

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

# Methods of Digital Philology for the Study of Early and Classical Arabic Language

Berlin (Germany), 19-21 October 2011

Convened by:  
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The European Science Foundation (ESF) is an association of 78 Member Organisations devoted to scientific research in 30 European countries. The Mission of ESF is to provide a common platform for its Member Organisations in order to advance European research and to explore new directions for research at the European level. Through its activities, the ESF serves the needs of the European research community in a global context.

The main objectives of ESF for the years 2006-2010 (extended to 2011) as defined by its current *Strategic Plan* are to promote Science Strategy and Science Synergy, paving the way for initiatives across disciplinary and geographic boundaries in the European Research Area (ERA).

The Exploratory Workshops scheme is one of the key instruments of the Science Strategy “pillar”. Each year, ESF supports approximately 50 Exploratory Workshops across all scientific domains. The focus of the scheme is on workshops aiming to explore an emerging and/or innovative field of research or research infrastructure, also of interdisciplinary character. Workshops are expected to open up new directions in research or new domains. It is expected that a workshop will conclude with plans for specific follow-up research activities and/or collaborative actions or other specific outputs either within the frame of ESF (e.g. prepare the ground to develop a [Forward Look](#) or a Scientific Programme proposal; publication of a Policy Briefing...) or for submission to the EU 7th Framework Programme or to other European or international funding organisations.

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### **Main Objectives of the Workshop:**

*The workshop will explore new message of lexicographical research in the field of the history of the Arabic language. Participants will be asked to contribute with their expertise to elaborate on a new research platform for the Arabic language including a digital database of Arabic epigraphic sources and an analytical dictionary of the Early and Classical Arabic poetry. The project aims to set up a European research network to shed light on the early history of the Arabic language in secular genres or sacred texts.*

### **Workshop Agenda**

*The workshop will explore new research methods in lexicography of Arabic language and help to establish an international collaboration group for a new project on an analytical database of Arabic epigraphy and poetry. The workshop will bring together leading European scholars who have approached the study of Arabic language in the context relevant for the intended database project.*

*Arabic language with its uninterrupted history of over three thousand years represents an extraordinary rich lexical corpus. The research of this vast linguistic material goes back to the very beginnings of the Arabic philological tradition in the 8 century AD. Being of significant importance, the existing sources of national Arabic lexicography, nevertheless, do not comply with the modern linguistic standards and lack tools for analytical evaluation. At the same time, in the European scholarship neither a historical dictionary of Arabic language nor a complete dictionary of Classical Arabic in any of the European languages have been produced until now. The Arabic-English Lexicon von Edward W. Lane remained unfinished, and the more recent Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache (WKAS), which has been published by Manfred Ullmann since 1970, includes only letters Kāf and Lām. Besides this striking gap, significant progress in several areas of Arabic studies during last decades, in particular regarding the Arabic epigraphy, papyrology and the quranic studies, has made deeper specialization and as a result further fragmentation of the scientific landscape inevitable. Against this background the need of new comprehensive*

*research tool for Arabic language and the history of its vocabulary becomes more and more urgent.*

*Implementation of the new information technology in humanistic research could provide essential support and pioneering solutions for this challenge. Therefore the main goal of the workshop is twofold: on the one hand, the meeting will give the opportunity to discuss the current state and the future of research on the Arabic language and vocabulary from the perspectives of different study fields, focusing in particular on the epigraphy, papyrology, Quran and poetry. And on the other hand, the workshop will allow the participants to exchange their working experience with different digital databases, which already exist or are being created, and accordingly give their advice and recommendations for the intended new database project.*

*Lexicographical project, which the applicants intend to implement at the Seminar for Semitic and Arabic Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin in cooperation with the Corpus Coranicum research project at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, should create a new analytical tool for the research of the Arabic vocabulary in the form an electronic database. At the first stage the work will focus on the evaluation of the earliest lexical material. This material is provided by the sources of (1) Arabic inscriptions, (2) papyri, (3) the text of the Quran and (4) the early Arabic poetry. The poetical sources will form the main basis of the project. These texts provide the largest lexical information and have closer relevance with the later development of the Classical Arabic language up to the present day. Despite their particular importance, poetic sources have been largely neglected in the contemporary research. All other corpora have already become subject of European research and digitalization projects such as:*

- *the Safaitic Database Project (Michael C. A. Macdonald, Oxford University, UK, <http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/staff/iw/mmacdonald.html>)*
- *the Digital edition of the South Arabian epigraphic corpus (Alessandra Avanzini, Università di Pisa, Italy, <http://csai.humnet.unipi.it/csai/html/index.html>)*
- *the Arabic Papyrology Database (Andreas Kaplony, Universität Zürich, CH, <http://orientw.uzh.ch/apd/project.jsp>)*
- *the Corpus Curanicum project (Michael Marx, BBAW, Berlin, Germany, <http://www.bbaw.de/bbaw/Forschung/Forschungsprojekte/Coran/de/Startseite>).*

*Focusing on the poetic texts, the new database will make also this significant material available for the research of the origins of Arabic language and its historical development. Along with the lexical entries (electronic dictionary) it will include all other relevant data such as the information about the authors, their tribal affiliation, chronological periodization and geographical classification. Such analytical tools will make the database useful not just as a convenient lexical source, but also as a reference work for the wider research on Arabic language, history and culture.*

*Another innovative feature of the project could come from the possibility to include in the database cross-references to the parallel linguistic material provided by other sources*

*(inscriptions, papyri and the Quran). These different groups of primarily sources have not yet been investigated in relation to each other. The inscriptions for example have been studied either in the framework of Semitic linguistics or in the context of ancient history and archaeology. Scholars working on Arabic literature barely take this material into account. The same applies to the papyrology and, to some extent also to the studies on the Quran. The intended project will help to overcome these divisions within the scope of Arabic studies and by implementing new methods of computer-based analysis will strengthen the interdisciplinary approach within humanities.*

*Previous attempts to create a modern and comprehensive lexical reference work for Classical Arabic clearly indicate that an undertaking of such dimensions requires international cooperation. Considering the fact that several groups working on related topics have already been established at research institutions in different European countries the success of the new project essentially depends on the active collaboration at the European-scale. The workshop of the European Science Foundation offers the best possible format to approach this issue and to explore concrete steps to achieve an effective and sustainable teamwork between European scholars of Arabic.*

*Along with presentations of their ongoing research activities the participants will be asked to elaborate in smaller working groups on specific suggestions for the new project. The results of the working groups will provide important feedback and help to design the structure and the interface of the new database in an appropriate way, making it accessible and useful for the scholars working on different Arabic primary sources. This important outcome of the workshop will lay strong foundation for scientific exchange and future collaboration between the scholars involved.*

## **Workshop Language**

*Preferred language of the workshop is English, but for reasons of convenience, German, is allowed as well. Informal translation will be provided where necessary. Participants who give their paper in another language than English are expected to provide a bullet point summary of their paper in English on a handout or in the powerpoint accompanying their lecture.*

## PRELIMINARY PROGRAMME

### Wednesday, 19 October 2011

- Morning *Arrival*
- 14:00 *Get-together, reception*  
(Brugsch-Pascha-Hall, Geschwister-Scholl-Str. 2-8, fifth floor)
- 15.00-15.20 **Welcome by Convenors**  
**Kirill Dmitriev** (FU Berlin, Germany / University of St Andrews, Scotland)  
**Michael Marx** (BBAW, Potsdam, Germany)
- 15.20-15.40 **Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)**  
**Hanne Ruus** (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH))
- 15.40-17.40 Session 1: Arabic Lexicography**
- 15.40-16.00 **Klassisch-arabische Philologie in der Kommission für Semitische  
Philologie der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (BAW),  
München**  
**Kathrin Müller** (BAW, München, Germany)
- 16.00-16.20 **Analytical Database of Early and Classical Arabic Poetry**  
**Kirill Dmitriev** (FU Berlin, Germany / University of St Andrews, Scotland)
- 16.20-16.40 **Database for the Early Arabic Language: Inscriptions, Papyri,  
Qur'an and Poetry**  
**Michael Marx** (BBAW, Potsdam, Germany)
- 16.40-17.40 **Discussion**
- 19.00 *Dinner*

### Thursday, 20 October 2011

- 09.00-09.40 **Technical Approaches and Database Technologies  
Used for the Corpus Coranicum**  
**Markus Schnöpf** (BBAW, Berlin, Germany)
- 09.40-10.00 **Discussion**
- 10.00-10.20 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 10.20-13.20 Session 2: Inscriptions and Papyri**
- 10.20-10.40 **The Safaitic Database Online for the 21st Century**  
**Michael Macdonald** (University of Oxford, UK)  
**Daniel Burt** (University of Oxford, UK)
- 10.40-11.00 **The Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions: the CSAI Project**  
**Alessandra Avanzini** (Università di Pisa, Italy)  
**Alessia Prioletta** (Università di Pisa, Italy)
- 11.00-11.20 **South Arabian Lexicographical Data of the University of Jena**  
**Anne Multhoff, Peter Stein** (Universität Jena, Germany)
- 11.20-11.40 **Discussion**
- 11.40-12.00 *Coffee / Tea Break*
- 12.00-12.20 **Digital Philology in Arabic Papyrology**  
**Andreas Kaplony** (LMU München, Germany)

12.20-12.40	<b>From APD to EpiDoc: Standards and Procedures for Editions with Critical Apparatus in Arabic Papyrology</b> <b>Johannes Thomann</b> (Universität Zürich, Switzerland)
12.40-13.00	<b>Discussion</b>
13.00-15.00	<i>Lunch</i>
<b>15.00-17:00</b>	<b>Session 3: Qur'an</b>
15.00-15.20	<b>First Steps towards a Text Grammar of the Qur'an: Some Reflections and Examples</b> <b>Daniel Birnstiel</b> (University of Cambridge, UK)
15.20-15.40	<b>Computational Approches to Word and Root Statistics of the Qur'anic vocabulary</b> <b>Orhan Elmaz</b> (Universität Wien, Austria)
15.40-16.00	<i>Coffee / tea break</i>
16.00-16.20	<b>Some Remarks on Foreign Lexems in the Qur'an and the Work of Arthur Jeffery' Foreign Vocabulary</b> <b>David Kiltz</b> (BBAW, Potsdam, Germany)
16.20-16.40	<b>Presentation of the Database Project on the Qur'anic Vocabulary</b> <b>Catherine Pennacchio</b> (Paris, France)
16.40-17.00	<b>Discussion</b>
19.00	<i>Dinner</i>

## Friday, 21 October 2011

<b>09.00-12:00</b>	<b>Session 4: Digital approaches in comparative perspective</b>
09.00-09.20	<b>Greek into Arabic: the Glossarium graeco-arabicum, Pinakes Text Greek and Arabic, and the pseudo-Theology of Aristotle</b> <b>Christina D'Ancona</b> (Università di Pisa, Italy) <b>Andrea Bozzi</b> (ILC/CNR, Pisa, Italy)
09.20-09.40	<b>The "Arabic and Latin Glossary" – A Research Tool for Medieval Translations from Arabic into Latin</b> <b>Barbara Jockers</b> (Universität Würzburg, Germany)
09.40-10.00	<b>Discussion</b>
10.00-10.20	<i>Coffee / tea break</i>
10.20-10.40	<b>The Optical Character Recognition System for Arabic Based on the Segmentation of Relevant Components</b> <b>Oleg Redkin</b> (Saint Petersburg State Univeristiy, Russia)
10:40-11.00	<b>The Ancient Egyptian Dictionary Project at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities</b> <b>Ingelore Hafemann</b> (BBAW, Berlin, Germany)
11.00-11.20	<b>Discussion</b>
11.20-12.00	<i>Coffee / tea break</i>
<b>12.00-13:30</b>	<b>Session 4: Planning of Follow-up Research Activities and Collaborative Actions</b>
13.30	<i>End of Workshop and departure</i>



## European Science Foundation

### **Objectives of the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)**

The main tasks of the **ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)** are:

- to encourage interdisciplinary work through the independent evaluation of collaborative research proposals emanating from the scholarly community;
- to identify priority research areas and to play an integrative and co-ordinating role by creating links between research communities which in the Humanities are often small and fragmented.
- to contribute to the development of the ESF science policy agenda and to provide expert advice on science policy actions at the European level in the field of its responsibilities.

The Committee is well aware that the ESF is the only European Agency where the Humanities have a place next to the other sciences and where European projects are reviewed, developed and subsequently operated.

The Committee considers it all the more important to be heard as the voice of the Human Sciences in Europe and to continue pleading for a more prominent place for the Humanities in the European landscape.

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