

ABSTRACTS

Said Aljoumani (Scholars at Risk/Freie Universität Berlin): The pre-Ottoman history of the Qubbat al-Khazna

On the basis of narrative sources this paper will address the history of the Qubba before its academic discovery in the 19th century. It will do so by focusing on three topics: The process of building (and re-building), the Qubba's function(s) and finally the various names that have been given to this building along the centuries (the Western Qubba, 'Ā'isha's Qubba, Qubbat al-mal and finally Qubbat al-khazna). It will become obvious that this building had various functions along its history, but that the storage of old books and papers was seen to be among its prime functions.

Boris Liebrecht (Freie Universität Berlin/The Graduate Center, City University of New York): Fire, Consuls, Scholars - Conflicting Views on the Discovery of the Qubbat al-Khazna Documents

There is a notion that the creation of the Qubba repository and its deposition in Istanbul was the result of a devastating fire that ravaged the Umayyad Mosque in 1893. Although this theory has been thoroughly disproved in such meticulous investigations as the works of Bandt / Rattmann and d'Ottone, it is still sometimes maintained even in most recent publications. Here, the focus will not be how access was officially granted to the German researcher Bruno Violet in 1900 and the ensuing fate of the documents. Rather, I shall look at traces for knowledge of the Qubba's existence preserved in the writings of several travelers, scholars, and consuls and long before the fire of 1893. The aim of this presentation is to present these witnesses and speculate on the level of knowledge of and access to the Qubba prior to its dissolution and transfer.

Cordula Bandt/Arnd Rattmann (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften): Bruno Violet and the exploration of the Qubbat al-khazna around 1900

In 1898, the German Emperor Wilhelm II visited the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, then in the process of restoration after the devastating fire in 1893. While most of the building was destroyed, the small Qubbah in the courtyard of the mosque was spared from the fire. It was known that numerous manuscripts, from ancient up to recent times and with Muslim as well as Jewish and Christian provenience, were "buried" in the Qubbah which had been opened before in irregular intervals. In course of the reconstruction works it was planned to open it again and the German New Testament scholar Hermann von Soden tried to secure a scientific participation. He was expecting fragments from the New Testament with old, hitherto unknown variants. By mediation on highest political levels – thanks to the friendship between Wilhelm II and Sultan Abdulhamid II – the young, linguistically extraordinary talented Bruno Violet (1871-1945) was sent to Damascus in 1900/01. The paper will retrace his journey, which is not only interesting because of the scientific output of Violet's work, which will be outlined, but also because the historical documents also shed light on the social structures in Damascus around 1900, where Violet also met other personalities as Gertrude Bell, Hermann Burchardt and Bernhard Moritz.

Christoph Marksches (Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften): Hermann von Soden: Bemerkungen zu einem zu Unrecht vergessenen Berliner Professor

The major contributions of Hermann von Soden to the History of the Christian Bible are mostly forgotten. The paper will discuss not only those contributions, especially the question why von Soden was involved in research on the Damascus Geniza, but also the question why his contributions were overlooked in the decades after his death. Some unknown sources from Archives of the Soden Family will be presented also material from Archives in Berlin.

Miriam Lindgren-Hjälms (Stockholm School of Theology, Sankt Ignatios Theological Academy): What has Damascus to do with Sinai? Paleographical similarities in Christian-Arabic texts preserved in the Qubba and in Saint Catherine's Monastery

From around the ninth century and onwards, scribes at monasteries in the Byzantine provinces of Palestine took pains in collecting and producing a large number of texts in Arabic, both translations and original compositions. Besides manufacturing manuscripts for the benefit of the nearby community, scribes composed copies at the request of others and thereby these texts came to circulate in a wider area. Despite many valuable studies on singular manuscripts, the work of mapping out relations between monasteries and scribes and of identifying hand writings in a systematic manner has only just begun. The commencement of such an immense work is facilitated by the recent trend of digitizing collections and thereby acknowledging the value of this rich heritage and making available a large number of extant copies. The present paper aims at discussing paleographical similarities of what appear to be ninth- and early tenth-century manuscripts in two such corpuses: Christian Arabic texts located at St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai and photographs of the manuscript finds from the Qubba al-Khazna in Damascus.

Ronny Vollandt (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München): The Qubbat al-Khazna and the Cairo Genizah: a typological comparison

Depositing the "worn-out" documents at the Qubbat al-Khazna followed a received practice of storing in a consigned place any sacred books and documents that were too fragile to remain in circulation or which had fallen out of use. This "storing away" was not intended to allow later retrieval or to be a type of archiving, but was rather a ritualized burial resulting from an esteem for, a special care for, or a fear of desecration of the written word. The practice was shared by Muslims, Jews, and Christians. My contribution will take a comparative perspective, bringing into the discussion also the Cairo Genizah and other cases of such a practice. What are the characteristics of such collections? How did these collections, their provenance - geographic and temporal - and history of acquisition shape our knowledge on a particular subject? What sets these collections apart from other manuscript collections?

Ahmad al-Jallad (Universiteit Leiden): An embryonic Graeco-Arabic script? The transcription system of the Psalm Fragment in light of Greek transcriptions of Arabic from the early Islamic and pre-Islamic periods

The Damascus Psalm Fragment is the longest example of early Arabic transcribed in Greek letters. Unlike earlier transcriptions – such as the transcription of Arabic names in Greek papyri from the 7th and 8th centuries CE – its transcription system is well thought-out and internally consistent. This fact suggests that the Psalm Fragment was not an ad hoc attempt to represent Arabic in Greek letters, but perhaps is the single surviving instance of an embryonic Graeco-Arabic script. This talk will outline the main features of this writing system, illustrating that it was designed without the influence of Arabic orthography, and suggest a possible date for when it could have been devised.

Francesco D'Aiuto (Tor Vergata - Università di Roma)/Donatella Bucca (Tor Vergata - Università di Roma): The Greek hymnographic fragments of Damascus: scripts and texts

Greek hymnographic fragments coming from the Qubbat al-ḥazna of Damascus are extremely precious. Only incomplete studies and surveys are available so far, making impossible a true evaluation of these interesting materials. Although fragmentary, they are significant from many points of view. The purpose of our presentation is to draw attention to some of the most important ones, through the illustration of some examples. Our research focuses on the Damascus fragments as they: a) contribute to the number of manuscript exhibiting old writings (e.g. the «scrittura mista»); b) disclose a large and old repertory of unedited hymnographic texts, still largely unknown; c) inform on archaic liturgical commemorations no longer survived; d) contribute to enriching the knowledge of earliest liturgical and hymnographic books, their structure and content.

Gideon Bohak (Tel-Aviv University): The Jewish Texts from the Damascus Genizah

There are very few Jewish texts in the Damascus Genizah, but their very presence there is quite surprising. In my talk, I shall briefly survey the Jewish texts, and compare them with the much larger, but roughly contemporaneous, corpus of Cairo Genizah texts. I shall pay special attention to three of the Damascus Jewish texts - a magical booklet that I published with Matthew Morgenstern, a ketubah (marriage document) published by Amir Ashur, and a rotulus with tractate Avot (the “Sayings of the Fathers”). In all three cases, the fragments from Damascus find close parallels in the Cairo Genizah, but their origins in a different genizah greatly enhances their historical significance. Moreover, the presence in the Damascus Genizah of many different types of Jewish texts, clearly stemming from several different locations and written over several centuries, raises interesting questions about when, how and why they came to the Qubbat al-khazna. In my talk, I shall offer some thoughts on these issues, but will also hope to learn more about them from the workshop’s other participants.

Grigory Kessel (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften): A survey of the fragments from Syriac manuscripts found in Qubbat al-Khazna

The fragments of Syriac manuscripts form quite a substantial part of the entire collection that is outnumbered only by the fragments of the Greek manuscripts. Over the course of the 20th century, many of the Syriac fragments have been identified thanks to the reproductions held at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften and the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz. To those can be added also a number of fragments that used to be preserved at the National Museum of Damascus, also partially identified. The talk will survey the text genres represented by the fragments and will offer a preliminary grouping of the manuscripts that happened to end up at Qubbat al-Khazna according to their script and possible dating.

Alin Suci (Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen): The Coptic Fragments from the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus

The “Genizah” of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus stands as one of the most significant, albeit little known and poorly researched, manuscript finds of the 20th century. The present paper introduces four Coptic fragments discovered in the Damascus “Genizah,” which have remained unnoticed by Coptologists. These are some of the rare examples of Coptic manuscripts that have not been discovered on Egyptian soil, documenting thus the presence of Coptic enclaves abroad. The paper will point out that there are hints that the fragments found in the Qubbat al-ḥazna have some connection with Christian communities from Jerusalem.

Serena Ammirati (University of RomaTre): Again on the Latin Fragments of Damascus: A further Analysis of the oldest items

Following the encouraging results of the preliminary inquiry into the Latin fragments and scripts from the Qubbat al-Khazna in the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus, in this presentation I intend to offer a further analysis of some of the oldest Latin pieces, both on paleographical and textual grounds.

Laura Minervini (Università di Napoli Federico II)/Gabriele Giannini (Université de Montréal): The Old French Texts of the Damascus *qubba*

Fragments of three Old French texts from Damascus Qubbat al-Khazna were discovered and studied in 1903 by Adolf Tobler: 38 verses of *La vie de Sainte Marie l'égyptienne*, five strophes of the epic poem *Fierabras*, and a short poem on the Virgin Mary. The last one is particularly interesting, since it was copied in a humble pocket-size manuscript together with a magical spell, a hymn to St. Nicholas provided with musical notation, and a short Greek text (perhaps another spell) written in Latin script. We present a new philological edition of all the texts, together with a comprehensive study on the manuscripts, their possible owners, and the historical and cultural context of their circulation in the Latin East.

Eyad al-Ṭabbā' (University of Damascus): A preliminary catalogue of the Koran manuscripts in the Umayyad Mosque: Overview and Analysis

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Konrad Hirschler (Freie Universität Berlin): Binding fragments from the Qubbat al-Khazna in Syrian manuscripts

Reuse practices, i.e. 'recycling' discarded writing material in order to produce new manuscripts, is also an important feature of medieval Arabic manuscript cultures, but has hardly been looked at so far. This paper takes manuscripts produced in late medieval Syria (c. 13th-15th centuries) where scribes routinely cut discarded writings into pieces to reuse them as title pages, quires, book bindings and sewing guards. What is striking about the reuse items found in Damascene manuscripts is that these items have a profile very similar to what is known about the profile of the material from the Qubbat al-khazna: They include texts in a range of languages including Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, Latin etc. and among these items we find fragments of handbooks on Islamic law, the Gospels, sermons, liturgical texts and legal documents. Equally striking is that we find among the reused materials very few documents linked to the 'state' (decrees, tax receipts etc.) and to trans-regional trade activities – two set of documents that are also conspicuously absent from the Qubba material. This paper thus explores the questions to what extent the Qubba was more than just a depository for discarded writings and to what extent Damascene medieval scribes also used it to source paper and parchment to produce new manuscripts. This reuse-angle on the Qubba problematises its cultural function within the city and potentially contributes to enlarging the corpus of 'Qubba material'.

Arianna D'Ottone Rambach (Sapienza - Università di Roma): Unpublished Exemplars of Block-Printed Arabic Amulets from the Qubbat al-Khazna

First identified at the end of the 19th century by Joseph von Karabacek, block-printed Arabic amulets have been rediscovered almost a century later, in 1987, by R. Bulliet. Since then a number of publications have unearthed new specimens in private collections, museums, libraries and institutions. Despite the growing material evidence, Arabic block-prints are yet considered as rare bibliographic witnesses. It is noteworthy that the use of woodcut printing was by no means restricted during the period of mediaeval Islam to the creation of magical texts, for numerous exemplars of the so-called pilgrims' certificates also attest to the use of this particular technique. This talk is devoted to some unpublished Arab-Islamic amulets preserved at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul.