Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts
Proceedings of a symposium held in Istanbul
March 28-30, 2001

Judith Pfeiffer
Manfred Kropp

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This volume comprises the papers presented during the international symposium on “Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts” that was organized in March 2001 in Istanbul, bringing together specialists in the editing theories and techniques from the textual and editorial traditions of Classical Antiquity and Oriental Studies. The contributions address the ‘traveling’ of texts through time and space, taking into account the differences between oral and written traditions; a comparative analysis of intertextuality in different textual traditions, in particular those of classical antiquity and the Near East; the material conditions of and intellectual incentives for the transmission, reproduction, and, indeed, edition, of texts; the interrelation between text genre and object genre; editorial choices, and how they take into account the manner in which a given text was historically reproduced; philological methods that have been developed in order to deal with these issues; and the questions of how and to which extent we can apply established editing methods developed by European medievalists to Near Eastern textual traditions, and which alternatives exist.
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Abbreviations of Journals and Reference Works

*AEMA* Arbeiten aus Eurasia Medii Aevi.


*BSOAS* Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies.

*CAJ* Central Asian Journal.


*Elr* Encyclopaedia Iranica.


*GAL2* Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Zweite, den

*GOW* Franz Babinger. Die Geschichtsschreiber der Osmanen und ihre

*HJAS* Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies.

*IÁ* Islam Ansiklopedisi: Istanbul, 1940-

*IJMES* International Journal of Middle East Studies.

*JA* Journal Asiatique.

*JAH* Journal of Asian History.

*JASSS* Journal of Asian and African Studies.

*JESHO* Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient.

*JAOS* Journal of the American Oriental Society.

*JRSA* Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.

*JSAI* Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam.

*TDVIA* Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi.

*TMEN* Gerhard Doerfer, Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neu-

*TP* Toung Pao.

*WZKM* Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes.

*ZDMG* Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft.
Introduction

Manfred Kropp and Judith Pfeiffer

The present volume comprises the papers presented during the international symposium on "Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts" that was organized in March 2001 in Istanbul, a cooperation between the German Oriental Institute (Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Abteilung Istanbul) and the Library of the University of Istanbul (Istanbul Üniversitesi Küütüphanesi), which brought together researchers from various disciplines in an international setting. The arrangement of the contributions to this volume largely reflects the panels in which the papers were presented during the three-day conference.

The Istanbul symposium provided a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas, prompting the participants to re-think and refine the theories and methods applied in their respective fields of research. Much of this has, in turn, found its way back into the contributions presented here. Among the issues addressed during the conference were the 'traveling' of narratives through time and space, taking into account the differences between oral and written traditions; a comparative analysis of intertextuality in different textual traditions, in particular those of classical antiquity and the Near East; the material conditions of the transmission and reproduction of texts; the interrelation between text genre and object genre; editorial choices, and how they take into account the manner in which a given text was historically reproduced; philological methods that have been developed in order to deal with these texts; and the questions of how and to what extent we can apply established editing methods developed by European medievalists to Near Eastern textual traditions, and what alternatives exist.

Precision in workmanship and academic method notwithstanding, any given critical edition based on a range of textual witnesses is never more than the editor's well-founded hypothesis on the history of a given text and its transmission. The editor's approach may be expressed in his or her attempt to reconstruct an archetype ('Urtext'), or else in the documented representation of the transformation of a given text over time as part of the copying tradition.

We may thus differentiate two fundamentally distinct, albeit not mutually exclusive, approaches; one seeks to establish a starting point in time, and the other aims at retracing an evolutionary process, bearing witness, along the way, to the process of the canonization of a text. To a certain extent, these distinct approaches also depend on the nature of the material at hand. The extreme case of the editions of the autographs of classical antiquity in medieval Europe may serve as an example: in this instance, it was the aim of the copyist, already in the pre-scientific era of handwritten text transmission, to transmit a given text as a
sui generis immutable entity in the 'most correct form' possible. This may be contrasted with, e.g., the transmission of popular literature, frequently expressed in the vernacular languages, where the copyist more often than not was as much involved in 'updating' and 'correcting' the text as in copying it. In this context, adaptations of form, contents, and language are indeed to be anticipated.

Given the existence of such a wide range of definitions of the duties of the copyist within a single culture, we may expect to find even greater dissimilarities when comparing the tasks and degree of involvement of copyists in different cultural contexts. Indeed, even comparable texts and genres may not always have held comparable positions within different cultural milieus. Such differences may moreover be a consequence of the specific understanding of the integrity and 'sacredness' of a given text in a given cultural and/or historical context by those entrusted with the task of copying; this could result in a greater or lesser degree of corresponding emendations, depending on the copyist's judgment.

The process of the reproduction of a text, the writing material, the alphabet and writing system concerned, the language (vernacular vs. standard written language), the social standing and education of the scribe, the role and position of the written word compared with that of the oral tradition in the context in question, and the standing of the individual author or individual work in comparison to that of the product of collective transmission, are among the many factors that are part of the intricate process that bears on the final product, the concrete textual witness. This means that the complex message conveyed by each textual witness can only be decoded if these factors are at least partially and explicitly part of the editing method, which is itself always an implicit act of interpretation.

With regard to the principles of textual criticism as established in exemplary fashion by, e.g., Paul Maas, this implies, however, that these principles are merely the adequate description of the special case of the tradition of classical antique texts of the European Middle Ages. For antiquity — for which no textual witnesses are extant — we can assume that some kind of a 'commercial reproduction' was in place. Given the often centuries-long gap between the date of the composition of a given text and its extant text witnesses (copies), however, it must remain an open question to what extent the oldest extant parchment manuscript copies in the West or the works produced mostly in the monastic milieu of the Byzantine East were directly based on witnesses from antiquity. If such witnesses were used, we know nothing about the quality of these antique textual witnesses themselves. In this regard, the field of Oriental Studies offers much more fertile soil; here, the textual tradition is in many cases much better (and more completely) documented and often we even have access to an unbroken chain of text witnesses.

Intertextuality is an essential feature of Oriental and Islamic literature, where a whole web of texts is constantly and consciously paradigmatically and syntagmatically evoked, co-thought, quoted and re-worked and re-interpreted with every phrase and sentence. Numerous parallel passages bear witness to the greater mnemonic culture. Furnishing proof of the web of these parallel paragraphs — in the apparatus of an edition, or in a wider framework, possibly on the internet — corresponds — to a certain extent — to the reproduction of the mnemonic culture of an individual author and his audience. All of this stands — to a certain degree — in contrast to the rather individualistically-atomistically oriented European author and his or her original work; it needs to be questioned whether this western model is not perhaps accurate only for modernity, and/or for the preservation of the classics of antiquity, but may be rather different for orally transmitted 'texts.'

The Istanbul symposium brought together specialists in the various editing theories and techniques mostly from the two textual and editorial traditions discussed above, that of classical antiquity and that of Oriental Studies. The publications of the German Oriental Institute are indebted to both. For more than six decades a great number of standard text editions of various works of classical Islamic culture have been published in the Orient-Institut's series "Bibliotheca Islamica." By virtue of the continuity of the workmanship on which these publications are based, an immense amount of practical experience has been accumulated, which is itself based on a thorough training in the methodology and theory of editing. This has, in turn, informed, on various levels and on multiple occasions, the theory of editing, if only in the various prefaces to the editions produced. The opening article by Wadad Al-Qadi, a veteran practitioner herself, calls this material from these various prefaces, and unites it in a single article while at the same time discussing it in the light of various alternative editing methods.

Conceptually, the subsequent contributions gradually ‘zoom in’ on the issues at stake. The first group of papers is devoted primarily to the general setting of ‘texts’ and the categories and factors which played an essential role mainly in the formation of the more recent and more continuously represented textual traditions in the Near East. Questions addressed are the relationship between texts and illustrations, the role of transmission and translation in the establishment of a textual tradition, and the importance of orality, as opposed to the written transmission of texts, in the very establishment and preservation of ‘texts.’

The second group of papers investigates issues of a more practical nature, related to the production, preservation, and storage of manuscripts, investigating the role of libraries and copying processes in the preservation of texts, the impact of the cost and value of the writing material, and the labor involved in the act of copying — what were the implications if the copyist was, e.g., a renowned calligrapher? These contributions also address the impact of the mode of production. Does it make a difference if manuscripts were mainly commercially produced works, copied by order, or whether they were made by readers and scholars for their own — and their students’ — use?
The third and last group of panels and papers presented here offered space for the debate about textual critical theory and practice in different contexts. This last in particular served to investigate the specific differences between the European and Oriental approaches in the formation of a textual critical theory.

The organization of the conference that formed the basis of this volume would not have been possible without the much appreciated support of a variety of individuals and institutions. The editors wish to thank the organizers from Istanbul University, Tuba Çavdar and Meral Alpay, for their excellent cooperation, and for turning the lecture halls of the Faculty of Philosophy of Istanbul University into a congenial environment for the symposium during which these papers were presented. We also wish to thank the then-Director of the French Institute of Anatolian Studies in Istanbul (Institut Français d’Études Anatoliennes, IFEA), Paul Dumont, for his willingness to host several of the conference participants. Our special gratitude goes to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Sûleymaniye Library in Istanbul for welcoming the conference participants to tours of their respective premises, permitting them to inspect some of their choicest manuscripts and incunabula at close sight. Special thanks we owe to Nevzat Kaya, Director of the Sûleymaniye Library, for his hospitality and guidance throughout the conference, which extended far beyond the pre-arranged visit of the manuscript collections with accompanying tea break in the Library’s lovely gardens.

During the preparation of this volume for publication, Ilker Evrim Binbaş was of great assistance both in technical matters, and with various suggestions regarding the editing and updating of the contributions. We wish to thank him for his patient and always cheerful assistance. Amanda Phillips has helped proofreading several of the articles, and we are grateful to her for her constructive suggestions, as well as for giving a hand in the final stage of the preparation of the index to this volume. Thomas Breier at Ergon Verlag was particularly helpful in suggesting solutions for the transfer of the various scripts and transliteration systems used in this volume, and, most importantly, he has seen this volume through publication. His support was particularly appreciated.

Last but not least, the organizers wish to thank the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; DFG) for its generous support of the organization of the conference. Without it, the symposium could not have taken place in the format it did, and could not have achieved its truly international and interdisciplinary character.

How ‘Sacred’ is the Text of an Arabic Medieval Manuscript?

The Complex Choices of the Editor-Scholar

Wadad al-Qadi

If we were, hypothetically, to ask scholarly editors all over the world about the theoretical approaches that govern their critical editorial work, many of them would be quite detailed in talking about the procedures they follow, but only very few would be able to talk about principles that guide them in their work. Although the accuracy of such a hypothetical situation varies from place to place and time to time, it is probably safe to say that scholars involved in editing surpass by far those involved with the theory of editing both in number and in volume of production. Some editors would have read, and even appreciated, something about the theoretical aspect of editing; but when the time comes for sitting at the table to edit, much of what had been learned seems somehow to evaporate, leaving few traces in the editor’s mind as he concentrates on the text in front of his eyes. And yet, is it really possible that a scholar-editor should function without any guiding principles whatsoever, that his editorial work proceeds in a theoretical vacuum? Probably not; for, even if the editor is not aware of it, “every statement about editing,” as G. Thomas Tanselle puts it, “reflects, directly or indirectly, an attitude towards certain fundamental questions, and various families of editorial approaches have grown up over the centuries because these questions have been answered in different ways.”

Indeed, after centuries of editing activity, D. C. Greetham found it still appropriate, and relevant, to ask, as late as 1995, “and what is scholarly editing, anyway?” with the question prompting him to assemble in a book a sizable number of articles on the subject from various perspectives and in different cultures.

Having done at least some of my editorial work without giving much conscious thought to the role of principles in determining the editorial process, I would like here to try my hand—and, actually, explore my spirit—at clarifying how I see the dynamic of principle-procedure at work in the particular field of editing medieval Arabic manuscripts. More specifically, I would like to examine

1 Throughout this paper, I shall be using the masculine singular when referring to the editor in order to make the text read smoothly.
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