
EDITORIAL BOARD

Since its earliest issues our journal has granted its pages for the publication of the material presented at international scholarly conferences closely connected with the fields of Oriental textology, manuscript studies, conservation and preservation of Eastern manuscripts and rare materials, acquisition policies of the world leading libraries and research centers, the influence of the new information technologies and current approaches to digitization of Oriental collections. Here one can mention, for example, our publication of materials presented at "Preservation of Dunhuang and Central Asian Collections" (Third International Conference, Berlin, 13–16 May, 1998) and "Oriental Book and Manuscript Collections and New Information Technologies. MELCOM XXIII" (St. Petersburg, 28–30 May, 2001). Together with our partners and friends we organized Correspondence Round Tables ("Arabic / Farsi OCR", December, 1995 and "ITISALAT Discussion of CD-ROM Protection / Privacy Problem", December, 1996) and published the results of extremely fruitful discussions.

In the first two issues of 2003 we started publication of materials presented to the Round Table "Libraries and New Information Technologies: Towards an Exchange Network of Arabic Authority Records" held within the frame of the 24th Annual Meeting of MELCOM (European Association of Middle East Librarians, Paris, 27–29 May, 2002). The Report by Annick Bernard, organizer of the Round Table, published in the current issue, completes the publication of this important material.

In the current issue we are also pleased to present the project of François Déroche and Francis Richard "Scripts, page settings and bindings of Middle-Eastern manuscripts. Papers of the Third International Conference on Codicology and Paleography of Middle-Eastern Manuscripts (Bologna, 4–6 October, 2000)". The materials of this extremely important conference will be published both in September and December issues of *Manuscripta Orientalia* (2003).

In introducing the above-mentioned project I would like to stress that the studies it includes represent the latest developments in international manuscript studies. These studies also reflect the general level, tendencies and perspectives that will determine the future development of research connected with several fields of our scholarly interest. We hope to continue co-operation with our colleagues both in Russia and abroad and arrange "on-the fly" publication of conference material of interest to the readers of *Manuscripta*.

I would like to stress that these publications do not represent a move away from a traditional policy of presenting the world Orientalist community with new research by Russian scholars. We also continue publishing the article series that has brought our journal so many new readers. We fully understand our debts towards the significant part of *Manuscripta* readership involved in Far Eastern studies. Thereupon I would like to introduce several important publications which are currently in preparation for the first issues of 2004. I would first like to mention the important studies devoted to Japanese and Chinese manuscripts from the famous collections of the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera), Russian Academy of Sciences. The fate of several items among them are connected with world tour of the future Russian Emperor Nicolas II during which he visited Egypt, India, Ceylon, Siam, Batavia, Hong Kong, China, and Japan. The majority of the collection (both official gifts and personal acquisitions) brought home by young Nicolas is now preserved in the St. Petersburg Kunstkamera. We hope to publish a special series of articles devoted to this marvelous collection reflecting the personal world outlook, tastes and preferences of the last Russian Emperor, thus providing the opportunity to view the world through his own eyes.

**Efim Rezvan,
Editor-in-Chief**

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After Istanbul (1986) and Paris (1994), the Third International Conference on Codicology and Palaeography of Middle-Eastern Manuscripts was held in Bologna in 2000. During three days, from October 4th to 6th, the villa Gandolfi Pallavicini where A. Mozart had been a guest 200 years ago was the magnificent setting of the conference. In contradistinction to the former meetings, it had been decided to suggest to the participants three topics. The codicology has made headway during the last decade, with more research and publications devoted to this field: time has come to pay more attention to topics which have been neglected or to go into more detail on a given subject.

The word "palaeography" has now been in use for more than two centuries among scholars working on manuscripts in Arabic script, but to this date, the results of this "science of the ancient scripts" has been meagre: it is still difficult to date according to the features of the script a manuscript which does not contain a direct statement about the date when it was written. So far, the period covering the first centuries of the Hijrah has been drawing most of the attention, while the study of the later developments was mostly limited to calligraphy. For all these reasons, the conference tried to shift the focus towards the period extending from the fall of Bagdād to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt. As far as calligraphy is concerned, this is a time of innovation. But what with the scripts in use for more ordinary purposes?

A second topic, page setting, was selected because it could be used as a bridge between palaeography, codicology and art history; at the same time, it offered the possibility to examine the way in which copyists but also painters were building the page, a first step towards an evaluation of aesthetics of the Islamic book. Binding was the third main topic suggested by the organizers: behind this choice is the need for all codicologists to get more information on the techniques as well as on the regions and periods about which little is known. The reader will find in this volume most of the papers which were read in Bologna: he will decide whether the goals outlined above have been at least partly reached.

It is our pleasant duty to acknowledge the support of various institutions: the University of Bologna, especially its Centro interdepartimentale delle scienze dell'Islam, the Ecole pratique des hautes études, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques, the Foundation Max van Berchem (Geneva) and the Fondazione Ferni Noja Nosedà (Lesa); all the participants and the organizers are indebted to them for the success of the conference. We would also like to thank Prof. F. Roversi Monaco, President of the University and Director of the Centro, Mrs. A. Nardi, his assistant, and Dr. V. Colombo who spared no pains in making us welcome in Bologna.

François Déroche

Francis Richard