Reconstructing Space and Time: 
Localising Manuscripts through Paratexts

Workshop at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) 
University of Hamburg

25-26 October 2013, Warburgstr. 26, 20354 Hamburg

Programme

Friday, 25 October

1.00-1.30 pm  Registration / Welcome Coffee / Tea

1.30-2.20 pm  Vito Lorusso (CSMC Hamburg) Localising Greek Manuscripts through Paratexts

2.20-3.10 pm  Kristina Nikolovska (TEEME University of Kent and Freie Universität Berlin) “In the time when those who were living envied the dead”: Interrogating the “Personal” in South Slavic Paratexts from the Ottoman Period

3.10-4.00 pm  Apiradee Techasiriwan (CSMC Hamburg) Localising Tai Lü and Tai Khün Manuscripts in Space and Time

4.00-4.30 pm  Coffee Break

4.30-5.20 pm  Olly Akkerman (BGSMCS Freie Universität Berlin) Bohra Manuscript Culture, Paratexts and Cyclical Time and Space

5.20-6.10 pm  Falko Klaes (University of Trier) Methods and Problems of Localising Manuscripts with Vernacular Additions in Space and Time – Manuscripts from Trier

7.30 pm  Dinner
Saturday, 26 October

9.30-10.20 am  Hanna Wimmer (CSMC Hamburg)  *A Medieval Reconstruction of Place and Time: On a Note in Henry of Renham’s Aristotle Textbook*

10.20-11.10 am  Marco Franceschini (University of Bologna)  *Dates in Grantha Manuscript Colophons: Some Remarks on their Structure and on some Symbols and Abbreviations used therein*

11.10-11.40 am  Coffee Break

11.40-12.10 pm  Hang Lin (CSMC Hamburg)  *Looking Inside the Covers: Localising the Donglin-Manuscripts through Paratexts*

12.10-1.00 pm  Gidena Mesfin Kebede (CSMC Hamburg)  *What Scribbles Can Tell...*

1.00 pm  Lunch
Abstracts

Localising Greek Manuscripts through Paratexts (Vito Lorusso)

This paper investigates the elements found in Greek manuscripts that allow for a successful localisation of these objects both in time and space. In this respect, I will present a few case studies from various manuscript collections, in particular from the library of Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472).

Colophons at the end of manuscripts are not uncommon. Generally they shed light on the origin of a book, since they provide information about the scribe(s) as well as about when, where and for whom the book was written. Furthermore, other information comes from additional notes that later reader(s) wrote in the margin of the main text. The issue at stake is whether and how these notes contribute to localise manuscripts over the course of their lifetime.

“In the time when those who were living envied the dead”: Interrogating the “personal” in South Slavic paratexts from the Ottoman period (Kristina Nikolovska)

The Orthodox Slavonic manuscripts written during the Ottoman rule in the Balkans contain diverse paratextual material. Borrowing from the Byzantine tradition, the South Slavic scribes would usually note the date of production of the manuscript; sometimes they would write their name, usually in the form ‘the most sinful of all’ and start the note with a prayer to God. These textual fragments usually contain information about the type of manuscript they copied, the place it was copied, or the person for whom the manuscript was made. It was also common to bless those that contributed to the work. There are also cases of authors giving instructions for readers and making requests, such as ‘the book should be read carefully and the mistakes by the sinful hand should be forgiven’. However, those texts describing the suffering of the Christian population living in an Islamic sultanate have been considered important in the Balkans. Almost unequivocally, the scholars in the region see these marginal notes ‘authentic’, ‘personal’ and ‘true’ voices of the past. The aim of this paper is to interrogate previous scholarship, by examining the functions that these marginal fragments played in the writing tradition of the South Slavs.

Localising Tai Lü and Tai Khün Manuscripts in Space and Time (Apiradee Techasiriwan)

Manuscripts of Tai Lü and Tai Khün provenience usually contain paratexts, notably colophons, providing valuable background information about the different contexts in which a specific manuscript was produced and used. Such information might pertain to the names of the scribes and donors, but also to the location where the manuscript was “born”, such as the address of the scribe or the name of the monastery to which the manuscript was donated (relevant especially for manuscripts bearing religious texts). Manuscripts of the Tai Lü and Tai Khün tradition – unlike many Siamese and Lao manuscripts – are mostly dated, i.e. they explicitly record the exact date when the scribe completed his work. Title folios usually note also the title of a text or – in the case of multiple-text-manuscripts – the titles of different textual units. In some manuscripts we find additional paratextual evidence related to the background of the source texts and the price of the writing support (e.g., mulberry paper).
Furthermore, there are certain special features embodied in paratexts which help us to localise manuscripts even when there are undated and do not mention the locality of the scribe and/or donor. In particular, local and regional variations of language and script – appearing in colophons more frequently than in the text proper – are helpful in this respect. The consistence of the paper used as writing support and of the ink as well as the layout are additional (non-paratextual) features pointing to the rough age of a manuscript. Finally, in very rare cases photos of the senior monks, who have supervised the copying of a manuscript, or a group of manuscripts, by their disciples, is glued on the cover folio. If the colophon of such a manuscript also mentions the name of that senior monk, the manuscript in question becomes a particularly interesting piece for localizing manuscripts in space and time.

Bohra Manuscript Culture, Paratexts and Cyclical Time and Space (Olly Akkerman)

In my research, which is based on both philological work and participant observation in the Bohra community, I investigate the role of a hitherto undisclosed Bohra archive as both a tangible collection and a sacred space. The Bohras are a small but vibrant Muslim Shia Ismāʿīlī sect in India which is entirely closed to outsiders. Bohra manuscript culture is unique in that these texts, which are only accessible to the highest Bohra clerics, are still copied today by hand.

In this paper I shall provide examples of the spatial and temporal dimensions of this manuscript culture. Both aspects are highly relevant for the case of the Bohras because while being in an Indian context (space), Bohra intellectual tradition (and therefore manuscript culture) is inextricably identified with an Islamic past (time) rooted in the Arabic Middle East. Starting with the temporal dimension, I will analyse Bohra manuscript culture as an alien Arabic manuscript tradition in an Indian context, looking at what defines this culture in terms of script, transmission and ownership statements, popular culture (magic) and other sophisticated systems of marginalia.

Subsequently, the living tradition of Bohra manuscript copying will be central, in particular with respect to manuscript production, editing and scribal etiquettes. By doing so I do not only wish to show what paratexts mean in a manuscript tradition that is still practiced today, but I would also like to give some attention to the codicological, palaeographical and editorial methods used by Bohra clerics themselves in contrast (or maybe not so much in contrast as we would like to think) to academic theoretical approaches to the study of paratexts.

Methods and Problems of Localising Manuscripts with Vernacular Additions in Space and Time – Manuscripts from Trier (Falko Klaes)

It seems like common sense that manuscripts tend to bear information about their production, about the places where they have been stowed or who owned them. This kind of information can of course also be found in the manuscripts of the corpus for my PhD project – in fact, this information generated the corpus of 14 manuscripts.

The manuscripts from Trier contain many different types of paratexts and I will show some examples to summarize the variety of thinkable and existent paratexts. The peculiarity about the paratexts I am most interested in – some texts, but mostly glosses – is that they are not Latin, but vernacular. "Old High German" is not a language itself but rather a collective term for the different dialects that were spoken and also written at this time. This fact makes it possible to localise medieval German testimonia by the means of dialectology. Furthermore, in many cases you may be able to date these additions in the manuscripts because of phonologic changes. However, in a case
study I will exemplify that, although vernacular additions can be helpful for localisation of manuscripts, they also quite often lead to surprising and sometimes even unsatisfying results.

A Medieval Reconstruction of Place and Time: On a Note in Henry of Renham’s Aristotle Textbook (Hanna Wimmer)

On the flyleaf of a Latin manuscript from the 13th-century Oxford containing Aristotle’s works on natural philosophy with glosses, a note states that it was written by a certain Henricus of Renham, and that he corrected and glossed it “audiendo”, listening, while he attended classes in Oxford.

It is rare that notes giving the names of scribes or original owners survive in medieval university textbooks, and even rarer that explicit mention is made of the glosses. Accordingly, in the study of medieval university textbooks, much has been made of this paratext: On the one hand, it allows scholars to locate an entire group of glossed Aristotle manuscripts that are closely related to Henry’s textbook in Oxford. On the other hand, the glossed manuscript has been discussed as evidence of a medieval student’s experience of classroom practices which were changing rapidly, moving away from a culture of almost exclusively listening and memorizing towards one that involved one’s own textbook and note-taking.

At a second glance, however, things appear a little more puzzling. The note seems to have been added to a lengthy ownership inscription of the Library of Rochester Priory, which states that the book was donated not by Henry himself but by a prior called John. The inscription is therefore probably a later addition, written long after said Henry had finished his studies in Oxford. Furthermore, the manuscript evidence suggests that it is unlikely that the glosses as they appear on the pages were written during lectures.

This paper proposes that rather than intending to provide a precise step-by-step account of the actual glossing process of the codex, which is of great interest to modern scholars but would have held little excitement for medieval ones, an important function of this paratext to its medieval writer and readers might have been to explicitly link the production and contents of the manuscript to Oxford university, and thus to locate it in the context of one of the most renowned scholarly centres in Europe. The explicit reference to the university and, more specifically, the classroom and the master’s teaching that is provided by the note has striking parallels the numerous pictorial representations of lecture scenes found in many university textbooks at the time, thus providing an opportunity to explore paratextual functions of textual and pictorial parerga in medieval manuscripts.

Dates in Grantha Manuscript Colophons: Some Remarks on their Structure and on some Symbols and Abbreviations Used therein (Marco Franceschini)

Out of the thousands of extant Grantha manuscripts, just a small number bear information on when, where and by whom they were written. Even when it is available, these data are often difficult to interpret, because of several different factors: they are usually formulated in two languages (Sanskrit and Tamil) and written in two scripts (Grantha and Tamil) mixed together, they are invariably given in a very concise –when not laconic– form, they are full of proper names (of days, months and years, of villages, cities, temples, and of people) that are sometimes difficult to recognise; moreover, as far as the dates are concerned some “specific difficulties” are posed by the different ways dates are recorded in colophons and by the use of symbols and abbreviations.
This paper presents the first results of a work in progress on the interpretation of colophons in Grantha manuscripts. It will focus especially on the portion of the colophons dealing with the date: through the comparison of a dozen colophons, different ways of dating manuscripts will be analysed, and some peculiar symbols and abbreviations will be explained.

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**Looking Inside the Covers: Localising the Donglin-Manuscripts through Paratexts** (Hang Lin)

China has enjoyed a long and flourishing manuscript tradition, and even eight centuries after the invention of printing this rich manuscript culture did not become extinct. Certainly, the manuscript as object can tell us much about its history, such as its location, its ownership, its making procedure, and its usage, but a questions remains as how do we go about extracting such information. For sure much information can be extracted from manuscripts merely by counting manuscripts without opening their covers. However, restricted accessibility of both manuscripts themselves and relevant information about them can greatly impede us to reach a comprehensive understanding of the history of the manuscript. In comparison, more information about the manuscript may be acquired when we take a look inside the covers, in particular when we examine various paratextual features located at the beginning and end of the work, in the centrefold of its folios, and at its edges and corners. These features can not only serve to help deduce bibliographic information for cataloguing these works, they can also enable us to tease out from them valuable facts about the social history of a manuscript and to reconstruct its history through the ages since its birth. In this paper, a number of the so-called Donglin-Manuscripts, manuscripts executed by or related to the members of the Donglin Party that was politically active at the beginning of the seventeenth century, stand in the focus of my inquiry. I shall exhibit some representative examples to showcase how various paratexts can help facilitate a reconstruction of space and time of these manuscripts. A survey of such paratextual components further elucidates the unique role paratexts play in our understanding of the social history of Chinese manuscripts.

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**What Scribbles Can Tell…** (Gidena Mesfin Kebede)

In an attempt to know how a manuscript happens to be where it is now, almost all information we come across within it is obviously important. Following this trail, we can ask related questions like: Who did bring the manuscript to the place (collection, library, etc.) where it is now? Why was it brought there? How was it acquired? Etc. A particular Ethiopian manuscript containing a text written in Geez, namely codex Orient. 274 of the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, gives a best example for such an important inquiry. Scribbles which can fall under the category of “paratexts” and given in the lower right hand corner of the recto and on the verso sides of the guard leaf contain precious information in store. These paratextual elements can be used to reconstruct the history of the acquisition of the manuscript, the owner and copyist, its date of compilation and/or copying to mention some. Through these scribbles, it is possible to tell its exact date of copying with precision, to relate how the manuscript possibly made its way to where it is now, partly recount the collections related to this very manuscript, name some important figures involved in the description of the manuscript, mention a multiple text manuscript “label” used then but that has faded away through time, explain the importance of material analysis in the study of manuscripts, etc. All in all the saying “don’t judge a book by its cover” seems to be well justified when we learn more about this manuscript.