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## INTRODUCTION\*

ARIANNA D'OTTONE RAMBACH

THE seminars entitled *Palaeography Between East & West*, which I convened at Sapienza University, aimed at offering a forum, a place of sharing knowledge and debate, to scholars who deal with manuscript materials in various languages and alphabets. Entitled “*Paleografia, paleografie. Esperienze a confronto*” (2 March 2011), “*Tra lingue e scritture. Itinerari grafici nel Mediterraneo e oltre*” (2 April 2012), “*La Paleografia tra Oriente e Occidente*” (5 April 2013), “*La Paleografia tra Oriente e Occidente – Palaeography between East and West*” (19 May 2014), these seminars (FIGS. 1-4) gathered contributions about very different areas:<sup>1</sup> Byzantium, Hellenistic and Coptic Egypt, Latin Europe, Armenia, Georgia, India, Central Asia, Japan and Tibet, and the Arabic world, of course.

Some of the papers given during those *East & West* palaeographic seminars have been already published:<sup>2</sup> they dealt with Graeco-Roman wooden tablets,<sup>3</sup> the written culture in Brahmanical India, Islamic printed amulets, the Book of Zambasta and the role of Latin paleography. In the course of time two additional texts have been added: both these papers, dedicated respectively to the Indian written culture – by Bruno Lo Turco – and to a unique papyrus in Latin script and Arabic language – by Dario Internullo and myself – were included as they are coherent with the spirit of the *East & West* venture.

The contribution by Asma Hilali offers important insight on the Sanaa palimpsest, a manuscript that has raised great interest among scholars of the Qur'an, both as a religious text and as a manuscript book. Palimpsests are well known in Greek and Latin manuscript production, but the Sanaa palimpsest is particularly complex, because of the chronological proximity

\* I am grateful to Pier Mattia Tommasino (Columbia University) with whom I had a very fruitful exchange when we met in New York in January 2015, as he encouraged me to develop further my thoughts on the boundaries of paleographical studies, only sketched in a previous contribution of mine – D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2014) – pointing out to me the volume *World Philology* (2015). Thanks are due also to Giuseppe Ucciardello (University of Messina) for reading a previous draft of the text of this Introduction.

<sup>1</sup> The programs of the seminars are available on-line, on my Academia.edu page: <https://uniroma1.academia.edu/ariannadottone>.

<sup>2</sup> AMMIRATI, SERENA (2013); LO TURCO, BRUNO (2013); D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2013b); RADICIOTTI, PAOLO (2013); D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2014); MAGGI, MAURO-MARTINI, GIULIANA (2014).

<sup>3</sup> The use of wooden slates continued well beyond the Graeco-Roman times: for the Arabic world, a recent archaeological find in the Sinai of such an object attests its use in the late 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century or early 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century, and the miniatures of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, dating back to 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century and 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, still show them, see HIRSCHLER, KONRAD (2012) p. 86.



Dipartimento Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali  
Sapienza-Università di Roma  
Via Principe Amedeo 182, b  
00185 Roma

### I Seminario di Paleografia araba

Roma, 2 Marzo 2011

Aula D e Aula E

(II piano)

### *Paleografia, paleografie. Esperienze a confronto*

#### Programma

##### **Aula D**

ore 10 saluti

ore 10.10-10.40: **G. Ucciardello** (Università di Messina), *Tra paleografia e papirologia: ricongiunzioni di frammenti letterari greci ed identificazioni di mani di scrittura ad Ossirinco*

ore 10.50-11.20: **D. Durkin-Meisterernst** (Berlin, Institute for Iranian Studies), *Manichaean codicology as indirect evidence for pre-Islamic Iranian books*

ore 11.30-11.45 pausa caffè

ore 11.45-12.30: **F. D'Aiuto** (Università TorVergata), *Graeca in manoscritti orientali, Orientalia in codici greci: dalla codicologia comparativa a una Handschriftenkunde integrata*

ore 12.30-13.00 **dibattito**

ore 13-15 pausa pranzo

##### **Aula E**

ore 15.00-15.30: **P. Orsatti** (Sapienza- Università di Roma, ISO), *Lingue e scritture: il caso dell'eterografia nel mondo iranico*

ore 15.30-16.10 **D. Bianconi** (Sapienza-Università di Roma), *Fonti scritte e strategie di mise en page a Bisanzio*

ore 16.10-16.30 pausa caffè

ore 16.30-17: **P. Radiciotti** (Università RomaTre), *L'imitatio nelle scritture greche e latine*

ore 17-18.00: dibattito e conclusioni: **P. Radiciotti**, *Riflessioni di un paleografo latino sulle paleografie orientali* – **P. Orsatti**.

FIG. 1.



ISTITUTO ITALIANO  
DI STUDI ORIENTALI ISO

**SAPIENZA**  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

**II Seminario di Paleografia araba**  
Roma, 2 Aprile 2012  
P.le A. Moro, 5  
Facoltà di Filosofia, Lettere, Scienze Umanistiche e Studi Orientali  
**Odeion**

***Tra Lingue e Scritture. Itinerari grafici nel Mediterraneo e oltre***

PROGRAMMA

ore 10.30 saluti  
Coordina: **A. D'Ottone**  
ore 10.40-11.10: **N. Pellè** (Lecce, Università degli Studi del Salento), *Libri, scritture e scribi per i tre grandi storici greci in Egitto*  
ore 11.20-11.50: **E. De Rossi Filibeck** (Sapienza- Università di Roma, ISO), *Rivelazioni dal segno. Cenni di paleografia tibetana*  
ore 12.00-12.30: **M. Capasso** (Lecce, Università degli Studi del Salento), *Libri greci e libri latini ad Ercolano: un rapporto problematico?*

ore 12.45-14.45 pausa pranzo

ore 14.45 ripresa del seminario  
Coordina: **G. Ucciardello** (Università di Messina)  
ore 14.45-15.15: **B. Lo Turco** (Sapienza- Università di Roma, ISO), *Manoscrittologia contro codicologia. L'India è differente?*  
ore 15.25-15.55: **S. Ammirati** (Università di RomaTre), *L'uso delle tavolette nel mondo antico e la nascita del libro in forma di codice: alcune riflessioni*  
ore 16.05-16.35: **A. D'Ottone** (Sapienza- Università di Roma, ISO), *Una modalità di stampa estremo orientale per amuleti islamici di area mediterranea attraverso un esemplare inedito*  
ore 16.45-17.15: **P. Radiciotti** (Università di RomaTre), *Tra filologia e storia: esiste ancora la paleografia?*

Conclusioni

FIG. 2.



LA PALEOGRAFIA TRA OCCIDENTE E ORIENTE  
I edizione del Seminario di Paleografia Araba

venerdì, 5 Aprile 2013

P.le A. Moro, 5  
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia  
Odeion

Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali Sapienza - Università di Roma  
in collaborazione con il  
Centro di Studi Papirologici - Università del Salento

### Programma

Ore 10.30 SALUTI: Arianna D'Ottone (Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali - Sapienza, Università di Roma)

COORDINA: Giuseppe Ucciardello (Università degli Studi di Messina)

**ore 10.40-11.10:** Anna Sirinian (Bologna, Alma Mater Studiorum), *Manoscritti armeni: caratteristiche generali con uno sguardo ai più antichi esemplari dei Vangeli*

**ore 11.10-11.40:** Lila Yawm (Roma, John Cabot University), *Scribi-pittori e committenze raggruppate: Il manoscritto dei Moralia in Iob di Bamberg e la sua famiglia di codici*

**ore 11.40-12.10:** Asma Helali (London, Ismaili Research Center), *The palimpsest of Sanaa in the view of its history of transmission*

**ore 12.10-12.40:** Lucio del Corso (Cassino, Università degli Studi di Cassino), *Le mummie di al-Hibah e i più antichi libri greci 'antologici'*

**ore 13-14.50:** pausa

**ore 15-15.30:** Mauro Maggi (Roma, Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali) & Giuliana Martini (New Taipei City, Dharma Drum Buddhist College), *Annotations on the Book of Zambasta, IV: chapter 18 no more*

**ore 15.30-16:** Maria Chiara Migliore (Lecce, Università del Salento), *Dai documenti ufficiali ai documenti privati: diplomatica e paleografia nel Giappone antico e medievale*

CONCLUSIONI: Natasha Pellè (Lecce, Centro di Studi Papirologici) - Arianna D'Ottone

Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali  
Sapienza - Università di Roma

il Centro di Studi Papirologici  
Università del Salento - Lecce



FIG. 3.



**LA PALEOGRAFIA TRA ORIENTE E OCCIDENTE / PALAEOGRAPHY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST**  
IV edizione del Seminario di Paleografia Araba

Lunedì, 19 Maggio 2014  
Piazzale Aldo Moro 5  
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia  
Odeion

Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali Sapienza - Università di Roma

**Programma**

**ore 10.10 SALUTI:** Arianna D'Ottone (Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali - Sapienza, Università di Roma)

**ore 10.20-10.55:** Michelle P. Brown (London, University of London), *From Skellig Michael to Sinai: new evidence of cultural contact between the Insular and Near Eastern Churches from St Catherine's Monastery*

**ore 11.00-11.35:** Paola Buzi (Roma, Sapienza), *Aspetti grafici di un codice 'privato' proveniente dal Monastero Bianco*

**ore 11.40-12.15:** Pasquale Orsini (Roma, Sapienza), *Ricerche sulla maiuscola ogivale inclinata*

**ore 12.20-12.55:** Serena Ammirati (Roma, Università di RomaTre), *I frammenti latini della Qubba' al-khazna di Damasco: osservazioni paleografiche*

**ore 13-14.00:** pausa

**ore 14.00-14.35:** ADAM GACEK (Montréal, McGill University) *Glossing the text: scholarly praxis in Arabic MSS*

**ore 14.40-15.15:** Delio V. Proverbio (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana) *Eterografia versus multigrafismo*

**ore 15.20-15.55:** Gaga Shurgaia (Venezia, Ca' Foscari), *La scrittura georgiana: excursus storico e paleografico*

**CONCLUSIONI**

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FIG. 4.



of its *scriptio inferior* with its *scriptio superior*.<sup>4</sup> Hilali, in her contribution in this volume, illustrates with special care the script, the hands, the corrections and the decorations of chapter and verse markers of the Sanaa precious Qur'an witness.

The Classical heritage in Greek and Latin, in the form of papyri, manuscript fragments and unpublished codices, is represented in this volume by materials coming from regions like Egypt and Syria: Lucio Del Corso examines in his paper the relationship between funerary and written practices, taking different materials into account – from Pharaonic papyri to third-century Greek book rolls and, in particular, mummy *cartonnages* rolls. Through the analysis of scribal practices and textual contents, Del Corso highlights the continuity and the change of funerary practices in which Greek papyri are used.<sup>5</sup>

Also, linked to Egyptian material, Michelle P. Brown's contribution presents new manuscript witnesses in Latin from the library of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. Through new manuscript evidence, Brown throws light on the scribal links between eastern and western churches and on the Mediterranean influences in the Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>6</sup>

It is from Syria instead, and notably from the *Qubba' al-khazna* in the Umayyad Great Mosque of Damascus,<sup>7</sup> that the Latin fragments identified by Serena Ammirati come, and which she places in context – from both a palaeographical and historical point of view. The *Qubba' al-khazna* find, containing multilingual material, offers numerous unpublished texts to classical palaeographers, to Romance philologists, to Arabists and to specialists of many other Oriental languages.<sup>8</sup>

Devoted to the oriental glosses found on the Bible of Cava dei Tirreni, is my own contribution in this volume entitled *Lucifer and the Arabic palaeography* – that is intended to throw light on the number, the meaning and the critical interest of the Arabic notes written in the margins of a Visigothic 9<sup>th</sup>-century bible.

Last but not least, the text by Maria Chiara Migliore is dedicated to Japanese documents and palaeography, which is a subject almost untouched

<sup>4</sup> On the palimpsest, see HILALI, ASMA (2017). It seems worth stressing here the fact that Hilali suggests a parallel between the method of teaching in Graeco-Roman and Byzantine Egypt – as studied by Raffaella Cribiore – and that of teaching and studying the Qur'an. The audition, as method of teaching, might actually provide a clue to explain some of the peculiarities of the redaction of the lower text (*scriptio inferior*), cfr. HILALI, ASMA (2017) p. 67 and note 116 p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> For ritual uses of the books in Medieval Islam and, notably, on the burial of an author with a specific work of his, see HIRSCHLER, KONRAD (2012) p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> François Déroche already pointed out, for example, a possible connection between early Qur'anic fragments and manuscripts produced in the British Isles, see DÉROCHE, FRANÇOIS (2009) p. 98.

<sup>7</sup> I had the pleasure to work on the *Qubba' al-khazna* material together with my late colleague, and friend, Paolo Radiciotti (1961-2012), see RADICIOTTI, PAOLO-D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2008).

<sup>8</sup> A workshop in Berlin, dedicated to the fragments from the *Qubbat al-khazna*, organised by K. Hirschler, R. Vollandt and myself, is scheduled for June 2018.

by previous western scholarship and which opens up horizons for further research.<sup>9</sup>

#### NEW HORIZONS FOR PALAEOGRAPHY AND MANUSCRIPT STUDIES

A trans-cultural history of the Mediterranean region in the Middle Ages is a concept that is nowadays widely accepted by the scientific community.<sup>10</sup> Historical research shows, increasingly, the fluidity of the boundaries between East and West. As for palaeography and manuscript studies, European educational initiatives – handbooks, university courses, summer courses, itinerant courses *et similia* – are undertaken to introduce students and scholars to Mediterranean manuscript production.<sup>11</sup>

In the United States, new scientific journals open up an even wider approach to manuscript studies, not limited to the Mediterranean area. For example, the editors of *Manuscript Studies* introduced the first issue of the journal by explaining that it has been conceived as a “forum for scholarship encompassing many premodern manuscript cultures – not just those of Europe” and they put, among the goals of the publication, the promotion of “conversation about manuscript studies beyond the borders of medieval and early Modern Europe” through the publication of “articles that transcend time periods and geography.”<sup>12</sup>

Some of these Mediterranean connections – discussed at length in this volume – are sufficient demonstrations that the modern disciplinary boundaries of palaeographical studies need to be revised and enlarged.<sup>13</sup>

The 10<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic writer Ibn al-Nadīm (d. c. 385-88 AH/AD 995-98), for example, already made a distinction between Greek script (*al-khaṭṭ al-rūmī*), “Lombard and Saxon” script (*qalam li-Nukubardih wa-l-Sākisih*) and “Frankish script” (*kitābaʿ al-Faranja*), which he had seen on sword-hilts and in a letter addressed to the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Muktafī billāh (r. 289-295 AH/AD 902-908) by a female Frankish ruler.<sup>14</sup> It was not just merchants and crusaders

<sup>9</sup> On the Japanese book and its features (scripts, writing materials, writing instruments – pens and inks – as well as book forms), see PASTENA, CARLO (2017) pp. 137-167.

<sup>10</sup> From a general point of view, see BRENTJES, SONIA-FIDORA, ALEXANDER-TISCHLER, MATTHIAS M. (2014). For contacts between Islam and Latin Europe, see KÖNIG, DANIEL G. (2015).

<sup>11</sup> The volume *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies (COMST). An Introduction* is an example of a handbook that gathers Greek paleography together with Arabic, Armenian, Syriac, Georgian, Ethiopic, Coptic, Hebrew and Armenian palaeography in a Mediterranean perspective, see BAUSI, ALESSANDRO (2015), pp. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> FRAAS, MITCH-NOEL, WILLIAM (2016).

<sup>13</sup> I already had occasion to stress this point – see D’OTTONE, ARIANNA (2014) – but I like to quote here CANFORA, LUCIANO (2014) who, in an article entitled *The Future of our Work* appeared in a volume dedicated to the history of writing, wrote: “Stolti a me paiono quei dotti i quali – quale che sia la loro dottrina – guardano in modo arcigno, e con mentalità da tribunale in seduta permanente, a chi vien dopo. Siffatti giudici ‘eterni’ sono, per lo più, privi di mente storica: non solo non intendono il cambiamento, ma si rifiutano di vederlo; non sanno intendere che ogni generazione ha sue proprie, e nuove, domande (e anche conoscenze) che la precedente generazione magari non ha, o ha in minor misura.”

<sup>14</sup> See KÖNIG, DANIEL G. (2016) p. 431.



that travelled, along with swords, gems, diplomatic gifts and works of art,<sup>15</sup> but also copyists, writing materials and manuscripts; it is worth remembering the papyrus that was written using an Arabic protocol, before traveling to Rome and being used in the Papal chancery for a Latin *bull*a of Pope John VIII (AD 820-882).<sup>16</sup>

As for external cultural influences on Arabic script, it is interesting to note that some graphic characteristics of various early Arabic written materials – such as documents, coins and glass weights – may be linked to the influence of scribes used to Pahlavi script.<sup>17</sup>

The contribution by Michelle Brown in this volume, on the unpublished Latin material from St. Catherine on Mount Sinai, shows, in its turn, that this monastery, a symbol of polyglot coexistence, was (and still is) a place where different graphic cultures met.

I will only briefly recall here a codicological detail, the cut of the left-cut pen, used in Beneventan-Cassinese script that is possibly the result of the encounter of Arabic-Islamic writing traditions with Latin ones at the monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai.<sup>18</sup>

Another, non-Western, example of a transfer of writing instruments can be found in Dunhuang, in Central Asia, where, instead of a brush of bristles (easy to obtain from rabbits, foxes and others local animals), the use of a rigid pen probably reflects a cultural influence originating in Tibet. Indeed, the transition between the brush and the pen, by Chinese copyists at Dunhuang, is also an important detail for dating manuscripts: “anything written with a stylus dates after the beginning of the Tibetan period (786); anything written with a brush must have been produced before that.”<sup>19</sup>

Palaeographical and linguistic interactions between the Muslim East and Latin Europe, are attested by bilingual and digraphic materials,<sup>20</sup> and I wish to take two bilingual Latin-Arabic examples that come from Spain. A

<sup>15</sup> For an overview of goods and objects traded between Muslim East and China and Europe between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, see MACK, ROSAMOND E. (2002), especially Chapter 1: *Trade, Travel and Diplomacy*, pp. 15-25. For a case study documenting, through archival material, the exchange of diplomatic gifts between a Venetian aristocratic family and the Mamluk sultan in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, see CURATOLA, GIOVANNI (2010). For Arabic and pseudo-Arabic letters in diverse media of Mediterranean and Northern European artistic production, see SCHULZ, VERA-SIMONE (2015).

<sup>16</sup> I recently had occasion to examine the papyrus BnF Lat. 8840 in person, and to ascertain the presence of 3 additional lines of Arabic script in (now faded) red ink that must be added to the 3 lines already known and edited. The papyrus, its date and its text, will be discussed in a forthcoming contribution, together with D. Internullo, who will reconsider the Latin text, see INTERNULLO, DARIO - D'OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA (forthcoming).

<sup>17</sup> For the documents, see KHAN, GEOFFREY (2013) in particular pp. 244-245; for coins and glass weights see, HEIDEMANN, STEFAN (2010) and D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2017).

<sup>18</sup> See D'OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA (in print).

<sup>19</sup> GALAMBOS, IMRE (2012) pp. 74-75.

<sup>20</sup> But the case of the papyrus in Latin script and Arabic language discussed in this volume proves also the existence of bilingual, and not digraphical, texts. On scripts and languages in manuscript production, see RADICIOTTI, PAOLO (2006) pp. 16-17 and p. 24.

manuscript fragment, Vat.lat. 12900 (*olim* Seguntinus 150), datable around 900 A.D., in Visigothic script for the Latin text;<sup>21</sup> and the chalcedony seal of countess Ermessenda (c.975-1058), in the Cathedral of Gerona, inscribed in Latin and Arabic.<sup>22</sup>

Spain is not the only Mediterranean region in which different languages and manuscript cultures coexisted, and an important example of absolute multigraphic context is offered by Syria: significant material in Greek and Latin is found in the Middle East, as exemplified by the *Qubba' al-Khazna* find.<sup>23</sup> This find is a cache of manuscript fragments, a spectacular witness of the co-existence of languages, religions and cultures, that suggests not only close contacts but also an enduring respect – and interactions – between cultures, languages and scripts. Serena Ammirati, in her contribution to this volume, publishes a first overview of the Latin material from the *Qubbat al-khazna*, amending previous descriptions of the contents of these fragments, and identifying new texts.

Palaeographical researches are useful not only for identifying and dating texts – old and new – but they also contribute the identification of hands. This is actually an important step in paleographical research, and it contributes to researches devoted to both the history of the texts and cultural history.<sup>24</sup> Such an approach recalls those art historians that can identify the authors of unsigned works of art, a process described by Philippe Costamagna – who identified Bronzino's *Christ on the Cross* – in his book *Histoire d'œils*.<sup>25</sup> 'Les œils observant, et l'observation déclenche un processus dans leur mémoire, qui leur permet de voir. Ce processus n'implique rien de génial, juste un sens de l'analyse très raffiné, la capacité à décomposer une peinture que l'on regarde en un ensemble de traits distinctifs qui se retrouvent à travers la production multiple d'un artiste.' Costamagna dedicated an entire chapter of his book to his visual education,<sup>26</sup> and his formative path is quite instructive: 'De mon arrivée au passage de mon bac, en 1977, j'allais m'abandonner avec boulimie à la fréquentation des œuvres d'art sous toutes leurs formes sans restriction, fréquentation essentielle à la formation de mon œil. Aujourd'hui encore, je n'entre pas dans un musée sans aller voir les départements d'art africain, islamique, asiatique ou océanien, de sculptures ou d'objet d'art, et je ne quitte pas une ville sans avoir visité les musées d'art moderne et contemporain, car notre culture est faite de cette connaissance d'ensemble' ~~(my emphasis)~~.<sup>27</sup>

Following the trend marked by the "World Philology",<sup>28</sup> it is also time to start thinking about a "Mediterranean palaeography", if not about a "World

<sup>21</sup> See D'OTTONE, ARIANNA 2013C.

<sup>22</sup> See D'OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA 2015, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> See D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2013). For a discussion of the *Qubba' al-khazna* material and the edition of one fragment of an Arabic version of the Exodus, see D'OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA (2017a).

<sup>24</sup> For the yet anonymous hands writing the marginal notes in the Bible of Cava, see D'OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA (infra).

<sup>25</sup> See COSTAMAGNA, PHILIPPE (2016) p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> COSTAMAGNA, PHILIPPE (2016) pp. 21-58.

<sup>27</sup> COSTAMAGNA, PHILIPPE (2016) pp. 25-26.

<sup>28</sup> See *World Philology* (2015).

palaeography". Both, the new philological trends and the "eyes" method of art historical education, display a need to go beyond borders, between objects that belong to a same category of study; texts and works of art for philology and art history, scripts and written material for palaeography. Besides being a gifted "eye", ~~to reach an expertise in the recognition of a specific hand / scribe~~, a paleographer cannot lack a "palaeographer's view" – to paraphrase a famous volume of collected studies.<sup>29</sup> This historical perspective cannot ignore the existence of contacts between cultures and languages.

#### PALAEOGRAPHY, CALLIGRAPHY AND ART HISTORY: FIELDS OF RESEARCH TO BE DEFINED

Making some methodological observations on Latin palaeography, Paolo Radiciotti wrote "The point is that palaeography should be treated by palaeographers."<sup>30</sup> Certainly, in the field of Arabic studies, the fields of palaeography, calligraphy and art history are often confused.<sup>31</sup>

As early as 1930 – the bibliographer Gualtiero Medri defined 'Calligraphy' as the art that teaches how to draw elegantly the lines forming letters;<sup>32</sup> it belongs to the field of graphic arts, because drawing is usually *ex tempore*. Therefore, the history of calligraphy is not, as is commonly believed, research into the genesis and development of various scripts because this is the goal of palaeography. The history of calligraphy is the study of theoretical treatises, and of the models that made the art of calligraphy evolve. In this respect, it is noteworthy that almost sixty years later, the paleographer Caterina Tristano wrote: "I cannot forget the definition of "Calligraphy", nowadays somewhat dated but always valid, in the Italian Encyclopaedia. It sounds to me as a warning for not trespassing the borders of a given field of research, for avoiding huge, as much as ingenuous, mistakes of historical understanding".<sup>33</sup>

Following certain rules, someone could write today in a 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>-century style script, like the *nasta'liq*,<sup>34</sup> and therefore calligraphy is an *ahistorical phenomenon*. Palaeography, instead, studies writing, a historical phenomenon – associated with culture, politics and patronage. It is therefore striking to read the art-historian Yasser Tabbaa complain that "Calligraphy is therefore pre-

<sup>29</sup> *A Palaeographer's view* (1993).

<sup>30</sup> "Il punto è che la paleografia dovrebbe essere trattata da paleografi", RADICIOTTI, PAOLO (2008) p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> See D'OTTONE, ARIANNA (2014) pp. 218-221.

<sup>32</sup> MEDRI, GIOVANNI (1930).

<sup>33</sup> "[...] non posso dimenticare le parole contenute nella trattazione relativa alla voce "Calligrafia", oramai molto invecchiata ma sempre valida, dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, che suona alle mie orecchie come un monito [...] a non travalicare i confini del proprio ambito di ricerca, per non incorrere in madornali quanto ingenui errori di comprensione storica"; TRISTANO, CATERINA (1986) p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> See VLAD, ATANASIU (1999) p. 12. Calligraphic treatises are also used to produce typefaces, as *ruq'a* and *nash*, for computers but "Palaeographic Arabic can only be transliterated, it cannot be transcribed"; see MILO, THOMAS (2013) pp. 269-270.

sented as an ahistorical phenomenon, a disembodied form deprived of all its rich associations with culture, politics, patronage and even theology”:<sup>35</sup> this is exactly what Calligraphy is...

The lack of a proper paleographical school, within Arabic and Islamic studies, leads whoever wants to use the words “calligraphy/palaeography”, to do so without a clear understanding of their meaning. The confusion between the fields of palaeography and calligraphy, and interest in the latter, is a phenomenon rather recent linked, among other things, to the disappearance of Arabic palaeography courses.<sup>36</sup>

Rather than an “overly specialized approach”, as Tabbaa describes it, palaeography is in fact a very wide domain, that includes the study of the production of books and documents – which is vast, because that means calligraphic specimens but also non-calligraphic, informal scripts<sup>37</sup> – as well as numerous other written materials such as inscriptions, coins, papyri, metal works, gems, and glass weights.<sup>38</sup> Not understanding the difference between palaeography and calligraphy – their respective fields and goals – comes from the too-rare teaching of Arabic palaeography. The absence of courses on Arabic palaeography, manuscript culture, codicology and book history, especially in the United States, has recently been pointed out by Evyn Kropf.<sup>39</sup> In Eu-

<sup>35</sup> TABBAA, YASSER (2001) p. 25. In the introduction to his book, p. 3, Tabbaa states: “This book discusses the transformation undergone by Islamic architecture and ornament during the medieval period [...]”. Therefore, the script, as admitted from the very first lines of his work, is not considered as a medium of communication but as an ornament. His analyses are therefore affected by a perspective that aims to be historical and palaeographical, but that – in fact – is art historical. As for a palaeographical perspective, it seems useful to quote Armando Petrucci: “According to an acute and expert contemporary English palaeographer, Malcolm B. Parkes, “Changes in the signs are the sign of change” [...]. Actually, each of the graphic system elaborated by the humankind has, or has had, behind it a more or less long series of changes, marked by modifications, adaptations, sometimes real graphic revolutions. All these phenomena are symptoms and consequences of deeper social, economic and cultural changes [...]. All this also entails, as one may expect, that within a general system of writing (Latin, Greek, Arabic and so on) there are specific types of script labelled with specific names [...] that are created, modified and abandoned following phases and events that the palaeographer has to study” (“Secondo un acuto ed esperto paleografo inglese contemporaneo, Malcolm B. Parkes, “ogni cambiamento dei segni costituisce un segno di cambiamento”. In effetti, ognuno dei sistemi grafici elaborato dagli uomini ha o ha avuto alle spalle una storia più o meno lunga, segnata da modificazioni, adattamenti, a volte da vere e proprie rivoluzioni grafiche. Tutti questi fenomeni sono sintomi e conseguenze di più profondi cambiamenti sociali, economici, culturali [...]. Tutto ciò comporta anche, com'è ovvio, che all'interno di ciascuna specie generale di scrittura (latina, greca, araba e così via) si definiscano e abbiano una loro particolare storia sottospecie tipologiche individuate da nomi particolari [...] che a loro volta vengono create, modificate, dismesse secondo fasi ed eventi che sta al paleografo individuare e studiare”), PETRUCCI, ARMANDO (2002) pp. 52-53.

<sup>36</sup> See *ultra*.

<sup>37</sup> I find it interesting to recall here reflections made by Byzantine palaeographers about informal, not calligraphic scripts; see ORSINI, PASQUALE (2006). For Arab-Islam manuscript production, some hints about the quality of the script, described as “excellent”, “mediocre” and “careless”, can be found in the Yemenite book culture; see D’OTTONE, ARIANNA (2013a), p. 77. On the other hand, as far as calligraphic scripts and “writing-as-object” are concerned, it seems useful to take into account what has been observed about the iconic function of the Byzantine Biblical uncial script; see ORSINI, PASQUALE (2013), in particular pp. 15-17 and pp. 37-39.

<sup>38</sup> On the field of Arabic palaeography see D’OTTONE RAMBACH, ARIANNA (2015a).

<sup>39</sup> KROPF, EVYN (2016) p. 56.

rope, *The Islamic Manuscript Association* (Cambridge) is promoting a series of summer intensive courses on palaeography and codicology intended to make students and scholars acquainted with these fields and their goals.<sup>40</sup>

The essays gathered in this volume contribute to the idea of a world paleography. I very much hope that the field of palaeography, and the related domains of book-history and manuscript-culture, will receive more attention in future, and scientific recognition as an autonomous domain of research within Islamic studies and as a proper field of research within palaeographical studies.

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<sup>40</sup> In July 2018, such an intensive course will be hosted in Jerusalem by the National Library of Israel.

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