

### Turgama: Computer-Assisted Analysis of the Peshitta and the Targum: Text, Language and Interpretation.

The TURGAMA project concerns a computer-assisted linguistic analysis, incorporating matters of text-historical interest and translation technique, of the Peshitta. It covers two closely related topics: the language and textual history of the Aramaic translations of the Bible (in this case Targum Jonathan) and the language of Classical Syriac documents which (unlike the Peshitta) are not themselves translations.

TURGAMA started in 2005. It is the successor of CALAP (Computer-Assisted Linguistic Analysis of the Peshitta), a joint research project of the Peshitta Institute Leiden and the Werkgroep Informatica at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. CALAP concerned the computer-assisted analysis of Peshitta-Kings (Janet Dyk and Percy van Keulen) and Peshitta-Sirach (Wido van Peursen) and the development of computer programs (Constantijn Sikkel and Hendrik Jan Bosman). The CALAP project leaders were Konrad Jenner and Eep Talstra. In TURGAMA the CALAP model of computational textual analysis and the computer programs required



The TURGAMA project team at work

for it are further developed, applied to other parts of the Peshitta (Judges and Psalms), and extended towards the Targum (Judges) and a corpus of original (non-translated) Syriac texts, namely the Book of the Laws of the Countries or Dialogue on Fate.

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## Individual research in manuscript studies

*Alongside presenting larger research projects, the Newsletter gives the opportunity for individual researchers to inform the broader academic public about their ongoing research. In the current issue we are presenting some of the ongoing projects conducted by younger researchers who were given the opportunity to attend one of the COMSt 2010 workshops.<sup>1</sup>*

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### Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension (ZER) of 1001 Nights.

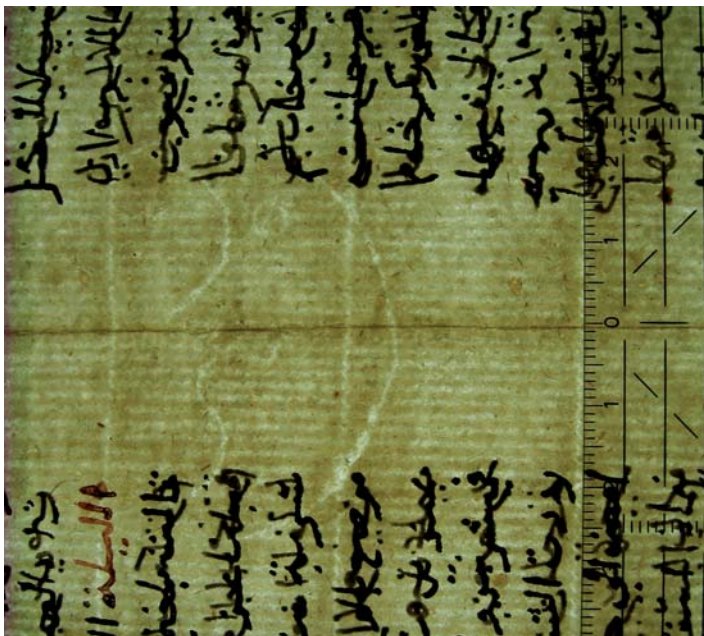
The Thousand and One Nights may appear the best-known piece of Arabic literature in the world. Numerous editions and translations of the text exist, most of them dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless the Arabic manuscripts themselves are little

studied. Zotenberg – one of the few to have worked on the topic – distinguished three main groups of manuscripts, basing his analysis on the tales, their succession, and the chronological and geographical origin of the manuscripts. One of these groups, now known as 'Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension' (ZER), includes manuscripts containing exactly one thousand and one nights and copied in Egypt at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This group is the object of my research.

I am carrying out a precise codicological analysis of each of the thirteen manuscripts of the ZER still existing, whether complete or not. Such a study will allow determining whether codicological features confirm the homogeneity of the group. The collected information will be compared to the conclusions of the narratological and philological study of each manuscript's text.

Another aspect of this research will focus on the context in which this group of manuscripts was created. Arabic manuscripts of the Nights were very scarce in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the question must be asked whether the ZER group was produced to address to a growing demand from the Europeans. ZER is the recension that served as a basis for the ancient editions of the text. But the printed texts do not exactly correspond to any manuscript. The edi-

<sup>1</sup> If you would like to see your research featured in one of the following issues please feel free to contact us. If you are interested in a travel grant to attend one of COMSt workshops please visit <http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/COMST/bandi.html>.



Ms. University of Liège, General Library, no. 2241, fols. 153-154, moonface watermark.

tors preferred to “classicize” the text, rewriting the Nights in proper classical Arabic and thus getting rid of all the signs of Middle Arabic. A close study of the language of the manuscripts will bring to light different aspects of Middle Arabic, a level of language still relatively unknown.

This part of the research will focus on one tale, covering 80 folios on average: the story of Ḥāsib Karīm ad-Dīn. I am preparing a critical edition and a French translation, taking into account all the ZER manuscripts. Regarding the narratological variants, other versions will also be considered since this tale is found in other works.

This research should provide us with a better knowledge of the history of the book as a material object in Egypt at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the codicological analysis will yield useful information for the classification of the Thousand and One Nights manuscripts, an indispensable prerequisite for the critical edition. The analysis of the text’s language will make an important contribution to a neglected field. The text of the critical edition of the tale of Ḥāsib Karīm ad-Dīn will then constitute a solid basis for investigations into the contents of the story. Finally, this research could be the starting point of a wider project to be led by various researchers: preparing a critical edition of the whole text of ZER manuscripts (more than 1500 ff.).

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### Syriac Monastic Anthologies.

The overwhelming bulk of texts of Syriac monastic literature including translations of Greek patristic writings have survived solely in larger anthologies. These, however, have not yet been thoroughly explored, nor has it been investigated how many of them are still extant. Some spot-checks have brought to light a number of hitherto unknown texts and authors. In order to reconstruct the otherwise

lost texts, as well as to understand which processes of reception and transmission these texts underwent, it is of crucial importance to get a better knowledge of how the genre of anthologies “functioned” in the Syriac tradition.

My project is conceived to pursue two interrelated research objectives: first, a detailed description of form and content of 127 Syriac manuscripts of anthologies will be established. This will include: material aspects (codicological, palaeographical and historical data) and contents (identification of each text). Secondly, the collected data will serve as the basis for a study of the particularities of the history of monastic anthologies.

In particular, the development of monastic anthologies in three ecclesiastical groups of the Syriac tradition (Church of the East, Syriac Orthodox and Chalcedonian Churches) will be explored via synchronic and diachronic study with special attention upon their peculiarities and interdependence.

The research will reveal the main trends and peculiarities in the development of the material and structural aspects (size, script, layout, organization of texts, general title, etc) in the period from 6<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and in the history of contents (by means of registering the presence of each text in the anthologies and thus revealing which texts were included, how often a text appears in the anthologies, when each particular text began and ceased to be transmitted).

Wherever possible, relation between extant anthologies will be established. Similar groups will be identified, based upon the affinity in composition between collections.

The study of the transmission history of the texts will reveal the main peculiarities of texts in the form they were transmitted in the anthologies (e.g., abridgment, emendations, extraction, division, etc.) in comparison to the same texts preserved elsewhere. The study of the reception history will reveal the main peculiarities of texts in comparison to the authentic recensions a) that have their origin in other ecclesiastical tradition (e.g., text of the Church of the East that appear in the anthologies of Syriac Orthodox Church), b) texts of seemingly non-ascetic contents (e.g. popular Greek philosophical works). The study of the historic-sociological background will reveal who were the compilers, scribes, commissioners and readers; centres where anthologies were copied.

Finally, the results of the investigation will be placed into the broader context of the history of Syriac literature and monasticism, showing the importance of monastic anthologies for its study (including examination of the way anthologies affect our knowledge of monastic texts).

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### Catalogue of the Gironcourt Collection.

By fall 2011, a “full-scale” catalogue of the de Gironcourt collection of West African manuscripts is