SFARDATA
THE HENRI SCHILLER CODICOLOGICAL DATABASE
OF THE HEBREW PALAEOGRAPHY PROJECT, JERUSALEM

Sfardata is a sophisticated quantitative database and retrieval system of a large number of measurable codicological attributes recorded in most of the extant explicitly dated, and in the undated but otherwise “colophonized” or named, Hebrew medieval manuscripts. Sponsored by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, in collaboration with the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, in cooperation with the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes in Paris, The Hebrew Palaeography Project has been engaged since its inception in 1965 in studying and recording most of the visible and quantifiable codicological features and variables of all the surviving dated Hebrew manuscripts and texts, some 5000 manuscripts kept in collections all over the world. Since the early 1970's many of the attributes recorded in the detailed questionnaires have been coded and electronically stored in Jerusalem. Over the past seven years an elaborate retrieving, sorting and linking system, based on FoxPro software, was and is still being developed, allowing endless querying of the data, clustering and statistics.

The methodology and ideology of quantitative codicology had indeed been realized by this project even before they were crystallized and presented in Latin codicology. The global and exhaustive scope of the documentation and the total exploitation of all the extant dated (about half of them also explicitly localized) codices, which was feasible due to the limited number of the Hebrew manuscripts, make Sfardata a precise tool for assessing the chronological limits and combinations of variables.

We present here a list of the coded codicological elements recorded in the database. Those which are particular to Hebrew manuscripts and texts were considerably bridged or altogether omitted in this list, as were those which are self-evident, like the detailed geographical classification of regions and countries of production, or of origins of immigrant scribes, which in the case of the Hebrew book extend from central Asia to England and from Yemen to Russia.

Not included in this presentation are the many para-graphic (or peri-graphic) data, such as graphic fillers, graphic substitutes for the tetragrammaton, underlining, citation, etc., which were recorded in the questionnaires but still require a suitable classification system and adequate coding. Textual data, such as names of scribes, commissioners, vocalizors, artists, the various scribal formulas, including those pertaining to codicological units (like opening eulogies at the head of quires), colophons (the entire text of which is contained in the database) and bibliographical information were not included in the following shortened list.

Sfardata is indeed a working instrument. It has proven its capacity as an indispensable tool for both the typology of the Hebrew handwritten books, quantitative codicology and large scale studies of various aspects of book production, and for dating and localizing manuscripts on the basis of sharing the same combination of codicological elements with the recorded dated ones. The database and its retrieval system provide also historical data, textual sources, lists of toponyms, scribes, patrons. The palaeographical identifications or assessments in the new catalogue of the important and rather extensive collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the Palatina Biblioteca in Parma, which is now been prepared, are carried out through Sfardata.

It should be noted that most of the variables can fit also non-Hebrew manuscripts, particularly Oriental ones. Indeed, selected codicological elements of 127, mostly Arabic and some Persian and Syriac, manuscripts have been recently recorded in Sfardata. The database can be easily extended and, if necessary, modified to accommodate manuscripts of other scripts and codex cultures.

The following list does not necessarily reflect the inner structure of the database, nor include the numerical codes of the variables.

Region, country and geo-cultural area of production and scribe's origin. [Not specified here.]

Script type of immigrant scribe: unidentified / Franco-German / Iberian-Provençal-Maghrebian / Italian / Oriental / Byzantine / South Italian / Yemenite

Destination of the copy: unknown / for the copyist's own use / on commission / for a relative / for a participating copyist / for a potential buyer / for a Christian commissioner / for a woman

Colophon data: written by a woman — copying duration — data on the copying — personal data — historical data — scribe's fee — scribe's signature — scribe's correcting colophon — cryptic colophon — vocalizer's colophon — corrector's colophon — artist's colophon —
Eras employed in colophon.
[The many systems of rendering dates are not specified here.]

Subjects of copied texts. [Not specified here.]

Writing material:

PARCHMENT:
Side: distinguishable / hardly distinguishable / indistinguishable
Scratching: not visible / visible
Hair follicles: not visible / visible
Arrangement of bifolia: sides do not correspond / matching sides / exceptions
Thickness: very fine (0.10 mm) / fine (0.11-0.15 mm) / medium (0.16-0.25 mm) / thick (0.26-0.35 mm) / very thick (0.36-... mm)
Dorsal stripe:
not visible / visible
across page / along spine / along top of page / along bottom of page

PAPER:
Splitting or splittable layers: two layers / three layers
Laid lines: not visible / visible / hardly visible
Chain lines: not visible / unclear / shading (pontuseaux)
   singles: regular / irregular
   grouped: in twos / in threes / twos and threes alternating / in four / irregular / unclear
Format: folio / quarto / octavo / other / horizontal laid lines / vertical laid lines
Watermarks: not visible / visible — Zigzag signs
Coloured paper
Shining paper: entire page / written space
striped shining: entire page / written space

PARCHMENT AND PAPER QUIRIES:
Parchment bifolia: outer only / inner only / outer and inner
Parchment strips: outer fold only / inner fold only / outer and inner folds
Outer bifolium starts with: flesh-side / hair-side / varies
Inner bifolium: flesh-side / hair-side / varies

Ink's colours. [Not specified here.]

Quiring: unclear / uniform / uniform: less than 4 quires / irregular / irregular:
less than 4 quires / coupled leaves bifolia
Composition of most of quires.

Means for ensuring the right order of the codex:

Quire numeration:
at end: in (Hebrew) letters / in other way / decorated / illustrated
at head and end: in Hebrew letters / in Arabic words / in Arabic numerals / decorated / illustrated

Frequency: quire / bifolia (including / excluding quire opening) / folio / page / column

Repeated words: at the beginning of quires / of folios / of bifolia and opening / of bifolia only / of pages / of columns

Headings: at the beginning of quires / in each leaf / in each page / on top of columns

Marking of quire opening.

Ruling:
not visible / lines on recto and verso don't correspond / hardly visible / visible / various techniques / vertical and horizontal lines / horizontals and one vertical / frame only / verticals and top line only / vertically only / horizontally only / double horizontal lines / text does not match ruling / ruling for pricking / rake ruling / ruling guided by slotted board?

Pricking:
Structure: none / for horizontals and verticals / for frame or verticals only / traces for horizontal lines / for vertical lines / verticals differ from horizontals / for groups of lines / single prickings / double for special lines / in outer margins only / in outer and inner margins
Frequency and direction: quire by quire / part of quire at once / bifolium by bifolium / in other frequency / on recto / on verso / on recto or verso
ILLUMINATIONS AND DECORATION.
[Including sizes and modes of scripts of text, initials, scribal formulas and colophon. — Not listed here.]

LAYOUT: irregular / uniform / varying / exceptional / glossed or multi-layer text

Last written line: within ruling / outside ruling / unclear / letters written between ruled lines

DIMENSIONS (measured in 3 pages for each hand or layout): page height — upper margin — text height — lower margin page width — inner margin — text width — outer margin — number of columns — column width — space between columns — total width of columns — 10 written lines height — number of writing signs in 5 lines — "taille" (page height + width).

PROPORTIONS AND CALCULATIONS: page width/height — text width/height — page area — text area — spatial proportion (text/page) — upper/lower margins — inner/outer margins — inner/upper margins — upper+lower margins/text height — inner+outer margins/text width — intercolumn space/inner margin text height/lines number — text linear density (signs per 10 cm) — text spatial density

A presentation of the retrieval system can be found in:


M. B.-A.