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Corpus Coranicum Byzantinum

(March 2016, first presented on 14/07/2015)

– Draft –

[Für die deutsche Fassung bitte hier klicken]

Abstract

The interdisciplinary project *Corpus Coranicum Byzantinum* intends to provide a database of inter-religious polemics and arguments between Christianity and Islam from Late Antiquity until the Early Modern Period. The database will contain all the Qur'anic material from Greek Byzantine manuscripts and present it in an xml-based digital version. Preliminaries for the planned database according to TEI-standards of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW), have been done. There have been several cooperative talks throughout Europe since 2015 for establishing an interdisciplinary project called *Corpus Coranicum Christianum*, including translations of the Qur'an into Syriac, Latin and Persian.

The *Corpus Coranicum Byzantinum* aims to study the Qur'an as a medium of 'revelation knowledge' ("Offenbarungswissen"). It will do so on the basis of Greco-Byzantine manuscripts and materials which display the transfer of knowledge about the Qur'an, as well as its transformation during the Middle Ages from the external Christian perspective. The project will thus be open to a broader range of cooperation between different disciplines outside of Greek and Arabic Philology, Muslim and Christian Theology, and Digital Humanities, such as Medievalists (for the reception of Islam in the Latin Middle Ages and its picture in the West), scholars of the Middle East (to explore the importance of early Byzantine works on Islam for the development of Islamic theology), and linguists (to examine the very diffuse and different levels of language in which Greek works on Islam were written).

Objective of the Project

The process of knowledge transfer will be shown in the case study of the Qur'an. Capturing the entire transmitted material textual witnesses (*corpus*) referring to the Qur'an (*coranicum*) from a Greco-Byzantine influenced space (*byzantinum*), transfer and transformation of this Muslim 'revelation knowledge' will be shown from an external perspective by the Greek sources. Based on this physical evidence of manuscripts, an analysis and commentary allow us to establish source-based evidence regarding (1.) inner-Islamic understanding of the Qur'anic text (*kalām*) and its reception, as well as (2.) the Christian understanding (*logos*) of and its relation to Islam and its 'revelation knowledge', which is fixed within the Qur'an.

A database has to be constructed in which the relevant textual witnesses of the Qur'an in Greek from regions influenced by Byzantine power and culture are recorded from the the time of the rise of Islam until the fourth Crusade (1204) and the end of the Latin sovereignty over Constantinople (1261). It will contain the entire Qur'anic material from the polemic by Nicetas of Byzantium (9th century) «Ἀνατροπὴ τοῦ Κορανίου»,[1] the so-called *Coranus Graecus*, which is the oldest and most extensive textual witness of a Qur'an translation [*Nik*]; furthermore the isolated fragments from the *Abiuratio* (confirmed 13/14th century)[2] [*Abiur*] and the first Christian documentation of the Qur'an

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[1] Vat. gr. 681 (*codex unicus*).

[2] Vind. theol. gr. 306, fol. 24v–27r; Pal. gr. 233, fol. 3r–6v; Brux. II 4836 (B), fol. 85r–90v.

by John of Damascus (7/8th century) in *de haeresibus,* cap. 100 [*JohDam*]. In addition, the tradition of Euthymios Zigabenos (12th century)[3] [*EuthZig*] as well as the scarce details of monk Euthymios (11/12th century) [*EuthMon*] and the tradition of Bartholomew of Edessa (12th century) [*BarthEd*] should be included.

This material is to be – in reference to Reinsch[4] and in development Ulbricht[5] – classified in four categories: literal quotation (Z), free quotation (S), paraphrase (P), hint (H).[6] The transcription of the manuscripts (!) will be described using xml according to TEI-standards,[7] to be made suitable for a web application (html). The website will be laid out with css. Using a search engine, the material will be displayed, due to its prior codification (xml), following certain parameters, e.g. category of the fragment, grammatical/syntactical structures, etymological/semantic features, transcriptions etc. According to these parameters equivalents, variations, modifications etc. will be made visible and thus made accessible to the user in a time efficient and didactically appropriate manner.

Completed Items

Nik is completed in a beta-version as an xml-based Website (html; layout by css), 165 fol., 400 pages in the printed 4-column-synoptic edition in the dissertation of Ulbricht (vol. II); cf. the description for the project "A Digital Edition of the 'Coranus Graecus'". The *Abiur* (approx. 6 fol., x 3 manuscripts = 18 fol.) is fully prepared (transcribed and available in an xml-compatible version in the *Classical Text Editor*); *JohDam* (approx. 6 fol.) is likewise prepared.

Relevance of the Project

It is probable that a systematic study of Muslim-Christian relations, of its various stages and the connected process of knowledge transfer from Late Antiquity, mediated by Byzantium, up to the Latin Middle Ages and until the Early Modern Period, will result in the reevaluation of the origins of our 'Western image of Islam'. Congruences of stereotypes and reasoning from Nicetan ideas in the 9th century up to the 20th century imply a much more decisive role of Byzantium as an actor of knowledge transfer in terms of *Episteme Islamica* than previously thought. It is imperative at this point to illuminate our current society through this knowledge and to raise awareness for the other, or – with Pope Benedict XVI: That is „die große Aufgabe der Universität" (Regensburg, 12/09/2006).

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[3] Probably depending on Nicetas of Byzantium, but in a higher (!) language level.

[4] D. R. Reinsch: „Stixis und Hören", in: *Actes du VIe Colloque International de Paléographie Grecque* (Drama, 21–27 septembre 2003), vol. I, ed. B. Atsalos/ N. Tsironi, Athen 2008, p. 259–269.

[5] M. Ulbricht, Ph.D. (2015, FU Berlin), Chapter 6.1.4 (p. 197–200, vol. II).

[6] These classifications reflect a 'degree of proximity' to the hypothetical arabic textual basis of the Qur'an. They are essential to relativize the commentary whilst correctly contextualizing the analytical findings in a philological way.

[7] TEI-standards have been chosen as a foundation in line with the standards of the BBAW in order to facilitate a possible co-operation in terms of technical and financial synergy effects.