paper, 25 folios (21 × 28 cm), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Mexicain 59–64.
in an attempt to reach audiences with different cultural backgrounds. This cultural complexity is also reflected by the visual organisation. Even if the pictorial manuscript is presented in the disguise of a European codex, the horizontal format and the narrative extending beyond the boundaries of the pages follow a pre-Hispanic manuscript tradition: the painters took care not to create any breaks whenever they reached the end of a page, connecting the miniatures as an ongoing narration. Hence the codex can be read like a pre-Hispanic screenfold by flipping the pages.

The manuscript covers the migration and the imperial and colonial period. By organising these periods in a row, the manuscript’s architecture connects them to a continual historiography. The section of the Mexica migration itself includes fragmented sequences and blocks of time distributed across the pages. Unlike in the Tira de la Peregrinación, the sequence of years assigned to individual stages of the migration does not mark the time spent at a given place, but the duration of the changes of place. Hence they are not used to indicate and describe a pause during the journey, but to describe the distances travelled. Or as Navarrete Linares puts it, ‘time [is being] measured by the rhythm of the stopovers of the migrants in their journey’.  

The journey itself is expressed by a path that meanders across the pages from bottom to top and from top to bottom. The manuscript’s surface is perceived and explored as a three-dimensional space, filled with rivers to be crossed and mountains to be climbed. In several cases, the path disappears behind a hill, depicted in the form of a pre-Hispanic glyph, adding a spatial character to the textual element. The arrangement of the calendar signs within the pages tends to be subordinated and in some cases even ambivalent and disconnected from the main narration provided by the continuous path. It is the Mexica’s track, not the calendar signs, that structures the migration story by connecting the different historical events, thereby recalling the visual narrative of topographic historiographical manuscripts.

Even in some of the migration manuscripts that keep an uninterrupted time line chronology, we can see attempts to subordinate the time line to the territorial narrative rather than vice versa. One example is the Codex Mexicanus (Fig. 6). Produced presumably at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century, this manuscript consists of several pieces of amate paper and was fastened like European codices. As in the Codex Azcatitlan, the pages are of a horizontal format and were painted and written on both sides. The painters took care to draw the time line at the same height on each page. Like in the Codex Azcatitlan, this creates a narrative that does not correspond with the limits of the pages but develops beyond them, connecting them to an ongoing narration in the tradition of pre-Hispanic screenfold manuscripts.

The counting of the years starts with a miniature showing the Mexica leaving Aztlan. Or rather, the counting of the years is introduced immediately after the Mexica’s departure. What we see is a group of people, some of

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92 Ibid., 153.
them carrying bundles on their back, standing in a place surrounded by water. The Mexica are looking and gesturing upwards, to a bird sitting in a treetop and representing the animal incarnation of Huitzilopochtli, the legendary leader and god of the Mexica. The animal’s body is drawn facing toward the right, but its head is turned to the group of people. Two Mesoamerican speech glyphs emerge from the bird’s beak, symbolising the uttering of sounds. A black line marks the track the Mexica will take. This line rises up, passes the tree and ends at the feet of a human figure, which – paralleling the body language of the bird – is facing to the right, but has also turned its head toward the Mexica group. This figure, which can be interpreted as a human incarnation of Huitzilopochtli, is on the first Mesoamerican calendar sign of the depicted time line and signals to the Mexica below to follow him by climbing the time line. Not only does this image connect the start of the journey with the beginning of a historiographical chronology, defining the undepicted pre-migration area as prehistoric. It also gives the following – essentially immaterial – reckoning of the years a physical character, reinterpreting it as a spatial rather than temporal pictorial element. The succession of years is thus turned into a distance that can be travelled. And more than that, as Navarrete Linares has shown: the painters are systematically playing with the idea of physical temporality. Take the miniature of Chicomoztoc, for instance: the legendary seven caves the Mexica reached during their journey are placed below the time bar. On one side there are footprints descending to the cave and they emerge again on the other side to indicate the continuation of the journey. With this, the time line not only turns in a distance to be travelled, but becomes the surface of the Earth, creating an upper and a lower register for the manuscript page, which is defined as above ground and below it.

II.3 Alphabetic historiographical manuscripts

The third category of colonial-period historiographical manuscripts about the Mexica is alphabetical writings in Spanish or Nahuatl. Several of these texts are included in multiple-text manuscripts about pre-Hispanic Aztec life and knowledge, which are often highly illuminated. These manuscripts (mostly written by Christian missionaries) were generally made of European paper bound in quires.

95 Escalante Gonzalbo interprets the men with bundles as teomamaque (‘god-carriers’). He points out that one of them holds a thick walking stick, which reminds one of St Christopher’s walking stick in a sixteenth-century painting (showing the saint carrying Christ) in the Franciscan church of Tlatelolco; see Escalante Gonzalbo 2003, 182–183.

96 Also see Navarrete Linares 2000, 32–34.

97 Like Aztlan, Chicomoztoc seems to be a mythological place rather than an actual one. In other colonial manuscripts about the Mexica’s origin, the legendary leaving of the seven caves is strongly connected with the leaving of Aztlan, suggesting that Chicomoztoc was, in fact, part of Aztlan.

98 More than 40 alphabetic codices about the Mexica migration have been preserved from the sixteenth century. Navarrete Linares 1997, 61–62 lists seven of them, dividing them into ‘indigenous’ and ‘Spanish’ histories. For alphabetic codices written by indigenous historians, see Boone 1998a, 190–193 as well.

99 For a definition of multiple-text manuscripts, see Friedrich and Schwarke 2016.
and were designed to be of use within the mission or sent to the Spanish court. Researchers have often referred to these compilations as ‘cultural encyclopaedias’, but so far, neither the corpus nor the genre of these works has been analysed thoroughly. One of the earliest known examples of such a manuscript about pre-Hispanic times is the *Codex Mendoza* (c. 1542), which does not narrate the legendary migration, but gives an account of the imperial period between the founding of Tenochtitlan and the Spanish conquest. The manuscript, which was written and painted on European paper, was commissioned by the first New Spanish viceroy, Antonio de Mendoza (1535–1550) and originally intended for Charles I of Spain (1516–1556). The classification of the *Codex Mendoza* and other related alphabetic multiple-text manuscripts as ‘encyclopaedias’ or ‘encyclopaedic writings’ derives from the famous *Florentine Codex* and its encyclopaedic structure. The *Florentine Codex*, written in Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin, was produced under the aegis of the Franciscan missionary Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) and sent to Philip II of Spain (1556–1598). Unlike other alphabetic compilations about pre-Hispanic history, religion and knowledge, the manuscript’s architecture follows the model of European encyclopaedias created in classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, among them the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (23/24–79), the *Etymologiae* compiled by Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) and the Franciscan *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (before 1203–1272). According to the encyclopaedic aspiration of the manuscript (and unlike the other examples discussed in this text), the corresponding chapter of the *Florentine Codex* does not confine itself to narrating the history of the Mexica’s origins, but claims to give an overview of all the generations who populated New Spain in pre-Hispanic times. Starting with the Toltecs, who Sahagún’s Nahuatl text parallels with the Babylonians (his Spanish text compares them with the Trojans, the legendary founders of Rome). Mexica history is not presented here as the

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100 The following are generally classified as cultural encyclopaedias: *Codex Mendoza*, the *Florentine Codex*, *Durán Codex*, *Tovar Manuscript*, *Codex Ramírez* (Mexico City, Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico 35–100), *Codex Tudela* (Madrid, Museo de América, Ms. 70400), *Codex Magliabechiano* (Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Ms. Magl., XIII, 3), *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. Mexicain No. 385), *Codex Ríos* (an Italian version of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis* partially attributed to the Dominican Pedro de los Ríos, Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Codex Vaticanus 3738) as well as all the calendar wheels. See Boone 1998a, 160–161. On encyclopaedic works about the New World, also see Rabasa 1993, 125–179.

103 *Florentine Codex* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España*), c. 1577, European paper, 1,223 folios (31 × 21.2 cm), Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Mediceo Palatino, 218–220.

104 Robertson 1966. Also see Folger 2003.

105 *Florentine Codex* (*Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España*), book 10, chap. 29 (‘De todas las generaciones que aun poblado en esta tierra’), fols 114 v–149.

106 On the parallels Sahagún draws between Mexica and Greco-Roman history, see Todorov 1987, 243–244; Keen 1990, 116–117.
The alphabetical writings about the Mexica adapt the migration story to a European manuscript page layout that fundamentally alters the nature of the narrative. Unlike the pictorial manuscripts discussed above, which were bound in quires (Codex Azcatitlan and Codex Mexicanus), the pages are in a vertical format. Furthermore, the categories of image and script – not existant in Aztec manuscript cultures – are defined and separate. A closer look reveals the permeability of these categories, however, showing phenomena of mutual interaction that go beyond the relationship between picture and text found in European manuscripts. In the Codex Mendoza, for example, alphabetic and pictorial sections are separated on different pages, but juxtaposed as two alternative systems of recording the same content. Thereby – as the Spanish text emphasises – the pictorial form of record keeping is regarded the original one, while the alphabetical writings are considered a hurried and imperfect attempt to grasp the images’ meaning. Alphabetic glosses besides the pictures furthermore indicating the translation between image and script.

In examples like the first treatise of the Dominican Durán Codex (1581) (Fig. 7a), which tells Mexica history from its legendary origins up to the Spanish conquest, this kind of valuing of the pictorial form of historiography is absent in the visual organisation (at first glance, at least).

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107 The Mexica history is narrated in book 10, chap. 14 (‘De los mexicanos’), fol. 139v–149r as a Spanish and Nahuatl text. See Levin Rojo 2014, 123.

108 Also see Bleichmar 2015.

109 Durán Codex (Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme), 1581, European paper, 344 folios (28 × 19 cm), Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vitr. 26–11. It is assumed that the manuscript formerly belonged to the royal collection of Philip V (1700–1746); Couch 1989, 44–45. According to Durán, the third treatise was finished in 1579 (fol. 316r) and the first one was completed in 1581 (fol. 221r). For the dating of the first treatises, also see ibid., 24–25, 65.
The manuscript section is dominated by alphabetical writings and the inserted images – the first six of which relate to the Mexica’s migration – are separated from the text by black and white framing, recalling the aesthetics of framed woodcut prints.\(^{110}\) As a result, the images seem to be decorative attachments or, as N. C. Christopher Couch has suggested,\(^{111}\) illustrations of the text in the tradition of illuminated European manuscripts. The pictures are all in a primary position, however; each one was put directly before a new chapter, serving as a kind of frontispiece to introduce the text that followed. The physical proximity of images and chapter headings furthermore creates a link between the two categories, allowing one to interpret the textual titles both as chapter titles and picture captions. The illumination (Fig. 7b) belonging to the second chapter of the first treatise, for example, shows three Chichimec hunters equipped with bows and arrows departing from the open mouth of an earth monster, which recalls medieval illuminations and woodcuts of the mouth of hell.\(^{112}\) The three hunters have been placed in a row, moving toward the right-hand side of the image, visualising a trail. Their feet are equally in a row, reminding one of the footprints embedded in the tracks of cartographic migration manuscripts.

The heading below the image reads ‘Second chapter: how the indigenous peoples left the seven caves they inhabited to come to this land.’\(^{113}\) This information clarifies two things: on one hand, we know that the hunters are to be interpreted as members of the legendary seven tribes leaving Chicomoztoc and migrating to the Valley of Mexico. On the other hand, it connects the picture with the illumination of the previous chapter (fol. 2\(^{r}\)), showing the seven tribes seated in the caves. The image of the three hunters, thus, becomes part of a series and a visual narration, while the alphabetic script adds information about the pictured departure and journey. The Spanish text of the first treatise of the Durán Codex is considered to be a translation of a lost alphabetic Nahuatl document recording oral history (connected with the hypothetical so called Crónica X, or rather the Crónica

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\(^{110}\) According to N. C. Christopher Couch, the page layout follows the model of printed editions of the Old Testament, designed to support Durán’s theory of the Mexica being descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel; Couch 1989, 5.

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 35, 316. Also see Cummins 1995, 168.

\(^{112}\) See the following images, for example: \textit{Hellmouth, locked by an archangel}, Winchester Psalter, c. 1150; \textit{Christ descending to the dead}, in a row, moving toward the right-hand side of the image, visualising a trail. Their feet are equally in a row, reminding one of the footprints embedded in the tracks of cartographic migration manuscripts.

\(^{113}\) ‘Capítulo segundo de como estos naturals yndios salieron de las siete cuevas donde auiauan [habitaban] para benir [venir] a esta tierra,’ fol. 4\(^{r}\).
X group). The text mentions pictures as the original form of record-keeping. Although the inserted miniatures of the Durán Codex are not pre-Hispanic but colonial era creations, within the context of the alphabetical manuscript, they are presented as heirs of pre-Hispanic recording traditions, turning into primary sources and references for the knowledge imparted in the Spanish text. The text, in turn, incorporates oral history, closely connected to the interpretation of pictorial recordings. Although the text and images are presented in the guise of a European codex page layout, they claim to be a translation of indigenous systems of historiography.

The Jesuit Tovar Manuscript (c. 1587), which is based on the Durán Codex and was compiled by Diego Durán’s cousin Juan de Tovar (1546–1626) for the Jesuit José de Acosta (1539/1540–1599/1600), narrates Mexico history from the migration to the fall of Tenochtitlan. Within the codex, alphabetic and pictorial systems of recording history are equally present, although divided into isolated chapters by the manuscript’s architecture, the first containing Spanish text (fol. 1r–84v), the second a series of pictures (fol. 85r–146v). The page-sized illuminations present four images related to the migration legend (fol. 85r–91v). These show the seven caves, followed by two images of stops along the Mexica’s route (at Tula and Chapultepec) and conclude with an illumination of the founding of Tenochtitlan (Fig. 8). The images, similar to the migration-related pictures of the Tira de Tepechpan, show isolated scenes out of the migration story, but the migration itself, that is a movement of generations of people through territory across a long distance, is not stated in any detail. Nevertheless, the miniature picturing the founding myth of Tenochtitlan includes a reminiscence of the trail, showing a short section of zigzag track with five embedded footprints. This short piece of track meanders its way toward the pre-Hispanic town glyph of Tenochtitlan, surrounded by pre-Hispanic glyphs for water, marking Tenochtitlan as a settlement in the middle of a lake. Within this pictorial context, the track itself turns into a glyph, serving as an abbreviation of the migration and is used to mark the end of the journey.

As in the Durán Codex, all the additional information about the migration legend was transferred to the Spanish text. Distances and paths were thus turned into words. Unlike the Florentine Codex, however, which does not include any images of the Mexica migration at all, migration-related pictures are still present, even if they are only presented in an appendix. References in the form of folio numbers for the corresponding pictures, which are written in the margin of the textual pages, link both, images and script. Phrases like ‘La pintura que tienen estas siete cuevas es en esta forma’ (‘The painting of the seven caves was in this form’) (fol. 1r) and ‘El cual [lugar] pintan en esta forma’ (‘This [site] was painted in this form’) (fol. 6r) mark the coloured drawings as containers of knowledge. Furthermore, they show Tovar’s intention to transmit the images in their ‘original’ form, regarding them as evidence of the alphabetical writings. Distances and paths are thus turned into words – but the words constantly remind one of or directly refer to pictorial forms of Mexica historiography.

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The alphabetical writings about the migration can be regarded as an attempt to make Mexica history accessible – or rather, readable – for a European audience. Several indeterminate places included in the pictorial manuscripts indicate the necessity of interpretation and explanation offered by oral accounts. The alphabetic codices aim at dissolving these ambiguous elements within the narrative, superseding the task of an interpreter and thereby replacing oral traditions. In doing so, they create a reproducible text designed for the individual reader.

To some degree, the alphabetic manuscripts also reflect the colonial debate about the capacity and limits of pictorial manuscripts and the Spaniards’ doubts of them being adequate for the writing of history. Following a Renaissance model, the existence of a ‘proper’ recording system (meaning alphabetic from a European point of view) was repeatedly turned into a precondition for ‘proper’ historiography. How one thing could be possible without the other seemed unconvincing to some of the missionaries – José de Acosta wrote to Juan de Tovar that he could not understand how the Mexica were able to record history without writing it down, for example. In contrast, Juan de Tovar, Diego Durán and Bernardino de Sahagún all knew about the functionality of this kind of historiography and utilised, translated and adapted it for their own alphabetic manuscripts, using it to authorise their new form of historiography, thereby rewriting Mexica history.

III. Conclusion
Regarding the pictorial manuscripts about the pre-Hispanic history of the Mexica, the above analysis shows that Robertson’s distinction between ‘time-oriented’ and ‘place-oriented’ manuscripts might well be helpful for a rough initial classification, but it is far from suitable for describing the dynamics within the visual narrative of these documents. The dynamics are basically created by what Navarrete Linares describes as a visual integration of ‘time and space into a single narrative’. This integration emerges from an indigenous tradition in his opinion. But as the presented material shows, there are different types of narrative that are created by different types of interaction between temporal and spatial devices – and they do not only derive from indigenous traditions.

In the Mapa de Sigüenza, for example, the visual narrative is dominated by the path the Mexica travelled; additional temporal aspects are present, but only of minor interest. The rectangular amate sheet on which the mapa was produced provides an adequate format for this kind of historiographical narrative, offering a multidirectional approach and sufficient space for the meandering track. In contrast, screenfold manuscripts, dominated by an ongoing time line like the amate-paper Tira de la Tepechpan, abandon the travel motive of the migration myth. Following the form of the strip and a reading direction from left to right, they break the path into a series of individual episodes connected to the reckoning of the years. The third kind of temporal and spatial interaction in pictorial manuscripts of the Early Colonial Period is the broken year account, provided as a screenfold (made from European paper, like the Tira de la Peregrinación) or bound in quires (like the European paper Codex Azcatitlan or the amate-paper Codex Mexicanus).
These manuscripts maintain a linear reading direction from left to right, but create room for a meandering path as well. They do so by either breaking the time line into blocks of time or reinterpreting it as a spatial element fit to be travelled and explored from above and below. This shows a creative combination of temporal and spatial elements that is more likely to have emerged from colonial-age negotiations than from an unbroken native tradition. In any case, it shows the rivalry between two narratives, a spatial and a temporal one, which, when combined, tend to be difficult to reconcile.

In a broader sense, the visual interaction of these narratives also reflect the colonial negotiation of different concepts of historiography. The alphabetic codices produced during the Early Colonial Period, like the Florentine Codex (1577), the Durán Codex (1581), and the Tovar Manuscript (c. 1587), can be interpreted as an attempt to solve this debate. Here the spatial and temporal narration is turned in a continuous text, structured by the succession of the chapters and the layout of the pages. In some cases (as in the Florentine Codex), the inserted pictures do not show the migration at all. In others (like in the Durán Codex), the pictorial sequences are broken into disconnected scenes, either divided by the chapters or (as in the Tovar Manuscript) moved towards the end of the codex. This separation of script and image translates the narrative of the Mexica migration into the visual organisation of European illuminated manuscripts, incorporating it into European manuscript traditions – and thus conquering and replacing pre-Hispanic forms of historiography. Interestingly, though, they do so by constantly using and referring to pre-Hispanic pictorial manuscripts and oral traditions. Hence, Sahagún emphasises that all his texts are based on information transmitted in the form of paintings which were explained and translated for him.126 His alphabetical writings in Nahuatl, Spanish and Latin may present a reproducible text designed for individual reading, but they are grounded on pre-Hispanic traditions of recordkeeping and knowledge transfer. Manuscripts like the Durán Codex or the Tovar Manuscript, which equally translate the migration narrative into written words, also present migration-related images. These pictures are colonial-era creations combining pre-Hispanic and European aesthetics in a hybrid and new style. Even so, they are – as the corresponding texts express – sources, authorities and references of the written account. The alphabetical writings, in turn, adopt the function of a narrator, interpreting the images and thus translate and replace oral traditions. This special form of interaction between image and script can only be understood if it is analysed while bearing in mind the colonial negotiation of different forms of historical narration. Within this context, the integration of images visually marked as belonging to a pre-Hispanic tradition reveals an imperial strategy. The alphabetic manuscripts do not incorporate these drawings unintentionally, but annex their authority, using them as elements of verification while rewriting indigenous traditions of historiography.

126 ‘Todas las cosas que conferimos, me las dieron por pinturas, que aquella, era la escritura, que ellos antiguamente usaban: y los gramaticos las declararon, en su lengua, escribiendo la declaracion, al pie de la pintura: tengo aun agora estos originales.’ Florentine Codex (Historia universal de las cosas de Nueva España), book 2, Prologo, fol. 1r.
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PICTURE CREDITS

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Fig. 3 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Fig. 4 © Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

Fig. 5 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Fig. 6 © Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Fig. 7 © Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.

Fig. 8 © The John Carter Brown Library, Providence.
Researchers who are working on or with Arabic manuscripts from a German library will, of course, know where the manuscript is stored. In many cases, they will also know where the manuscript was originally copied because this is often stated in the colophon. The way the manuscript made its way from its place of origin to the library that currently possesses it is much less well known, although information about this is contained in readers’ and owners’ notes, ‘audition certificates’¹ and, in some cases, librarians’ remarks about the manuscripts’ origins in the catalogue. A closer examination of the circumstances in which Arabic manuscripts were brought to Germany reveals some important aspects of the history of Arabic texts’ reception. This paper gives an overview about the last leg of the journey Arabic manuscripts made to the three public libraries in Germany owning the greatest collections of Oriental manuscripts, namely the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), the Bavarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, BSB) and the Gotha Research Library (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha). By concentrating on the last stage of their journey, one can gain information on the multifaceted and changing relationship between Europe and the Middle East and North Africa.

Ideally, acquisition by a library will trigger off the last trip that an Arabic manuscript will undertake in its lifetime. There are some known exceptions, however – predominantly of an unpleasant nature. The transfer of cultural property is a well-known phenomenon. It includes transfers from eastern German libraries and the mines, monasteries and castles that items were moved to in the last few years of World War II, involving transfers to disparate places, many of which were in the Soviet Union. Only a limited number of manuscripts were moved from the two libraries we are concerned with here – Berlin and Gotha – in the aftermath of World War II, however. During the war, Max Weisweiler (1902–1968), the librarian responsible for the Oriental manuscripts kept by the Berlin State Library, which was then called the Prussian State Library, obviously had a premonition of coming events.² He simply ignored the directives given to him, avoiding sending them off to places in the eastern parts of the German Reich, and took the objects to Beuron Archabbey in Württemberg, to a potash mine in Hesse, to a palace called Schloss Laubach, also in Hesse, and to Banz Abbey (now Banz Castle) in Upper Franconia. Unlike many other books and manuscripts from the Berlin State Library, 56 Oriental manuscripts ended up in the Jagiellonian Library (Biblioteca Jagiellonska) in Cracow, while another 53 are thought to have been irretrievably lost. These 109 objects had been evacuated to Silesia.³ The stock of Oriental manuscripts belonging to the Gotha Research Library is a good example of the fact that transferring them to the Soviet Union did not necessarily mean they would be lost, however: the entire collection of more than 3,000 manuscripts was transported to the Soviet Union in 1946 and was returned without any loss or damage in 1956, three years after Stalin’s death.⁴

Another earlier example of the repercussions of war is what has been called ‘the French book abduction’ of 1800, when fifteen Oriental manuscripts from what was then the Munich Royal Library (Hofbibliothek) were taken to Paris. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, these had to be returned or replaced by other manuscripts in the event of their loss. This was how at least two valuable manuscripts formerly in the possession of the French National Library (Bibliothèque nationale de France) came to be in Munich and now bear the owner’s stamps of both libraries.⁵

¹ For more information on these certificates, known as samāʿ (āt) in Arabic, see Seidensticker 2015.
⁴ Information kindly provided by Cornelia Hopf, Gotha Research Library, November 2012.
⁵ Two such manuscripts are described in Rebhan 2010, nos. 5 and 33. For more information on the ‘book abduction’, see eadem, 17–18 and Kennecke 1979.
Table 1: Acquisitions of Arabic and ‘Oriental’ manuscripts by the Berlin State Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collections of manuscripts</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>Oriental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old holdings (‘Ms. Or’) until 1887</td>
<td>620</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diez (bequeathed in 1817)</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heinrich Friedrich von Diez (1751–1817), Prussian ambassador in Constantinople</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetzstein (purchased in 1852)</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815–1905), Prussian consul in Damascus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetzstein II (purchased in 1862)</td>
<td>1,934</td>
<td>1,962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petermann I (purchased in 1853–7)</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julius Heinrich Petermann (1801–1876), professor of Oriental languages in Berlin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petermann II (purchased in 1870)</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>&gt; 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sprenger (purchased in 1857)</td>
<td>1,140</td>
<td>1,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893), worked in India, professor in Berne after 1857</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landberg (purchased in 1884)</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlo Landberg (1848–1924), Swedish Arabist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glaser (purchased in 1887)</td>
<td>241</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eduard Glaser (1855–1908), Austrian Orientalist and traveller to Yemen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daḥdāḥ (purchased in 1941/42)</td>
<td>254</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruṣaid al-Daḥdāḥ (1813–1889), Lebanese politician and merchant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rescher (purchased in 1974)</td>
<td>1,296</td>
<td>1,722</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oskar Rescher (1883–1972), German Orientalist, emigrated to Istanbul</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spuhler (purchased in 2010)</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friedrich Spuhler, expert on Islamic art, collector and trader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further acquisitions (1897–2013)</td>
<td>3,350</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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6 It has been impossible to find out exactly which languages were designated by the adjective ‘Oriental’ in each case where it has been used by a librarian. In the remainder of the text, I abstained from putting the word in quotation marks.

7 See Rauch and Gonella 2013 for more information on the famous picture albums from the Diez collection, stemming from the Topkapı Palace.

8 See Rauch 2015 for some information on Wetzstein and especially the early Qur’ans acquired by him.

9 See Kurio 1981 for more detailed information on Sprenger as a collector and three sections of his collection (history, geography, Prophetic tradition).

10 Wagner 1976, xvi–xvii discusses Ruṣaid al-Daḥdāḥ and his collection of Arabic manuscripts.

11 See Rauch 2011.
Another reason for the unforeseen movement of manuscripts was criminal activity. A case of theft involving several items taken by a curator occurred at the Chester Beatty Library and Gallery of Oriental Art in Dublin in the 1980s, but the culprit was caught, convicted and sent to jail.\(^\text{12}\)

Let us turn to a more pleasant matter now, namely to those Arabic manuscripts which lie safely on the shelves and will hopefully not be moved again, except to the manuscript reading hall. I will start with the library possessing the biggest collection of Oriental manuscripts in Germany: the Berlin State Library. This was founded in 1661 as the ‘Churfürstliche Bibliothek zu Cölln an der Spree’ by Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg (Fig. 1), who was called ‘Der Große Kurfürst’ (‘the Great Elector’). He set up the first Brandenburgian colonies in Africa and the West Indies and is said to have planned the foundation of an East Indian company as well. The fact that he gave an order to his Royal Library (Hofbibliothek) to buy Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Ethiopic, Coptic, Indian and Chinese manuscripts is a natural sequel to these commercial and colonial aspirations. In the year 1688, there were a hundred Oriental manuscripts in the collection, but no manuscripts from East Asia were among these. Table 1 lists the most important collections in what is now the Berlin State Library,\(^\text{13}\) the first and the last lines are, of course, not collections in the sense that they were acquired from or by a single person.

What is important to note here is the immense number of Arabic manuscripts the Library gained in the short span of time between 1852 and 1887, roughly the two decades preceding and following the foundation of the German Empire: there were 5,657 in all, beginning with Wetzstein I and ending with Glaser’s collection. To explain the enormously increased interest on the part of the Library, we would need to take a closer look at its interdependency with the emerging academic discipline of Orientalistik in Germany. This cannot be done here, however; suffice it to say that the studies by Sabine Mangold, Suzanne Marchand and Ursula Wokoeck on German Orientalism in the nineteenth century were groundbreaking for such an enterprise.\(^\text{14}\) The Library’s normal budget was not always sufficient for these acquisitions, it seems; Glaser’s collection, for example, could only be acquired with the aid of a subsidy from the Prussian king.

The second of these libraries is the Bavarian State Library in Munich. Founded as the Munich Court Library (Münchener Hofbibliothek) by Duke Albrecht V (Fig. 2) in 1558, it currently possesses 4,200 Islamic manuscripts (Table 2).\(^\text{15}\) It is the second-largest library in Germany of interest to us, and not only as far as quantity is concerned. Oriental manuscripts played a major role in the Library’s acquisitions right from the beginning. In the year that the

\(^{12}\) See Geoffrey J. Roper’s obituary of David James, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-Islamart&month=1212&week=a&msg=b7f9wYq53nVRE6Yx7nkj5JA> (12 March 2016).

\(^{13}\) The figures are based on Ahlwardt 1887, v–vi, Schmieder-Jappe 2004, passim, and for the Daḥdāḥ collection and the last line, on e-mails from Christoph Rauch, head of the Oriental Department of the Berlin State Library, March/April 2014.


\(^{15}\) These figures are based on Rebhan 2010, 15–24 and, for the last two lines, on e-mails from Helga Rebhan, head of the Oriental Department of the Bavarian State Library, November 2012 and March 2014.
Library was founded, the library of the humanist scholar Johann Albrecht Widmanstetter (1506–1557) was acquired. Widmanstetter, an Orientalist, was not only one of the most reputable scholars of his time, but he also had a notable career as a diplomat in the service of clergymen and worldly potentates. In Arabist circles, he is especially known for his early publication of the Qur’an in Arabic, and some of the finest pieces in the Library’s possession are copies of the Qur’an from his collection. While attending the coronation of Emperor Charles V in Bologna, he got to know the Bishop of Burgos in Castile. It is probably through this acquaintance that he managed to buy these remarkable manuscripts originating from Islamic Spain and North Africa.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the new acquisitions made by the Royal Library primarily consisted of Türkwenbeute (literally, ‘Turkish loot’, that is, spoils from the wars between European powers and the Ottoman Empire). I will come back to this topic later. The secularisation of monasteries after 1803 was the reason for further growth of the holdings; some of these manuscripts are highly valuable, such as the Qur’an owned by Père Lachaise, the confessor of Louis XIV, the ‘Sun King’. At around the same time, the Hofbibliothek Mannheim was transferred to Munich – a donation from the elector, Karl-Theodor, who had died in

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16 See Kulturkosmos 2008, no. 25.
17 See Rebhan 2010, nos. 1, 2 and 4.
18 For more information on Widmanstetter, see Rebhan 2010, 15–18; Kulturkosmos 2008, 81–84 (H. Rebhan); on his library, see Rebhan 2009.
19 See Rebhan 2010, no. 3.
1799. Later in the nineteenth century, two personal physicians of the viceroy of Egypt, Clot Bey and Pruner Bey, donated their sixty Oriental manuscripts to the Royal Library as well.

In the history of the Munich Royal Library, there are only two counterparts to the major acquisitions the Berlin library made between 1852 and 1887, the first of which was the purchase in 1858 of the library of the French Orientalist Étienne-Marc Quatremère, a professor at the Collège de France and what was then called the École des langues orientales in Paris. The collection's price of 340,000 gold francs could only be paid by auctioning off a considerable number of doublets of printed books from the holdings of the Munich Royal Library. The other large-scale purchase was the acquisition of 157 Arabic manuscripts from Yemen; these were sold by Eduard Glaser, who was also responsible for collecting two other groups of Yemenite manuscripts consisting of 328 and 282 items, now in the possession of the British Library in London and the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) in Vienna respectively.20

Due to the personal involvement of two Munich librarians, Emil Gratzl and Karl Dachs, the number of Oriental/Islamic manuscripts continued to increase in the second half of the twentieth century, growing by 140 and 1,492 manuscripts respectively. Dachs's interest in copies of the Qur'an deserves special mention here, as he was able to buy many important pieces at a time when precious ones were still affordable. Currently, the Library holds 179 complete copies or fragments of the Qur’an.

Before presenting the history of the acquisitions made by the Gotha Research Library, I should perhaps explain where Gotha is situated geographically. It is a small town halfway between Erfurt and Eisenach in the central German state of Thuringia and owes its fame not only to a genealogical handbook of European nobility first published there, but to the fact that it was the residence of the Duke

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20 On Glaser's collections, see the virtual exhibition in The Digital Bab al-Yemen, where, in the summer of 2016, 86 Glaser manuscript volumes from the Berlin State Library could be accessed in digitised form <https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/exhibit/gQs9TMxJ>.
of Saxe-Gotha from 1640 to 1918. The new palace of Duke Ernest I (Fig. 3), called Schloss Friedenstein, was the seat of the residential library ever since it was founded in 1647. At that time, not a single Oriental manuscript seems to have been kept on the shelves, but in 1664, a Turkish manuscript was given to Duke Ernst which, as a note at the end of the manuscript shows, was gained as booty in the course of the unsuccessful siege of Pécs (Quinque Ecclesiae) in what is now southern Hungary; Pécs was under Ottoman rule from 1543 to 1686.

This is another example of what is commonly called Türkkenbeute in German. We already encountered this term when we looked at the growth of the Oriental manuscripts kept by the Munich Royal Library, and the ‘old holdings’ of the Berlin State Library contain a considerable number of such objects as well. Table 3 shows the figures for the Gotha Research Library.

Gotha’s old holdings, acquired prior to Seetzen’s large-scale acquisitions, amount to 74 Oriental manuscripts in all. In fourteen cases, notes in the manuscripts state that they came into German possession as booty, but this figure is probably much higher in truth; I estimate that a third or even half of the old holdings are instances of Türkkenbeute.

There are two instances of this in Gotha that are particularly obvious. The first one contains extracts from the Qur’an and prayers (Ms. orient. A 517). A note on fol. IIb reads:

21 Ms. orient. T 218, fol. 264b; for a picture see Orientalische Buchkunst 1997, 18.

22 A word that might not sound politically correct, but which is nevertheless used as the official name of the website that presents the spoils from the military confrontation with the Ottomans contained in the Baden Regional Museum, Karlsruhe <www.tuerkenbeute.de>.

23 Based on the chapter ‘Zur Geschichte und Erschließung der orientalischen Handschriften in Gotha’ (Hans Stein) in Orientalische Buchkunst 1997, 17–40.

When Buda in Hungary was besieged and taken by the Christian army in the last war against the Turks in August 1686, Mr von König zu Unter-Simau was a member of the cavalry. He was a cornet at the time, but later became a colonel and commanding officer at Coburg Fortress. He [once] shot a Turk and found this book upon his body (instead of the money he had been hoping for), and then brought it with him to the Coburg area.

The second example (Ms. orient. A 3) is an Arabic multitemanuscript mostly containing Prophetic Tradition. A note on fol. 1r tells us that the manuscript was pulled out from under the body of a mufti killed at Buda and was badly stained with blood. A similar note is in a manuscript seized at Stuhlweissenburg [Székesfehérvár] in 1593 and now in the possession of the Austrian National Library in Vienna, it has blood stains on it as well.

As an aside, many manuscripts preserved in libraries all over Europe bear witness to famous events in military history: the first siege of Vienna in 1529, the second one in

24 A picture of this note can be seen in Orientalische Buchkunst 1997, 25.


26 Jones 1987, 100 and footnote 42.
1683 (which proved to be especially fruitful for the libraries), and Gran/Esztergom in 1595.\textsuperscript{27} Such spoils were also made outside Europe, of course. Robert Jones points out that ‘[i]n 1535, the siege and sack of Tunis by the Emperor Charles V included the looting of manuscripts, especially Qur’ans, from the mosques and libraries of the city’.\textsuperscript{28} One of these pieces found its way to Heidelberg (and later to the Vatican), a second one – a Qur’an from Seville dated 1227 – came into Widmanstetter’s possession and then made its way onto the shelves of the Bavarian State Library, and three volumes of an eight-volume Qur’an migrated via the Escorial to the National Library of France in Paris.\textsuperscript{29} A manuscript containing magical texts that was seized in Tunis came into the hands of the historian Johann Andreas Bose and was sold to the library of the University of Jena in 1675 by his widow.\textsuperscript{30} Booty of this kind was also made in the course of naval battles, such as during the famous Battle of Lepanto in 1571 between the Christian powers and the Ottomans. About twenty Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts came to the Escorial after that famous day and another one found its way to Leiden University Library via Rome and a Spanish possessor.\textsuperscript{31} Besides naval battles, the sea was witness to pirate attacks, and even enterprises like these could mean that Islamic manuscripts changed hands. In Robert Jones’ opinion, [d]oubtless the single most dramatic episode [of this kind] […] was when Spanish pirates closed on a boat off the west coast of Morocco. According to Spanish sources, this took place in 1611. When they boarded the boat, the pirates found it was carrying an exceptionally valuable cargo in the shape of Sultan Mawlay Zaydan’s household effects. This included his entire library of some three or four thousand Arabic manuscripts. Back in Spanish waters, the cargo was unloaded and the library presented to King Philip III, who deposited it in the library of the royal monastery of San Lorenzo at the Escorial.\textsuperscript{32}

These examples have shown that research on the provenance of such booty manuscripts can yield interesting results even beyond a spectacular change in proprietor. Their history after incorporation into the Christian world can often be reconstructed from paratexts and the libraries’ acquisition books, and in my eyes the high esteem the objects were held in is particularly striking. So far, the \textit{Türkenbeute} has been studied in detail with respect to the holdings of the University of Jena Library (Thüringer Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Jena), Duchess Anna Amalia Library (Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek) in Weimar, the Gotha Research Library\textsuperscript{33} and Leipzig University Library

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\textsuperscript{27} On these events and the manuscripts seized on these occasions, see Jones 1987, 98, 100, 103.

\textsuperscript{28} Jones 1987, 100.

\textsuperscript{29} Jones 1987, 100; on the Seville Qur’an (BSB Munich, Cod. arab. 1), see Rebhan 2010, 16 and 30–31.

\textsuperscript{30} Sobieroj 2001, xiv and 70–72.

\textsuperscript{31} Jones 1987, 100.


\textsuperscript{33} See Sobieroj 2001.
Much more work needs to be done regarding the Leipzig holdings:


Identifying the pieces of booty and thereby gaining an insight into the cultural life of individual towns at the time they were conquered is one possible purpose of research work, and an important one at that. Vienna, Leiden, Dresden and many other smaller libraries elsewhere are an excellent source of primary material by which to study intellectual life, transfer of knowledge, book production and book trade, or the history of libraries and individual people in south-eastern Europe during the Ottoman era. The possibilities that entries on donations, owners and the spoils of battle present us with have only just begun to emerge.

Much more work needs to be done regarding Türkenbeute kept by the Berlin and Munich libraries.

Returning to Gotha from south-east Europe, we have already seen that the lion’s share of the Gotha manuscripts was purchased by Ulrich Jasper Seetzen (Fig. 4). This man was born in 1767 near Jever in East Frisia, the son of a wealthy farmer.35 He studied Medicine and Natural History and wrote significant publications in various fields, including national economy and technology. At the age of 33, he resolved to make a journey to the Middle East and perhaps afterwards to cross Africa from east to west, partly at his own expense, but also with help from a yearly subsidy from his sovereign.36 On his way to Vienna in 1802, he received a letter informing him that the Duke of Gotha’s heir apparent, Emil August, would pay him an annual sum of 800 Reichstaler and that he should use this money to buy objects of all kinds for a ducal museum or curiosity cabinet. His journey led him via Constantinople and Smyrna to Aleppo, Damascus, Jerusalem, Cairo and the Sinai Peninsula and on to Mecca, Medina and Yemen. Not all of the parcels Seetzen sent home actually reached Gotha, however; the last few manuscripts that reached Schloss Friedenstein were those he had acquired in Cairo. From there, he left for the Arabian Peninsula in 1809. In the last letter that has been preserved, he reports his plan to turn inland from the Yemeni seaport of Mokha, carrying his acquisitions with him on seventeen camels. His traces disappear thereafter. According to rumours, he was poisoned by order of the Imam of Sana’a near Ta’iz. Seetzen always left acquisition information in the books he had bought,37 but as yet, not a single manuscript of those he carried with him on the ominous inland journey has surfaced in Yemen.

Some of the manuscripts that did reach Gotha are of immense value, especially the fragments of old parchment Qur’ans from Cairo. The most famous of these is a fragment consisting of twelve leaves from a manuscript which is commonly known as the ‘Amr Qur’ān. Forty-six other leaves from it have been in the possession of the National Library in Paris since 1830 and 570 leaves are now stored in the National Library of Egypt. This Qur’ān was probably written in the first half of the eighth century, as the script bears some resemblance to the early Hijāzī script and the width of the oblong leaves is as much as 62 cm. In his diary, Seetzen describes the difficulties he encountered when trying to buy the leaves.38 Apart from the ‘Amr Qur’ān and the other parchment Qur’ans, which were extremely valuable, Seetzen also bought many other very rare and precious manuscripts. Among Arabists, Gotha is a well-known place due to Seetzen’s activities.

As Table 3 on the Gotha inventory shows, the collection grew very slowly after the addition of Seetzen’s manuscripts

34 Liebrenz 2008, 26. The notes contained in the Arabic manuscripts of the Gotha Research Library have now been made accessible by Boris Liebrenz, cf. <http://www.manuscripts-gotha.uni-jena.de/content/index.xml> under ‘Manuskriptvermerke’.

35 On Seetzen, see Nebes, 1997; Henze 2002; Stein 1995; Schienerl 2000.

36 As Jever belonged to Russia at that time, Seetzen was a subject of the tsar. In reality, Jever was under the administration of Princess Friederike Sophia Auguste of Anhalt-Zerbst. See Schienerl 2000, 14.


38 For more information about this famous Qur’ān and the Gotha fragments, see von Bothmer 1997.
up to the end of World War II, and even fewer Oriental manuscripts have found their way into the Library since then. In fact, there have only been three more recent additions to date, which means that this part of the Gotha Research Library is essentially a closed collection.

As for the reasons why German libraries spent such a considerable amount of time and effort in acquiring Arabic – or more generally, ‘Oriental’ – manuscripts, it has now become apparent that colonial and commercial interests played a role in the earliest stage of the Berlin library’s acquisitions in the seventeenth century. To what degree the purchased books actually fulfilled these purposes is another question. In the case of mid-sixteenth-century Munich, such worldly interests played a much less prominent role, although there is probably nothing like pure scientific curiosity.39 But at least Seetzen’s mission to buy manuscripts and all kinds of other artefacts such as tools or mummies was not subsidised because the Dukes of Gotha planned to establish colonies on the Arabian Peninsula or in Africa; rather, they were simply competing with other German sovereigns in a bid to build up a library and a curiosity cabinet as a status symbol.

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39 See Rebhan 2009, 113, for more on the Kulturpolitik of Albrecht V, founder of the Munich library.


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1. Introduction

The study of West African Arabic manuscripts has seen a remarkable increase over the last twenty years. A growing corpus of documented manuscripts and inscriptions from different parts of the region has stimulated research on epigraphy, codicology and the textual range of the Arabic scriptural and literary heritage of Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa as well as boosting research on its relationship to the wider Arab and Islamic world. After Mauritania, where several surveys of private manuscript collections have been undertaken since the 1980s, it was the region of Timbuktu that subsequently gained the lion’s share of interest. This was largely due to the spectacular recovery and rescue of Timbuktu’s manuscript collections around the year 2000, which is, in fact, still continuing at the moment. Digitisation of individual manuscripts and even of entire regional library collections like the documentation of Mauritanian libraries (Tübingen) and the large Ségou library kept by al-Hājj ʿUmar (d. 1864) and his son Aḥmad al-Kabīr (d. 1897), now in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) in Paris, has given a boost to comparative research on the regional traditions of Arabic writing and penmanship and on the heritage of local literature written in Arabic script.

Apart from Timbuktu and the Niger Belt, another focus of researchers’ interest in the Arabic scriptural tradition south of the Sahara has also developed: the region of the old Kanem-Bornu empire and its sphere of cultural influence, which included large parts of present-day northern Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and western Chad, and the adjacent Saharan regions. The typology of West African scripts developed in the context of the work on the Timbuktu corpus has distinguished three major types of manuscripts produced in West Africa. These are (a) a ‘Saharan’ (Ṣaḥrāwī) type identifiable in the Western Sahara and radiating into the sub-Saharan region, (b) the Sūqī attributed to the Tuareg scholars of the Kel Es Sūq and other Saharan regions of Mali and Niger, and a residual category, (c), a ‘Sudanese’ (Ṣūdānī) script common in the sub-Saharan regions of western and central Sudan.

Further research on the widely acknowledged role of Bornu as a centre of Qur’anic learning and writing and on its far-reaching influence has recently resulted in closely argued...
The challenge posed to further in-depth research on the West African scriptural tradition of Arabic is still great, due to the scarcity of dated manuscripts for the period before the thirteenth century H./nineteenth century CE and particularly to a very uneven coverage and documentation of Qur’anic and non-Qur’anic styles, registers and genres of writing. These still lack a convincing typology, and the amount of variation identifiable in the larger centres of Islamic learning and sometimes even within individual manuscripts still strains any assumptions concerning the differences between the major regional styles of Arabic script and their intermingling and reshaping in the course of time.

One way out of this dilemma might be by identifying and scrutinising individual owners' personal libraries of manuscripts. These presumably provide a clearer picture of the scriptural variation related to the different literary genres represented in such collections and also to their intake of manuscripts of different origins, which possibly exerted some influence on the scriptural habits of their readers. We are still a long way from having any clear idea of how such personal collections of manuscripts might have affected the reading and writing habits and intellectual outlook of their owners, and of knowing what impact such collections had on the owners' children or students and friends with whom they shared them.

The following is an attempt at finding some clues to scriptural variation at a local level in West Africa. It will offer some glimpses of a family collection of Arabic manuscripts from Ilorin (Nigeria), which was documented during two research stays in this city in 1987 and 1989, with further information being obtained during a short visit in 2012. It aims to provide material for the reconstruction of a local textual heritage and its scriptural development in the nineteenth century, focusing on samples which could be ascribed with some confidence to the pre-colonial period, which lasted until 1897 in Ilorin.

2. Ilorin and its tradition of Arabic and Islamic scholarship

For an assessment of the interaction of different styles and traditions of Arabic writing originating from central and western Sudan, Ilorin seems to be particularly well suited as a place of research. The town emerged as a centre of Arabic learning and education in the course of its establishment as a hub of migration for Muslims from the Oyo Empire and from other regions of central and western Sudan in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Its mixed population of warriors, scholars, traders, craftsmen and slaves of highly different origins provided the basis for an Islamic community which became attached to the Sokoto Caliphate as an Islamic emirate after the overthrow of its non-Muslim Yoruba ruler Afonja (c.1824) and a civil war, which had come to an end by around 1828/9.10

The early scholarly community of the town was strikingly cosmopolitan. Along with the Yoruba population, which made up the majority of the inhabitants and also became strongly committed to Arabic and Islamic learning, there were migrant representatives of older scholarly traditions from adjacent regions, scholars of Fulbe, Hausa and Nupe origin, and also early migrants from western Sudan (the Niger Belt and Futa Jallon), from the central Sudanic regions further east (Bornu and Agades) and even from eastern Sudan.11

The educational practice and the literary culture which came to be established in the town reflected these diverse origins, especially in the ways of studying and teaching the Qur’an, and also in the traditions of Arabic writing and calligraphy that made themselves felt in the course of the nineteenth century.

9 Nobili 2011; Brigaglia 2011; Nobili and Brigaglia 2013.

10 For overviews of the history of Ilorin and its role as a centre of an Islamic polity and Islamic learning in the nineteenth century, see Dannmole 1980; O’Hear 1983; also see O’Hear 1997; Reichmuth 1998; Reichmuth and Abubakre 1995b.

3. Notes on the Gbodofu family and its position in the Nupe community in Ilorin

The manuscript material which forms the basis of this study was provided by members of the Gbodofu family of Nupe origin. They still live in or are attached to their old family compound in the Balogun Fulani quarter of Ilorin called Ile Tapa Gbodofu (see Map 1).

The Nupe have played a special role in the ethno-religious make-up of the town ever since their involvement in the struggles of the early nineteenth century, when they became part of the Gambari community in the town, which included many Hausa and Gobirawa, but also Nupe and Kannike (Kanuri) elements. The first warlord (balogun) of the Gambari (a man named Dose) is sometimes said to have been of Nupe origin. Some of the leading scholars of the town were Nupe, and the important office of the Imam of the Gambari quarter (Imam Gambari), the third Imam in the hierarchy of imams in Ilorin, has always been held by a member of a Nupe family. In the twentieth century, the family provided the community with a number of prominent judges and Sufi leaders. The connection with the Qadiriyah is particularly strong among them. The Gbodofu family still maintains an old mosque and a Qur'anic school of the round zaure type (Fig. 1), which apparently was still common among the scholarly Nupe families in the town in the 1980s. The Gbodofu family has the reputation of being the oldest Nupe family in Ilorin: their ancestors are said to have hosted Idrisu, the Nupe king who took refuge there around 1820 and then fought and defeated his rivals in a battle near the town together with his allies from Ilorin. The family’s compound apparently served as a kind of court where the Nupe families could settle their own disputes. Their solitary residence in the Balogun Fulani quarter, and not among the other Nupe groups under the Balogun Gambari, would lend credit to their claim of having an ancient and unusual position. The family still has to be consulted before a new Imam Gambari is elected. Most of the other leading Nupe families are related to it by marriage or by long-standing teacher–student relationships. The members of the Gbodofu family also share an adherence to the Qadiriyah with the others, although some of their ancestors are said to have belonged to the Tijaniyya before they became Qadiris. This is also confirmed by the existence of an old manuscript of a Tijaniyya poem, the Munyat al-murid, in their manuscript collection. Along with the tradition of Islamic learning and with the religious and teaching offices connected with the mosque and the school, the family has come to share the normal range of professions like weaving, tailoring and other urban crafts with the commoners of the town. Some of their members have joined the public Arabic and Islamic teaching profession up to university level, which has been developing in Ilorin ever since the 1980s.

The family traced its origins to a scholarly ancestor called al-Hasan, who was said to have arrived in the days of Alfa Alimi, the Fulani scholar and preacher who

12 I wish to express my gratitude to Abdullahi Jibril Gbodofu and Ndagi Saliu Gbodofu (d. 2012), who kindly provided information and manuscripts to me during my research stays in the town in 1987 and 1989, and to Dr Khalil Gbodofu, who was my host at the family compound during a short visit in 2012. The information I will provide in the following is mainly based on their accounts of the Nupe families in Ilorin; also see Saliu 1980, 67f. For a general history of Nupe and the Nupe Emirate of Bida in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Nadel 1942; Mason 1981.

13 Interview with Jimoh Balogun Gambari, Balogun Gambari Compound, 31 August 1987; Mallam Yakubu Gananga, Sarkin Gambari, together with Alhaji Adamu, a member of the Sarkin Gambari family, Oke Oyi, 30 August 1987. The descendants of Dose themselves trace their ancestors to Katsina (northern Hausaland); interview at their family compound, Ile Eleru, Magajin Arẹ Ward, Ilorin, 27 August 1998.


15 Saliu 1980, 67.

16 Aḥmad b. Bābā al-ʿAlawī al-Shinqīṭī al-Tijānī (d. after 1260 H./1844 ce), Munyat al-Murid, on the author and text, see Rebstock 2011, vol. 1, 268f. (no. 777, 4); on manuscripts in Ségou, see Ghali et al. 1985, 302, 395 (BnF 5734, 15a–22b); for the Gbodofu manuscript, see Reichmuth 1998, 373, where watermarks of the tre lune type, also with moon faces, and with the letters ‘GLS’ are mentioned.

came to Ilorin around 1817 and took over leadership of its Muslim community. Álímì’s sons became the first emirs after him. To al-Hasan reverential titles like Shehu Imám al-Ā’zām (‘The Greatest Shaykh and Imam’) and even Wolithyi (‘Saint’) were attributed, which confirms the considerable religious reputation this man and his family enjoyed. Ndagi Salih Gbodofu (d. 2012), the owner of one of the one-volume manuscript collections discussed in this study, traced his own roots to al-Hasan via a chain of four ancestors. He also mentioned that al-Hasan was of Arab origin – he was ‘from Badari [Badr?] in Saudi Arabia’ and is said to have migrated from the Arab lands to the Nupe region. The family name may also be related to Kpotofo-

4. Overview of the manuscripts: observations on texts and papers

Apparently, the manuscripts had initially been owned by Imam Gbodofu Ahmed (d. 1986). They are now in the possession of his sons Jibril Tunde and Ndagi Salih (d. 2012), each of whom had inherited one of these one-volume libraries from their father. Both volumes are manuscript collections (composite manuscripts). They had been tied together between two thick cardboard covers, and they contained a large number of folios in quarto format (largely between 23 cm × 16 cm and 20 cm × 15 cm). One of the covers of the first collection had a grid of strings (Ar. mastara, see n. 34) stitched to its inner side, which in earlier times had served to provide lines and margins for the text block of the copy by pressing the paper against this grid. Both volumes were kindly handed over to me on loan for some time during my research stays in Ilorin in 1987 (by Jibril Tunde G.) and 1989.

Fig. 1: Gbodofu family school (zaure).
(by Ndagi G.). Ndagi also showed me a collection of some prayers and magical recipes in octavo (the normal format for such items), some of which were obviously quite old as well and equally belonged to his heirlooms. During a short visit in 2012, an old family Qur’an was shown to me at the family compound by Dr Khalil Gbodofu (Department of Religions, University of Ilorin).

50 texts were included in the quarto volume from Jibril Tunde G. and 28 in the one from Ndagi Saliu G. The works were of highly diverse lengths, which ranged between one and 20 sheets. A good number of them were incomplete, with only single folios surviving, which made identification of their titles a protracted affair. A wide range of topics and disciplines was covered, with certain fields clearly standing out: short texts and poems related to the basic doctrine of faith (aqīda) were quite frequent in the first collection, for example (nine texts compared to only one in the second). The largest fields, which were almost equally shared between the two, were prose texts and poems on ethics and admonition (waʿẓ, 18 texts), with the few works on prophetic tradition (hadīth) (4 texts) and a number of Sufi texts (2) also largely falling into this category. Arabic poetry – pre-Islamic poems as well as poems in praise of the Prophet and Sufi poetry – also stands out in this corpus: there are 17 texts of this kind altogether, including two pieces by ʿAbdullāhi b. Fodiye (d. 1829), brother of ʿUthmān b. Fodiye and one of the leading scholars of the Jihād movement in northern Nigeria who became the first Emir of Gwandu. Certain areas were less well represented: general didactics (3 texts), Islamic law (5 texts), arithmetic and numerology (3 texts), prayers and texts on special qualities (khawāṣṣ) of certain sûras of the Qurʾān (4 texts), and even grammar (1 text only). The collection thus shows a profile dominated by waʿẓ texts, combined with a strong interest in ‘aqīda and Arabic poetry. The number of shorter creeds reflects an outlook of scholarship which seems to go back to the eighteenth century and to the early period of the Jihād Movement. The strong literary and ethical orientation, on the other hand, falls in line with the general profile of Arabic and Islamic learning which emerged in nineteenth-century Ilorin out of the various scholarly traditions of its Muslim inhabitants. Some of the texts included glosses and comments in Arabic and Hausa. What seems to be a nineteenth-century manuscript of a four-page Nupe poem in octavo format (entitled ‘Shaykh ʿUthmān’ in the colophon), which was also found in Ndagi’s collection, is yet to be edited and translated. Hopefully, it will then provide an addition to the Nupe texts in Arabic script which have recently received some attention by researchers in Nigeria.

The watermarks on the European (mostly Italian) paper found in the Gbodofu manuscripts can function as a terminus post quem for dating some of the texts that might well go back to the early nineteenth century. The precise dating remains a challenge since most of the manuscripts do not include any dates in their colophons, and the watermarks and quality of the paper thus provide the most important clues for qualified guesses in this respect. The great number of variants of the ‘three crescents’ (tre lune) with or without faces, which are most common among the older manuscripts, still lack sufficient documentation for comparative purposes, and part of the initials of the paper factories found on the paper still have not been identified. Watermarks like those of Valentino Galvani (d. 1810, VG), Giovanni Berti (BG, GB), the crowned coat of arms with grapes, an elliptic coat of arms with a broad diagonal stripe with the initials ‘GM’ under it, and the Venetian pattern of the large ‘three hats’ (tre cappelli), otherwise mostly documented as originating in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, may indicate the oldest group of manuscripts in the collection, although no clear periods of time can be determined without any further comparative research work. Terence Walz’s observation on tre lune variants with moon faces (produced by the Galvanis and by numerous Venetian papermakers), which derived from his study of Egyptian court records, shows that these first appeared in the 1820s and had replaced other moon patterns by the 1840s. This may also be of comparative value.

as a terminus post quem for manuscripts in Nigeria, even if variants of the tre lune proper were apparently still found there much later.28

5. Bornu influences and scriptural diversity

A first attempt at assessing the character and diversity of the Arabic manuscripts which can be traced to nineteenth-century Ilorin already documented a strong Bornu influence on the early stages of the literary culture. The oldest dated Arabic manuscript which could be identified in the town, a copy of Jazuli’s famous prayer book Dalāʾil al-khayrāt, had been written in Bornu’s capital Birnin Gazargamo in 1148 H./1736 ce.29 With its tall and angular letters, it provided a good example of the old ‘Bornu court hand’ described by Bivar and later by Bondarev.30 A more rounded and flowing style of Qur’ānic script which was also developed in this tradition was attested by a scholar who was also of Bornu descent (Büşerî b. Badr al-Dīn, d. 1915) and whose commitment to the Bornu ways of Qur’ānic learning can be seen in a copy of the Qur’ān that he wrote from memory.31 Another legal manuscript, an exemplar of Khalīl b. Ishāq’s Mukhtaṣar with copious glosses taken from different commentaries, which was found in the possession of a family also tracing its origin to Bornu, showed a script which was close to the angular Bornu type, but augmented with Maghribi patterns, something which could also be found in the illustrative parts of the mentioned Dalāʾil manuscript.32 This leads us to the conclusion that the writers had different scripts or variants at their disposal, with their choice depending on the character and genre of text or paratext. The diversity of the scriptural culture in nineteenth-century Ilorin with its textual and pictorial elements could also be seen in the other samples of that study.

The Gbodofu collection also includes seemingly old texts and textual fragments which testify to this diversity. In the following, some of them will be presented and discussed with the textual and scriptural history of Arabic literary culture in central Sudan in mind. As research on the collection is still in progress, however, many of the results and conclusions stated here are only preliminary in character.

6. The Bornu model of Qur’ānic calligraphy in Ilorin: a Qur’ān written by different hands

The Qur’ānic manuscript which could be documented during my last visit to the Gbodofu family in 2012 appears to be close to the standard of nineteenth-century Qur’āns which can still be found in Ilorin today, and appears to have been

28 See also Brockett 1987, 49ff.; the author also argues on a similar basis for a mid-nineteenth century dating of the Qur’ān he studied.

29 Reichmuth, 2011.

30 The manuscript was found in Ile Mekabara (Balogun Alanamu Ward, Ilorin) and was described in some detail in Reichmuth 2011, 223–227.

31 Bivar 1968, 7; also see Bivar 1959, 328–336, and Bondarev 2006, 122.

32 Reichmuth 2011, 227ff.

33 Reichmuth 2011, 231ff.
strongly shaped by Bornu tradition (Figs 2–5). The original brown leather wrapper has been preserved, with a fore-edge flap and an envelope flap which apparently had a cord or thong attached to its tip, by which the work was tied together. Its remarkably rich decoration was patterned by punched semicircles, dots and embossed ruled lines. The borders and fore-edge flap were given a black tint, as was the central field on the rear of the cover. The leather was lined with green cloth. This kind of ‘Sudanese binding’ and the form of decoration used here have also been attested elsewhere in Sudanic Africa.34

An initial examination of the manuscript gave me the impression that its pages, in spite of their largely uniform general style, indicate a certain shift from an angular and regular pattern to a more rounded, less regular and rather coarse one, which goes along with widening margins. This becomes especially clear on the page preceding the last few suras. The yellow or brownish hamza dots, common in this tradition of Qur’anic calligraphy, have been abandoned on the later pages for black ones. The first page shows traces of a tre lune watermark with a faced moon below it (Fig. 3, right-hand page, left-hand margin). The old layout still prevails in a less regular execution, clearly written by a different hand, on the page before the final one (Fig. 4, right page, already with black hamza dots). The final page (Fig. 4, left page), perhaps a later addition or replacement, differs in terms of its layout, having much wider margins (with only 11 lines rather than the 14 used in the rest of the book) and a spaced, angular script which – although without any contrast between thicker and thinner lines – has much in common with Kano models, which became especially popular with the spread of printed texts.35 The paper also changed from a tre lune type with a strong surface shaped by the laid lines to a smoother and more absorbent one, which was occasionally also found in other pages and was obviously less resistant to oxidation.

Both the binding and the calligraphy used testify to the special status of the Qur’ān in local scriptural practice

Fig. 3: Beginning of the Gbodofu Qur’ān manuscript.


35 Brigaglia 2011.
and to a tradition of Qurʾān writing which remained fairly consistent since the nineteenth century, but finally underwent a significant change towards a more angular and spaced script. It appears closer to the Kano model, which was to have a strong impact on the development of Arabic printing in the region.

7. Some unusual theological and Sufi texts, with scripts yet to be classified

There are three fragments of theological and Sufi texts in the Gbodofu one-volume libraries which have not been the subject of any research yet despite their impact on central Sudan; indeed, as yet, some of them have not even been attested as manuscripts in this region. Apart from their textual testimony, all of them seem to belong to the oldest stratum of the Ile Tapa Gbodofu collection and stand out on account of their scriptural particularities.

7.1 Abū ‘Imrān al­Jawrāʾī’ s ʿAqīda – an Ashʿarite creed criticised by ʿUthmān b. Fodiye

As mentioned above, texts on the Unity of God (tawḥīd) and the basic theological doctrines of Islam are strongly represented among the older works in the Gbodofu collection. They indicate a theological interest in rational theology (kalām) according to Ashʿarite doctrine, which was typical of the scholars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century in central Sudan and was also pursued with vigour by ʿUthmān b. Fodiye (d.1817) and his followers. This even involved the introduction of texts from authors from other parts of the Islamic world who belonged to different theological schools such as the Māturīdiyya, widespread among scholars of the Ḥanafī school of law in the Ottoman Empire, Central Asia and India. A Māturīdite ʿaqīda, the poem Badʾ al­amālī written by Sirāj al­Dīn al­Ūshī al­Farghānī (d.1173) is also represented in our corpus. The reason for ʿUthmān b. Fodiye’s


37 The Gbodofu manuscript of this creed has already been presented and discussed by Daub 2014.
strong interest in theological doctrinal texts can be related at least partly to the intensely discussed question of the ‘faith of the imitator’ (īmān al-muqallid), i.e. the religious status of unreflected acceptance of religious authority in questions of doctrine. This had been widely discussed in different parts of the Muslim world since the seventeenth century. The radical position of the North African Ashʿarite theologian Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanūsī (d. 892 H./1486 ce) had also gained predominance in West Africa; he regarded all imitation (taqlīd) in questions of the creed as amounting to unbelief.

The issue was of great relevance for ʿUthmān b. Fodiye’s religious movement as well, which relied to a large extent on the support and religious mobilisation of ordinary believers. One of ʿUthmān’s polemical writings, ‘The Fortress of Understanding’ (Ḥiṣn al-afhām), challenged this radical opinion and tried to refute it at length. The aforementioned Māturīdite poem *Badʾ al-amālī* also explicitly supports the acceptability of the īmān al-muqallid.

Among the theological authors strongly criticised by Ibn Fodiye was a scholar named Abū ʿImrān al-Jawrāʾī (Jūrāʾī?), whom he quoted in his Ḥiṣn al-afhām with a text entitled ‘The Doctrine of the Believers in the Unity (of God)’ (*ʿAqīdat al-muwahhidīn*) (Fig. 5). Al-Jawrāʾī expressed his strong opinions about the priority of rational understanding of God’s existence and other matters of belief over the devotional acts, and about the spiritual danger of blind imitation in questions of the creed. The author is probably identical with a scholar from Fās of the same name who is mentioned in some biographical works as being the teacher of two prominent Mālikite jurists of the earlier eighth H./

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40 See the text in *Majmūʿ muhimmat al-mutūn* 1369/1949, 21, line 16. A theological manuscript from the Timbuktu region documented in Meltzer, Hooper, and Klinkhardt 2008, 70f., also discusses the question of the īmān al-muqallid.
fourteenth century CE.41 His lifetime would thus fall into the period around 700 H./1300 CE. On the grounds of his strict Ashʿārite positions, he could be regarded as a theological predecessor of Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Sanṣāfī.

Five other copies of this once apparently popular but long discarded text are extant in the Ségou library in Paris,42 while others are in the Centre Ahmad Baba in Timbuktu43 and in the Data Record Centre of the Bayero University Library, Kano.44 Another one was mentioned by Brockelmann for the Escorial.45 The name of the author, which is spelt differently in the manuscripts and sources, still has to be clarified; Jawrāʾī (or Jūrāʾī) seems to be the most widespread version. The title of the text is not absolutely clear either.

The incomplete Gbodofu manuscript has seven pages.46 It begins with an initial saying of a ‘Shaykh Abū al-Maʿālī’, which obviously refers to the famous Ashʿārite theologian Abū l-Maʿālī ʿAbd al-Malik al-Juwaynī (d.478 H./1085 CE), who might appear to be the author at first sight. But the text immediately continues with a quotation from al-Jawrāʾī, and a comparison with a seventeenth-century copy in Paris47 shows that the initial reference to al-Juwaynī is missing there. Al-Jawrāʾī’s authorship can thus be established for the Gbodofu version as well. The comparison equally shows that the only final page is missing from the manuscript. The extant text also includes the quotations found in Ibn Fodiye’s Ḥiṣn al-ʿafhām.48 The paper appears to be quite old and does not have any watermarks. The bold and angular handwriting exhibits some remarkable features: its strongly angular letters rāʾ, ḥāʾ and wāw, the independent hāʾ with an upward stroke to the right, the sharply hooked dāl and the vertical orientation of the alif bear some resemblance to the sūqī type of script which was developed by the Kel Essuq Tuareg scholars in Mali.49 A Sufi manuscript from neighbouring Air (Niger) which was published by H. T. Norris and whose first folios are markedly different from and older than the rest50 also comes in for a comparison. The strongly indented sīn and shīn differ from both, however, and draw the text closer to the Bornu court script, especially to the samples of the diplomatic letters of the Shehus of Bornu dating from the nineteenth century, which were presented and analysed by Bivar.51 It might therefore be regarded as another derivate of the older Bornu patterns, leading in a direction that still needs to be followed up by further research. A few notes in Hausa can be found on the margins of this remarkable text, which testifies to the calligraphic taste and strong theological interests of its writer and early owners.

7.2 Fragment of a Shādhili Sufi handbook (Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sikandarī, d.1309, Tāj al-ʿarūs wa-uns al-nufūs): a local copyist taking over from a foreign one

Although the Shādhiliyya Sufi ʿarīqa did not develop a significant and lasting presence in Central Sudanic Africa, the writings of some Shādhili authors like Aḥmad Zarrūq (d.1494) and especially al-Ḥasan al-Yūsī (d.1691) enjoyed considerable popularity in Sufi and scholarly circles. Works by Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh al-Sikandarī (d.1309), head of the Alexandria Shādhiliyya of his time and especially famous for his collection of Sufi aphorisms (ḥikam) and his influential Sufi manuals,52 have not been attested much in that region up until now. The Gbodofu manuscripts (Figs 6 and 7) include a folio which could be identified as part of his handbook of Sufi ethics entitled ‘The Bridal Crown and the Intimacy of the Souls’ (Ṭāj al-ʿarūs wa-uns al-nufūs).53 The text of the fragment calls for active self-education in the love of

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43 Ould Ely, Johansen et al., 1995–1998, vol. 1, 188 no. 634 (author stated as ‘al-Ṣādīqī’).

44 Siddiqi 1989, 180, n. 181; Ar. text, 79, n. 2; 81, n. 1.

45 Gal S II, 992, also stated as ‘al-Ṣādīqī’.

46 See Reichmuth 1998, 359: its format is 22 cm x 16.5 cm and the initial page contains 19 lines, while the others only have 17 lines.

47 BN F Ms. 5340, ff. 9–12. The name Jeurādī, given by Ghali, Mahibou, and Brenner 1985, 19 (presumably based on other manuscripts), does not match the one given in the headline, which – at least on the scan available in the internet – reads Jārāʾī.


49 As described by Nobili 2011, 126–131. A sūqī text from the nineteenth century can be found in Norris 1990, 10f.


52 Nwyia 1986.

53 Format: 22 cm x 16 cm, 16 lines; text in al-Sikandarī [2006], 32, line 1 and lines 14–35.
God and stresses the necessary assistance of the Prophets (anbiyāʾ), saints (awliyāʾ) and the pious (ṣāliḥīn) for this endeavour. Love of God can be measured by the emotional eagerness to pray and to ask for His forgiveness, and by the avoidance of doubt in Him.

This manuscript is also unusual because of its handwriting: most of it shows a well-trained hand with a script that has some striking peculiarities like the very short denticles of the letters bāʾ, tāʾ, thāʾ, yāʾ and sīn; and a final yāʾ which is often written with a short downward stroke to the left. Hamza and isolated final yāʾ often look the same, like rounded hooks opening towards the right. A curved rāʾ equally occurs as a variant, as does the v-shaped hāʾ in middle position, otherwise common in Western Sudan. Red ink is used for the highlighting of certain words, names and phrases. A floridly decorated pause mark (mawqif) can be found in the left-hand margin of the first page. The last eight lines have been written by a local hand which appears less sophisticated and much coarser, with larger letters that are also more angular. A comparison with the printed text reveals many mistakes made by the second抄写员. The manuscript version has different types of tre lune watermarks with and without moon faces.

The very angular and regular script of the first hand still remains without any attested parallels. Some basic Central Sudanic elements, like the vertical strokes of tāʾ and zāʾ, are recognisable. The script may also be related to the wider sphere of Central Sudan, showing influences which still have to be traced and which—for the time being, at least—make the manuscript as unique for the region as the text itself.

7.3 ‘The Hadīth about the Preventing by the Preventers’ (Ḥadīth nahy al-nāhīn) – Sufi admonitory stories written by a Western Sudanese hand?

This waʿẓ text, which has so far only been attested by a printed edition produced by a Yoruba scholar from Ikirun (western Nigeria) and published in Egypt in 1948, is represented by its first page among the Gbodofu manuscripts (Fig. 8). It is a collection of stories illustrating the seven major unforgivable sins, related by the Prophet Muḥammad as told by Moses (Mūsā b. ʿImrān) to Joshua (Yūshaʾ b. Nūn), and augmented with other waʿẓ material. The origin and textual history of the various stories in the compilation have yet to be verified.

54 al-Mukhtār 1948; the text of the manuscript page is on p. 7ff.; Reichmuth and Abubakre1995a, 493–449; Ogumbi, 1999, 122ff.; al-Mukhtār's edition has been included in Abd al-Jawād 2010, 446-476.

55 The format of this manuscript is 21 cm × 16 cm, 21 lines. There are no watermarks, and laid lines are visible.
The script of this text, although clearly related to Central Sudanic models (e.g. with the indented sīn, the shape of the hāʾ and the vertical stroke of the ṭāʾ), shows some peculiarities which tend to create an overall impression of the page which evokes Western Sudanese or even Maghribī patterns. There are a number of features which contribute to this impression:

a) the strong regularity of the lines and the fairly large number of them (21 altogether),
b) large and bold final bends of a number of letters (sīn, qāf, lām, nūn, wāw), which help to create a vivid and florid impression of the whole page,
c) alif often slightly curved,
d) ṭāʾ sometimes written with a strongly curved and rounded upper part,
e) alif yāʾ sometimes written as a downward stroke or as a small curved hook on the line.

Although the paper used for the manuscript is without any watermarks, the character of the script (for which no later parallels have been identified up until now) lends weight to the assumption that it was produced sometime in the early nineteenth century. The general impression would seem to indicate a strong Western Sudanic influence on the copyist’s handwriting. Bivar records the transcript of a letter from the Pasha of Tripoli to Muḥammad Bello, Sultan of Sokoto, in the Sultan’s Library (Sokoto), the script of which he describes as ‘an elegant and unusual Maghrībi hand’. The photographs of this letter show a very specific merging of North African and Central Sudanic scriptural traits, where, contrary to North African practice, the vertical stroke of the ṭāʾ is also preserved. As with the Nahy al-nahīn manuscript sheet (Fig. 8), the origin of the copyist remains unclear. The two cases may serve to illustrate the diverse range of scripts which fed into the scibal culture of Central Sudan in the nineteenth century, and possibly also the quite unique synthetic ways of handwriting, which would sometimes emerge from contact with different scripts.

8. Imruʾ al-Qays: a pre-Islamic poet and his diwān

Pre-Islamic poetry has belonged to the literary canon of higher Arabic studies in West Africa for a long time. Fragments of the diwāns of two of the famous Jāhiliyya poets, Imruʾ al-Qays, the oldest Arabic poet, and ‘Antara, are also represented in Ndagi Gbodofu’s volume. Whereas the copy of the second one is apparently of a more recent date (presumably from the colonial period), the diwān of Imruʾ al-Qays is written on paper with watermarks showing the abbreviation ‘VG’, which goes back to the paper mill run by Valentino Galvani (d.1810). It also includes tre lune marks with faced crescents and a moon in a shield, which Walz attested for Egypt from the 1820s onward. It may well belong to the first half of the nineteenth century.

The order of the poems in the diwān and also the verse order of the poems themselves largely follow the version established by al-ʿAṣmaʿi (d.831 H.), the famous philologist of the early Abbasid period, which was edited and commented upon by the Andalusian scholar al-ʿAʿlam al-Shantamari (d.1083 H.). This is also the version which was used for the modern Egyptian edition of the diwān by

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56 Bivar 1959, 344–349; plate IV.
58 Cf. Walz 2011, 87f.
59 GAL I, 309, S I 542.
Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. The twelve folios of the Gbodofu manuscript include the complete texts of the famous Muʿallaqa (following the Aṣmaʿī version) and of the second poem (with minimally varying order), but only a reduced version of the third one. Only four verses of the fourth poem are extant. The text then sets in again with poem no. 19, following the order of the dīwān again up to no. 29, after which it breaks off.

The large script is typical of the commentary genre. The layout leaves ample space for interlinear and marginal glosses. The script itself again shows a Central Sudanic hand with a mixture of Western Sudanic or Ṣaḥrāwī features, especially the final upward bends of bāʾ and tāʾ, the strongly curved dāl and the curved variant of rāʾ.

The interlinear and marginal glosses (the latter being arranged clockwise around the text) are mainly of a lexical character. At first glance, they seem to combine different strands of the commentary tradition which grew around Jāhiliyya poetry. Some of them are translations in local languages, apparently Nupe and Hausa, often marked as foreign words by the note ‘non-Arabic’ (ʿajam). There are abbreviated references to other books and commentaries, which still await identification. At the end of the Muʿallaqa, on the sample page (Fig. 9, left-hand margin), the reader is informed by the copyist about a local scholar from whom he obtained his information. He calls him m-y-s-t-w, which should probably be read as Mai-satū, and seems to refer to a Qurʾānic specialist able to write the Qurʾān from memory (an activity called sātū in Hausa).

The names K-th-y th-w-

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60 Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm 1984.

61 The Gbodofu manuscript thus includes poems 1–2 (both complete), 3–4 (both incomplete) and the shorter pieces of the Ibrāhīm edition, 19–29.

62 11 lines per page (the first three pages have 17 lines). See the example discussed in Reichmuth 2011, 231ff.

63 See e.g. on saqī (v. 1): a) munqāṭiʿ al-raml (al-Shantamarī, in Ibrāhīm 1984, 8); b) mawḍiʿ mā tasāqātā min al-raml (al-Tibrīzī, d. 1109, Lyall 1894, 1); both can be found among the glosses on f. 1v.

64 Bargery 1951, 912: sātū ‘writing the Qurʾān from memory’. I am grateful to D. Bondarev (Hamburg) and N. Dobronravin (Sankt Petersburg) for their remarks on the language of the notes in this manuscript.
and the nisba (al-B-s-ni) are yet to be identified (the latter possibly referring to Bussa, capital of northern Borgu).

In another gloss on the initial page, it is stated that the book preceded the Prophet in the world by 600 years! Should we read this as an indication of the pre-historical aura of the Jâhiliyya poetry within the historical frame of local Islamic scholarship?

9. Aḥmad b. Fāris: all the Muslim needs to know about the life of the Prophet (sīra)

The biography (sīra) of the Prophet and its sacred and eschatological qualities are widely transmitted and celebrated in West Africa with prayer texts and praise poems. Qur’ānic exegesis (tafsīr) also requires a sound knowledge of his life and the alleged context of the various revelations.

The classical sīra books like those of Ibn Iṣḥaq/Ibn Hishām are only rarely attested for West Africa, however. The demand for general knowledge of the Prophet’s life is met in this collection by an old sīra abridgement which summarises important information concerning the genealogy and life of the Prophet, including his marriages, his hijra and the dates of his military campaigns up to his death, his weapons, horses and property, etc. It goes back to the Iranian lexicographer Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Fāris (d.1005 ce) and runs under titles like ‘Abridged Biography of the Messenger of God’ (Mukhtaṣar siyar Rasūl Allāh) and ‘Abridgement of the Genealogy of the Prophet, His Birth, Upbringing and Mission […]’ (Mukhtaṣar fi nasab al-nabi wa-mawlidhi wa-manṣta ihi wa-mab athīhi [...]). The title of the complete manuscript in the Gbodofu collection (Fig. 10) stresses the duty of the male Muslim to know these facts by heart (Dhikr mā yajib ʿalā al-mar’

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Fig. 10: Gbodofu manuscript, Ibn Fāris, Mukhtaṣar siyar Rasūl Allāh.

n-w-ā and the nisba (al-B-s-ā-ni) are yet to be identified (the latter possibly referring to Bussa, capital of northern Borgu).

An incomplete copy of Ibn Iṣḥaq’s Sīra can be found in the Ségou collection, BnF Ms. 5641, 1a–156b; Ghali, Inventaire, 187.

67 GAL I, 130, S1 197f., no. 6.
al-muslim ḥifẓuhu min nasab rasūli Llāh wa-mawlidihi wa-manshaʾihi [...] Other West African manuscripts of this text are yet to be identified. *Tre lune* and *tre cappelli* watermarks with the letters ‘BG’ (probably standing for ‘Giovanni Berti’)\(^68\) suggest a date around the middle of the nineteenth century or perhaps earlier. Glosses in the margin of the sample page (with passages on the Prophet’s horses) refer to the famous ‘Life of the Animals’ (*Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān*) by al-Damīrī (d.1405).\(^69\)

The script appears very bold, written with a pen with a rather broad nib, which gave the strokes a width that was almost constant throughout. The handwriting resembles other writing I was able to view during my research in the town in other manuscripts by Nupe scholars and in photocopies from the Nupe area. It remains to be seen whether it follows a regional pattern.

The manuscript is unusual because of its text (which has still not been attested yet in West Africa), and its bold type of script which might have been cherished by Nupe scholars, but which, in one form or another, also seems to represent one of the calligraphic options more generally available in Central Sudan.

### 10. Concluding remarks

The collection of Arabic manuscripts from Ilorin, which was documented at the end of the 1980s and has been presented here, still needs to be fully assessed and described. With the kind permission of the Gbodofu family, an annotated web publication of the photographic material is now in preparation. The preliminary results show the library of an old family of Nupe scholars from Ilorin that had been active in the town since the early nineteenth century. Its content still retains much of the older scholarly profile which reaches back into that period with a diversity that shows the far-reaching contacts of the scholarly community of Ilorin, and a local literary canon that was still in the making. The old interest in Ashʿarite theology comes out as clearly as a strong ethical and Sufi orientation combined with a solid grounding in Arabic poetry. Ethical and literary interests were to gain special importance for the preaching activities and the educational reform movements of the twentieth century, which have shaped the socio-cultural history of Ilorin ever since the colonial period.

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\(^{68}\) Walz 2011, 100.

\(^{69}\) A nineteenth-century copy of this mediaeval Arabic zoology (dated 1247 H./ 1831 CE) is extant in the Séguo Library (BN 5369, 1–158; Ghali, Mahibou, and Brenner 1985, 28.)
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Article

Fakes or Fancies? Some ‘Problematic’ Islamic Manuscripts from South East Asia

Annabel Teh Gallop | London

Introduction

One of the exhibits in the 1990 British Museum exhibition *Fake? The Art of Deception* was an Old Babylonian stone inscription, purporting to be of the reign of Manishtushu, King of Akkad (c. 2276–2261 BCE), but in fact probably created several hundred years later in the first half of the second millennium BCE by priests in order to strengthen their temple’s claim to privileges and revenue.1 This was the earliest of over three hundred items on display in the exhibition, spanning some four thousand years, illustrating that the history of fakes and forgeries in art is almost as old as the written history of mankind. The exhibition catalogue by Jones provides an excellent overview of the subject, and shows that there is an enormous variety of motivations for producing fakes, not always financial; that great experts have regularly been fooled; that fakes can be successful both when presented as typical examples of a genre and as exceptions to the rule; and that there are many objects that continue to defy categorisation. In this article I will not pursue the theoretical, philosophical and ethical issues surrounding fakes and forgeries, but will simply aim to identify and describe a number of ‘problematic’ manuscripts written in Arabic script from the Malay world of South East Asia, in the hope that a codicological and contextual analysis will help to allow them to be appreciated for what they are, and not for what they are not.

The maritime world of South East Asia is home to hundreds of languages, but only a small number are associated with writing traditions. Although a few isolated manuscripts written on perishable materials are known to survive from the fourteenth through to the sixteenth centuries, in general manuscripts from insular South East Asia only date from the seventeenth century onwards, with the great majority deriving from the nineteenth century. No indigenous scripts are known from South East Asia, and all extant inscriptions and manuscripts from the region are written either in scripts of Indic origin or in extended forms of the Arabic alphabet, with some languages such as Javanese and Bugis yielding manuscript traditions in both script families. Amongst the most important languages with manuscripts written in scripts of Indic origin are Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Balinese, Bugis, Makassar, Lampung and the Batak family, while those in Arabic-derived scripts include Malay, Acehnese, Minangkabau, Javanese, Madurese, Wolio, Tausug and Maguindanao. But one of the most significant languages in terms of numbers of manuscripts produced in this now predominantly Muslim region is Arabic, while the very small numbers of Sanskrit manuscripts found today perhaps attest to a similar role for that canonical language in an earlier era.

This article focuses solely on ‘Islamic’ manuscripts from South East Asia, namely those manuscripts written in Arabic script, containing texts in Arabic and Malay, and occasionally in Javanese. The indelible association between Islam and the Arabic script – the vehicle for the word of God in the Qur’an – lends itself to a widespread and convenient market perception of all manuscripts written in forms of the Arabic script as inherently ‘Islamic’, irrespective of their contents. Thus a manuscript of the *Hikayat Perang Pandawa Jaya* – the story of the final fight of the Pandawa brothers from the *Mahabharata* – written on paper, in Malay in the extended form of Arabic script known as Jawi, might easily appear in an auction sale in London of Islamic manuscripts, while a manuscript of the *Serat Yusup*, the Muslim story of the

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1 This is a revised and extended version of a paper entitled ‘Fakes or fancies? some “problematic” Malay-world manuscripts’, presented at the ASEAUSUK Conference, Asian Studies Centre, St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 15–17 September 2006. I believe it has benefitted greatly from the long period of gestation between initial presentation and publication, a period of intense market activity in the world of Islamic manuscripts. I acknowledge with thanks permission to reproduce images from the respective holding institutions and individuals.

1 Jones 1990, 60.
Prophet Joseph, written on palm leaf in Javanese language and the Javanese script which is of Indic script, would attract little interest in the international Islamic art market. And it is indeed the rapid expansion of the international market in Islamic art over the past three decades that has precipitated the writing of this article. Since the early 1980s, there has been a global rise of interest in Islamic art and manuscripts, with London emerging as the centre, with twice-yearly sales of Islamic art at the auction houses of Sotheby’s, Christie's and Bonhams (previously Philips), and commensurate activity amongst private dealers and booksellers.

This surge of interest in London was mirrored by a similar flurry of activity on the other side of the world, due to the collecting activities of two large institutions in Malaysia. In the early 1980s, the Department for Islamic Affairs (Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, BAHEIS) – now known as the Department for the Propagation of Islam (Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia, JAKIM) – in the Prime Minister’s Department of Malaysia embarked on an ambitious project to collect Islamic cultural artefacts including manuscripts. More than 3,600 manuscripts in Arabic, Malay and other languages were acquired in a relatively short period, including over 300 Qur’ans, mainly from South East Asia.

Since 1998 the JAKIM collection has been on loan to the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM), Kuala Lumpur. The second important event was the foundation in 1984 of the Malay Manuscripts Centre (Pusat Manuskrip Melayu) at the National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, PNM), whose collection now numbers over 4,700 manuscripts primarily in Malay, but including about 40 Qur’ans. Other smaller institutions in South East Asia, as well as a number of private collectors, also actively began to acquire Islamic manuscripts in the 1980s and 1990s. In Indonesia, a major revival of interest can be traced to the Festival Istiqlal held in Jakarta in 1991, which included the first major exhibition of Qur’an manuscripts from the archipelago.

In contrast to older collections of Malay manuscripts in Malaysia such as those held in the Language and Literature Bureau (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, DBP) and University of Malaya (Universiti Malaya) Library which were predominantly of literary, historical and legal texts, these newly collected manuscripts from the Malay world were very different in character. The great majority were strongly Islamic in content, with a high proportion written in Arabic, comprising theological works as well as copies of the Qur’an and prayer books. Many of the manuscripts – particularly in the JAKIM collection – came from the north-eastern states of the Malay peninsula, namely Terengganu, Kelantan and the culturally Malay-Muslim region of Patani in southern Thailand, while the PNM also acquired a considerable number of manuscripts from Aceh in north Sumatra. The third significant source was Java, another area where manuscripts in Arabic script were plentiful, coexisting temporally alongside manuscripts written in Javanese script on both paper and palm leaf.

Although the majority of manuscripts which entered public collections in Malaysia around this time were clearly acquired from private collections within the communities in which the books had been produced and consumed, around the early years of this century I became aware of a number of puzzling manuscripts which for various reasons did not comply with expected characteristics. In some cases there were ‘genuine’ surprises, with writing formats and texts that had never been encountered before and which served to extend our understanding of the writing traditions of the Malay world. For example, a number of Malay manuscripts from Patani and Kelantan, on the periphery of the Thai tradition, were written on locally-made paper in the accordion folding-book format characteristic of Thai manuscripts.

But in other cases, I became increasingly certain that at least some manuscripts had been manufactured or at least ‘processed’ in some way to meet market demand. These ‘problematic’ manuscripts will be discussed in more detail below in two main categories, firstly of ‘new manuscripts’ created within the past few decades, and secondly of ‘enhanced manuscripts’, namely genuine old manuscripts which have been embellished recently, whether by the addition of decoration or text.

A. New manuscripts

The primary meaning of the word ‘manuscript’ is simply a book or document written by hand and not printed, and

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2 IAMM 2010, 6; Ali 1997, 109 n. 4.

3 Manuscripts from the JAKIM collection now held in IAMM can easily be identified by their shelfmarks beginning ‘1998’.

4 Now renamed the National Centre for Malay Manuscripts (Pusat Kebangsaan Manuskrip Melayu).

5 On the format of traditional Thai manuscripts see Ginsburg 2000, 8, May and Igunma 2018, 17, 25; for images of Malay manuscripts in folding-book format held in PNM see National Library 2002b, 33, 170.
does not carry with it any intrinsic implication of age or importance. My shopping list scribbled yesterday in pencil on a piece of paper is no less authentic a ‘manuscript’ than one written in ink on papyrus two thousand years ago. The significance of any manuscript thus depends entirely on its content, material form and context – the coherence and rarity of the text, aesthetic features, the date and place of writing, and identity of the author and scribe – established through philological, codicological and socio-cultural analysis.

In 2002 I viewed a small exhibition at the Handicraft Museum (Muzium Kraftangan) in Kuala Lumpur of a collection of manuscripts said to have come from an Islamic museum in Langkawi that had recently closed down. Included in the display was a very unusual illuminated manuscript containing a compilation of hadith (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad), with the two open pages displaying a hadith according to al-Bazzâr, confirmed by al-Hakîm, presented in four versions: in Arabic, in Malay in Jawi script, in romanised Malay, and in English (Fig. 1). From the style of the roman-script handwriting, the use of English, and the unusual combination of languages and scripts, it can be surmised that this beautiful book was probably written in the post-war period around the 1950s or 1960s, and is unlikely to be mistaken for a product of an earlier era.

There are however a considerable number of South East Asian manuscripts of recent production which are much more difficult to distinguish from older examples. In Bali, patrons still occasionally commission copies of holy texts written in Sanskrit, Old Javanese and Balinese on palm leaf for presentation to temples, in an unbroken continuation of older traditions. The Festival Istiqlal held in Jakarta in 1991 saw the launching of the copying of the Mushaf Istiqlal, the ‘national’ Indonesian Qur’an, with each of its thirty sections (juz’) decorated with designs representing a different province, which appears to have sparked a renaissance in the handwriting of complete Qur’ans in Indonesia. In recent years a considerable number of high-profile Qur’an manuscripts have been copied in different provinces of Indonesia, such as the Mushaf Sundawi in 1997, Mushaf Jakarta in 2000, Mushaf Kalimantan Barat in 2002, Mushaf al-Bantani in 2010 and Mushaf Jambi in 2015, as well as more individual efforts. In Jakarta in 2003, alongside a display of mostly nineteenth century Qur’an manuscripts from the collection of the late Haji Masagung, I was shown a complete Qur’an which, according to the custodian Haji Thabrany Aziz, had recently been copied by a lady in Jakarta as an act of piety.

All the manuscripts described above make no claim to be anything other than contemporary creations. However, I will now present below a number of manuscripts which, tacitly or otherwise, appear to have been written in the heyday of manuscript production in island South East Asia – in other words, prior to the first decades of the twentieth century – but which in fact are much more recent productions.

A.1 Recent ‘traditional’ manuscripts

In this group are manuscripts which in general appearance are typical products of the Malay manuscript era, but which on closer inspection turn out to be very recent creations. Probably belonging to this category are two Malay manuscripts in the British Library (BL), which were acquired at the London auction house Bonhams in 2005. According to the vendor, he had recently bought these manuscripts from ‘Malay’ students outside the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

The first manuscript, BL Or.16128, Hikayat Raja Khandak dan Raja Badar, has a colophon dated 9 Rabiul Awal 1224 (24 April 1809) in negeri Reman (or Raman), one of the principalities of Patani (Fig. 2). The manuscript is written in a neat but slightly jerky hand in black ink with red rubrics, on cream laid paper with vertical chainlines but with no visible watermark. It has some water staining around the edges and

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6 I have not been able to find out anything more about this museum, or the present whereabouts of the manuscripts.

7 With thanks to Ali Akbar for this information.
is bound in a modern dark blue buckram binding. The hand appears to be quite modern, with slight bleeding from the text suggesting the use of a felt-tip pen. The most unusual feature though is that rubricated words have been written in red ink above a pencil outline (Fig. 3). This suggests that the present manuscript was copied from another source, and followed the same pattern of rubrication. While copying out the text the scribe noted words to be rubricated in pencil, and then returned to these places and overwrote the pencilled outlines in red ink. Although rubrication is very common in traditional Malay manuscripts, there are almost never signs of pencil outlines; instead, the scribe wrote directly in red ink. These pencil outlines therefore suggest a manuscript copied outside the mainstream of the manuscript tradition.

The second manuscript aquired from the same source, BL Or. 16129, consists of only 11 folios and contains an unidentified religious work (or fragment of a work) by Imām Aḥmad (the Sunni jurist Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, 780–855), set within frames with a commentary written in the margins. The main text is dated 24 Muḥarram 1[2]60 (14 February 1844) in Mecca. This manuscript is also written in a small neat hand with a ‘modern’ feel, but in this case modern influences are clearly manifest in the use of certain punctuation features such as brackets and numbered points within the text, indicating a date of production in the twentieth century and perhaps even suggesting that the manuscript might have been copied from a printed source text (Fig. 4).

Thus a general inference can be made on palaeographical grounds that both these manuscripts are very recent copies of older sources, and have reproduced verbatim the colophons in their sources. This is by no means an unusual scenario; many manuscripts from the Malay world are encountered with colophons that give a date which for codicological reasons (perhaps the use of dated or dateable watermarked paper) evidently predates the date of the manuscript, and therefore can be assumed to apply to the source text rather than the present copy. For example, the British Library holds two copies of the Malay narrative poem Syair Jaran Tamasa,
one with a colophon stating it was copied by Ismail on 29 Muharram 1219 (10 May 1804), and another manuscript evidently copied from the former, reproducing exactly the same colophon and date, but then continuing to state that the present copy had been made for Raffles by Muhammad Bakhar. What is slightly perturbing though about the two manuscripts discussed above is apparent traces of physical attempts to create the impression that the manuscripts are older than they actually are. Both are written on robust laid paper (without watermark) which is far more discoloured than proportionate with the good condition of the paper itself, leading to a suspicion that the paper was deliberately stained before the writing of the text, to produce a manuscript with the patina of age.

Does this understanding affect our perception of the value of the manuscripts? Little can be said at present about the manuscript containing the work by Imām Ahmad until the text in the manuscript has been identified. The Hikayat Raja Khandak, on the other hand, is a very popular Malay tale set during the early wars of Islam, with versions also known in Javanese, Sundanese, Acehnese and Makasarese. At least 24 Malay manuscripts of this work are known from collections in Indonesia and Europe, copied in a wide range of locations, including Semarang, Kampung Boyan in Singapore and Batavia. However no other copies are known from Patani, and thus the present manuscript – even if itself a very recent copy – is of great value in testifying to the presence of this story in the northern Malay peninsula in the early nineteenth century.

A.2 Manuscripts of the Sejarah Patani, ‘History of Patani’

The suggestion that BL, Or. 16129 may have been copied from a printed source leads on to the presentation of a very distinctive and flamboyant group of five Malay manuscripts, identified in catalogues as histories of Patani. In fact, all five manuscripts contain the text (or part) of the work entitled Sejarah Kerajaan Melayu Patani, ‘The History of the Malay kingdom of Patani,’ by ‘Ibrahim Syukri’, which is believed to be the pen name used by a number of writers associated with Patani separatist circles in Malaya in the 1950s, which was published by the Majlis Ugama Islam

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10 Gallop 2015.
12 Wijaya 2008, 10–12.
13 BL Or. 14350.
14 CUL Add. 3772.
15 LUB Cod.Or. 7324.
16 Jory 2013, xv.
Press in Pasir Putih, Kelantan in 1958. This typeset book in Jawi script presents a nationalist local Malay view of the history of Patani up to the post-war period, with the last date mentioned in the text being 1950. The manuscript copies thus, by definition, date from the second half of the twentieth century. The five manuscripts noted are all remarkable for their fanciful decoration, generally utilising non-traditional motifs, structures, palette and pigments, and, in two cases, for their unusual formats not encountered in any ‘authentic’ Malay manuscripts: DBP MS 20 is written in ink on strips of bamboo (discussed further in section A.3.2 below), while a manuscript in Leiden University Library, LUB Cod. Or.26541, is written on sheets of thick parchment bound into codex form. The other three copies, which are all paper codices with elaborate decoration, are PNM MSS 809, and DBP MS 181 (Fig. 6). To date, none of the contents of these manuscripts have been investigated to identify the exact portions of text contained, who the scribes and artists were, and exactly where the copies were produced.

A.3 Recent ‘untraditional’ manuscripts

Maritime South East Asia is home to a wide variety of languages and manuscript formats, yet some types of media are only associated with certain languages. Recent decades though have seen the appearance of a number of Malay and Arabic manuscripts which – like the two manuscripts of Sejarah Patani mentioned above – appear to have been consciously created in strange formats and using unusual materials, and some of these categories will be presented below.

A.3.1 Tree bark

Tree bark is a traditional medium for Batak manuscripts from north Sumatra, and also to a lesser extent for Lampung manuscripts from south Sumatra, both written in scripts of Indic origin, reading from left to right. Such manuscripts are written on long strips of tree bark which are then folded accordion-style to form books, sometimes provided with a wooden cover. However tree bark is rarely used for Arabic

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17 An English translation was published by Connor and Miksic (Ibrahim 1985). A facsimile of the Malay Jawi text with a romanised transliteration, edited by Hasrom Haron and Mohd. Zammeri A. Malek, was published in 2002 (Ibrahim 2002); according to the editors the copy they used had a stamp on the cover stating that the book was issued on 15 October 1958 (Ibrahim 2002,10).

18 Ibrahim 2002, 120; Ibrahim 1985, 94.

19 The manuscript is described in Kamariah and Wan Salhah 2006, 27-28, and an image is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 24.

20 Acquired in 2005 from Haji Azahar of Kuala Lumpur; no further information is known about this vendor.

21 An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2006, 90-91; Katalog 2014, 50.

22 An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 51.

script,\textsuperscript{24} while the use of single folios of tree bark sewn into codex form – as found in the Malay manuscript described below – is not encountered in any known South East Asian manuscript tradition.

- PNM, MS 1319, \textit{Cerita Nabi Muhammad}, ‘Stories of the Prophet Muhammad,’ written in Malay in Jawi script, in black ink, on sheets of tree bark sewn together and bound in codex form.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{A.3.2 Bamboo}

Bamboo – either in the form of complete sections of the cane, or split into thin strips – is a traditional medium for Batak manuscripts and also for Lampung and Malay texts written in Indic rencong script from south Sumatra.\textsuperscript{26} In bamboo manuscripts, the text is incised onto the bamboo with a sharp implement and then blackened. Sometimes the bamboo strips are threaded together with a string through a hole at one end. Within South East Asian manuscript traditions, bamboo is never used for Arabic script; manuscripts on bamboo are never written in ink with a pen; the use of pigmented decoration on bamboo is unknown; and the technique of stringing strips of bamboo like a Venetian blind (though encountered in Burmese palm-leaf manuscripts)\textsuperscript{27} is never found in the archipelago. All these ‘untraditional’ features are encountered in the two manuscripts described below.

- PNM, MS 1323, \textit{Kitab tibb}, a work on traditional medicine and healing, in Malay in Jawi script, written in black and red ink on strips of bamboo, 6 lines per strip, with floral cartouches at each end in yellow, red and black. The first and final strip are shaped with a gentle protrusion on one of the long horizontal sides.\textsuperscript{28}

\textbf{A.3.3 Palm leaf}

Palm leaf (\textit{lontar}) was a standard writing support through much of South East Asia for over a millennium, probably having been introduced through Indian influence. Many thousands of palm-leaf manuscripts survive from Java, Madura, Bali and Lombok, and the medium is still in use in Bali today.\textsuperscript{30} However, all palm-leaf manuscripts are written in scripts of Indic origin, from left to right. Arabic script is hardly ever used on palm leaf, save for one or two short notes or letters. Therefore the manuscripts described below, most of them in codex form with folios comprising stitched-together palm leaves, on which Arabic script is incised, are nothing short of outlandish, and suggest simply an intention to create something fancy or ‘different for the sake of difference’ (\textit{supaya lain daripada yang lain}).

- PNM MS 931, \textit{Kitab mawlid}, texts in praise of the Prophet Muhammad, manuscript written in ink on palm leaves sewn together with zigzag stitching along their horizontal sides and then bound into codex form, with initial decorated double frames.\textsuperscript{31}

- Qur’an manuscript, each folio made up of 16 palm leaves, with three lines of text per leaf, stitched together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into a codex, with an Islamic-style leather binding with envelope flap (photographs sent from Christie’s, London, 2004).

- Four Qur’an manuscripts, each made up of palm leaves stitched together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into codex form, seen at a Qur’an festival in Jakarta in 2011 (Akbar 2013b).

- Qur’an manuscript, with 60 folios, each folio made up of 16 palm leaves, with two lines of text per leaf, stitched

\textsuperscript{24} See e. g. Durie 1996, 249. Another rare example originates from the periphery of the Batak tradition: a letter in Malay in Jawi script, written on tree bark folded accordion-style, and bearing a lampblack seal impression, nineteenth century; formerly in the collection of the now-closed Nijmeegs Volkenkunde Museum, ET 48-2-33, viewed in 2000.

\textsuperscript{25} An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 15.

\textsuperscript{26} Kozok 1996, 234, 236; Durie 1996, 250-251.

\textsuperscript{27} For images of Burmese palm-leaf manuscripts strung like Venetian blinds see May and Igunma 2018, 164, 238.

\textsuperscript{28} An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2002b, 12, 16, 17; National Library of Malaysia 2014, 34.

\textsuperscript{29} An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2014, 24.

\textsuperscript{30} On the production and preparation of \textit{lontar} leaves, see Rubinstein 1996, 136–137.

\textsuperscript{31} An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 1990, 12.
together at each end and through the middle, and then bound into a codex, ‘dated AH 1331 (1912–13 CE),’ sold in London at Bonhams, Islamic and Indian art, 21 April 2015, lot 3.\textsuperscript{32}

- Qur’an manuscript on \textit{lontar}, with three lines of text per leaf, containing 7 \textit{sūras}, not stitched and bound in codex form but strung at the two ends like a Venetian blind, and stored in a box; acquired from a dealer in Pekan Baru who said the manuscript was from Aceh and dated from the eighteenth–nineteenth century (Fig. 7).\textsuperscript{33}

\subsection*{A.3.4 Wooden boards}

In some parts of the Islamic world, notably sub-Saharan Africa, wooden boards are a standard writing support, using a special charcoal ink that can easily be washed off.\textsuperscript{34} When two American missionaries visited Brunei in 1837, they noted that verses (\textit{syair}) were ‘generally written upon a piece of board, whose breadth corresponds to the length of a verse, as paper is very scarce among them.’\textsuperscript{35} However, very few Islamic writing boards from the Malay world which can be authenticated are known, apart from three from Minandanao acquired in the first decade of the twentieth century and now held in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.,\textsuperscript{36} and perhaps one held in Kerinci in central Sumatra.\textsuperscript{37} Therefore it is difficult to gauge the authenticity of a few recently acquired writing boards noted in Malaysian institutions.

- PNM, MS 1322, wooden writing board with Qur’anic verses.\textsuperscript{38}

\subsection*{A.3.5 Oversized Qur’an manuscripts}

In September 2002, on a visit to the Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Islamic Exhibition Gallery at the State Mufti’s Office in Brunei, in the room reserved for manuscripts from the Malay world I noticed a ‘massive’ Qur’an. Consulting my handwritten notes from that date, I find that I wrote ‘not asli’ (i.e. not authentic). Then in February 2007 I was sent images from the San Francisco Book Fair of two enormous Qur’an manuscripts from Indonesia, said to have come out of Aceh after the tsunami of 2004 (Fig. 8). And by 2012 Ali Akbar had recorded over ten (belasan) such oversized Qur’ans in Indonesia, some held in museum collections while others are said to have ‘appeared’ in mysterious circumstances, as noted below.\textsuperscript{39}

The first such case recorded by Ali Akbar occurred in April 2009, when a giant Qur’an with folios measuring $200 \times 103$ cm, was said to have ‘suddenly appeared’ in front of the Masjid Dua Kalimat Syahadat (‘Mosque of the two sentences of the declaration of faith’) in the hamlet (\textit{dusun}) of Babakan, part of the village (\textit{desa}) of Bojongleles, in the district (\textit{kecamatan}) of Cibadak, regency (\textit{kabupaten}) of Lebak, in the province (\textit{propinsi}) of Banten in West Java. A team was sent from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to inspect the Qur’an, and due to numerous deficiencies in the Qur’anic text (omissions and repetitions), the Ministry recommended that the Qur’an be ‘secured’ by the appropriate authorities so as not to cause religious dissent.\textsuperscript{40} In another case, on 12 August 2012 the newspaper \textit{Media Indonesia} carried a photo and report of a very large Qur’an held in a \textit{pesantren} (madrasah) in Bogor, said to have been written on banana leaves by a son of Sunan Bonang (one of the \textit{wali})

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{32} For an image of this manuscript see: <http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/22813/lot/3/?category=list&length=10&page=1>.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Abu Dervish 2013.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} Bondarev and Löhr 2011, 61.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} Lay 1839, 202.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Gallop 2011b.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Digitised through the Endangered Archives Programme, EAP117/46/2/20.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} An image of this manuscript is reproduced in \textit{National Library of Malaysia} 2002b, 14.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Akbar 2012, 2013a.
\end{itemize}
songo, the nine saints credited with bringing Islam to Java in the fifteenth century) and presented by Moro Muslims from the southern Philippines. And on 12 January 2015, Tribunnews posted on its Facebook page a report of a giant Qur’an suddenly appearing in a room in the house of a religious scholar, Ustadz Anang Asriyanto, in the village of Glagah Arum, district of Porong, near Sidoarjo in East Java; within the next 14 hours, the post was shared nearly two million times. In 2012 Ali Akbar was also telephoned by someone from Cirebon, offering him a Qur’an said to have ‘suddenly appeared after a group of religious scholars performed ascetic practices (tirakat) at the tomb of Sunan Gunung Jati’ (another of the wali songo).

Ali had a chance to inspect several of these oversize Qur’ans in person, and others from photographic reproductions. All the Qur’ans were written with felt-tip pen (spidol) on brown cardboard paper known in Indonesia as kertas semen or kertas samson, and were generally poorly calligraphed and carelessly executed, with frequent unorthodox word breaks. Nonetheless, the manuscripts reflected features of the manuscript tradition no longer present in modern printed Qur’ans – for example, the absence of numbering of verses, and the placement of illuminated frames at the beginning, middle and end of the volume – which suggested that these undoubtedly new manuscripts were copied from traditional manuscript sources, rather than from modern printed copies.

B. Enhanced manuscripts

Many manuscripts evince multiple layers of history. Typical examples might include a twelfth-century manuscript text with marginal annotations from the fifteenth century, a sixteenth-century Mughal manuscript with added miniatures from the eighteenth century, or a seventeenth-century Safavid manuscript re-set in new decorated borders in the nineteenth century. A good example is one of the greatest treasures of the Persian collection in the British Library, a manuscript of the Khamsah of Nizāmī (d. 1202/3), Or. 2265, which is described as follows:

Originally copied for the Safavid ruler Shāh Tahmāsp (r. 1524–76) between 1535 and 1543, it was augmented by the addition of 14 full page illustrations by some of the most famous court artists of the mid-sixteenth century. Further pages were inserted probably during the seventeenth century,

41 Akbar 2013c.
42 Akbar 2015.
43 Akbar 2012.
44 Akbar 2013a, 2014.
and again at a later stage, perhaps when the manuscript was rebound in the early nineteenth century at the court of Fatḥ 'Alī Shāh Qājār (r. 1797–1834). Includes three paintings by the artist Muḥammad Zamān (fl. 1649–1704).\(^{45}\)

In a South East Asian context, a recent study by Mulaika Hijjas (2017) of a Sufi compendium from West Sumatra has identified multiple layers of marginal annotations, ranging in date from possibly the eighteenth century to the twentieth century. In all these cases, our evaluation of the value and significance of the manuscript depends on an accurate understanding of the dates and chronological ordering of its constituent elements. Equally important is our assessment of the motivation and intent for the subsequent additions or enhancements, whether for reasons of scholarship, conservation, beautification or deliberate manipulation, the latter most commonly for commercial gain, but sometimes for other, less evident, motives.

Presented below are examples of such ‘hybrid’ manuscripts, which are in essence authentic manuscripts, mostly written in the nineteenth or occasionally eighteenth century, which have been ‘enhanced’ by the addition of either decoration or text. The manuscripts can be discussed in two groups: those with graphic enhancements in the form of added illumination (purely decorative ornamentation composed of vegetal or geometric motifs) or illustration (pictorial images that usually relate to accompanying texts), and those with textual enhancements. Nearly all the graphically enhanced Islamic manuscripts from maritime South East Asia which have been identified originate from Java, but a few examples are also known from Aceh and Patani.

**B.1 Graphic enhancements**

**B.1.1 Aceh**

Among manuscripts illuminated in the Acehnese style, a sizeable minority are decorated with monochrome frames, where the ornamental frames are drawn in black ink but left uncoloured.\(^{46}\) Of such manuscripts, there are also a small number which are partially coloured, suggesting that it was also common for colour to be added at a later stage. However, in all ‘genuine’ illuminated Acehnese manuscripts, the application of colour to decorated elements follows a well-established protocol: the palette is essentially limited to red, black, and yellow, with the main motif – a plaited border, a trailing vine, or a lotus-shaped bud – always picked out in ‘reserved white’, namely the plain paper background, contrasting with pigment applied to surrounding elements. Therefore, a manuscript of the *Hidāyat al-ḥabīb fī al-targhīb wal-tarḥīb* (PNM, MS 2654) by Nuruddin al-Raniri appears rather unusual, as the decorated headpiece and tailpiece are coloured in strong crude pigments applied to solid sections (Fig. 9). We can surmise that this is an original nineteenth-century manuscript with monochrome headpiece and tailpiece, which were very recently coloured in.

**B.1.2 Patani**

Three manuscripts from Patani have been identified which have probably been enhanced. One of these is a work by Syaikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, *Iḍāḥ al-bāb li-murīd al-nikāḥ bil-ṣawāb* (PNM, MS 2412). *Kitab Jawi* – referring to the corpus of texts in Arabic and Malay comprising the curriculum for religious studies – from Patani are generally characterised by very neat text blocks with wide margins, often with dense marginalia.\(^{47}\) The majority of manuscripts do not have text frames, but when present these tend to be minimal, comprising two thin ruled lines in red or purple. In PNM, MS 2412, the crude tailpiece and colourful and

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\(^{46}\) Gallop 2004, 200.

\(^{47}\) Images of many such manuscripts are reproduced in Ismail 2002.
unusual ruled text frames in red, yellow and purple, enclosing an inner border filled with star-shaped motifs, appear to be recent additions. On very close inspection, it is apparent that this manuscript did have original text frames of two ruled thin red lines, which have now been overcoloured with yellow.

The second example is a Qur’an (PNM MSS 3236) with a very fine initial double decorated frame in typical Patani style (Fig. 10). In contrast with illuminated Qur’ans in the Terengganu style which may have decorated frames at beginning, end and also in the middle of the text, Patani-style Qur’ans generally only have illuminated frames at the start of the Holy Book. In this Qur’an however, very crude decorated Patani-style frames in gold, orange and blue in what appear to be modern pigments have been added to the final two pages (Fig. 11).

While the decorated frames at the end of the manuscript discussed above were probably added very recently, a third enhanced Qur’an manuscript from the East Coast of the Malay peninsula is more enigmatic. This Qur’an (IAMM 1998.1.3537) is in size and text format a typical Terengganu Qur’an, with the expected text frames and fine red leather Islamic-style binding with envelope flap, stamped gold frames and medallions, and colourful Indian cotton doublures, but with atypical illumination with sinuous curves and tendrils reminiscent of *Art Nouveau*. The initial double decorated frames are in the shape of two oval cartouches, surrounded with foliate garlands, and with bud-shaped finials at top and bottom and on the outer midpoint (Fig. 12). Such a composition is alien to the known, and highly conventionalised, traditions of Qur’anic illumination in South East Asia. At the end of the manuscript is a sinuous foliate tailpiece which, although conforming to the general Islamic principle of a tapered triangular shape, is also

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48 An image of this manuscript is reproduced in National Library of Malaysia 2006,11.


50 On general features of Terengganu Qur’ans see Gallop 2005 and 2012a, and for similar bindings see IAMM 2017,127–129.
non-traditional in form, for one of the key artistic principles in illumination in Islamic manuscripts from the East Coast of the Malay peninsula is the containment of decorative elements within clearly defined regular outlines, whether undulating or ogival arches or more rigidly geometric enclosures such as triangles, circles or rectangles (Fig. 13). Moreover, tapered tailpieces are never normally found in illuminated East Coast Qur’ans; if illumination is present at the end of the Holy Book, this is always in the form of double decorated frames.

Indeed, a codicological examination of the physical structure of this manuscript shows clearly that the initial and final sections have been bound in at a later date (Fig. 14), as shown too by a comparison of the colour of the paper, and the fact that the round verse markers and the text frames lack the yellow pigment found in the main part of the codex. However the quality of the handwriting of the later additions is totally commensurate with that of the older, central, portion of the manuscript, and of a calibre generally not known in recent manuscripts of the late twentieth century. The graphic layout of the text on the final page is also unusual. In East Coast Qur’ans, whether in the Terengganu or Patani style, the scribe usually plans for the text to fill a complete line. Applied to the basmala at the beginning of a sūra, this is often achieved by elongating the bā’-sīn ligature to the necessary length, and indeed this feature can be seen clearly in the penultimate pages of this Qur’an. However, on the final page of the Qur’an, containing just Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās, the initial basmala is centred in the middle of the page, as are the final words. The overall conclusion is that these additions and enhancements to the manuscript were certainly done at a subsequent date to the writing of the main central body of the text, but it is not easy to judge whether the enhancements date from the early or late twentieth century.

B.1.3 Java

The main production centre for ‘enhanced’ Islamic manuscripts from South East Asia appears to be located in Java, where, for the past two decades, a veritable cottage industry has been churning out illuminated Qur’an manuscripts. The modus operandi is to use genuine, probably nineteenth-century Qur’an manuscripts written on dluwang – Javanese manuscript cultures

51 The initial page and f.1 is watermarked ‘Guthrie & Co.’, while the rest of the initial ‘additional’ section is watermarked with a moonface in a shield.
paper made from the beaten bark of the mulberry tree\textsuperscript{52} – in good condition but without any original decorative features. Such Qur’ans are very common in Java (cf. BL Add. 12343 for an early nineteenth-century example), and are probably still easily and cheaply available. These originally plain Qur’ans are then illuminated by adding decorated frames at conventional locations within the text, and occasionally also other, more unusual, illuminated elements. The modern colours used are strong, including maroon, dark green, gold and pink, and the pigments harsh and chemical, often bleeding through the thin \textit{dluwang}. The ornamentation of the decorated frames is not unattractive, but large and indelicate compared to good nineteenth-century work. The bindings are also often re-worked in strange ways. When isolated illuminated elements are encountered, they are usually situated before the start or after the end of the Qur’anic text, and generally depart radically from the iconographic repertoire of the traditional manuscript artist. And yet the very audacity of these illuminations can serve to belie concerns, as there are many instances in Javanese art of incongruous marriages between, say, European and Javanese elements.

I first encountered this phenomenon at the ‘Asian Decorative Arts’ sale at Christie’s South Kensington, 13 December 2001, which included three illuminated Qur’an manuscripts written on \textit{dluwang}, numbered lots 17, 18 and 19 (Christie’s 2001). I inspected all three Qur’ans prior to the sale, and found them very intriguing. Lot 19 had a double-page spread of two fully illuminated pages preceding the Qur’anic text. On the left-hand page, a floral frame enclosed a note about the \textit{shahadah}, while the remaining space on the page was coloured black. The right hand page bore a representation of ‘crowned arms’ according to European heraldic principles (which I now recognize as the arms of the Sunanate of Surakarta): a light blue oval panel containing in gold a star, crescent moon, ‘the sun in splendour’ (the sun with multiple rays and a human face), and a globe pierced by a nail (a pictorial rendering of the regnal name of the Sunan, \textit{Pakubuwana}, ‘Nail of the World’), surmounted by a Javanese crown, surrounded by a floral and foliate wreath.\textsuperscript{53} Although this artistic composition was very unusual in a Qur’anic context, I found it quite convincing (at the time!) because I was familiar with the occasional appearance of such quasi-heraldic symbols in Javanese manuscripts, as, for example, in the stamped figure of a sun-faced ‘angel’, flanked by a man-in-the-moon and a star, in a Javanese calendrical treatise copied in Yogyakarta in c. 1810.\textsuperscript{54} Lot 17 had very heavy and rather crude wooden binding boards, which I found a puzzling and unattractive feature, and moreover the dense double decorated frames around the start of the Qur’anic text extended to the very edges of the page. Lot 18 was in some ways the most conventional, with three pairs of decorated double frames at the beginning, middle and end of the Qur’anic text, and marginal ornaments marking every \textit{juz} or thirtieth part of the text. But less usual was the illuminated frontispiece in the form of a standing screen, bearing a medallion inscribed: \textit{Pangeran Paku Ningrat Kraton Sumeneh 1793} (Fig. 15). As the illumination appeared to be certainly

\begin{flushright}
\textit{Fig. 15: Illuminated panel at the start of a Qur’an from Madura. BL, Or. 15877, fol. 1'.}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{52} On the production of \textit{dluwang} or \textit{daluang}, see Ekadjati and McGlynn 1996.


\textsuperscript{54} Behrend 1996, 190, Fig. 208.
later than eighteenth-century, I took 1793 to be the Javanese
year, equivalent to 1865 ce. A feature which convinced me
(then!) of the manuscript’s authenticity was the spelling of
Sumeneb as s.w.m.n.b, with a b rather than p, as is indeed
is found in nineteenth-century Malay letters from the court
of Sumenep. The most impressive feature of the manu-
script was the calligraphy: the whole text was written in a
supremely confident, artistic, cursive sloping hand, and it
was the quality of the calligraphy that convinced me to bid
for the manuscript. At the sale, Lot 18 was acquired by the
British Library, and is now held as Or. 15877; Lot 19 was
sold; and Lot 17 was unsold.

In the intervening years I have worked intensively on
the art of the Qur’an in South East Asia, and on the basis
of my now much greater understanding of the field, it is
clear that all three manuscripts offered at Christie’s in 2001
were ‘enhanced’ manuscripts, namely plain nineteenth-
century Qur’ans from Java written on dluwang that were
probably only illuminated shortly before being consigned
for sale. For example, I can now state with confidence
that there is no authentic tradition of placing bold stand-
alone illuminated elements – such as the frontispiece from
Sumenep – in South East Asian Qur’an manuscripts. In
the manuscript acquired by the British Library, Or. 15877,
further indications of the very recent illumination include
bleed-through from the strong green pigment used, and
the discernible texture of talcum powder rubbed over the
illuminated elements, presumably to induce the required
patina. The decorative medallions marking the start of
each juz’ overlie and in some cases partially obscure
earlier, original, calligraphic indicators or annotations
in the margins. Most decisively, the double decorative
frames in the middle of the manuscript do not frame the
beginning of Sūrat al-Kahf, as is customary in Javanese

Fig. 16: Recently added illuminated double frames in the centre of a 19th-century Qur’an from Madura, enclosing text starting at Sūrat al-Kahf, 18:17. BL, Or. 15877, fols.147v-148v.

55 Cf. Gallop 2012d.
illuminated Qur’ans, but the pages starting with verse 17 of the sūra (Fig. 16). What would have originally been a typical Javanese brown leather binding with stamped medallion, corner brackets and multiple concentric borders has been dyed black and the medallion and corner brackets have been gilded. Yet another non-traditional touch is that the fore-edges of the manuscript have been gilded. The (authentic) colophon to this manuscript has now been partially deciphered; it was copied by ʿAbd al-Latīf in the ‘hamlet of Larangan, in the village of Puri’ (dusun Larangan kampung Puri). Even though the frontispiece inscription mentioning Sumenep is not original, it may imply that the manuscript is from Madura, and there is indeed a village called Larangan in regency (kabupaten) of Pamekasan, near Sumenep. I am pleased to report that my assessment of the quality of the calligraphy in Or. 15877 has not changed, but the illumination may only be described as ‘an interesting example of very late twentieth-century Javanese or Madurese work.’

Since 2001, countless other examples of these ‘enhanced’ Javanese Qur’ans have been documented, too many to be listed, mostly on dluwang but some also on European paper. Amongst the earliest documented are two Qur’ans from the JAKIM collection (and hence pre-dating 1998) now held in the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, one with a quasi-architectural structure filling the page below the final lines of text, with a crown and a ‘logo’ (IAMM 1998.1.3626) (Fig. 17), and the other with a deep v-shaped device filled with a floral vine (IAMM 1998.1.3627). A sale at Christie’s South Kensington on 15 April 2010 included three lots (692, 694, 697) containing 11 Javanese Qur’ans, of which eight can be categorised as ‘enhanced’ dluwang Qur’an manuscripts.

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56 Gallop 2012b, 217.

57 Gallop 2012b, 217
A copy was seen at the Muzium Kraftangan in 2000, and the Library of the University of Cologne acquired a copy in 2012 (Cod. Malaiologie 001/2012).

B.1.4 Java: illustrative additions
Alongside the Qur’ans from Java with added illumination, a few examples have been noted of non-Qur’anic Islamic manuscripts from Java with added illustration. These are generally dhawang manuscripts containing religious texts in Arabic or Javanese commonly used in pesantren (madrasah) education, which have been ‘enhanced’ with colourful drawings of wayang characters in the style of Javanese shadow puppets. Wayang-style illustration is common in Javanese literary manuscripts in Javanese script, and similar doodles may often be found on the spare pages at the end of Malay literary manuscripts, but such illustrations are never traditionally found in manuscripts used for religious instruction. A typical example of one of these newly enhanced manuscripts is now held in the Museum Religieuze Kunst & Etnografica, Antwerp, RKE.62.235 (Fig. 18).

B.2 Textual enhancements
Daghistani Qur’ans with added South East Asian colophons
The final group of ‘enhanced’ manuscripts to be discussed is fundamentally different in nature from all others presented above because in this category the ‘base’ manuscripts are not from South East Asia but from Daghistan in the Caucasus, now part of the Russian Federation. They have been included in this article because the manuscripts bear colophons identifying their places of origin as in South East Asia, and have therefore been offered for sale on the international Islamic art market, and purchased, as ‘South East Asian Qur’ans.’

This group of manuscripts was introduced and discussed in detail in my 2008 publication in the St Petersburg-based journal Manuscripta Orientalia, ‘From Caucasia to South

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58 Wieringa 2014.
60 With thanks to Prof. E. Vonck for this information and the image.
East Asia: Daghistani Qur’ans and the Islamic manuscript tradition in Brunei and the southern Philippines. In that study, I presented 14 Qur’an manuscripts with a shared and highly distinctive codicological profile, six of which had colophons mentioning South East Asian toponyms such as Kota Batu in Brunei, Sabah (Fig. 19), and the Philippines (Figs 20 and 21). Following a close examination, I concluded firmly that ‘all 14 Qur’ans discussed above were created within the Daghistani manuscript tradition, by Daghistani scribes, and using Daghistani materials and implements’. I then examined the historical record, concluding that there were just enough traces of linkages (for example, a nineteenth-century Daghistani scholar in Mecca is known to have taught South East Asian Muslims) to imagine ‘a historical, theological and cultural context within which the prospect of a Daghistani scribe producing a Qur’an in the Brunei-southern Philippines zone in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century is logically plausible, without, it must be admitted, a single piece of firm supporting evidence from South East Asia itself, other than the colophons of the six Qur’an manuscripts’. At this point, I faced up to ‘squarely consider the question of forgery,’ in particular, whether the ‘colophons may have been tampered with or added to at some subsequent date’, but on the basis of a close visual examination, concluded that there was ‘no reason to doubt the authenticity of the colophons of these Qur’an manuscripts and their South East Asian links’.

However, since that date I have come to the opposite conclusion, namely that the colophons linking these Daghistani manuscripts to South East Asia must have been added recently – and expertly! – for a number of reasons which will be outlined below.

Firstly, one major hindrance at the time of writing of my 2008 article was the state of knowledge of the field, with the complete absence of any published reproductions of authentic Qur’an manuscripts from the Philippines, combined with confirmation from Brunei authorities of the absence in Brunei of any Qur’an manuscripts known to have

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61 Gallop 2008a, 2008b.
62 For an outline of the characteristics of Daghistani Qur’ans, with respect to binding, paper, layout, script, illumination and spatial arrangement of the Qur’anic text, see Gallop 2008a, 34–37.
63 Gallop 2008a, 43.
64 Gallop 2008a, 49.
65 Gallop 2008a, 49.
been copied in Brunei itself. I have since worked intensively on Islamic manuscripts from the Philippines, documenting Qur’an manuscripts acquired by American forces in the first decade of the twentieth century and now in U.S. collections, as well as Qur’ans still held in Mindanao itself. All of these examples of illuminated Islamic manuscripts from the southern Philippines were found to relate broadly to other South East Asian schools of manuscript art, but betray no codicological linkages at all with the Daghistani Qur’ans.

Secondly, the flow of these Daghistani Qur’ans onto the market has continued unabated over the past few years, turning up not only in London sale rooms but also in the hands of dealers in the Middle East and elsewhere, offered for sale with a diverse range of supposed provenances. A Malaysian collector of manuscripts and antiquities currently based in Abu Dhabi, Abdul Raman Bahrom, has published three examples in his blog Abu Dervish; two of these were sold to him in around 2011 by a dealer based in Lebanon, one described as ‘Kashmiri’ and the other – comprising some large loose leaves – as ‘Mamluk’, but he now agrees that both are Daghistani. The Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Kuala Lumpur has recently acquired a copy, apparently from a dealer in Terengganu, and indeed, while I was writing this article, I noticed a copy offered for sale on eBay.

The concatenation of events which for me tipped the tenuous balance of probability, from my earlier acceptance of these colophons as authentic to my present realization that they must be fake, was the appearance on the London market in 2010 of three manuscripts. A sale at Bonhams on 15 April 2010 included a recognizably Daghistani Qur’an section, with unusual blue floral illuminated cartouches on the front cover, overwritten

66 Gallop 2008a, 40.
with the commonly-found Qur’anic injunction to ensure ritual purity when handling the Holy Book (56:77–79). The colophon to this manuscript was dated Sha’bān 1030 (June–July 1621 CE), and the scribe was named as Muḥammad bin ‘Abd Allāh al-Shaghūrī. Around the same time a Qur’an section, containing only a selection of surahs, came into the hands of a London dealer. It bore an almost identical floral illuminated composition, in pink, on the front cover, with the same Qur’anic inscription (Fig. 22). But in this case, the manuscript bore a colophon dated 3 Rabī’ al-Awwal 1124 (10 April 1712) with the scribe named as Munqāḥ ibn Maḥmūd al-Būrūnāwī of Kotū Bātū in Būrūnā (Fig. 23). The artistic linkages between the frontispieces of two manuscripts are indisputable,70 suggesting a common stable of production, and yet the hand of the Qur’anic text is different. The dates in both colophons appear unfeasibly early for these types of manuscripts which mostly date from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The inescapable conclusion is that both the colophons and the illuminated frontispieces were added to these two manuscripts relatively recently.

Finally, a large illuminated Qur’an manuscript was offered for sale at Sotheby’s on 5 October 2015, lot 47, with a colophon naming the scribe as Ḥāshim bin Muḥammad al-Būrūnāwī in the kingdom of Kūtā Bātū and the date as Ramadan 1070 (May–June 1660), with a further inscription in red below dedicated to ‘our lord the Sultan’.71 The manuscript was sold for a hammer price of £80,000, equivalent to £97,250 inclusive of buyer’s premium – the highest price achieved at auction for a ‘South East Asian’ manuscript – and is now held in the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha. In fact, the Qur’an displays all the standard features associated with Daghistani Qur’ans, and most characteristically, it includes at the back a diagram representing the four schools of law similar to that found in a Qur’an with a confirmed Daghistani

70 The trefoil cartouche on each frontispiece is identical in shape to that found on a nineteenth-century arched stone fireplace, probably from Kubachi, Daghistan, now in the Aga Khan Museum; Graves and Junod 2012, 155.


Fig. 24: Diagrams of the schools of law, at the end of a large illuminated Qur’an from Daghistan. BL, Or. 16127.
provenance now held in the British Library (Fig. 24). Overall, however, the calibre of calligraphy and illumination in this Qur’an was not nearly as fine as that in many other similar (i.e. Daghistani) Qur’ans that had appeared on the market. Therefore, I could not help but conclude that the Brunei colophon in this manuscript was a recent addition to a Daghistani Qur’an.

Thus far, my conclusions were based purely on contextual evidence. Fortunately, with the kind assistance of Prof. Haida Liang – Head of Imaging and Sensing for Archaeology, Art History and Conservation (ISAAC) at the School of Science and Technology, Nottingham Trent University – I was recently able to test my hypothesis scientifically. One of the Daghistani Qur’ans now in the British Library, Or. 15913, bears on the bottom of the final page a colophon statement (mentioning the toponyms Ṣabaḥ and al-Burūnawī) set within an illuminated panel, with what appears to be exactly the same ornamentation and pigments as found elsewhere in the manuscript. On 14 February 2018, this page was subjected to multi-spectral imaging by my colleague in the British Library conservation department, imaging scientist Christina Duffy, and the spectral images were then analysed by Liang’s student Luke Butler and research fellow Sotiria Kogou. While the pigments surrounding the colophon appear to be identical with those elsewhere on the page to the naked eye (Fig. 25), the near infrared (1050 nm) band image (Fig. 26) shows a clear difference. Both the application of principal component analysis (PCA) and the independent component analysis (ICA) (Fig. 27) on the spectral images, and the spectral comparison between the green areas in the colophon and those elsewhere on the page, show a clear difference in the material composition, and these results support the suggestion that the colophon panel was added to the manuscript at a later date. While spectral imaging cannot give a clear dating for this later addition, it does confirm that the colophon is not an integral part of the original manuscript.

Thus all the other South East Asian colophons in the Daghistani manuscripts which I published in 2008, and at the time gave the ‘benefit of the doubt’, can now also be regarded as spurious modern additions. Ironically, although the South East Asian colophons were evidently added for commercial reasons, the manuscripts themselves are in fact intrinsically valuable as fine examples of an impressive albeit little-known Islamic calligraphic tradition from the Caucasus, and are worthy of being appreciated as such in their own right. Thus the British Library is now happy to find itself the
proud possessor of an important research collection of ten Daghestani Qur’ans, even though some of the manuscripts were admittedly first acquired in the belief that they were from the Malay world. Nevertheless, the high degree of market activity has necessitated this lengthy exposé, to clarify forcefully that such Daghestani Qur’an manuscripts have no authentic connection with South East Asia.

C. A view from the ground in Madura

I wrote earlier in this article of my impression of a ‘veritable cottage industry’ in Java, ‘churning out’ illuminated Qur’ans, without having any concrete information on the actual circumstances of production. It is therefore extremely valuable to be able to share a view from the ground, offered by Hakiem Syukrie, from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, who in a blog post in 2012 wrote about meeting one such producer of new and enhanced Qur’ans.72

Following an increasing flow of visitors to the Section for the Certification of Copies of the Qur’an (Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur’an) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the Bayt al-Qur’an in Jakarta, all bearing photographs of oversize ‘new old’ Qur’an manuscripts, found in locations as diverse as Amuntai in South Kalimantan and Fak-Fak in Papua, and asking sky-high prices, Hakiem began to wonder who the scribes were, where they were based, and what their motives were for producing these manuscripts. On the basis of information from a colleague at the Museum Empu Tantular in Sidoarjo near Surabaya in East Java, in July 2011 Hakiem travelled to Sumenep at the eastern end of the island of Madura, where he saw in the Palace Museum (Museum Kraton) a giant Qur’an 4 × 3 m in size. According to museum officials, the Qur’an had been produced a few years previously in conjunction with a provincial Qur’an recital competition (MTQ, Musabaqah Tilawatil Quran), by a woman in the nearby district of Bluto.

Expressing a desire to meet the makers of these manuscripts, and perhaps to acquire one, Hakiem was taken to meet an antique kolektor (the Indonesian term kolektor carries the commercial connotations of a ‘dealer’ as well as a ‘collector’) named Haji Ihsan in Bluto. On learning of Hakiem’s interests, Haji Ihsan brought out a number of manuscripts, distinguishing clearly between which were new and which were old, and saying of one in particular, ‘This is old, but the beginning with Fatiyah and al-Baqarah and the cover are new, to replace the lost originals’. In a corner of the room, Hakiem noticed a pile of completed very large Qur’ans, waiting to be bound. Haji Ihsan then called out his son, Usmaniyah, who together with five other scribes was responsible for writing the Qur’ans, and who showed Hakiem the felt-tip pens (spidol) which they used for writing. They also explained that Qur’ans on lontar were written with a small bor (drill, or spike); Hakiem also noticed many siwalan trees (Borassus flabellifer) – the source of lontar palm leaves – growing around the house.

Hakiem then raised the fact of the high prices being asked in Jakarta for such Qur’ans, and Haji Ihsan replied, ‘These [i.e. large] Qur’ans I sell for 3 million [rupiah]. The Lontar ones I sell for 5 million.73 If someone takes them to Malaysia they can go for 15 million. If someone claims that these are old Qur’ans and asks billions for them, they are cheats.’ Haji Ihsan said his customers came from everywhere, not just from Indonesia, and that in the 1980s and 1990s he would fill up a pick-up [truck] with Madura manuscripts every week and take them to Jakarta, to be sold overseas, including to Yemen and Jordan. At the end of the meeting, he gave his mobile number to Hakiem, to be passed on to prospective customers: ‘If you know of anyone who wants to buy a handwritten Qur’an, tell them to contact me – they make lovely decorations for any home.’

Hakiem wrote that he published his blog post in order to clarify the different roles of producers and scribes of these Qur’ans, and the vendors, and the status of the Qur’ans themselves, to ensure that not all are ‘tarred with the same brush.’

D. Is What You See What You Get?

The Islamic manuscripts discussed in this article can be categorised either as newly-created works, or authentic old manuscripts which have been enhanced either graphically or textually, and three major centres of production of these ‘problematic’ manuscripts can be identified.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Patani appears to have been a centre for the creation of new manuscripts in Malay on a wide range of subjects, including both new copies of older works produced within the traditional idiom, and new ‘fanciful’ manuscripts which attracted attention primarily

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72 All the information in this section is based on Syukrie 2012, with my own translations of quotes.

73 With an exchange rate in 2011 of about £1 = Rp. 20,000, Rp 3 million is roughly £150 (then US$/Euros 200) and Rp 5 million about £250 (US$/ Euros 350).
because of their non-traditional format and decoration. These Patani manuscripts are notable for their fine small rounded hand, which though distinguishable as ‘modern’ in appearance by comparison with nineteenth-century manuscripts, is nonetheless very accomplished. In fact, it could be suggested that by the late twentieth century, Patani was the only region in the Malay world still capable of producing a fine manuscript hand for writing Malay in Jawi script, and it was this skill which enabled writers in Patani to ‘rise to the challenge’ of the economic boom years of the last decades of the twentieth century in South East Asia, when Malaysian institutions were avidly seeking to build up their collections of Malay manuscripts.

The second major centre of activity in South East Asia is Java, perhaps with a particular focus on the island of Madura in the province of East Java. From the 1990s to the present day, large numbers of enhanced and new manuscripts have been produced in Java, for both the domestic and the international market. Enhanced manuscripts are primarily Qur’ans, comprising originally plain nineteenth-century manuscripts mostly written on dluwang to which illumination has been added. A few non-Qur’anic religious manuscripts are also known with added wayang-style illustration. New manuscripts produced in Java are generally Qur’ans created as unik artefacts (the Indonesian word unik carries connotations of ‘unusual’ or ‘fanciful’ rather than the singularity of the English term unique) because of their large size or lontar format. However, unlike in Patani, the calibre of calligraphy in these manuscripts is generally mediocre, or

Fig. 28: Illuminated double pages of the final two sūrahs from a Javanese Qur’an, inserted into the middle of a religious text in Arabic from Java. Farish Noor Collection, National Library of Singapore.
as Ali Akbar (2014) has termed it, *asal-asalan*, only reaching a bare minimum standard.

In discussing these two regional groups of manuscripts, in general I have deliberately avoided the use of the word ‘fake’, preferring the term ‘problematic’ to acknowledge the inevitable discrepancy between viewer expectations and the actual nature of the manuscripts. But if a ‘fake’ manuscript can be described as one that purports to be something which it is not, I would argue that in many of the cases discussed above there is not necessarily such intrinsic ‘purport’ involved. Taking for example the various copies of the *Sejarah Patani*, who is to suggest that they ever claimed to be older than they are? The text contains numerous references to twentieth-century events, and in all cases the illumination is highly original and unrelated to decorative elements found in nineteenth-century and earlier manuscripts. Therefore, pending textual study, these manuscripts should be accepted as no more and no less than twentieth-century manuscripts of a Malay political-historical work. Turning to ‘enhanced’ Qur’ans, there is a long and illustrious tradition of the embellishing of Qur’an manuscripts as a mark of honour for the text of the Divine Revelation, and although it is true that in the case of the stridently-coloured Javanese *dluwang* Qur’ans, the motivation was probably for financial rather than spiritual gain, it is difficult to be categorical. As for the newly-created Javanese Qur’ans, Hakiem Syukrie offers a robust defence of Haji Ihsan’s booming business in ‘Souvenir Qur’ans’ (*al-Quran Cinderamata*), which are openly sold as newly-made objects of beauty or interest suitable for enhancing the interior of any Muslim home. As
Wieringa\textsuperscript{74} has put it bluntly, it takes two to tango, and as long as the demand exists for such new or hybrid manuscripts, the market will supply them. Indeed, the phrase (most often used with computer fonts) ‘What You See Is What You Get’ is in fact extremely appropriate in the present situation, and suggests that onus for evaluating these manuscripts should be shared with the beholder.

However I would argue that the final group of enhanced manuscripts – Daghistani Qur’ans with added colophons relating to Brunei and the southern Philippines – are in a different category. Here I would not recoil from using the word ‘fake’ in relation to these added textual elements, and would also wish to highlight the great potential damage that can be caused to scholarship, and the distortion of our understanding of the cultural history of the region, by such embellishments seeking to maximise the commercial value of the manuscripts.

At this juncture I would like to stress that, in view of the limited current state of the knowledge of the field, and unless specified otherwise, there is no implication that any vendors of manuscripts mentioned in this article were aware of the ‘problematic’ nature of the manuscripts at the moment of sale. However, the time now is certainly ripe for all interested parties – including collectors, dealers, auction houses, scholars, curators, cataloguers and Qur’an certifiers – to take the initiative to describe and report as accurately and honestly as possible the manuscripts which come into their hands. A few laudable attempts can already be noted: for example, the published catalogue description of the probably originally monochrome decorated manuscript from Aceh mentioned above, PNM MSS 2654, reads ‘The dome-shaped decoration on fol. 1\textsuperscript{r} and fol. 117\textsuperscript{v} appears newly coloured’.\textsuperscript{75} While Edwin Wieringa admitted spending € 450 of German tax-payer money’ on a Qur’an manuscript which he later realised ‘must have been specifically created for the market’,\textsuperscript{76} his close description and analysis of the manuscript, and his highlighting of particular ‘problems’ such as the missing Qur’anic text at the junctures between the newly added illuminated elements and the ‘core’ old manuscript, will greatly help others to evaluate similar manuscripts. Abdul Raman Bahrom’s candid blog Abu Dervish, written from the perspective of a private collector and giving full details of where he acquired manuscripts, and how they were described by the vendors, casts valuable light on the mechanics of the manuscript trade. Ali Akbar’s important series of articles entitled Qur’an kuno-kunaoan, ‘Pseudo-ancient Qur’ans’, in his blog Khazanah Mushaf al-Qur’an Nusantara, ‘The treasury of Qur’ans from South East Asia’, as well as another series, Jangan langsung percaya!, ‘Don’t be too quick to believe!’, should also be noted, along with Hakiem Syukrie’s blog highlighted above.

The present article is an attempt to build on the resources available for consultation by those studying such manuscripts, and hopefully also for those involved in acquiring or selling them. The aim is to advance knowledge in the field to an extent that an appreciation of new and enhanced manuscripts from South East Asia will be on the basis of a realistic acknowledgement of how and when they were actually created, and the relative merits of their constituent parts.

The final example presented here is from the collection of Islamic manuscripts formed by Dr Farish Noor, donated in 2017 to the National Library of Singapore. Acquired in Java in around 2013, it is a religious text in Arabic written on dluwang, and like most examples of the genre, the manuscript would originally have been completely plain and unadorned. However, this particular book now includes in the middle two illuminated pages from the end of a Javanese Qur’an, containing the Sūrat al-Falaq and Sūrat al-Nās (Fig. 28). As can be seen from the illustration, the edges of the pages are frayed and worn, and so these two folios have been ‘backed’ by being glued onto two other (non-consecutive) folios from the Qur’an, with the result that the reverse of the illuminated page with Sūrat al-Falaq contains the beginning of Sūrat al-Ṣad, verses 1–16 (Fig. 29), while the verso of the page with Sūrat al-Nās contains Sūrat al-Ṣad verses 42–60. Without any further information, this could be regarded as a truly audacious and misleading example of commercially-driven ‘graphic enhancement’. But in this particular context, no deceit was intended, for according to Farish, the vendor cheerfully informed him that the manuscript had been ‘improved’ by the addition of the decorated pages taken from elsewhere. And so this book can simply be treated as a composite item, in future years to be seen as a testament to market conditions in the early twenty-first century, and which can be appreciated both for its original theological text,
and also for the newly-added typically Javanese double illuminated frames from a now-dismembered Qur’an which—thanks to the entrepreneurial verve of the dealer—have been preserved within the volume. After all, in Hakiem Syukrie’s words, ‘Old or new, in time all these too will be old.’

77 ‘Kuno atau baru, pada waktunya nanti akan menjadi kuno juga’, Syukrie 2012.
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What a Multiple-text Manuscript Can Tell Us about the Tamil Scholarly Tradition: The Case of UVSL 589

Jonas Buchholz and Giovanni Ciotti | Hamburg

1. Introduction
UVSL 589 is a palm-leaf manuscript that is now kept in the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library (UVSL) in Chennai (Tamil Nadu, India) (Fig. 1). This multiple-text manuscript is unusual both with regards to its contents and its layout. It contains a remarkably large number of excerpts from Tamil texts, which are arranged in a systematic way and represent the domains of grammar and literature. At the same time, the layout facilitates navigation between the texts in a way rarely found in Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts. Taken together, these features invite us to investigate the cultural context of UVSL 589. This case study intends to show how a deeper understanding of the cultural history of texts can be gained by studying manuscripts as objects in their own right, rather than just as a disparate collection of texts – an approach rarely adopted in Tamil studies so far.

2. Codicological features
UVSL 589 consists of 100 folios of regular size (36.5 × 5.5 cm), all of which are made of the same palm-leaf material (Fig. 2). The general state of preservation is rather good. The first two leaves, which are presumably guard leaves, are blank, whereas the following 98 leaves contain texts inscribed on both sides by what appears to be one and the same hand. The manuscript was obviously produced very carefully. The script is neat and tiny – the scribe managed to fit between 14 and 20 lines of text on each leaf. The text was meticulously proof-read, as shown by numerous occurrences of interlinear additions (marked in the line with a + sign) and crossed-out characters. A few uninked notes and emendations show that the manuscript was proof-read at least twice, before and after it was inked (Fig. 3). It is impossible to ascertain when the uninked elements were added, but the hand seems to be the same hand that wrote the rest of the manuscript.

Fig. 1: UVSL 589, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library, Chennai, side view of the bundle.

* We would like to thank the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library (UVSL) in Chennai for permission to publish pictures from manuscript UVSL 589. We would also like to thank Victor D’Avella, R. Sathyanarayanan and Eva Wilden for their insightful remarks on previous versions of this article. The research for the article was carried out within the scope of the work conducted by (1) NETamil ‘Going From Hand to Hand: Networks of Intellectual Exchange in the Tamil Learned Traditions’, Hamburg / Pondicherry, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and (2) the SFB 950 ‘Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa’, funded by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) within the scope of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC), University of Hamburg. Although this article is the result of a collaboration and would not otherwise have existed in its present form, the authorship of sections 5, 6 and 7 should be attributed to Jonas Buchholz and that of sections 2, 3 and 4 to Giovanni Ciotti.

3 A row of circles was added by the scribe wherever the quality of the palm leaf was not good enough to support writing.
Folio numbers are marked on the left margin of the recto sides. The system of foliation is quite peculiar as the manuscript contains several macro-sections with individual foliation in both Tamil digit-numerals and Telugu letter-numerals. Despite such disparate numbering, we are inclined to think that the whole manuscript is the result of a single production act as the size, material and scribal hand appear to be the same for all the leaves of UVSL 589. It seems that the different foliations found in the manuscript were used intentionally in order to structure the manuscript. As we will see later, by and large, the macro-sections marked by the foliation have specific thematic foci. Secondary pagination in Western numerals from 1 to 194 (counting the recto and verso of each folio separately) was added later, most probably when the manuscript became part of the UVSL collection. For the sake of convenience, we have decided to use this pagination for reference purposes in this article. A synopsis of the original foliation and the corresponding secondary page numbers is found in Table 1.

Unfortunately, the manuscript neither contains any record concerning the date and place of its production, nor any indication of the identity of the scribes who worked on it.

2 The total number of pages should actually be 196 (excluding the two blank guard leaves), but two pages were skipped, either because they do not contain anything (the page between 31 and 32) or simply by mistake (the page between 145 and 146).
nor does it mention the name of its scribe or of any other person potentially involved in its production (such as the commissioner or proof-reader, for example). The catalogue of the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library does not contain any information about the manuscript’s provenance either. As for the date of the manuscript, we can only make an educated guess. Due to the climatic conditions there, palm-leaf manuscripts had a rather limited lifespan in South India and had to be copied regularly as a result. Most of the manuscripts that have survived to this day are therefore not very old. The majority of dateable palm-leaf manuscripts from that region range from the end of the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century. It is very likely that UVSL 589 was crafted sometime during this period, too.

While UVSL 589 contains little direct information about the circumstances of its production, it does provide some hints about the milieu in which it was produced. First of all, the person who produced the manuscript seems to have been an adherent of Śaivism. This is apparent from the numerous paratexts found in the manuscript. For instance, the very beginning of the manuscript is a stanza from the Tēvāram (3.54.1), which is quoted as an invocation. The Śaiva affiliation is confirmed throughout the manuscript by means of numerous invocations placed at the ends of texts or sub-units of texts. These invocations are mostly in Sanskrit written in Tamilian Grantha script (Fig. 4a), but they can also be in Tamil written in Tamil script (Fig. 4b). Most of the Sanskrit invocations contain names of Śiva as the lord of Chidambara, a prominent site of Śaiva worship, (e.g. Citambareśa, ‘Lord of Chidambara’ Kanakasabhānateśa, ‘lord of dance in the golden hall [in the temple of Chidambara]’). The Tamil invocations mostly praise the Tamil Śaiva saint Cuntarar. A complete list of the invocations along with their translations can be found in Appendix 1 below.

The presence of both Tamil and Sanskrit in one and the same manuscript should come as no surprise, considering the importance of Sanskrit as a pan-Indian scholarly and religious language. However, given that Tamil studies have long tended to ignore the history of the interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit, the use of Sanskrit invocations in a manuscript which only contains Tamil texts is notable. Moreover, there is a third language with which the scribe of UVSL 589 was obviously acquainted, namely Telugu (Fig. 4c). This is the main language of the present-day states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, but it is also spoken by a sizeable minority in Tamil Nadu. We have already seen that the foliation of UVSL 589 partly uses Telugu letters. Apart from that, the manuscript also contains a few annotations that are written in Telugu script, although their language is Tamil (listed in

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1 Like most Indic manuscripts, one cannot exclude the possibility that a single person produced the whole manuscript, wrote and emended its text(s), and kept the object for his own use.
2 The dates recorded in the colophons of palm-leaf manuscripts from the area of what is now Tamil Nadu clearly point to such a timespan; see Ciotti and Franceschini 2016.
3 The Tēvāram, a work of devotional poetry in praise of Śiva, forms the most important part of the Tamil Śaiva canon (Dramayari).
4 Besides Telugu script, Tamilian Grantha (which is also known as Tamil Grantha) is the main script used in south-east India in order to write Sanskrit.
5 Invocations may help link a manuscript with a specific place if they mention the local manifestation of a deity worshipped in a particular temple; see Ciotti and Franceschini 2016, 80–81. The case of Śiva in Chidambaram, though, does not allow for any conclusions about the place of production of UVSL 589 since Chidambaram is a place of worship of transregional importance.
6 Secondary literature on the Telugu community in Tamil Nadu is scarce. The Census of India 2001 puts the number of Telugu speakers in Tamil Nadu at 3.5 million, which amounts to almost six per cent of the total population of that state, see <http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_Data_2001/Census_Data_Online/Language/parta.htm>.
The rationale for using the Telugu script is not very clear. Possibly it reflects a slip of the hand on the part of the scribe since he only used this script occasionally and in the last case even mixed Tamil and Telugu scripts.

To sum up, UVSL 589 must have been produced in a multilingual Śaiva milieu, in which Tamil co-existed with other languages such as Sanskrit and Telugu. What we still do not know is in what context the manuscript was meant to be used. In this respect, it is important to note from the codicological point of view that UVSL 589 seems to have been designed with the intention of easing its navigation. We have already seen that the manuscript is divided into several series of foliations, the end of which coincides with the end of a text or a group of texts. Furthermore, the consistent use of invocations at the end of texts or sub-units of texts can also be said to ease navigation. Text titles are often stated in the left-hand margin of the folios where the texts begin. Where stanzas start somewhere in the middle of a line or are interspersed with so much commentary that it is difficult to find them, the beginning of the stanza (pratīka in Sanskrit) has been put in the left-hand margin. The most striking feature of the layout, however, is that large parts of the manuscript contain one stanza per line, with a line number appearing at the right-hand side of the folio. This is in marked contrast to the usual layout of Tamil palm-leaf manuscripts, where the text is written in a continuous script without any line-breaks.

It seems that the purpose of the layout in UVSL 589 was not to fit as much text as possible on a palm-leaf, but rather to make it easy to locate a given stanza in the manuscript. Another noteworthy feature, rather uncommon at least in manuscripts from southern India, is an internal reference that guides the reader from one folio of the manuscript to another. Certainly, the envisaged user of UVSL 589 was not expected to read the manuscript from beginning to end, but to browse through it and consult various sections according to his needs.

One can speculate about the possible didactic character of the manuscript on the basis of the variety of navigational

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9 Such annotations (words or short sentences added to the main texts) are found in several places in UVSL 589. They are usually written in Tamil using Tamil script.

10 Line numbers also justify each line in accordance with the overall layout of the manuscript, which has one text-block per folio side. In this respect, one can also see that whenever the space needed to write a stanza exceeded the length of the line, what is left was written on the far right-hand side of the folio and marked with curly brackets. Was this possibly done under the influence of Western conventions?

11 Page 77, line 20 has a note stating ‘‘immūṉṟu ceyyuṭkum urai 42m e…’’ (‘the commentary for these three stanzas … [is found in folio] no. 42’). Folio 42 of section 3 corresponds to page 114, where we indeed find the commentary of the three stanzas quoted on page 77.

12 It is worth noting a further codicological feature of UVSL 589 here, namely the use of pullis (little circles added above characters to indicate that the inherent vowel ‘a’ should not be read; e.g. ந ‘na’ vs ந் ‘n’). Pullis are rarely used in manuscripts, but in many sections of UVSL 589 these were added when the first member of a consonant cluster is at the end of a line and the second member is at the beginning of the following line. Such a feature, which may seem like an insignificant scribal idiosyncrasy at first, helps greatly in overcoming the ambiguity of the unmarked version of Tamil script by preventing the pronunciation of an unrequired ‘a’ vowel. Within the same line, when one can clearly see what character comes next, pullis are not that necessary for anyone proficient in Tamil. However, when one has to read over two different lines, having a pulli in the position just described is rather convenient.
aids it incorporates. It could have been used by a teacher or a student, either in class – perhaps as a memory aid – or by a student for reference. Because of the lack of direct evidence, as is the case for many Indic manuscripts, we do not know who actually owned UVSL 589. The question of the intended use of the manuscript, however, becomes especially relevant with regard to its unusual contents, to which we will turn in the following section.

3. Description of the contents

UVSL 589 contains an astounding number of Tamil texts, partly in full, partly in excerpts. Their arrangement is shown in Table 2. The rationale behind this arrangement is not immediately clear, but we can make at least partial sense of it by looking at the distribution of texts on the basis of our knowledge of Tamil literature. In this way, we can see that the macro-sections group related texts together to a certain extent. The manuscript contains excerpts of fourteen literary works, for instance, all of which belong to a corpus known as Pātigēniḻkkāṇakku, or just Kīḻkkaṇakku for short. Nine of them are grouped together as part of the first macro-section (sections d to n), whereas five more are found in the third macro-section (sections w to z and bb). Apart from the Kīḻkkaṇakku works, we can find four other literary works at various places in UVSL 589: the first half of the Kallāṭam (section u), excerpts from the Tiruvalluvamālai (section cc), the whole Tirumurukāṟṟuppatai (section dd), and excerpts from the Cīvakacintāmani (section ee). In addition to the literary texts, UVSL 589 contains four grammatical treatises, namely Naggūl, Akapporul Viḷakkam, Yāpparukkalakkārikai, and Tantuṭiyālakāram, which are placed together at the beginning of the second macro-section of the manuscript (sections p to s). Furthermore, the manuscript also includes what can be called illustrative stanzas, that is, stanzas which were specifically composed to exemplify certain poetological topics. These illustrative stanzas have been taken from the commentary on the Tantuṭiyālakāram (sections a, c and aa) and from another treatise, the Purapporul Venpāmālai (section b). Finally, there are two sections which combine stanzas from literary works (Cīvakacintāmani and Cilappatikāram) with illustrative stanzas from the Purapporul Venpāmālai (sections t and v).

Section o is a special case, which is labelled in the margin as caṅkīram (lit. ‘mixture’, probably in the sense of ‘miscellanea’). This section contains 105 stanzas taken from a wide array of different sources. Sometimes the source is identified after the stanza, but mostly it is not. Due to the nature of this section, it was difficult to identify all of the stanzas. The sources which we could identify include well-known literary texts such as Cilappatikāram, Muttoḷḷāyiram, and Nālaṭiyār, but also religious poems from the Śaiva Tirumūṟai canon, minor works of the so-called Pirapantam genre, and occasional stanzas which were later included in collections of individual poems (Tanjippūṭal Tirattu).

As we have seen, UVSL 589 includes both poetical works and theoretical treatises on grammar. This reflects a view prevalent in Tamil scholarly tradition, where literature (ilakkiyam) and grammar (ilakkaṇam) were seen as a complementary pair. ‘Grammar’ in the Tamil sense of the word includes not only grammar sensu stricto, but also the study of poetical conventions, metrics and figures of speech. This complementarity is reflected in the terms ilakkiyam (from Sanskrit laksya, lit. ‘what should be described’) for literature and ilakkaṇam (from Sanskrit laksana, lit. ‘description’) for grammar. In other words, grammar represents the toolbox for studying and producing literature. The co-existence of grammatical and literary texts in UVSL 589 is quite remarkable. Given the lack of information available to us, we can only speculate about the ways in which this manuscript was used, but it seems quite possible that UVSL 589 formed a kind of syllabus. It contains both grammatical works which a student of Tamil was expected to master and excerpts from literary works to which he could apply his theoretical knowledge. The fact that most of the literary works are only included in excerpts and come without a commentary (even in the case of texts which were regularly transmitted together with a commentary) suggests that they were not meant to be studied as pieces of literature.

13 Kār Nāṟpatu and Aintiṇai Aimpatu are actually included twice. As we will see, the first instances of these two texts (sections d and e) are connected with the preceding section rather than with the Kīḻkkanakku block.

14 The Purapporul Venpāmālai is unusual if compared to the other grammatical treatises insofar as the illustrative stanzas are not contained in the commentary, but in the text itself (Zvelebil 1995, 584). Whether or not these stanzas are later additions is hard to tell on the basis of the information available.

15 A substantial number of Tamil literary works exist as e-texts on various websites on the internet. In many cases, it has therefore been possible to identify the stanzas simply by using a web search engine. The limitations of this kind of approach are obvious, of course. What is really needed is a comprehensive, searchable electronic corpus, but unfortunately, the situation in Tamil studies is far from ideal – much more has been achieved in Classical Studies thanks to the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, for example.

Table 2: Macro-sections marked by a change of foliation, indicated here by blue horizontal lines.

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in their own right, but rather for illustrative purposes. Seen against this background, the selection of texts in UVSL 589 becomes meaningful. In the following sections, we will try to find out just what this selection can tell us about the learned milieu in which UVSL 589 was produced and used.

4. Strategies of transmission of grammar

The selection of grammatical treatises found in UVSL 589 mirrors the predominant configuration of Tamil grammar, which includes five sub-domains respectively focusing on the study of ēḻuttu, col, porul, yāppu, and anï. These domains roughly correspond to phonology, morphology, poetics, metrics, and the study of figures of speech. In particular, UVSL 589 contains the Naṉṉūl of Pavaṇanti Muṉivar (twelfth century), which deals with phonology and morphology, the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam of Nāṟkavirāca Nampi (thirteenth–fourteenth century), which deals with poetics, the Yāpparuṅkalakkārikai of Amitacākarar (tenth–eleventh century), a treatise on metrics, and the Tāṇṭiyalaṅkāram, a twelfth-century adaptation of the Kāvyadarśa by the Sanskrit scholar Daṇḍin (seventh–eighth century), which deals with figures of speech. As such, all five domains of grammar are represented in the manuscript. One should note that the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam only deals with one of the two subdivisions of Tamil poetics, namely the study of love poetry (akam). The other genre of heroic poetry (puṟam) is also represented in UVSL 589, but by illustrative stanzas taken from the Puṟapporuḷ Venpāmālai by Aiyaṉ Āritaṉār (prob. ninth century). Even though the treatise itself is not included, it can be argued that the person who produced the manuscript considered the Puṟapporuḷ Venpāmālai to be an important reference work for analysing heroic poetry.

We know that some of these texts were popular at the time the manuscript was produced. In particular, despite its antiquity, the Naṉṉūl was broadly used for teaching Tamil well into the nineteenth century.17 The popularity of the Naṉṉūl is corroborated by the numerous commentaries, printed editions and translations that were published during that time.18 Similarly, the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam seems to have been the standard text on poetics during that period, as is shown by the fact that nineteenth century poetical compositions generally followed its rules.19 Furthermore, it seems that the five treatises which we find in UVSL 589 were frequently combined in order to cover the five domains of grammar. This can be inferred from secondary sources. For instance, the eighteenth-century missionary C. G. Beschi hinted at this fivefold list in his grammar of the high register of Tamil,20 where he mentions exactly the same texts we find in UVSL 589 (with the exception of the Puṟapporuḷ Venpāmālai).21

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| y. | Mutumoḷikkāṅci (31 stanzas) | pp. 128–129 |
| z. | Ėlāti (10 stanzas) | p. 129 |
| aa. | Selections from the Tāṇṭiyalaṅkāram with commentary and illustrative stanzas | pp. 130–156 |
| bb. | Ācārakkōvai (87 stanzas) | pp. 156–162 |
| cc. | Tiruvallavāmbālai | p. 162 |
| dd. | Tirumuruṅkṛuppattāi | pp. 163–166 |
| ee. | Selections from the Čiṅkasamāntaṇi, with commentary | pp. 167–194 |

17 See Gover 1874, 54; Cāminātaiyar 1950, 115.
18 Ebeling 2009, 244–246.
19 Ebeling 2010, 92, n. 84.
20 See Beschi 1822. 1822 is the year of publication of the English translation by Benjamin Guy Babington. The original Latin work was only published in 1917 (Trichinopoly: St. Joseph’s Industrial School Press).
21 Reading Beschi, though, one has the impression that he thought that the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam also deals with puṟam topics. In fact, he probably did not even know the title Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam, as this is the only work he refers to by the name of its author rather than its title.
There are also a number of primary sources, manuscripts and early printed books that somehow intersect with this ideal syllabus. It is clear, in fact, that there is a discrepancy between the ideal five-fold composition of Tamil grammar, the selection of texts forming the corpus used to engage with it, and the actual material realisation of the corpus. For instance, various libraries throughout Tamil Nadu host multiple-text manuscripts containing some of the five grammars of UVSL 589, sometimes together with non-grammatical texts.22 However, none of these manuscripts contain all five grammars, and each collection of texts has some unique characteristics. UVSL 601, for instance, combines three of the five grammars (Naṟṟū, Yāpparunikalakkārikai and an incomplete copy of the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam) together with a selection of ethical texts, including the Tirukkuṟaḷ, the Nālaiṭiyār, and the Tirikatkam. In this respect, it comes close to being an ideal counterpart to UVSL 589, which combines grammars with texts that are mostly literary.

In addition, there are at least two books printed in the nineteenth century that seem to present the same corpus or part of it. As early as 1835, which was quite early in the history of Tamil printed books, Tāṇṭavarāyamutaliyār, a pioneer in the field of Tamil printing, published a volume entitled Ilakkaṇapiṟaṇaikaḷ (‘The Five on Grammar’) together with Māṅcaṟ Ā. Muttuccāmippillai.23 Despite its title, however, this book only includes the Naṟṟū, the Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam and the Puṟapporuḷ Venpāmāḷai.24 Another book dated 1864 and edited by a certain NaracīṅkapuramVirācāmiMutaliyār is said to contain copies of the rules of all five grammatical treatises found in UVSL 589 (including the rules of the Puṟapporuḷ Venpāmāḷai).25 Notwithstanding, this editorial choice does not seem to have been particularly successful, as each work was usually printed in a separate volume. Generally speaking, our understanding of how grammar was studied and transmitted from teachers to pupils is still inadequate.26 What is intuitively clear, though, is that in order to master grammar properly, one must be acquainted with all five branches of grammar. At the present stage of research, there are many more or less sensible ways in which the history of grammar can be narrated. One of these ways would envisage a fluid scholarly practice: teachers transmitted different texts, or parts of texts, to intermediate students – in other words, students deemed ready to venture into a rather sophisticated technical literature – in order to cover all branches of grammar. Attempts at stabilising this situation have been made in the past: the very first extant grammar of Tamil, the Tolkāppiyam (first half of the first millennium), and, later on, two more works, namely the Viracōḻiyam (eleventh century) and the Ilakkanavilakkam (seventeenth century), cover the whole gamut of grammatical topics.27 On the one hand, the fact that we still have manuscripts preserving these works bears witness to their success, as it means that they were studied and copied. On the other hand, as one might expect in any scholarly context, the intention of these works to encompass the entire field of grammar raised controversies and was not accepted by the whole community of scholars; at a time close to UVSL 589, for instance, the Ilakkanavilakkam was vehemently criticised by Civañāṉa Cuvāmikal (alias Civañāṉa Muṉivar), possibly the most influential Tamil scholar of the eighteenth century, in his Ilakkanavilakkacuravāli (‘Cyclone on the Ilakkanavilakkam’).28 As works such as the Ilakkanavilakkam were only successful in part, schools and individual scholars may have opted to combine texts, or parts of different texts, in order to create effective grammatical syllabi. UVSL 589 seems to befit such a historiographical reconstruction.

5. Bridging grammar and literature
The interplay between grammar and literature in the Tamil scholarly tradition is exemplified in UVSL 589 by the way

22 So far, it has been possible for us to consult the following multiple-text manuscripts: UVSL 45, 67, 438, 601, Government Oriental Manuscripts Library (Chennai) 5549-52, Madurai Tamil Sangam (Madurai) 127, Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library 6368 (Thiruvananthapuram), and Perur Adheenam Library (Perur) 13. The latter two were digitised by N. ‘Babu’ Ramaswamy and the late G. Ravindran for the NETamil project.

23 On Tāṇṭavarāyamutaliyār, see Blackburn 2003, 100–102.

24 These works jointly cover three domains of Tamil grammar, viz. phonology, morphology, and poetics. Even if we were to regard the two genres of love and heroic poetry as two different grammatical domains, the book would still only cover four disciplines. A rare copy of this book is kept at the Roja Muthiah Library (Chennai).

25 This information is taken from Vēṅkaṭacāmi 1962, 151; we do not have direct access to this book at present.

26 See also Chevillard 2014, 257.

27 It should be noted that the Tolkāppiyam and the Ilakkanavilakkam only consist of three sections: on phonology, morphology, and poetics respectively. Metrics and figures of speech were not treated separately, but as part of poetics. On the other hand, printed editions of the Viracōḻiyam contain four sections on phonology, morphology, poetics and metrics, with the latter containing a subsection devoted to figures of speech.

28 See Chevillard 2014, 265 for a brief summary of this controversy and for further bibliographical references.
in which both quotations from literary works and illustrative stanzas from the grammatical literature are used in order to introduce particular poetological topics. What can be called illustrative stanzas are poems which were specifically composed to illustrate the topics discussed in the grammatical works. In particular, UVSL 589 contains illustrative stanzas from the commentary on the Taṇṭiyalakāram and from the Purapporul Venpāmālai. In some cases, the stanzas are given in the order in which they appear in the text from which they are taken, as is the case with section aa.29 In other cases, the illustrative stanzas were selected according to thematic criteria. This is the case with sections a and b, which deal with a common topic: the praise of a patron. In section c, which mostly contains illustrative stanzas from the commentary on the Taṇṭiyalakāram, the common topic is the rainy season (an important theme in Tamil and, indeed, pan-Indian poetry).30 This section is directly followed by a selection of poems from two literary works, the Kār Nāṟpatu and the Aintinai Aimpatu (sections d and e), which also deal with the rainy season. Here we can observe how both stanzas from the grammatical tradition and excerpts from literary works were used as illustrations of the same poetological topic.

Another example of how quotations from literary works were used in poetological discussions is provided by sections t and v, which contain a number of stanzas from the epics Cīvakacintāmaṇi and Cilappatikāram as well as illustrative stanzas from the Purapporul Venpāmālai, all supplemented by commentary.31 The starting point is a stanza from the Cīvakacintāmaṇi (657), which describes a beautiful lady singing and playing the lute in such a tantalising way that trees shed their leaves, stone pillars produce offshoots, and birds fall from the sky. What follows is a commentary discussing various aspects of this stanza, substantiated by further quotations. The following stanza of the Cīvakacintāmaṇi (658) is quoted to show how the poet describes the lady’s beauty in accordance with poetical conventions, while another stanza from the Cīvakacintāmaṇi (31) and an illustrative stanza from the Purapporul Venpāmālai (357) provide parallels for the effects of music on nature. Finally, a quotation from the Cilappatikāram (7.1, lines 5–7) elaborates on the various ways of playing the lute, which were mentioned in Cīvakacintāmaṇi 657. The discussion contains numerous cross-references such as ‘this stanza, too, is an example of the stanza [beginning with] “cilaittolig pirunutal”’ [i.e. Cīvakacintāmaṇi 657]’ (iccēyyulū cilaiitolig pirunutal eyγuν ciyyuv’t utarāram, p. 114, line 14). What we are witnessing here is a sophisticated discussion of poetological topics, illustrated by quotations from various literary and theoretical sources. Unlike this section, most of UVSL 589 contains quotations without the pertaining discussion, but we can easily imagine that the manuscript could have provided the basis for similar discussions taking place in an oral setting.

6. Glimpses of a pre-modern canon

As we have seen, UVSL 589 makes use of excerpts from poetry in order to illustrate poetological topics. Seen against this background, the selection of literary works found in the manuscript becomes meaningful, as it allows us to infer which works the person who produced the manuscript deemed exemplary literature. We are therefore in a position to catch a glimpse of what might have constituted a canon of Tamil literature at the time the manuscript was produced, which was probably sometime in the nineteenth century. Of course, it is impossible to draw far-reaching conclusions from a single manuscript, but UVSL 589 certainly opens up a window into Tamil literary culture during a crucial period of its history.

The most striking feature about the literary works contained in UVSL 589 is possibly what is missing, namely the so-called Caṅkam literature. The Caṅkam texts – 18 works of erotic and heroic poetry, which are divided into two groups of texts, the ‘Eight Anthologies’ (Eṭṭuttokai) and the ‘Ten Songs’ (Pattuppāṭṭu) – form the oldest stratum of Tamil literature. They were probably composed during the early centuries of the Common Era (though dating is a matter of dispute). The Caṅkam works are thought to have been rediscovered during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by men like U. V. Swaminatha Iyer (1855–1942), who collected the surviving manuscripts and produced printed editions of them, triggering a process known as the

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29 Section aa contains illustrative stanzas from the Taṇṭiyalakāram commentary. Sometimes these are quoted together with the rules of the Taṇṭiyalakāram which they exemplify.

30 The section bears the marginal title anicāṅkiṟuṇaṁ mēkam, ‘miscellanea on figures of speech – [dealing with] clouds [i.e. with the rainy season]’.

31 Sections t and v are linked by a cross-reference, which was mentioned above.
Tamil Renaissance. Thanks to printing, the Čāṅkam works were widely disseminated and caused a major transformation of the Tamil literary canon. While there is reason to believe that the Čāṅkam works were not forgotten entirely, as is often thought, it does seem that they had become a rather marginal part of Tamil literary culture by the nineteenth century. UVSL 589 appears to confirm this verdict; in the manuscript, the Čāṅkam texts are conspicuous by their absence.

The only exception here is the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai, one of the ‘Ten Songs’ (Pattuppāṭṭu). This is the only Čāṅkam work which seems to have been more widely known before the Tamil Renaissance. Unlike the other Čāṅkam works, this text belongs to neither of the genres of ākam or puṟam poetry, but contains a hymn to the Hindu god Murukāṇ. Due to its religious contents, it came to be included not only in the Pattuppāṭṭu, but also in the Śaiva canon (Tirumūṟu). As such, it enjoyed great popularity and was transmitted in numerous manuscript copies. Given the Śaiva affiliation of the manuscript, it stands to reason to assume that the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai was not included because of its being part of the Čāṅkam corpus, but because of its religious significance.

While the Čāṅkam texts seem to have been marginalised in the nineteenth century, they were still alive in people’s minds to some extent. The names of the Čāṅkam texts were known from a series of three so-called mnemonic stanzas which listed the constituent works of the Ēṭṭuttokai and the Pattuppāṭṭu (the two collections which make up the Čāṅkam corpus) as well as the Kīḻkkanakkuu corpus in a versified and easily memorable form. These mnemonic stanzas are also found in UVSL 589 (as part of the ‘miscellanea’ section on p. 31). The person who produced the manuscript thus knew that the Čāṅkam works existed, but there is no evidence that he had any first-hand knowledge of them.

In contrast to the Čāṅkam texts, the works of the Kīḻkkanakkuu corpus are quite well represented in UVSL 589. The Kīḻkkanakkuu texts were composed in the period directly following the Čāṅkam texts, that is, probably in the middle of the first millennium. Most of them represent a new genre, which can be called ‘ethical literature’, i.e. they deal with questions of right conduct. Seven out of the 18 texts, however, represent the ancient genres of love poetry (ākam) and heroic poetry (puṟam) and thus continue the tradition of the Čāṅkam literature. In UVSL 589 we find excerpts from 14 of the 18 Ākkanakkuu works, arranged in a way which reflects the order and sub-grouping found in the mnemonic stanza. Even the most obscure Ākkanakkuu text is represented: the Kainnili, whose inclusion in the corpus was contested for some time. This shows that the Ākkanakkuu works were transmitted as a corpus and that the Kainnili was accepted as a part of the corpus.

Notably, the two most popular Ākkanakkuu texts – the Tirukkuṟḷ and the Nālaṭiyār – are missing in UVSL 589, except for a few quotes from the Nālaṭiyār in the miscellanea section. The manuscript also contains a part of the Tiruvalluvaṇmālai, a poem in praise of Tiruvalluvar, the author of the Tirukkuṟḷ, which was often prefixed to the Tirukkuṟḷ. Nowadays, the Tirukkuṟḷ is the most famous work of Tamil literature and it seems to have enjoyed great popularity throughout the ages. Though less renowned today, the Nālaṭiyār seems to have come close to the Tirukkuṟḷ in popularity in pre-modern times. Given that UVSL 589 contains stray excerpts from the Nālaṭiyār

32 The manuscripts collected by U. V. Swaminatha Iyer formed the basis of the collection of the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library, the institution which holds the manuscript discussed in this article. It is quite possible that UVSL 589 was collected by Swaminatha Iyer himself, but there is also the possibility that the library obtained the manuscript from another source (no records exist, unfortunately).

33 Venkatachalapathy 2005.

34 Scholarship of previous decades (e.g. Ramanujan 1985, xi-xiv and Zvelebil 1992, 144–153) has tended to overemphasise the rediscovery narrative. Recent publications which question the rediscovery of Čāṅkam literature include Tieken 2010 and Rajesh 2014.

35 Wilden 2014, 43.


37 The order given in the mnemonic stanza is Nālaṭiyār, Nāṭyanāmaṉmaṭikai, the four Nāṟpatu (Iṉṉilai Nāṟpatu, Iṉiyavai Nāṟpatu, Kār Nāṟpatu, Kalavaḻi Nāṟpatu), the four Aṁtaṅi (Aṁtai Aṁtapu, Aṁtai Eluppu, Aṁtai Aṁtipu, Aṁtai Iluppu), Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ, Tirukkuṟḷ. For the order of the Kīḻkkanakkuu texts in UVSL 589, see Table 2.

38 In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars disagreed on the interpretation of the mnemonic stanza which lists the Kīḻkkanakkuu works. Some claimed that the eighteenth work was a text named Iṟṟgalai, while others maintained that the remaining work was called Kainnili, see Vēṅkaṭacāmi 1962, 317–338. The Kainnili was first edited as late as 1931. The text as we have it today is fragmentary, as large parts of it have been lost in transmission.


40 Numerous manuscript copies of the Tirukkuṟḷ and the Nālaṭiyār survive, and from secondary sources we know that these two works were taught to pupils at a very early stage of their studies; Cutler 2003, 277.
and the Tiruvalluvaṉalai, it seems certain that the person who produced the manuscript knew the Tirukkuṟaḷ and the Nālaiṭiyār. We assume he chose not to include them because the user of the manuscript was expected to know them already.

It is quite remarkable to find the Kīḻkkaṇakku works so prominently represented in the manuscript. This is especially true of those that represent the genres of love poetry (akam) and heroic poetry (puṟam). Nowadays, classical Tamil akam and puṟam poetry is almost invariably associated with the Caṅkam works. The Kīḻkkaṇakku akam and puṟam works are usually viewed as an inferior imitation of the latter, if they are not ignored completely. The attitude prevalent in modern scholarship is epitomised by Kamil Zvelebil’s statement in his History of Tamil Literature: ‘As poetry, they are not much’.43 UVSL 589, on the other hand, includes excerpts of all six Kīḻkkaṇakku akam works and of the lone puṟam text. This shows that akam and puṟam literature was still read at the time this manuscript was produced. Moreover, for the person who produced the manuscript, the texts which were exemplary of akam and puṟam poetry were not the Caṅkam texts, but the Kīḻkkaṇakku works. This may simply be due to the fact that he had no access to the Caṅkam works or, possibly, he deemed the Kīḻkkaṇakku texts to be better suited as illustrations than the Caṅkam works, which are linguistically more difficult and do not always follow the poetological conventions described in the grammars. In any case, UVSL 589 suggests that the Kīḻkkaṇakku works might have had a better standing in the pre-modern scholarly milieu than modern literary histories would have us believe.

At the same time, it has to be conceded that the number of surviving Kīḻkkaṇakku manuscripts other than Tirukkuṟaḷ and Nālaiṭiyār is relatively small. Probably, not very many people were studying the other Kīḻkkaṇakku texts at the time UVSL 589 was produced. The fact that we find these texts in the manuscript suggests that its envisaged users must have been rather well acquainted with Tamil literature. A similar point can be made for another text, which is partly contained in UVSL 589: the Kallāṭam. This is a mediaeval (probably eleventh-century) work of Śaiva affiliation, which combines religious themes and akam poetry.44 Though rarely read today, in the nineteenth century this difficult work had the reputation of being the touchstone of erudition: only the most capable of scholars were thought to be able to study this complicated text. According to a saying quoted by U. V. Swaminatha Iyer in his autobiography, ‘one should not argue with those who have studied the Kallāṭam’ (Kallāṭam kaṟṟavarōṭu collāṭātē).45 Clearly, the reader for whom UVSL 589 was meant was an accomplished scholar, or at least a very advanced student.

There is one more text whose presence in UVSL 589 is remarkable: the Civakacintāmani. This is one of the five epics of the late-classical period, probably composed in the tenth century by a Jaina author.46 The Civakacintāmani had a special place in the history of the putative rediscovery of classical Tamil literature. In a widely quoted passage in his autobiography, U. V. Swaminatha Iyer describes how he met a certain Salem Ramaswami Mudaliar, a wealthy government official and connoisseur of literature, in 1880. During their meeting, Ramaswami Mudaliar urged Swaminatha Iyer, who was not acquainted with classical Tamil literature at the time, to study the ancient texts, and he handed him a manuscript of the Civakacintāmani. Swaminatha Iyer recounts how he started studying it and thus gained access to the world of ancient Tamil literature for the very first time.47 In his autobiography, Swaminatha Iyer gives the impression that no-one at the time was familiar with the Civakacintāmani, except for members of the Jaina community, who recited the text on the grounds of its religious merits.48 The fact that we find the Civakacintāmani in our manuscript, which has a clear Śaiva affiliation, however, shows that the text was read as a piece of literature across religious borders.49 It seems that Swaminatha Iyer’s account is somewhat exaggerated. As A. R. Venkatachalapathy has shown, the Civakacintāmani

44 Cāmināṭaiyar 1950, 504.
46 Cāmināṭaiyar 1950, 726–734.
47 Cāmināṭaiyar 1950, 735–745.
48 As Norman Cutler has pointed out (drawing on U. V. Swaminatha Iyer’s autobiography), the Vaishnava Kamparāṁyānam (the Tamil version of the Rāmāyaṇa) was studied in a Śaiva environment because it was similarly seen as belonging to the literary rather than the religious domain, Cutler 2003, 279.
was not as unknown as Swaminatha Iyer would have us believe. Part of it had already been published at that time, and the text was even prescribed reading in the Madras University curriculum.\footnote{Venkatachalapathy 2005, 539.} UVSL 589 is another testimony to the relative importance of the Čivakačintāmaṇi.

To sum up, then, what we find in UVSL 589 is a glimpse of what a highly erudite person of the period immediately preceding the Tamil Renaissance could have considered a canon of Tamil literature. This canon had strong classicist leanings. The genres which played the most prominent role in contemporary literary production, pirapantam and purāṇam, are absent, except for a few stray quotations in the ‘miscellanea’ section.\footnote{Pirapantam (from Sanskrit prabhandha, ‘composition’) or cīṟṟilakkiyam (‘minor literature’) is the cover term for a number of diverse poetical genres, all of which are characterised by their rather strong formalistic rigour. Purāṇam in this context mostly means temple-legends (sthālapurāṇa) expounding the greatness of a particular sacred place. See Ebeling 2010, 55–57.} All the literary works included in the manuscript belong to the first or early second millennium. On the other hand, the very oldest stratum, which today would be characterised as the epitome of classical Tamil literature, namely Caṅkam literature, is missing. In some respects, such as the absence of the Caṅkam works, UVSL 589 seems to confirm existing notions about the pre-modern Tamil literary canon. In other respects, it further consolidates doubts about dominant narratives, e.g. U. V. Swaminatha Iyer’s account about the Čivakačintāmaṇi. In yet other respects, UVSL 589 seems to provide new insights; for example, it gives us reason to wonder if the Kīḻkkanaṅkku texts played a more important role in the period pre-dating the Tamil Renaissance than we would generally assume today. What is needed is more research which would allow us to place our conclusions on a stronger footing than what was possible in this case study.

7. Conclusions

The selection of texts in UVSL 589 and the way in which these were put together provides us with some valuable insights on the transmission of grammatical and literary knowledge and their intimate connection within Tamil scholarship. We have seen how different grammatical treatises were put together in order to cover the whole spectrum of grammatical knowledge and how excerpts from literary works were used to illustrate poetological theory. From the latter, we were able to deduce which literary works the person who produced UVSL 589 deemed exemplary. Furthermore, the arrangement of texts in UVSL 589 together with its codicological features, which make its contents readily accessible, suggest that the manuscript served as an educational tool. As such, UVSL 589 provides a snapshot of the Tamil scholarly tradition at the time just before the printing press and Western education caused a definitive transformation of the Tamil scholarly landscape.

Such insights can only emerge by studying the manuscript in its entirety. There is nothing special about the texts contained in UVSL 589 in themselves. It is their co-occurrence in UVSL 589 that makes it such a remarkable object. As Dominik Wujastyk has recently pointed out, Indology has long tended to equate manuscripts with texts. Catalogues of Indic manuscripts usually contain lists of titles rather than of physical objects.\footnote{Wujastyk 2014, 173–174. As for Tamil manuscripts, a felicitous exception is represented by the catalogue of the collection held at the Maharaja Sarfoji’s Saraswathi Mahal Library of Thanjavur (e.g. Olaganatha Pillay 1964).} This is also true of the U. V. Swaminatha Iyer Library catalogue ([Anonymus] 1956–1962). In this catalogue, texts are listed under their respective titles, but there is no list of the texts contained in the same physical object. Thus, it is simply impossible to gather information about a multiple-text manuscript as a whole unless one is already familiar with its contents. If we take our list of the contents of UVSL 589 as a starting point, however, and try to look up the individual texts, it emerges that the catalogue lists the sections that can be identified with a particular work, but omits the composite sections t and v, which contain material assembled from various texts.\footnote{In fact, the first part of the manuscript (up to section o in our counting) is not reflected at all in the catalogue. This is most probably due to a mistake, since most of the sections found there can easily be identified with a particular text and would be expected to be found in the catalogue. We find the following entries for the rest of the manuscript: UVSL 589-A: Naṉgūḻ; UVSL 589-B: Aṟapporṟaḻ Viḷakعام; UVSL 589-C: Yāpparunkalakkaṅkaiṟi; UVSL 589-D: Tantiyalkarām; UVSL 589-E: Kaḻḷatūm; UVSL 589-F: Paḻamolṉi Nāṟṟupu; UVSL 589-G: Cīṟṟupaiṟamāḷam; UVSL 589-H: Mutumokkaṅkaiṟi; UVSL 589-I: Elūṟi; UVSL 589-J: Tantiyalkarām; UVSL 589-K: Ācūṟakkaiṟi; UVSL 589-L: Tiruvalḷuvaṉmallai; UVSL 589-M: Tirumurukṟṟappai; UVSL 589-N: Čivakacintāmaṇi.} In other words, anything which is not a text in the narrow sense is excluded from the catalogue. As we hope to have shown in the case of UVSL 589, however, it is only by engaging with manuscripts as objects in their own right that we are in the position to place their textual dimension in a broader cultural frame.
Appendix 1: Invocations in UVSL 589. The invocations are provided in a diplomatic transcription. In this respect, one may note the unusual spelling of mamgaḷam for maṅgalam. At times, the same invocation occurs in a slightly enlarged version. These variants are reported in round brackets.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Invocations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the (holy) lord of liberality [i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. (śrī) puṇḍarikapuresāya mamgaḷam</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1:1, 24:15, 32:5, 42:8, 49:10, 63:3, 71:4, 75:10, 76:13, 129:17, 162:15, 194:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the (holy) lord of the Lotus Town [Chidambaram; i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the holy dweller of the Lotus Town [Chidambaram; i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. śrī kanakasabhānatesāya mamgaḷam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20:15, 25:4, 71:4, 75:10, 76:13, 156:8, 162:15, 194:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the holy lord of dance of the golden hall [in the temple of Chidambaram; i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. śrī citambaresāya mamgaḷam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>76:13, 166:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the holy lord of Chidambaram [i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. (nampi) tampiriṇṭiḻōḷaḻaṟu tiruvaṭikāḷe caraṇam / yām uṭaiya puruṣu</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>76:14 (3x), 114:5 (2×), 162:4, 162:15, 166:8 (2×), 194:17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tamil: ‘the holy feet of the companion of the (supreme) lord [i.e. Cuntarar] are the refuge / our devotion’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. anavaratotāna nāyakar tiruvaṭikāḷe caraṇam / kati</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49:10, 55:10, 76:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tamil: ‘the holy feet of the lord of incessant liberality [i.e. Śiva] are the refuge / support’).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. śrī anavaradānanāthāya mamgaḷam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sanskrit: ‘prayer to the holy lord of incessant liberality [i.e. Śiva]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. vaṉṟoṇṭaṇār tiruvaṭikāḷ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>76:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tamil: ‘the holy feet of Vaṉṟoṇṭaṇār [i.e. Cuntarar]’)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Annotations written in Telugu script in UVSL 589.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotations</th>
<th>Translations and explanations</th>
<th>Page no.: line no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ṭaṃḍḍāram</td>
<td>Lit. ‘Saivite devotee’. Appended to Purapporul Venpāmālai 232 to give the gist of the stanza, which is about what one may achieve by worshipping Śiva.</td>
<td>4:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Tamil paṇṭāram)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. kaivēl kalīṟṟuḍum</td>
<td>Lit. ‘also [the poem which begins with] ’kaivēl kalīṟṟuṭu’ [i.e. Tirukkuṟaḷ 774]’. Appended to Purapporul Venpāmālai 142, which is similar in content, to point out the parallel.</td>
<td>10:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Tamil kaivēl kalīṟṟuṭum)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. suṟumbivarsiṇḍduṇḍduṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṟṟaṛ</td>
<td>(So far no explanation)</td>
<td>29:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. iṉainilaittivakam</td>
<td>This is the technical term for a particular figure of speech. Appended to a stanza from the commentary on the Taṇṭiyalanḵāram, which illustrates this figure of speech.</td>
<td>31:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Tamil iṭainilaittivakam)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. iḵṭirāṇḍdeḷuttu</td>
<td>Lit. ‘this [only contains] two letters’. Appended to a stanza from the commentary on the Taṇṭiyalanḵāram, which only employs two different consonants. The first two characters of this brief annotation are written in Tamil script, whereas the rest is written in Telugu script.</td>
<td>149:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for Tamil iḵṭ’ iṟaṇṭ eḷutta)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The Novgorod Birch-bark Manuscripts

Imke Mendoza | Salzburg

Abstract

The Novgorod birch-bark manuscripts (берестянская грамота, berestjanaja gramota or only gramota), pieces of birch bark with short messages, are typically dealing with issues of everyday life in mediaeval Russia. They have fascinated historians, archaeologists and, most notably, linguists ever since the first birch-bark writing was found in 1951.1 We now have 1,200 documents of this kind, which were unearthed in several cities in Russia, mostly in the Novgorod area (Fig. 1).2

Due to their contents, function and linguistic features, the manuscripts constitute a unique corpus of documents showing Russian mediaeval literacy.3 They contain valuable information on daily life in mediaeval Novgorod, the social structure of Novgorod’s society, trade relations, private relations, the city administration and so on. They have also proven to be an extraordinarily valuable source of information for historical linguistics since they have some unusual linguistic and pragma-linguistic characteristics.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, I shall present a general overview of these manuscripts. Then I will focus on the complicated interactional setting that the birch-bark documents were part of and will show how this affects the linguistic and communicative structure of the documents.

1. General description of the birch-bark corpus

The first birch-bark document was found on 26 July 1951 during archaeological excavations in the city of Novgorod in north-west Russia. Great Novgorod was a city of great economic and political power and played an important role in mediaeval Russia. The archaeological layers of Novgorod date back to the late tenth century, the time of the Christianisation of Rus’. Between 1136 and 1478 CE Novgorod was the centre of the Novgorod Republic (Novgorodskaya Respublika), a rather independent structure within the Rus’ territory and in the fourteenth century it was the largest and most prosperous Russian city.4

Extensive excavations began in Novgorod and the surrounding area after World War II and are still going on today. They have unearthed an enormous number of archaeological artefacts, including birch-bark manuscripts. The birch-bark documents were found in various cultural layers on the territory of private homesteads (Fig. 2). According to Janin,5 the existence of birch-bark archives is highly unlikely since messages on birch bark were considered to be of temporary value only (see below). They have been preserved due to high soil humidity, which prevents organic material like leather, bone and wood from decaying.

Now we have approximately 1,200 documents and the number is still growing. More than a thousand pieces of birch-bark writing were found in the city of Novgorod

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1 The general public has also taken a great interest in these documents. The yearly excavations in the city of Novgorod receive extensive media coverage, particularly in the local media, and the anniversary of the day when the first document was found is publicly celebrated (‘Birch-bark Day’, Den’ beresty, 26 July).

2 Other cities with birch-bark finds are Pskov, Staraja Russa, Toržok, Tver’, Moscow, Nižny Novgorod, Vitebsk, Smolensk, Mstislavl’, Staraja Ržan’ and Zvenigorod Galickij. In 2013, archaeologists found a birch-bark document as far away as Staroturuxansk in the Krasnodar region in Eastern Siberia; see Tjemina 2013.

3 For a comparison with similar corpora in other cultures (rúnakefli, Vindolanda tablets, papyri), cf. Franklin 2002, 35–47, and Schaeken 2012, 204–205. Birch bark was used as writing material in other cultures as well – see the collection of Mongolian manuscripts described in Chiodo 2000–2009 and Indic Buddhist manuscripts (cf. the contributions in Harrison/Hartmann 2014). I am indebted to Michael Friedrich for drawing my attention to these manuscripts.

4 The ‘Novgorod Republic’ existed from 1136, when Prince Vsevolod was ousted from Novgorod, until its forcible annexing to the Grand Duchy of Moscow in 1478. It was ruled by the aristocracy and the archbishop; the prince only played a marginal role. For an outline of the history of mediaeval Novgorod, see Goehrke 1981 and Crummey 1987, 32–34.

Fig. 1: Eastern Europe, c. 1350. Birch-bark manuscripts' finds are marked with orange circles.
alone,\(^6\) some in other cities, mostly in the north-west or west of Russia (Map 1). The birch-bark documents cover a period of about four-and-a-half centuries, the oldest coming from the first half of the eleventh century, the youngest ones from the late fifteenth century. Almost all of the documents are datable because of them belonging to clear archaeological strata and because of dendrochronology. The number of birch-bark documents was not spread evenly over the centuries: after a steady increase and peak in the 1160–1180s, the count dropped drastically in the first two decades of the thirteenth century, only to rise again up to the late fourteenth century. The reason for the decline in the number of manuscripts is not altogether clear. It was possibly related to the military threats to the Novgorod borders posed by the Teutonic Order in the west and the Swedes in the north-west and the resulting economic regression Novgorod suffered in the early thirteenth century.\(^7\)

The birch-bark manuscripts are rather small documents, typically 15–40 cm wide and 2–8 cm high. The text was usually written on the inner surface, rarely on the outside, but some documents have text written on both sides. They were found rolled up in a scroll, the inner surface being on the outside.\(^8\) The text was generally written along the grain – only the Moscow manuscripts were written across it.\(^9\) Most messages were very short and did not contain any more than 9 words.\(^10\) In some cases, two or more pieces of birch bark were used for longer messages, such as no. 519/520\(^11\) and no. 698/699.\(^12\) The message was carved into the bark with a stylus usually made of iron, but sometimes bronze or bone (Fig. 3);\(^13\) only three messages were written in ink\(^14\) (Fig. 4).

About a quarter of the documents are almost entirely preserved; the rest are fragments, some of them so small that they are hardly interpretable.

Figures 5 and 6 show some typical finds: one is preserved in its entirety, while the other one is a fragment and comes in two pieces. No. 43 (Fig. 5) – one of the most famous birch-bark letters of all – is a note from a boyar\(^15\) to his wife or another female family member. Its transliteration and translation is given in example (1). No. 4 (see Fig. 6) is a letter from someone called Mikita to someone with the name Cert. Unfortunately, we cannot restore the text accurately because the document is so badly damaged. Therefore, I can only provide a transliteration (2):\(^16\)

\[
(1) \text{No. 43, 1380–1400} \\
o^\omega \text{boris ko nostassii kako pr} \\
\text{ride sja gramota tako pri} \\
\text{li mi colovëka na žerepc} \\
\text{zane mi zdëse dëh mnogo da} \\
\text{prišli sorociju sorocićë za} \\
\text{byle}
\]

From Boris to Onostasija. When you get this gramota, send me a man on a stallion as I’ve got a lot to do. And send me a shirt [as] I forgot my shirt.

\[
(2) \text{No. 4, 1320–1340} \\
o^\omega \text{mikit ě ko certou cto jesm } \ldots \ldots \\
rucič ou petra na gorodišć ě n\ldots \\
jurgi bylъ vydalъ so dvora . n\ldots
\]

\(^6\) There is one Latin manuscript among the birch-bark manuscripts found in Novgorod (No. 488, fragments of a psalm; Arciovskij and Janin 1978, 80–83, Janin 1995, 19) and there is also one Karelian document (No. 292, a spell; Arciovskij and Borkovskij 1963, 120–122).\(^7\) See Schaeken 2012 for possible reasons and a detailed description of the chronological distribution. Also see Worth 1990.\(^8\) Arciovskij and Tixomirov 1953, 6.\(^9\) Gippius et al. 2011, 453.\(^10\) The longest birch-bark document found so far is Moscow No. 3. It contains 52 lines with about 370 words, see Gippius et al. 2011, 453.\(^11\) The documents excavated in the city of Novgorod are only identified by a number (e.g. ‘No. 43’); finds from other places are referred to by the name of the place where they were uncovered and a number (e.g. ‘Tver’ 5’).\(^12\) Zaliznjak 2004, 17.\(^13\) Rybina and Janin 2009, 93.\(^14\) These are Nos. 13 and 496 (Zaliznjak 2004, 17) and Moscow No. 3 (Gippius et al. 2011, 453, and Makarov 2008). All three of them are relatively young: Moscow No. 3 is from the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century and No. 13 and No. 496 are from the mid-fifteenth century, which is incidentally also the period when writing on paper with ink became increasingly common due to the lower cost of paper (Janin 1995, 216).\(^15\) Boyar – member of the highest rank of nobility next to the prince.\(^16\) The examples are cited in Latin transliteration. Square brackets indicate doubtful or only partially legible characters, and conjectures are enclosed in round brackets. Square brackets around three dots […] indicate an omission by me. The translations are based on Zaliznjak 2004 unless indicated otherwise. The website <www.gramoty.ru> presents most of the birch-bark documents, including photographs, outlines, Cyrillic transliterations and translations into modern Russian.
Fig. 2: Archaeological excavations undertaken by Bournemouth University at the Troitsky site in Novgorod in 1998; excavated wooden buildings from the first half of the fourteenth century.
1.1 Writing on birch bark

Birch-bark literacy can be characterised as ‘pragmatic’ or ‘practical’ literacy. Dealing with the concerns of urban life, the items of bark writing played an important role in organising daily life in Novgorod and other mediaeval cities.

The participants of birch-bark correspondence were ‘the urban elites at a level below that of the princes and the bishops: predominantly (but not exclusively) laymen, predominantly (but not exclusively) men, predominantly (and perhaps exclusively, at least for the first three centuries) people of means’.

Unlike writing on parchment, the messages on birch bark were considered to be ephemeral. They were written for the moment and not intended to be kept for a longer period or archived. After a birch-bark manuscript was delivered and read, it was often torn in two or more pieces and discarded. Parchment was used to transmit contents that were meant to be accessible for a longer period of time, e.g. deeds, chronicles, ecclesiastical texts etc. In some cases, birch bark was used to draft a message that was subsequently written on parchment (e.g. No 358). After the message was put on


parchment, the birch-bark document became expendable and was likely to be thrown away. This ephemeral status is probably the most noteworthy feature of birch-bark literacy.

The birch-bark documents can be classified into several groups by their content and function:

1. letters (messages relating to family affairs, businesses, legal affairs and other issues of daily life),
2. different kinds of lists and registers (e.g. debts, tributes, inventories),
3. documents related to schooling (spelling exercises, alphabets, drawings, cf. Fig. 7),
4. literary and folklore texts,
5. official documents or drafts of such documents (wills, documents relating to legal matters, very few treaties, one bill of sale for land and property),
6. tags and labels (probably propriety tags and price labels)
7. church-related documents.

The letters are by far the largest group (group 1), accounting for more than 60% of all birch-bark documents. The lists and registers constitute the second-largest group (approximately 14%), while the remaining groups are each represented by a very small number of documents.
In order to understand the enormous impact the birch-bark findings have had on the study of the history of the Russian language and culture, we need to consider what was known about literacy in early Rus’ before the discovery of the birch-bark manuscripts. The written word and the spread of Cyrillic script came to mediaeval Russia in the wake of Christianisation. Ecclesiastical writing appeared in Rus’ shortly after the official conversion of the state by the Kievan prince Vladimir the Great in 988. The language used in these manuscripts was Church Slavonic, a language imported from Bulgaria. Church Slavonic is closely related to the vernacular(s) of the East Slavonic area, but is sufficiently different to be called a different language or variety. Church Slavonic was never a language of everyday communication; rather, it was purposely designed for ecclesiastical use or, even more specifically, for translating ecclesiastical texts from Greek. It was highly ‘bookish’ in style and intention. The Old Russian vernacular, in turn, was the language of secular life. Not only was it the spoken language, but it was also used for secular writing – in treaties, law books, deeds of donation and other such formal documents. Only a very small number of texts written in the vernacular were known of until the discovery of the birch-barks. There were no documents from the eleventh century, almost none from the twelfth century and only a few from the thirteenth century. The Church Slavonic documents far outnumbered (and still outnumber) the vernacular ones.

Since the overwhelming majority of the birch-bark documents use the Old Russian vernacular, their discovery promised to be evidence not only of widespread non-ecclesiastical Old Russian literacy but also of colloquial

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23 This traditional view is challenged by Franklin, who argues that there was noticeable secular Cyrillic writing before Christianisation (Franklin 2002, 120–27). However, I lean towards the traditional theory, since the material evidence for pre-Christian literacy is very scarce; also see Gippius 2012.


26 Zaliznjak 2004, 3.

27 See sections 2.1.1–2.1.3 below.
2. The messages

Formulating, delivering and receiving a message on birch bark was a complicated process that involved many different roles: that of the author, addresser, scribe, messenger, reader and addressee. Some of these could be fulfilled by one and the same person, of course: the author and scribe were often identical, the messenger knew the content, heard it from the sender and sometimes wrote the message or read it out loud, etc. He played an essential role in transmitting the whole message. Unlike most other written documents, the birch-bark manuscripts are not necessarily the main element in the communicative act, but often merely play a supporting role.

Their ephemeral nature notwithstanding, most birch-bark documents were composed very carefully. The messages were written with noticeable diligence and show very few mistakes or corrections. They usually have a clear textual pattern. A typical letter consists of an opening of varying length followed by the main part, which formulates a certain concern concisely and articulately.

Sometimes the letters are concluded by a closing formula (see 2.1.5). The most striking feature, however, is their so-called laconism or brevity: the essence of the message is reduced to its very gist, almost artfully and without any redundancies or repetitions. Let us take a look at some typical examples.

The following example is a bill of exchange. Kur owes Boran some money, but instead of paying it himself, Kur tells Boran to go and get it from Ivan, one of his own debtors:

(3) No. 690, 1360–1380

poklono o kura ko boranu i ko kuzmi vozmi svoju poltinu u jevana u vyjanina bo plotinickikomo konci podo borisoglibomo

Greetings from Kur to Boran and Kuz’ma. Get your half-rouble from Ivan of [the village of] Vyja in the Plotnickij quarter by [the church of] Boris and Gleb

The next document is a petition (čelobitnaja) from peasants to their feudal lord:

(4) No. 311, 1400–1410

[griu]vojejmu mixailu jurejevi[č]u [xrest]jani·tvoi čerenšani čelo bijute što jesi ωdoda dereveneku klimecu oparinu a my jego ne xšimo ne susšednei čelověko voleno bь de i ty

Your peasants from [the village of] Čerenskoe prostrate themselves before our Lord, Mixail Jurevič. You gave the hamlet to Klimec Oparin, but we don’t want him, [as] he is not one of our men. God and you are free [to decide].

2.1. Orality and literacy in the birch-bark manuscripts

The birch-bark manuscripts display a number of features that are more typical of spoken communication than of written texts. This is particularly true of the letters (group 1; see section 2.1.1). Letters in general have some oral features as well since they address another person directly, thereby making reference to a certain discourse situation. The birch-bark letters, however, show a degree of orality that goes far beyond what we would usually expect from letters. This is partly due to the complex interactional setting the letters were part of. But at the same time, they are good examples of mediaeval Russian literacy, a fact that has taken a back seat in many discussions.

In the following sections, I will address this issue using Koch’s and Österreicher’s framework of ‘conceptual orality’
and ‘conceptual literacy’\textsuperscript{35}. It is obvious that the distinction between oral and written discourse is not only a question of whether we talk or write, but it also pertains to the linguistic characteristics of discourse. A sophisticated keynote speech resembles a written text much more than a text message on a mobile phone, which, in turn, has more in common with colloquial speech. The terms ‘conceptual orality’ and ‘conceptual literacy’ accommodate this circumstance. They refer to the linguistic features of prototypical oral and written discourse respectively, but form a scalar contrast rather than a binary opposition. A given text can be placed anywhere on this scale, depending on its linguistic features. If it only has features that are typical of oral texts, like a family conversation, it is very close to the ‘oral end’ of the scale, an article on astrophysics is the quintessential written text, and an interview on TV is located somewhere in-between.

Many features of oral and written discourse can be deduced from the respective prototypical discourse situations. Prototypical oral communication relies on the fact that the participants can hear and see each other. Mistakes can be corrected and misunderstandings be cleared up immediately. We can point to objects instead of naming them and we usually use the speech situation as a reference system. Oral discourse is instant and immediate. There is not much time for planning and interpreting the utterances, hence information is usually broken up into small, easily ‘digestible’ chunks.

The opposite is true of prototypical written discourse: the participants are separated from each other in space and time, which is why it is harder – if not impossible – to clear up any misunderstandings. One has to put more effort into ‘packaging’ the message, as it were. We have to be clear and explicit, we have to avoid ambiguity and we can, as a rule, not use the production situation as a reference system. On the upside, there is usually enough time to compose and understand the message. This allows us to use longer sentences and more complex syntactic constructions.

2.1.1 Communicative heterogeneity

The most conspicuous feature of many birch-bark letters is what Gippius\textsuperscript{36} calls their ‘communicative heterogeneity’ (\textit{komunikativnaja neodnorodnost’}). Heterogeneous letters are birch-barks that contain more than one message, i.e. birch-bark documents that have two different authors or two different addressees (the second speaker respectively addressee is emphasized by italics in the translation). Heterogeneity is without doubt a feature of orality, since it refers to the participants of a communicative act that includes multiple persons, thus simulating oral discourse.

Heterogeneity can be overt, i.e. explicitly indicated, or covert, i.e. without being expressed formally.\textsuperscript{37} The following documents are examples of overt heterogeneity. Example (5) contains two messages addressed to two different people. The change of addressee is indicated by directly referring to the addressee with the expression ‘and you + name’. I will cite the relevant part of the letter here:

(5) No. 358, 1340–1360

[…] poslalъ jesmь s posadnicimъ manuilomъ :k: bělъ k tobě a ty nestere pro čicjakъ prišli ko mni gramotu s kimъ budešъ poslaš […]

[…] I sent you 20 bely\textsuperscript{38} with the mayor. And you, Nester, send me a gramota about the helmet, with whoever you send it […]

Letter No. 831 also has two different addressees. Moreover, the two messages clearly differ in status. The first message is very long and both sides of the birch-bark letters are written on. The author – who writes in the name of several addressers – complains to the first addressee, Raguil, that he got drawn into a legal skirmish with someone else. The second message is much shorter and makes reference to the first one. It tells the second addressee, Stepan, to put the first message on parchment and send it somewhere. Apparently, birch bark was used to draft important messages that were later written on parchment.\textsuperscript{39} This indirectly confirms the aforementioned ephemeral nature of the birch-bark documents: they were meant to be written, read and then thrown away, whereas


\textsuperscript{36} Gippius 2004, 185.

\textsuperscript{37} Gippius 2004, 190.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{běla}: monetary unit.

\textsuperscript{39} Zaliznjak 2004, 304.
parchment was used for more important documents, which were supposed to last for a long time. In example (6), I cite the beginning of the first and the second messages:

(6) No. 831, 1140–1160
ωκουσμενι οτη δει ηγ Κα τα δε α στασουμ[ου(ς)]
[…]
a ty stepane рьцрсаво на харотитиу пοσμεл βη … (…)
From Kuz’ma and his children to Raguil the Elder
[…]
And you, Stepan, after having written this on parchment, send it (…)

No. 952 shows two messages by two different addressers. The first message is from Radko and the second one from Vjačeška. The addressee is probably the same person for both messages, i.e. Lazor’ is Radko’s father.40

(7) No. 952, 1140–1160
ω’ радко κη отсеви покланяне товацкь есамо пοσмлѧ
smolnanskou a poutilou ti outili ny jati vь fомoу
κи vjačeskькою а мьлвja zaplatite чяетя ќтa гrivьnа ili
а зовтe fомoу сємo пакy ли da васадимo ву vь рогтbо
i пoκlanяне ω’ vjačeskькě ки lazorъви пoслαѧ emь кoпь
jukовьсько а сaмь эмь дoспьл
Greetings from Radko to his father. I sent the merchandise to Smolensk. Putila was killed there. They wanted to arrest Vjačeska and me in lieu of Foma, saying: ‘Pay 400 grivna or get Foma to come here. If not, we will put you in the dungeon’. And greetings from Vjačeska to Lazor’. I sent a sumpter, and I am all prepared.41

The following example illustrates covert heterogeneity. The first message ends with the words … da bogo vamo radoste ‘may God give you delight ’ and is an invitation to relatives to come to the city. The following words mi vašego solova voxи ne osotavimo ‘we will all not ignore your request’ must be read as the answer to the invitation or the letter will not make much sense.42 The handwriting is the same throughout the whole document, so it was presumably the messenger who wrote both messages, the invitation as well as the answer:

(8) No. 497, 1340–1360
поклон о гаврili о поcеni ко зати моemu ко горigorι χ кoumou i ко сеpтo мoи ко оluti χi би еste пoξали vo
gorodo ко radosti мoeи a naσego сoλoва не oσtавili da bogo
вamo радoste mi vašего сoλoва voxи ne osoтaвиmo
Greetings from Gavrila Postnja to my brother-in-law Grigorij, the godfather, and to my sister Ulita. Would you come into the city, to my delight, and don’t ignore our request. May God give you delight. None of us will ignore your request.43

No. 177 probably presents a case of overt heterogeneity as well. According to Gippius44, there are also two addressees involved, namely the priest (pop) and Foma. The new addressee is not addressed explicitly by name in the vocative form, but the author uses the phrase a ty ‘and you’ instead.

(9) No. 177, 1360–1380
покon o’ maskima ко попу дai κluиϖи фоми a тy пoşi grigoriю
οнeфимова чтo б(u)[д](e na)dobi […] foma
Greeting from Maksim to the priest. Give the keys to Foma, and you send Grigor’ja Onfimov. If anything is needed […] Foma

2.1.2 Implicitness
Another feature of orality is implicitness. Not everything has to be spelled out in spoken discourse because the presence of the discourse participants and the possibility of quickly correcting errors and misunderstandings allow for a certain vagueness and ambiguity. The birch-bark letters show a great deal of such implicitness. Clause-combining is often asyndetic, and if conjunctions are used, they are mostly not very specific from a semantic point of view.47 In addition,

40 Janin and Zaliznjak 2015, 46–49.
41 Translated on the basis of Janin and Zaliznjak 2015, 46–49.
42 Schaeeken, 2011; 2014, 156–58, Gippius and Zaliznjak 2015, 244–245.
43 Translated on the basis of Gippius and Zaliznjak 2015, 244–245.
45 As Dekker points out (2014, 19), changes of addressee also occur in other Old Russian documents like the ‘Documents of Great Novgorod and Pskov’ (Gramoty Velikogo Novgoroda i Pskova), but not without explicitly naming the new addressee.
46 The characters between nadobi and foma are not decipherable.
47 The most frequent conjunctions are i, a, ṡe and ēto, each of which has several meanings; cf. Zaliznjak 1987, 181.
referred expressions are sometimes impossible to interpret without extra-linguistic information, as demonstrated in the following example. The pronoun *emu* ‘him’ refers to the person who abused the author of the letter, but the message does not contain any hint about his identity.

(10) No. 725, 1180–1200

*emo* rameške poklanjanje kà klimja(tè) i kà pavljout: dèlja kotrej ljubo potrodisja do vlacyèè šxat(ì)ita vlacyèè moju obidou i moi boi želèza a ja emu ne dòlšjene nièìmè že i molju va sja

Greetings from Remša to Klimjata and Pavel. For God’s sake, one of you please go to the archbishop, tell the archbishop about my misery and the beatings and the iron chains. I don’t owe him anything. I beg you.

Implicitness also characterises discourse structure. As evidenced by letters with covert heterogeneity, the role of a certain piece of text is not always marked explicitly. A similar phenomenon is the lack of overt indication of direct speech, the following example being a case in point.

(11) Tver’ 5, 1300–1320

*emo* iliçi ko iliçi šugja dubie perepisyvaeta a [b]cely li tzaljo jazo dubie o’imaju po svoei meti ‘I am taking away the oaks on my own mark’ meaning ‘I mark the oaks as my own’, and to mi dubo vaše bortiko okralošja pervy ‘it is my oak, your beekeeper has fallen into robbery first’ should be interpreted as instances of direct speech, although there is no formal marker to indicate this.49

From Ilijca to II’ja. Šuža is writing over [the marks on] the oaks and has taken honey from the hives, [saying:] ‘I am taking away the oaks on my own mark’. He is cutting away the cut-mark, [saying:] ‘It’s my oak. Your beekeeper has fallen into robbery first.’ […]50

Another important manifestation of implicitness is ellipsis. As pointed out by Živov, ellipsis is one of the main cohesive devices in the birch-bark documents.31 No. 142, one of Živov’s examples, illustrates the elliptical style so typical of the birch-bark letters:

(12) No. 142, 1300–1320

[…] a četì oûsè prišśu i vy imì kàpe à mat golubiy daite sì ljdumi date saxè ne klade a ne vèsme i vy vo stàd pustite pedì ljdumi […]

[…] and if they send the ploughshares, give them my grey horse in front of people, so he won’t put [the horse]52 in the *sokha*. And if he won’t take [the horse], let [it] go to the flock in front of other people […]

2.1.3 Use of deictic expressions

The frequent occurrence of deictic expressions, i.e. of expressions like I, you, here, there, this or that, is also typical of spoken discourse as the referents of such expressions can only be identified in relation to the immediate discourse situation (emphasized by italics). The birch-bark documents also employ deictic expressions, but not very often. Evidence is given in examples (13) and (14). The expression *sja gramota* in (13) refers to the document itself, and the demonstrative pronoun *semu* in (14) refers to the messenger:

(13) No. 43, 1380–1400

[…] kako pride sja gramota tako prišli mi colovëkъ na žerebcë […]

[…] when you get this gramota, send me a man on a stallion

(14) No. 879, 1120–114084

*wo* žirjatъ poklanjanie ko radjatъ vodai semu eže ròklo vòròščju tu.

Greetings from Žirjata to Radjata. Give him [= the messenger] what he said, [namely] the grain.

51 Živov 2003, 289.

52 The brackets indicate the omissions in the Old Russian text.

53 *sokha*: a light wooden plough, which was used in north-eastern Europe.

54 According to Gippius 2004, 205, letter No. 879 is a written authorisation for an orally delivered message. It nicely demonstrates the auxiliary role many of the birch-bark documents had in the communicative act as a whole.
2.1.4 Syntax and information structure
As argued before, complex syntactic structures are more typical of written texts, whereas oral discourse prefers simple sequences of predications. In this respect, the birch-bark letters show both oral and written features. On the one hand, most of the sentences are iconic, i.e. they name events in their natural order, like No. 538:

(15) No. 538, 1380–1400

prikazъ ω' popadъi k popu čto ou tebe bylo a pošlo k onanii
a ninece pronositsja ω' kjurьjaka a ninece ponaboli o toma.

Request from the priest’s wife to the priest: What happened to you happened to Onan’ja [as well] and now it is being spread by Kjur’jak. Do something about it.

Iconicity is a corollary of the fact that the birch-bark letters prefer asyndetic structures and highly polysemous connectives (see 2.1.2 above). Anti-iconic ordering needs more specialised connectives that unequivocally indicate the temporal and causal relation between the events (ʻafter’, ‘because’, ‘since’, etc.).

Word order and information structure follow the principles of oral rather than written communication as well. The main part of the message (topic) comes first, to be specified in the following part (comment). Typically, the topic is introduced by the pronoun čto (cf. No. 99, a čto u tebe nedobore stari ʻas regards your old loss’) or the connective a (cf. No. 124 a lodku ʻand the boat’, No. 124):

(16) No. 99, 1340–1360

 […] a čto ou tebe nedobore stari prišli zerebe
 […] and as regards your old loss, send a [note with your] share

(17) No. 124, 1400–1410

prišli mi paroboko boranu ili udu mně sja ne možetsja a
lo­dku dai pavlu sobolecevu izo nama
‘send me a servant – Boran or Uda – [as] I’m not doing very well. And the boat, lend [it] to Pavel Sobol’cev’

This principle also holds on the level of the phrase, where it can cause a violation of projectivity, i.e. the separation of elements that form one syntactic constituent.

Consider the following examples. In (18), the phrase žiznobude novgorodské ʻŽiznobud, a peasant from Novgorod’ is broken up after the word žiznobude by the insertion of the words pogoublene ʻkilled’ and ou syčevicь ʻat Syčevič’s [house]:

(18) No. 607/562, 1075–1100

žiznobude pogoublene ou syčevicь novgorodské smъrde
lit.: Žiznobud killed at Syčevič’s Novgorod peasant
ʻŽiznobud, a peasant from Novgorod, was killed at Sycevič’s [house] […]

In (19), the phrase dalъ jesmь Dmitru cerenecju ʻ[I] gave to Dmitr, the monk’ separates druguju another ʻother’ from polotinu ʻhalf-rouble’:

(19) No. 689, 1360–1380

[…] druguju dalъ jesmь dmitru cerenecju polotinu […]
lit.: another [I] gave to Dmitr the monk half-rouble
[…] I gave another half-rouble to Dmitr the monk […]

On the other hand, the birch-bark letters regularly make use of hierarchically ordered, complex structures like relative clauses and constructions with participles. (20) demonstrates the use of participles (vodja novouju ženou ʻhaving married a new wife’), whereas (21) is an example of a relative construction:

(20) No. 9, 1160–1180

[…] a nyně vodja novuju ženou a mъně vъdastь ničьto […]
[…] and now, having married a new wife, he won’t give me anything […]

(21) No. 600, 1220–1240

[…] se poslali dva mouža xotynjane k pro tu tjažju pro
rekou pro čto to poslale negane ω’ knjazja i ω’ tebe […]
 […] The people from Chotyn sent two men to [you] about
the lawsuit about the river, because of which Negan had sent
[someone] in the Prince’s and your name […]


2.1.5 Formulaic elements

Most of the birch-bark letters begin with a formula of address. The early documents have very simple patterns and only name the addressee and addressee. In the course of time, the formulae become more sophisticated and more deferential. The following examples show their increasing complexity: (22) from the eleventh century only mentions the addressee and addresser, whereas (23) and (24) use the deferential expressions poklanjanje ‘bow’, ‘greeting’ and poklonъ (idem) and in (25) we see čelobitъ ‘prostration’, which was not in use until the fourteenth century.  

(22) No. 613, 1050–1075.
gramota о вонёга къ ст[авро](ви)
gramota from Vонега to Stavr

(23) No. 952, 1140–1160
о радъка къ отьцивъ poklanjanie
greetings from Radko to Father

(24) No. 497, 1340–1360
poklono о гаврили о позени ко зати моemu ko gorigori zи кoumou i ko sestori moei ko ouliti
greetings from Gavrila Postnja to my brother-in-law, the godfather Grigorij and to my sister Ulita

(25) No. 129, 1410–1420
colobitъje о жеѕifa bratu svojemu fомѣ
prostration from Jesif to his brother Foma

Another important element of the incipit is a cross at the very beginning of the text, as evidenced by No. 682. Unfortunately, the cross is hardly discernible in the photograph (Fig. 8), but the outline (Fig. 9) makes its presence clear. The initial cross occurs in many of the early birch-bark documents (from the eleventh to the early thirteenth century) and is also typical of Old Russian official documents on parchment. According to Zaliznjak, its presence in a birch-bark documents emphasises the importance of the message.  

Closing formulae are rarer and less stereotypical. Early formulae are dobrъ stvorja/dobro stvorja/dobro stvori ‘please’ and i cěluju tja ‘and I give you my regards’. In No. 497 (ex. (8) above) we find da bog vamo radoste ‘may God give you delight’; (26) below is an example of a very long and deferential closing phrase including the expression cеloomъ biju ‘I prostrate’:

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58 Gippius 2012, 248.

59 See Franklin 2002, 267, mentioning the sanctio spiritualis – God’s punishment which is called upon via the depiction of the cross in all administrative documents of the period.

60 Zaliznjak 1987, 151. However, see Franklin 2002, 267 about the talismnic function of the cross in most non-parchment Christian writing in Rus’ explicitly including birch-bark manuscripts.

The use of formulaic expressions is a feature typical of written text. Moreover, the formulae used in the birch-bark manuscripts are clearly influenced by Church Slavonic writing. This is particularly true of the early letters. Typically, Church Slavonic formulae like *i cěluju tja* or *poklanjanie* or the use of the cross do not occur later than the thirteenth century. At the same time, the development of these elements indicates an increasing independence of the birch-bark documents from the immediate communicative act, a process of ‘emancipating’ the act of writing from oral discourse.

3. Conclusion

The analysis presented here shows that one of the ordering principles of the birch-bark manuscripts, in particular the letters, is a highly specific set of oral and literate features. On the one hand, they show pronounced characteristics of orality, namely heterogeneity and implicitness. On the other hand, the formulaic expressions with their Church Slavonic background, the clear organisational patterns and the overall diligence in wording and writing are features typical of written discourse and thus point to the other end of the orality–literacy scale.

One possible explanation of this peculiar situation lies in the double origin of birch-bark literacy: it may be the result of the close interaction between the mundane and the sacred in mediaeval Russia. As Gippius convincingly argues, birch-bark literacy started out as a ‘by-product of ecclesiastical culture’ and was closely connected with clerical circles at first. Only as time went by did it loosen its ties to Church Slavonic literacy. Simultaneously, early birch-bark documents were deeply rooted in the oral communication situation and did not have an autonomous status; they merely continued and extended oral communication and were just an auxiliary part of the communicative act.

The diachronic development of the birch-bark letters also has two sides to it. The letters grew increasingly independent from both Church Slavonic literacy and oral discourse over time. As writing on birch bark spread in ever-wider social circles, the ties to Church Slavonic literacy weakened. This trend is reflected in the development of the formulaic expressions and the temporary spread of the use of everyday orthography.

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62 Gippius 2012.

63 Cf. Gippius 2009, 291: ‘“Zrelyj” formuljar berestnjanoj perepiski obražaet uže kačestvenno inoe vosprijatie pis’menogo teksta i možet byt’ ponjet kak rezul’tat svoego roda “ėmancipacii” pis’menogo vyskazyvanija, prisobite­nija im avtonomnogo komunikativnogo statusa’ (‘The “mature” form of birch-bark correspondence reflects a qualitatively different perception of the written word and can be interpreted as a result of some kind of “emancipati­on” of the written word, as it has acquired an autonomous status’).

64 Gippius 2012.

65 Gippius 2012, 248 and passim.

66 Zaliznjak 2002, 607–610. Also see section 1.1 above.
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Arcixovskij, Artemij V. and Tixomirov, Mixail N. (1953), Novgorodskie gramoty na bereste. Iz raskopok 1951 g. (Moscow: Akademii Nauk SSSR).


Fig. 1: Archives nationales (France), document U 2343, fol. 1r. Thematic index volume showing summaries of copied documents of the French Parliament on paper snippets (fichettes épinglées), written and arranged by Jean Le Nain of the French Parliament’s Library.
Inventories are fundamentally important for using archives because they tell us which documents are part of them. Inventories enumerate the documents contained in a certain repository and present them in an epistemically meaningful order. Intelligently constructed inventories permit us to navigate the archive. Most research on archival inventories concentrates on their epistemic structure. Authors discuss the arranging of knowledge embedded in the inventories and how it mirrors political or other realities. However, only rarely do scholars wonder how archivists actually created those impressive surveys of archival documents. This question will be addressed in the following pages.

In order to fully appreciate the complexities and difficulties entailed in the production of inventories, it is helpful to draw on recent scholarly work about lists and list-making. Lists are studied by literary scholars, among others, who view them as important narrative tools and rhetorical means for describing the world. They are also increasingly attracting the attention of scholars interested in the organisation of knowledge, following implicitly or explicitly a line of analysis frequently associated with the name of Michel Foucault. Rarely, however, have the growing bodies of scholarship on lists and archival inventories been linked together.

According to the literary scholar Robert E. Belknap, ‘lists are frameworks that hold separate and disparate items together’. He continues: ‘the list is simultaneously the sum of its parts and the individual parts themselves’. Lists are both ‘accretive’ and ‘discontinuous’ according to Belknap, that is, they consist of elements which, while being separate and segregated, are still connected within a larger organising structure. The elements in a list are thus isolated and integrated at the same time, being taken out of context on the one hand and yet part of a larger ensemble on the other. Lists can be systematic in terms of their organisation, but they can also be spontaneous and may even be chaotic in their enumeration of items. Moreover, they are subject to constant addition – ending a list is, in fact, often a highly problematic procedure. It is not by chance that many lists end with an ‘etc.’, indicating that an end to the list was simply imposed for pragmatic reasons. Many of these features of lists are also pertinent to archival inventories. As we will see, archivists in the early modern period understood perfectly well that the dynamic of isolation and integration, discontinuity and coherence that characterises the list as a media form was highly relevant for the production of well-organised archival inventories.

Archival inventories frequently claim to be organised according to some meaningful epistemic structure, but this systematic order can only emerge in the course of actually analysing each of the documents. The structure of archival inventories in the early modern period did not emerge without any preconceived ideas, yet the process of arranging items constantly challenged, deepened and altered those initial assumptions. Thus, the order among the inventory’s items was constantly in danger of changing and evolving while the list was in the making. In other words, inventory-making was more than just a simple procedure of sorting a large number of documents according to pre-existing criteria. Individual
items had to be put on a list in a certain order while the order itself was still emerging. The archival order of knowledge needed to remain flexible and open to adaptation, at least while the process of inventorying was still going on. In practice, this meant that the order of archival items possibly had to be altered as new items were identified and analysed.

How could that be done without rewriting the entire list every time the order had to be changed? Early modern archivists were very articulate about their procedures and spoke at length about the challenges of inventorying and about ways to overcome the problems they encountered. They relied both on physical and spatial activities and on the advanced use of writing and paper to achieve their aims. As this essay will show, inventorying an archive was a resource-intensive procedure involving not just ink and paper, but many other instruments and physical objects as well.

Unmixing the salad: carrying documents to create ‘archival things’

Before an archive was inventoried, it was nothing but an ‘Italian salad’, as Christoval Rodriguez, archivist at the Cathedral of Ávila in Spain, wrote around 1730. Like a bowl of mixed salad, in which many different items are mixed together in such a way that no individual ingredient can be picked out easily, the unorganised archive was nothing but an amorphous and continuous mass of paper. What was tasty in the kitchen – a mélange of ingredients – proved counter-productive in the archive; a jumble of paper and parchment was completely unusable, in other words. The archival salad therefore had to be ‘unmixed’, and this would be achieved by creating an inventory, a list of individual documents. Other eighteenth-century archivists concurred on this point, though in less culinary language. In 1779, for example, the French archivist M. Mariée described the archivist’s most basic task as the ‘distinction des objets du cahos’. Transforming piles of papers into a series of distinctive, discontinuous and discrete documents was the first step in creating an inventory. Inventorying meant bringing the logic of lists to bear upon an archive.

For the process of sorting the archival chaos into discrete objects, Mariée and his colleagues suggested a strategy that seems almost self-evident, but was, in fact, highly complex. All writers agreed that epistemic organisation rested upon spatial organisation. Physically moving and placing archival documents was, thus, a key moment in the production of an inventory. According to the German archivist Philipp Ernst Spieß, for instance, the archivist was ‘to take one document after another and put [them] into baskets or drawers. If there is enough space, he can distribute the documents on the floor of a large room’. Other early modern archivists agreed: Ernst Moritz Leonhardi, for instance, working in the German town of Ansbach in 1741, suggested that the task of inventorying the local government’s archives should begin by taking all its documents out of their current location and dividing them into twelve large piles. In France, Joseph Battenev described a similar routine in 1775: creating order meant distributing documents in a room and making piles out of those that belonged together. In this view, the making of an archival inventory started with transporting document after document from one place to another. Ordering an archive thus implied a great deal of tedious physical labour as it meant carrying papers back and forth.

This work could involve specific skills and required great care. The unfolding and refolding of ancient parchments, for instance, was a key part of this labour. It was also a risky activity, though, as old documents could easily be destroyed by handling. Thus, the French archivist Pierre Camille Le

4 Rodríguez 1992–1993, 250: ‘As de suponer (Lector mio) que entra a componer un Archivio […] este esta tan pervertido, y con ninguna union colocado, digamoslo de una vez, como ensalada italiana’.

5 An ‘Italian salad’, according to Johann Heinrich Zedler’s Universal-Lexicom, was characterised by its many ingredients being mixed together without any distinction – fish, oysters, mussels, lemons, capers, olives and ‘other Italian stuff’; vol. 33, Leipzig/Halle 1742, col. 666 (s.v. ‘Salat’).

6 The other aspect of ‘unmixing’ the archival salad, of course, was to create physical order so that individual documents might be located easily in the armoires, drawers and containers in the rooms of the archive. The epistemic order of the inventory and the physical order of the archival furniture had to be coordinated, e.g. by connecting individual items in the inventory to specific locations by specific signs or descriptions. For more on this, see Friedrich 2013.

7 Mariée 1779, 38f.

8 Spieß 1777, 58f.: ‘daß man eine Urkunde um die andre nimmt und selbige in Körbe, Schubladen oder wohl gar, wenn man einen Saal oder sonst geräumiges Zimmer hat, auf dem Fußboden nach der Verschiedenheit der Materien abtheile, sodann eine gemachte Abtheilung um die andre aufs neue vornehme, und jede Urkunde ganz kurz aufschrifte’.

9 Landeshauptarchiv Koblenz 30/171, 37–41.

10 Battenev 1775, 2. Each pile was to be divided – and later subdivided – into chapters, with each chapter potentially becoming a distinctive liasse or carton of documents. Eventually, every single document was to be wrapped in an envelope which was to bear a brief summary of the document together with the number of the relevant chapter and a short reference. The summaries were ultimately transcribed into the inventory according to the order of cartons/liasses and chapters.
Moine, writing in 1765, wrote no less than four pages on how to handle such precious and fragile items. A few years later, in 1770, when Le Moine was planning to reorganise the archives of Saint-Germain-des-Prés Abbey, he returned to the issue. Again, the first step he had in mind was to inspect existing piles of documents and move specific papers to different heaps if necessary. This time, he insisted that the archivist should take great care not to break the fragile seals attached to mediaeval charters during the process. Given this physical aspect of archival work, it is no wonder that archivists like Spieß or Leonhardi frequently complained about the material side-effects of their activities – getting dusty and dirty was an inherent consequence of inventorying, for example.

And yet, material and physical as it was, this spatially implemented process of ‘unmixing the salad’ was much more than just a manual task; it required sophisticated abilities such as deciphering ancient handwriting and understanding mediaeval Latin. Archival list-making also presupposed considerable knowledge of diplomatics and law. Furthermore, a set of tools and helpful devices had to be at hand. Especially necessary were reference works such as geographical encyclopaedias to identify the names of villages, or dictionaries to help with mediaeval Latin. Charles Du Cange’s famous Latin–French dictionary was particularly useful: ‘The gentlemen of the Chambre des Comptes always have M. du Cange’s Latin glossary on their desks so that they can turn to it when ancient deeds present difficulties’, one contemporary author noted. Le Moine, too, relied routinely on Du Cange’s dictionary during his daily work. Only rarely mentioned in the literature, but equally important, were tools and objects like slips of paper for labelling and enfolding documents, needles and thread to tie documents together, and boxes or envelopes to gather papers and parchments. List-making in the archive was therefore an embodied epistemic practice dependent upon sophisticated intellectual, cultural and physical resources.

What happened when archivists unmixed the archival salad and produced a list of records was quite similar to what happened in early modern laboratories and observatories. Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, a German historian of science, has explained that the laboratory – seen as an ensemble of technical apparatus, mental habits, habitualised research practices and scientific discourses – first creates the objects that it then studies. In the environment of a laboratory or observatory, he concludes, the facts and phenomena subjected to scientific classification and interpretation are not simply found, but rather created in complex processes – reality is transformed into ‘epistemic things’, to use Rheinberger’s terminology. Something similar takes place in an archive when an archivist produces an inventory. This implies ensembles of practices, resources, infrastructure and abilities to create distinctive, discrete and discontinuous items – individual documents, which could be talked about and worked with in a professional way. Archivists make complex decisions about documents while creating a list of the inventory: what should be listed and what should not? How should it be listed? What defines a single ‘document’ and where does a ‘file’ or ‘book’ start? These were (and are) not so much questions of ontological necessity, but the result of an archivist’s practical decisions. Most early modern archivists, for instance, very explicitly distinguished ‘useless’ and ‘useful’ documents, and only those papers that were considered useful were catalogued and listed. As for those documents deemed less useful, however, the list’s logic of ‘et cetera’ applied: they were only alluded to, but not identified in detail.

Unmixing the archival salad, both in physical and in epistemic ways, was a first step that was necessary reference to Du Cange was possibly scribbled by a later archivist, not by Le Moine himself.

16 Archives départementales de l’Indre-et-Loire G 456 (‘Inventaire des titres de la prévôté de La Varenne, achevé par Lemoine, architecte’), 131, where Du Cange is quoted as explaining unusual and regional terminology. The
to impose some order by creating an inventory. To do this, archivists sorted the continuous, amorphous mass of records into individual units. They did so – in strong analogy to the creation of ‘epistemic things’ in laboratories and observatories – by applying specific tools, discourses and practices, both mental and material. The result was a large number of distinctive items: documents or groups of documents that could count as ‘archival things’ that could and needed to be classified, ordered and inventoried.

Creating coherence
Archival inventories were – and still are – not simply enumerations of individual documents in random order. Quite the opposite, in fact: inventories (claim to) impose a rational structure on the individual items they list. They are, to put it in Robert E. Belknap’s terminology, ‘accretive’. Archival inventories (claim to) reassemble the discrete items that they mention into larger structures according to overarching criteria. Just where did these criteria come from in the case of early modern archives?

Some experienced archivists felt they could create order in an archive by relying on a preconceived and deductive organising framework. To Heinrich Ernst Moritz Leonhardi, the archivist from Ansbach quoted above, what each of the twelve piles of documents was to be labelled was clear before work even started on them: Historia Saynensia, Regalia et Iura, Pacta et Negotia, Processualia, Rechtssachen [legal matters], Militaria, Feudalia, Consistorialia, Regierungs und Landesverfassung [national and state constitution], Justiz [judicial system], Cammeralia, Miscellanea. Likewise, Christoval Rodriguez, the author from Ávila who compared unordered archives to Italian salads, knew in advance that archives were best structured in 21 categories in alphabetical order, from A like ‘Arendamientos, Apeos, Apelaciones’ to Z like ‘Zedulas reales etc.’. In a similar vein, German authors developed ideal plans for archival structuring, which were presented as being rational and universally applicable. In 1687, for instance, Theodor Reinkingk published an ideal archival order for German territorial states. His plan was based on the political and social realities of the Holy Roman Empire – documents concerning the empire and the emperor should always come first, he said, followed by those addressing fellow princes; papers on different areas of domestic policy only came after these. Augustin Balthasar, writing in 1742, felt equally confident about producing a standardised system of categories – he created an ideal archival order for German imperial cities. Writers like Reinkingk and Balthasar obviously thought that archives and their inventories could and should be ordered according to preconceived principles – this could be called a ‘deductive’ approach to structuring archives.

Other archivists apparently did not believe in general, abstract systems of archival order, but took a more ‘inductive’ approach to list-making and thought that organising principles would only emerge in the process of sorting documents. Theirs was a bottom-up approach to ordering written knowledge. Le Moine thought there should be as many different categories as was ‘convenient’. According to the German archivist Spieß,

[…] allein die Erfahrung hat mich bisher gehreht, daß der beste Plan derenige ist, den die Urkunden selbst an die Hand geben. Mein verfertigter Plan thut mir also wenig Dienste, ich finde Urkunden, die mich an einen Titul erinnern, an den ich vorher gar nicht gedacht habe, oder ich sehe offenbahr, daß ich fehlen und mir viele Unbequemlichkeit zuziehen würde […]. Durch das tägliche Arbeiten lernt man erst besser erkennen, welcher Titul mit dem andern mehr oder weniger Verbindung hat, und wie also mit der Zeit alle Titul in der schicklichsten Ordnung auf einander folgen können.

[…] experience proves that the best system for ordering archives is provided by the documents themselves; a preconceived plan is of little help. I find charters that fall into a category I had not thought of before. […] Only daily work with the documents teaches us which documents are connected. It thus requires time and experience to understand how to organise documents.

The order of knowledge and the structure of an inventory list was to be found empirically and inductively. Creating
organised lists thus had something tautological or paradoxical to it: a list of documents was not supposed to be random, but its structure only emerged in the course of sifting through the documents in question and was not apparent at the beginning. The series of items had to be finalised on the one hand, but the position of individual items on the list still had to be flexible enough to allow changes to be made later. This was the crux of the matter: how should lists of archival documents be made and yet be readily adaptable at the same time?

Producing a well-ordered inventory

Archivists could walk well-trodden paths to overcome such difficulties. Together with scholars, administrators and authors, they relied on a wide range of ‘little tools of knowledge’ that helped them to manage vast amounts of information: note-taking, excerpting, filing and referencing, compiling, cutting and pasting were part of the daily routines of learned people all over Europe, as Ann Blair and others have demonstrated so well. All these technologies relied, in one way or another, on the sophisticated handling of paper and writing. In fact, in Early Modern Europe, control of knowledge not only meant control of paper, but also control by paper. These practices, while most visible in the erudite milieu of scholars and literary figures, were not confined to the ‘republic of letters’, but were available to bureaucrats and administrators as well – and to archivists.

For instance, Mariée’s short treatise on archives from 1779 suggested – similar to early modern erudite practice – that archival inventorying had to rely on notebooks. Two different notebooks were needed, in fact. In the first one, which was called a pouillé, the archivist was supposed to write a short summary of each document as he read it – the pouillé thus reflected the sequence of his work. A second set of notebooks was structured in thematic order, quite similar to erudite commonplace books. These were the so-called caïers de distribution. The excerpts of the pouillé were to be copied into these ledgers (caïers) according to topics. Mariée gave an example: when the archivist read the first document dealing with legal issues, he was to start a new caier entitled ‘jurisdiction’. When he found the first terrier, he was to start a new caier with the heading ‘terriers’, and so on. There were to be as many caiers as one needed, although Mariée estimated that about 20 of them would suffice. Later documents on similar topics were to be inserted into these caiers. That still left a final task to be done, though: to connect the entries in the pouillé with the caiers and the documents themselves so that clear identification was possible. Mariée suggested the following: each short summary in the pouillé should receive a number. The same number should also be attached to the entry in the caiers. This number should finally be written on a standardised slip of paper which was to be attached to the original document by a small pin (epingle). Three things were achieved by this complex process: first of all, every single document was numbered and could be filed away in numerical order; second, the continuous series of excerpts in the pouillé allowed one to find a brief excerpt of each document by its number; and third, the excerpts in the caiers enabled one to search for specific topics and identify the relevant document and summary.

Things became even more complicated if one did not merely want to make an inventory, but create an index (or, as the French called it, a table) of the entire archive. Again, the experience of indexing books helped here. Indices were frequently produced by using small, loose pieces of paper. Documents were read and each significant piece of information was noted on a small slip of paper, roughly resembling a modern index card. Each of these pieces of paper only contained one element, such as the name of a person or a fact and the exact source reference. Since these small slips of paper were loose, they could be sorted and arranged according to whatever logic one wished to employ. Loose slips of paper were easily recombined and reorganised.

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24 Blair 2010; Becker and Clark 2001; Yeo 2014.
25 Soll 2010.
26 This strategy of relying on two notebooks, one following the order of reading, the other the order of topics, was well established in erudite practice. It is explained in Clemente 1635, 479f., for instance.
27 The name was significant and most likely used as an analogy: pouillé was originally a French technical term denoting a type of document otherwise known as Urbar (German) or ‘rent-roll’ (English). It is basically a systematic register of fiefs pertaining to one lord, including descriptions of the rights and dues attached to each fief. The analogy probably lies in the fact that rent-rolls also had the appearance of being simple summaries of legal titles, one after another.
28 Terriers were complex documents detailing seigneural lands and the dues and rights attached to them.
29 Mariée 1779, 40: ‘Vous ferez autant de petits caiers que vous appercevrez d’objets distincts & appellatifs de noms différents, qui seront de nature différentes’. The number of ‘vingt, plus ou moins’ caiers is on p. 29.
if necessary. Early modern encyclopaedists such as Conrad Gesner and Theodor Zwinger relied on such methods to produce and organise their staggering compilations of excerpted pieces of information. As Fabian Krämer has recently shown, Ulisse Aldrovandi also wrote, cut and collected such small pieces of paper with individual items of information for much of his life. Aldrovandi preferred to order information alphabetically and kept the pieces of paper in bags, one bag for each letter. Only when he finally compiled his 83-volume manuscript encyclopaedia, the *Pandechion epistemonicum*, did he order the snippets in each bag alphabetically. He fixed the order of the slips by gluing them into large folios.

Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, a late seventeenth-century German poet and author, has left us a helpful description of this typical procedure:

The subject index [is] arranged according to the ABC, and for this it is very useful to have a box with 24 compartments, each of which is marked with a letter. If you now wish to make an index, you must write the contents in proper measure on a sheet of paper, cut it up into individual pieces and then you must put each piece into its own letter compartment. Finally, you take them out again, arrange one letter after the other, and either paste the paper slips in their proper order or write them out once again.

More or less the same procedure was also used in archives to create indices and inventories. A modest example comes

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32 Blair 2010.

33 Krämer 2013; Krämer and Zedelmaier 2014.

34 Translated in Wellisch 1981.
from the German duchy of Sachsen-Gotha. There, in the middle of the seventeenth century, an unknown archivist produced a small index to parts of the ducal archive by using a method similar to Aldrovandi’s: he read through many documents, wrote interesting pieces of information on small and fairly standardised slips of paper (including a reference to the document and page number) and underlined the keyword on each piece. Later, he arranged the slips alphabetically according to the underlined keywords and glued these ordered snippets of paper onto blank pages, which were finally arranged into bound volumes.

The famous Schedario Garampi in the Vatican Archives is a much more impressive and famous example of this procedure. Giuseppe Garampi, Prefect of the Archives in the second half of the eighteenth century, had several assistants browse through thousands of volumes and take notes on them on roughly 800,000 snippets of paper. The card index that was thus developed – the Schedario Garampi – originated as a historical project, initially being intended as a starting point for a History of Bishops and Churches of the World. Later, at the end of the nineteenth century, the many small pieces of paper were glued into 125 volumes, ordered in several series and ranked more or less alphabetically within each series. As all these cases show, in Early Modern Europe (and well beyond, well into the nineteenth century) blank pages were used to keep the slips of paper in a strict order. Gluing tiny bits of paper into large books was the ultimate step in fixing the order of knowledge once and for all. Archival inventories were produced by cutting, sorting and gluing thousands of small and unassuming pieces of paper.

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35 The volume is Staatsarchiv Gotha Geheimes Archiv SS X.

36 Diener 1982.
Glue and pins, and the ordering of knowledge

Glue was, thus, a highly important tool for early modern scholars, bureaucrats and archivists. Just like handling and making ink, being able to make and handle glue was a key skill that organisers of knowledge needed to acquire. The French scholar Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Pereise, for instance, in a letter from 1619, describes how his servant inadvertently cut an old charter made of parchment; ‘with a little bit of glue, we can remedy this misfortune’, he added.

There were other cases, however, where cutting up pieces of parchment and regluing them was actually a deliberate criminal activity. One such example from the seventeenth century was reported in English case law:

One Leak, a Clerk in Chancery, intending to Forge a Patent, puts together two pieces of Parchment, and had fitted them, and put them together with Mouth-glew, that they appear’d as one: Than a Grant was written upon the outmost, and a Seal affix’d, so that the Great Seal is put on a true Thing, then he cuts off the edges of the Parchment, so as to sever them, takes of the written One, and leaves the Seal on the Blank, then Forgeth the Grant and makes us of it.

However, what was much more typical, if slightly less spectacular, were the many legal ways in which glue was regularly used to attach things to large books. Glues were used to affix specimens of plants to paper and to fasten single snippets of paper to larger sheets, as we have already seen in the cases of Aldrovandi and Garampi. Even more impressive are what are known as Klebebände in German – large volumes in which avid collectors glued large numbers of prints of all shapes and sizes. The series of Klebebände produced in Dresden and Arolsen are particularly famous: in these cases, the princes who resided in these two areas ordered the collection of hundreds or thousands of prints that were cut to size and reassembled into meaningful groups by gluing them onto blank pages.

Certain types of glue were well known. In French, people spoke admiringly of colle de bouche. In English, the same type of glue was similarly called ‘mouth-glew’. Its usage is described in detail in a well-known passage by Robert Hooke (note that the passage starts by describing the practice of Klebebände):

Now these Histories being writ in brief, in a small piece of very fine Paper, 'twill be very convenient to have a large Book bound after the manner of those that are very usual for keeping Prints, Pictures, Drawings &c in, to preserve them smooth and in order; On the sides of which, in the same manner as those Pictures are kept, it would be convenient to stick on with Mouth Glew, or some such Substance in the best Method that can be thought of for the Present; the several small Schedules containing the abbreviated and complicated Histories of Observations and Experiments, as they are last written on fine Paper, for by the Contrivance of this book, which for Brevity’s sake I will call a Repository, not only all the Histories belonging to any one Inquiry may be placed so as to appear all at one View [...] But they may at any time, upon occasion, be presently remov’d or altered in their Position or Order.

Even though Hooke does not talk about indexing proper, his account of how he ordered his notes on his observations closely resembles the procedures for indexing described above. In his view, this kind of glue had the advantage of being dissolvable; the snippets of paper could thus be removed if the order needed to be rearranged. The temporary adhesive powers of such types of glue were also considered important for surveyors, who often had to work with large maps or plots that they were advised to ‘glew [...] with Mouth-glew fast to the Table at the four Corners thereof’ while working with them so as to keep them steady. Crucially, ‘mouth-glew’ of Hooke’s kind helped to combine stability with fluidity, two potentially contradictory aspects

37 I am currently collecting material for a larger project entitled ‘The Glue of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Glue’. The following remarks present some initial findings from this research.

38 Correspondance de Rubens 1887, 231: ‘avec un peu de colle de bouche, il y a encor quelque remède à ce malheur’.

39 Proceedings 1700, 75. This was used as an example in a debate about what exactly constituted treason. According to his judges, the above-mentioned clerk had not committed treason in forging the grant. The example was most likely taken from Edward Coke, Third Part of the Institutes of the Lawes of England, London, 1644, 16.

40 See the article on ‘Herbier’ in Denis Diderot et al. (eds): Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des connaissances humaines tome XXIII, 1773, 114.

41 Brakensiek 2003; Vogel 2015.

42 Waller 1705, 64. The section has been cited by Siegert 2000, 43 and by Yeo 2014, 249, for example.

43 I quote from Love 1760, 139. The very same passage appears in several other handbooks on surveying.
Fig. 4: Archives nationales (France), document U 2260, title page with table of contents. One of the final index volumes (tables méthodiques), that is a clean copy of an index volume with thematic snippets, by Jean Le Nain of the French Parliament’s Library.
required of slips of paper involved in the making of archival inventories.

Glue did have its down-sides, however. Johann Christoph Gatterer, the well-known German professor of history and polymath at Göttingen, noted in 1768 that it would attract all sorts of insects. Others feared the same consequences, but a solution was available: in 1728, for instance, Sigmund Jakob Apin had defended the use of glue by pointing out that insects could be deterred by adding lavender or other herbs to the mixture. In any case, there was a much more elegant alternative at hand: instead of glue, small pins could be used to fix the tiny pieces of paper in place in books (Figs 2b and c). Mariée had suggested this in the passage mentioned above. Pins were also used in one of the most fascinating early modern projects of archival indexing. In the second half of the seventeenth-century, Jean Le Nain (1609–1698), président of the Parlement de Paris, filled more than 200 volumes with copies of documents in the Parlement’s archives. He then created a multi-volume index to these copy-books, which is still one of the best tools with which to navigate the archives of the Parlement to this day (Figs 1–3). To create this index, he produced numerous tiny snippets with short (or sometimes fairly long) summaries of the copied documents. Le Nain then sorted and ordered these pieces of paper in thematic order. The little slips of paper were pinned into 83 books, which were eventually copied in clear handwriting to create the final index (Figs 4 and 5).

The important question here is not why Le Nain did this or how his project worked in detail (if it did at all). What Le Nain’s dozens of volumes demonstrate is the enormous effort it took early modern archivists to create the inventories they desired. Archival list-making was a procedure that required a great deal of technical sophistication. It relied not only upon epistemic decisions, but on more mundane, yet crucial manual skills. Producing lists of information implied ordering it. Ordering information, in turn, was a laborious manual task that called for the skilful use of scissors, glues and pins.

Conclusion

Archival inventories are lists, and lists are tools to create order. They cut reality into distinct items in order to reinsert them into larger epistemic frames. Before being subjected to the order of lists, an archive is ‘like an Italian salad’, to quote the Spanish archivist Rodriguez once more. In the case of archival inventories, items on the list must be arranged in systematic ways for the list to be effective – a randomly ordered archival inventory would be of no use whatsoever. Yet it is frequently unclear what an inventory’s organisational structure might be, as the best order of documents often only emerged during the process of ordering them. To cope with this situation, the archivists had to develop a set of practical approaches. In Early Modern Europe, they frequently relied on well-established practices of paper-based knowledge management. The making of archival inventories required pins and glue, scissors and bags, notebooks and loose snippets of paper. Order was created through the manual tasks of writing, cutting and pasting, in addition to handling, placing and transporting documents. Inventory-making was, quite literally, a physical activity and was even said to require heroic virtues. Writing in 1779, the French archivist Mariée was particularly eloquent on the mental qualities necessary for archival work in such circumstances: ‘Arm yourself with all the courage that a hard-working soul will need’, he said. ‘I advise you not to be baffled by all the chaos you will have to sort’; ‘have courage’ – this was realistic advice to all those involved in the making of archival inventories.

44 Gatterer 1768, 96.
45 Apin 1728, 35.
46 On Le Nain, see Le Grand 1907. The volumes are part of the Archives Nationales, ‘U’ series. Also see Brancourt 2010 <https://parlementdeparis.hypotheses.org/214>.
47 The index can initially be used to locate an interesting piece of information in Le Nain’s copy-books where references to the original volumes can be obtained. In a second step, the original volume of parliamentary documentation can be retrieved.
48 Mariée 1779, 23–25. ‘Armez-vous du courage qu’une ame la plus laborieuse doit avoir’; ‘Je vous recommande actuellement de n’avoir aucune inquiétude sur le cahos que vous avez à débrouiller’; ‘ayez du courage’. 
Fig. 5: Archives nationales (France), document U 2260, fol. 1. Beginning of one of the final index volumes (tables méthodiques) headed Notaires et Secrétaires de la Cour (‘Notaries and Secretaries of the Court’), by Jean Le Nain of the French Parliament’s Library.
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Contributors

Christian Benne
University of Copenhagen
Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies
Emil Holms Kanal 6
2300 Copenhagen, Denmark
christian.benne@hum.ku.dk

Anna Boroffka
Universität Hamburg
Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures
Sonderforschungsbereich 950
Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa
Warburgstr. 26
20354 Hamburg, Germany
anna.boroffka@uni-hamburg.de

Jonas Buchholz
Universität Hamburg
Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures
NETamil
Warburgstr. 26
20354 Hamburg, Germany
jonas.buchholz@uni-hamburg.de

Giovanni Ciotti
Universität Hamburg
Asien-Afrika-Institut
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, Ost
20146 Hamburg, Germany
giovanni.ciotti@gmail.com

Markus Friedrich
Universität Hamburg
Fachbereich Geschichte
Überseering 35 #5
22297 Hamburg, Germany
markus.friedrich@uni-hamburg.de

Felix Heinzer
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg
Seminar für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie
Platz der Universität 3
79085 Freiburg i.Br., Germany
heinzer@mittellatein.uni-freiburg.de

Imke Mendoza
Universität Salzburg
Fachbereich Slawistik
Erzbabt-Klotz-Str. 1
5020 Salzburg, Austria
imke.mendoza@sbg.ac.at

Stefan Reichmuth
Ruhr Universität Bochum
Seminar für Orientalistik und Islamwissenschaft
GB 2/39
Universitätsstraße 150
44801 Bochum, Germany
stefan.reichmuth@rub.de

Bruno Reudenbach
Universität Hamburg
Institut für Kunstgeschichte
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, West
20146 Hamburg, Germany
bruno.reudenbach@uni-hamburg.de

Tilman Seidensticker
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena
Institut für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients
Löbdergraben 24a
07737 Jena, Germany
tilman.seidensticker@uni-jena.de
Annabel Teh Gallop
British Library
Southeast Asia Curator
96 Euston Rd
London NW1 2DB, UK
Annabel.Gallop@bl.uk
Writing is one of the most important cultural techniques, and writing has been handwriting throughout the greater part of human history, in some places even until very recently. Manuscripts are usually studied primarily for their contents, that is, for the texts, images and notation they carry, but they are also unique artefacts, the study of which can reveal how they were produced and used. The social and cultural history of manuscripts allows for ‘grounding’ the history of human knowledge and knowledge practices in material evidence in ways largely unexplored by traditional scholarship.

With very few exceptions, the history of the handwritten book is usually taken to be the prehistory of the (printed Western) book, thus not only denying manuscripts their distinct status as carrier medium, but also neglecting the rich heritage of Asian and African manuscript cultures from which, according to conservative estimates, more than ten million specimens survive until today.

The series *Studies in Manuscript Cultures (SMC)* is designed to publish monographs and collective volumes contributing to the emerging field of manuscript studies (or manuscriptology) including disciplines such as philology, palaeography, codicology, art history, and material analysis. SMC encourages comparative study and contributes to a historical and systematic survey of manuscript cultures.
10 - Dividing Texts: Visual Text-Organization in North Indian and Nepalese Manuscripts by Bidur Bhattarai

The number of manuscripts produced in the Indian sub-continent is astounding and is the result of a massive enterprise that was carried out over a vast geographical area and over a vast stretch of time. Focusing on areas of Northern India and Nepal between 800 to 1300 CE and on manuscripts containing Sanskrit texts, the present study investigates a fundamental and so far rarely studied aspect of manuscript production: visual organization. Scribes adopted a variety of visual strategies to distinguish one text from another and to differentiate the various sections within a single text (chapters, sub-chapters, etc.). Their repertoire includes the use of space(s) on the folio, the adoption of different writing styles, the inclusion of symbols of various kind, the application of colors (rubrication), or a combination of all these. This study includes a description of these various strategies and an analysis of their different implementations across the selected geographical areas. It sheds light on how manuscripts were produced, as well as on some aspects of their employment in ritual contexts, in different areas of India and Nepal.

15 - Studies on Greek and Coptic Majuscule Scripts and Books by Pasquale Orsini

The volume contains a critical review of data, results and open problems concerning the principal Greek and Coptic majuscule bookhands, based on previous research of the author, revised and updated to offer an overview of the different graphic phenomena. Although the various chapters address the history of different types of scripts (i.e. biblical majuscule, sloping potend majuscule, liturgical majuscule, epigraphic and monumental scripts), their juxtaposition allows us to identify common issues of the comparative method of palaeography. From an overall critical assessment of these aspects the impossibility of applying a unique historical paradigm to interpret the formal expressions and the history of the different bookhands comes up, due to the fact that each script follows different paths. Particular attention is also devoted to the use of Greek majuscules in the writing of ancient Christian books. A modern and critical awareness of palaeographic method may help to place the individual witnesses in the context of the main graphic trends, in the social and cultural environments in which they developed, and in a more accurate chronological framework.