

European Science Foundation
Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)

ESF SCH EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

Corpus Coranicum
Exploring the Textual Beginnings of the Qur'an



Berlin, Germany, 6-9 November 2005

Convened by:
Angelika Neuwirth

^① Seminar für Semitistik und Arabistik, Freie Universität Berlin



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Berlin, Germany, 6-9 November 2005

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Main Objectives of the Workshop:

Given the rich calligraphic tradition of the Arabic script and its evolution through history, it is remarkable that the Cairo edition of the Qur'an appears to break with this calligraphic tradition in a number of cases. Because of its wide dissemination, this typeset edition seems to have become *the* image of the sole, uncreated timeless text of the Qur'an, as sometimes is claimed by conservative Muslim theology. Because of this, the complex textual history of the Qur'an manifested in such a rich cultural heritage of textual variations and manuscripts unfortunately gets sidelined and neglected. It is precisely the aim of the project to counter the ahistoric character of the Cairo edition and to contribute to a reevaluation of its text in its position as the standard edition of the Qur'an in Islam.

During the workshop, specialists in Arabic palaeography, codicology, and the Qur'an will discuss issues related to the transmission of the Qur'anic text. The workshop is conceived as an interdisciplinary event bringing together scholars from the field of palaeography, Qur'anic studies, manuscripts, Islamic sources and evolution of Arabic script. All these different fields of study bearing on the textual history of the Qur'an will be linked with knowledge about computer technology to bridge the gap that still exists between philological knowledge and computer techniques. The desired outcome of a data base prototype to serve as a scientific tool in Qur'anic studies will be discussed during the workshop. The data base prototype will be crucial for the larger project on the Qur'an in its textual and manuscript tradition.

The submitted project aims at using modern computer techniques to analyse the Qur'an. For this purpose it is necessary to bring together specialists in the oldest manuscript traditions, scholars of palaeography as well as scientists familiar with modern technology. One of the outcomes will be the creation of a data-base model to analyse the Qur'an historically. The proposed workshop is linked to a project (Bergsträsser memorial series: The Qur'an in its manuscript and textual tradition) to produce a Qur'anic text documented by the oldest available evidence (manuscripts and variant readings) on the Qur'an, thus offering a historical perspective on the central document of Islam. The use of modern computer techniques in this field is of crucial importance for the evaluation of the various historical scripts. A database allows further research to handle complex information structures. The issue of computer technology and philological research is central for the development not only of Qur'anic but also of Oriental studies in general, since it critically reviews the computer tools provided by the industry which at present are still incapable of dealing with the cultural heritage of Arabic script and literature.



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PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

Sunday 6 November 2005

Arrival

Monday 7 November 2005

09:30 Welcome address by **Klaus Hempfer**, vice president of the Freie Universität Berlin (solicited)

Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)
Etan Kohlberg (Jerusalem) (Standing Committee for the Humanities)

Angelika Neuwirth, Berlin: "State of the Art and desiderata in Qur'anic studies"

10:45 - 11:00 *Coffee break*

Section 1: Manuscripts and Archives

Gerd-Rüdiger Puin / Elisabeth Puin, Saarbrücken: "The "geniza" of Sanaa and its value for textual archaeology of the Qur'an"

Sergio Noja-Nosedá, Lesa: "Laying the foundations of a study in the textual transmission: The project of the Fondazione Noja-Nosedá"

Joshua Lingel, Los Angeles: "Arthur Jeffery's project for the study of the Qur'an"

13:00 - 14:30 *Lunch break*

Michael Marx, Berlin: "The Bergsträsser film archive of Qur'anic manuscripts"

Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer, Saarbrücken (solicited): "The evolution of textual organisation of the Qur'an in the oldest codices"

Efim Rezvan, St.-Petersburg: "The Mushafs Uthman from Samarqand and St.Petersburg: comparing the Kufic and the Hijazi version"

15:30 – 15:50 *Coffee break*

16:00 Visit to the manuscript department of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (10 minute walk from the hotel): meeting and discussion with **Dr. Hars Kurio** (Orientabteilung) (solicited)

19:30 *Welcome reception and snacks at the house of Angelika Neuwirth (Drakestr. 62, Berlin Lichterfelde)*



Tuesday 8 November 2005

Section 2: Oral features of the text and the development of orthography

09:00

Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, Saarbrücken: "How to transcribe Qur'an manuscripts?"

Jan Just Witkam, Leiden: "Written in Wax. Some early Islamic opinions about Qur'anic phonography"

Omar Hamdan, Tel Aviv / Berlin: "The development of Arabic orthography through newly discovered sources on variant readings (qira'at)"

Ahmad Pakatchi (Tehran): "The Orthographic Traditions in Early Arabic. Writing as Reflected in *rasm al-mushaf*"

11:00-11:30

Coffee break

Yassin Dutton, Edinburgh: "The hierarchy of variant readings within single Qur'an codices"

Daniel Birnstiel, Regensburg: "The Qur'an as a linguistic corpus: towards a text grammar of the Qur'an"

Neila Silini, Tunis: "The relevance of variant readings (qira'at) for the exegesis of Surat al-Baqara"

13:00

Lunch break

Section 3: Information Technology and Qur'anic Studies

15:00

Gerd-Rüdiger Puin, Saarbrücken: "Synoptical representation of Sura 20 (Taha) as occurring in various manuscripts"

Thomas Milo, Amsterdam: "The data base as model of research: the case of Surat Taha"

Ruud van Tol, Amsterdam: "Data base technology versus philology"

Followed by an interactive demonstration of **Thomas Milo** and **Ruud van Tol**: "The dynamic text edition in the guise of a relational data base – a prototype using Sura Taha (testing the model of dynamic contrastive analysis)"

17:00

Coffee break



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Section 4: The Qur'anic Text and the Critical Method

09:00 **Islam Dayeh**, Berlin: "Critical attitudes toward textual transmission in Classical Arabic scholarship"

Dirk Hartwig, New York/Berlin: "Written or oral tradition? - The Qur'an as a Late Antiquity document"

Keith Small, London: "A Typology of Textual Variants: Preliminary Categories and Observations from Comparing New Testament and Qur'an Manuscripts"

Moncef Ben Abdeljelil, London: "The critical study of the Qur'an in Modern Arabic discourse"

Andrew Rippin, Victoria / **Walid Saleh**, Toronto: "Can the model of Biblical studies be applied on the Qur'an?"

13:00 *Lunch*

Afternoon *Departure*



European Science Foundation

Objectives of the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)

The main tasks of the **ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)** are:

- to encourage interdisciplinary work through the independent evaluation of collaborative research proposals emanating from the scholarly community;
- to identify priority research areas and to play an integrative and co-ordinating role by creating links between research communities which in the Humanities are often small and fragmented.
- to contribute to the development of the ESF science policy agenda and to provide expert advice on science policy actions at the European level in the field of its responsibilities.

The Committee is well aware that the ESF is the only European Agency where the Humanities have a place next to the other sciences and where European projects are reviewed, developed and subsequently operated.

The Committee considers it all the more important to be heard as the voice of the Human Sciences in Europe and to continue pleading for a more prominent place for the Humanities in the European landscape.

Exploratory workshops are viewed by ESF Standing Committees as a useful instrument for identifying emerging fields requiring action at a European level. Exploratory Workshops are aimed at helping European research teams to exchange knowledge, establish new links and to explore the possibilities of developing future collaborative actions. Further information at <http://www.esf.org/workshops>.

One desirable outcome of an ESF Exploratory Workshop may be that participants submit **high quality proposals for further ESF activities** (such as "[à la carte Programmes](#)" or a EUROCORES initiative), or **research funding applications** for submission to the EU 6th Framework Programme or to other European or international funding organisations.

In the case of **ESF Programmes** ("[à la carte](#)" or [EUROCORES](#)), which are financed by, and coordinated through, the European Science Foundation, a draft proposal should be submitted to the SCH Secretariat for advice, to then subsequently undergo further external refereeing. If successful in obtaining SCH's scientific recommendation, the proposal will be submitted to ESF Member Organisations for funding on a voluntary basis. More details are available at <http://www.esf.org/sch>.



Provisional List of Participants

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