

Jewish, Hebrew and Old Testament Studies

Sektionsleitung / Section Supervision: Lukas Mühlethaler

Raum / Room: Tokyo (1.2001)

Organised Panels

The Medieval and Early Modern History of Middle Eastern Jews Through Genizah Arabic Poetry

Panel convener: Ahmed M. Sheir

The ERC-funded research project “Arabic Poetry in the Cairo Genizah (APCG)” aims to present a comprehensive and interdisciplinary study of Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic poetry in the Cairo Genizah. One of the main aims is to reveal, through the study of poetry, the history of the Middle Eastern Jews in medieval and early modern periods, showing undiscovered aspects of the socio-cultural, literary, and anthropological history of the Jewish community. The project explores the history of interconnected and interpersonal relationships between Jews, Christians and Muslims, examining the Genizah Arabic poetry role in shaping this history. Analysis of the Genizah poetic fragments while tracing historical sources and relevant literary texts will present transcultural perspectives of the social history of Jews and Christians, revealing the state of coexistence of minorities in the medieval and pre-modern Middle East societies. Last, but not least, one of our research aims is to conduct a literary-anthropological investigation of Genizah Arabic poetry to explore cultural and social practices of the Jewish community in medieval and early modern Egypt.

Presentations

Bilingualism in Genizah Arabic Poetry

Mohamed Ahmed (Trinity College Dublin), Benjamin Outhwaite (Cambridge University)

There is evidence of a shared interest in poetry between Arabic-speaking Jews and Muslims from the 7th century onwards, which has continued down through the ages until modern times. Arabized Jews began to compose poetry in Arabic in the pre-Islamic period, and some Jewish poets of Arabia are fixtures of the Arabic tradition, such as the 6th-c. al-Samaw'al ibn 'Ādiyā'. The emergence of secular Hebrew poetry in Andalusia, with its adoption of Arabic verse forms, was a direct consequence of exposure to Arabo-Islamic poetry. Remnants of this Arabized world can be found in the dozens of fragments with medieval Arabic poetry written in Hebrew script (Judaean-Arabic), from both known and unknown authors, found in the Cairo Genizah. These represent a significant body of poetic material that adds further evidence of the intertwined nature of Arabic language and culture in the Judaean-Islamic heritage of a multicultural and multilingual society. This presentation investigates the linguistic and graphic form of this intertwining of Arabic and Hebrew, and their respective scripts, in many medieval and pre-modern poetic manuscripts. The methods employed in the texts include translation, changing language (code-switching) and swapping between scripts (script-switching), which provide evidence of the interest these fragments hold for the study of bilingualism in the medieval Judaean-Arabic milieu.

Lost Judaeo-Arabic medical manuscripts of Matenadaran Collection

Ani Avetisyan (Cambridge University, United Kingdom)

My paper will discuss the MS No.1751 Early Modern Judaeo-Arabic medical manuscript preserved in the Scientific Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts of the Matenadaran Museum. The Matenadaran MS No. 1751, an eighteen century Ottoman medical miscellany in Judaeo-Arabic and Hebrew, contains texts of three medical treatises and a glossary of medico-botanical terms in Judaeo-Occitan. Although the volume has been copied during early modern times, the originals from which they were produced date back to approximately between tenth to fourteenth centuries. All three tracts are written in Judaeo-Arabic, only with occasional parts in Hebrew, by authors working in Baghdad, Egypt and Persia. The linguistic analysis of the manuscript reveals that the 18th century medical register retains many conservative orthographical, syntactical and morphological features as well as show how obviously the medical register differs from utilitarian prose. Additionally, it is somewhat surprising to see the similarities existing in 14th century Arabic and 18th century Judaeo-Arabic texts, except for the occasional cases when some verbal changes were found. This shows firstly, how little the medical texts were adapted to Early Modern audiences, in comparison to the translations of the sacred texts (Hary 2009) *šarḥ* (pl. *šurūḥ*) for instance and secondly, the education level of the intended audience of the medical works.

Legal documents and the analysis of writing materials as a source of information in medieval history

Zina Cohen (Universität Hamburg UHH, Alsterterrasse 1, 20354 Hamburg, Germany; BAM (Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung), Germany; EPHE Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Laboratoire SAPRAT, 4-14 rue Ferrus 75014 Paris, France), Judith Schlanger (EPHE Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Laboratoire SAPRAT, 4-14 rue Ferrus 75014 Paris, France; Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Oxford University, Pusey Lane, Oxford, OX1 2LE), Ira Rabin (Cohen (Universität Hamburg UHH, Alsterterrasse 1, 20354 Hamburg, Germany; BAM (Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung und -prüfung), Germany; EPHE Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Laboratoire SAPRAT, 4-14 rue Ferrus 75014 Paris, France)

The Cairo Genizah is a collection of mostly Jewish medieval documents discovered in the 19th century in the Ben Ezra Synagogue and other places in Fuṣṭāṭ, Cairo (Egypt). The Genizah provides sources for the literary, linguistic, historical studies of the various aspects of Jewish life. But they also represent an important, although poorly explored, source for understanding the use of writing materials in the Mediterranean medieval world. Our study has demonstrated that inks used in Fuṣṭāṭ in the 11th century show the greatest diversity in types and compositions.

The study of writing materials is of great importance not only for the history of medieval technologies but also for the general social and intellectual history. Such a study reflects the scribal practices, the contacts between different communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, and the process of producing the texts of the documents.

To support this statement, we would like to focus on a part of the recent PhD corpus by detailing the results obtained on some legal documents. We will thus see how the interpretation of the results of this corpus enriches our understanding of the legal system and can be used to reconstruct the chronology of the production of certain documents, by identifying writing stages.

For the determination of the inks type and composition we had to choose non-invasive, non-destructive and portable techniques to analyze the corpus *in-situ*. The analyses were carried out with a μ X-ray spectrometer ArtTAX and a USB microscope with illumination in the ultraviolet, visible, and near-infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Science in Exile: An Analysis of the German Jewish Scientists in Early Republican Turkey

Ebru Erginbas (Brown University, United States of America)

By the 1930s numerous German scholars of Jewish origin were invited to Istanbul University as full-time professors when the Nazi Regime ended their career as scholars in Germany. The forceful unemployment resulted in the displacement of the scholars of Jewish origin and non-Jewish scholars who openly were against the Nazi Regime. The nascent Turkish Republic's founder and first president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk invited some of these scholars to Turkey and offered them full-time employment in various higher educational institutions, including Istanbul University. This paper aims to examine select German Jewish medical scientists' exile experiences, namely Philipp Schwartz, Felix Haurowitz, Wilhelm Gustav Liepmann, Siegfried Oberndorfer, and Erich Frank in Istanbul. Though information on their exile experience is scarce, this paper will assess their experiences in light of the formation and consolidation of the national identity of the new Turkish Republic. These scientists were influential in introducing modern scientific concepts and treatment methods to Turkey. They were, ironically, treated as "Western" or "German" rather than "Jewish" in Turkey. At a time when Atatürk's Turkey was struggling to show the world that "Turks" were as much Western and civilized, the housing of the German exiles in Turkey helped Atatürk demonstrate that the new Republic cared about humanistic values. This paper argues for the ironies of the nascent Turkish Republic, which opened its arms to the exiled Jewish scholars, while at home punitive measures such as the "Wealth Tax" of 1942 were employed to discriminate against the Turkish Jews.

Words and Things (and Grammar)

Simon Haffner (LMU München, Deutschland)

In my Ph.D.-project (started in 10/2021) I investigate the philological endeavours of the Karaite grammar tradition between its poles of linguistics and hermeneutics: On the one side, we can observe an extensive study of single words as linguistic structures which we can consider as morphological in a modern sense. On the other, the entire engagement finally serves as an important instrument of understanding the Divine Law: The study of grammar aims to better understand the Biblical text and to improve the readers' skill to distinguish among various interpretations the correct ones from those which are not.

In my presentation, I will focus on the 'semiotic' aspect of the Karaite scholar 'Abū al-Faraj Hārūn ibn Faraj's language thought as it is displayed in his "Kitāb al-kāfī fī al-luġa al-'ibrānīya". Given that language is a human convention and based on reason, I want to outline what consequences this has for the systematisation 'Abū al-Faraj aims at based on his theory of naming ('tasmiya') (to which he dedicates two chapters in his "Kitāb al-kāfī"): This issue covers the (establishment of) relations between words and things, 'Abū al-Faraj's distinction between mere lexical items and functional grammatical patterns, as well as various phenomena of deviance from 'literal' meanings (subsumed under 'majāz').

The local deliberative bodies of the Jewish community in Tunis during the colonial period

Ahlem Hajaji (The Historicity of Democracy, Tunisia)

The aim of this paper is to contribute to discussions on notions like deliberation and democracy through the study of the transformation in a colonial context of the practices that existed within the Jewish communities of Tunis in medieval and Ottoman times. There were approximately 20,000 Jews in Tunis at the end of the nineteenth century, most of whom having ancestry in Tunisia stretching back at least to the Roman era, with smaller groups composed of arrivals from Spain and Italy. In 1857 reforms to grant civil and religious equality to all subjects were introduced by Mohammed Bey, prompted also by European economic interests. Before the French colonial occupation of 1881, Jews in Tunisia had lived with the Ottoman *dhimmī* status, that provided a level of protection unknown in Europe. Starting from 1910, some Jews could become naturalized French citizens, though they lost this status in 1940. After World War II, the Jewish community experienced a massive emigration, in the context of Independence and of the geopolitical tensions that followed the creation of the State of Israel. The paper, based upon a study of archives from the Tunisian National Archives and from local communal archival resources, as well as upon a reading of the local communal Jewish press and archives, examines the evolution of deliberative and voting practices within the various branches of Jewish communal organisations. It also proposes reflections on the articulation of temporalities between various layers of historicity.

Halévy, Habshush, Himyar, and Haskala

Josef Jeschke (DMG, Deutschland)

1869-1870 Joseph Halévy travelled the Yemen pursuing to collect as many South Arabic inscriptions as possible. In order to do so he hired Hayyim Habshush, a young jew from San'ā' as his local guide. Twenty years later Habshush composed a report of the campaign.

Even though Halévy was generally not interested in the contemporary jewry of Yemen he had a great impact on Yemenite jewry. The paper aims to illustrate how Halévy altered the attitude of Habshush and others towards magic and kabbalistic traditions by deciphering the South Arabic inscriptions.

Judaeo-Islamic Virtue Ethics in the Cairo Genizah

Muhammad Imran Khan (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland)

The fascination of the Judaeo-Arabic poetry of the Cairo Genizah is not confined to the confluence of languages (Arabic and Hebrew) therein, but also a congruence of themes within Islam and Judaism. This paper will explore the language, allusions and metaphors utilised in the poetry, which serves as an educative medium of transmission for the promotion of virtue ethics. It will argue for the centrality of these themes to the writers of such poetry, and how they relate to the religions of Islam and Judaism. This paper will demonstrate through the contents of these poetry fragments that there was a culturally-fluid appropriation of tropes that highlight a milieu of inter-religious familiarity and engagement. By doing so, it will reveal virtues that are emphasised in both faiths and towards which those who wrote about them were agnostic in their admiration

Planning Israel: Shaping the Future of the Arab Minority in the Jewish State, 1947-1948

Itamar Radai (The Open University of Israel, Israel)

This paper will engage in the history of the Emergency Committee, that was established on November 1947 in Jerusalem by the Jewish Agency and the National Council of the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. The reasons for its formation were the gradual disintegration of the British Mandate government, and the necessity to pave the way for the founding of a Jewish state in a part of Palestine, according to the United Nations Partition Plan that was approved by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947. The Emergency Committee appointed a Legal Council and sub-committees for economics and finance, public services, social services, law and administration, civil services, Jewish settlements within the projected Arab state, and else. The Committee's secretariat collected detailed information on the British Mandate Government that ruled Palestine from 1920 to 1948, and made specific plans for the transit of power, with the forthcoming British evacuation, into the future Jewish state institutions. On April 21, 1948 the Emergency Committee's final report was submitted to the National Administration. The paper will concentrate especially in the planned institutions and policies vis-a-vis the Arab population that lived in 1947 in the proposed are of the Jewish State, in comparison to other planning done by the Zionist leadership, headed by David Ben Gurion, at this time. In order to achieve this object, the research will include archive documents, diaries, and memoirs.

Sahl ben Maşliaḥ: a 10th century Karaite in Jerusalem and his Bible commentary

Friederike Sophie Schmidt (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany)

The Karaite Sahl ben Maşliaḥ is best known for his Epistle called Iggeret ha-Tokhaḥa (or Tokhaḥa Megulah) in which he utters stark criticism of his Rabbanite contemporaries' practices. Thus he is commonly labelled as "polemicist" and "missionary". However, his literary activities were not restricted to this realm but encompassed the genre of Bible commentary, law, and grammar. In my presentation I will offer a glimpse into the way his Bible commentary worked and how discussions of translation, grammar, and law were intertwined therein.

Bibliotheca Polyglotta Karaitica

Gregor M. Schwarb (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany)

The paper sets out the scale and structure of an ongoing project which aims at laying the ground for the publication of synoptic editions of major works by eminent Qaraite sages of the 11th century [Levi ben Yefet, Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, and Yeshu'ah ben Yehudah] alongside their near-contemporaneous Byzantine Hebrew translations and the recurrent Judaeo-Greek glosses and annotations contained therein. Only a handful of these texts have appeared in print so far, mostly in form of uncritical and unreliable editions. Based on the recently identified Arabic Vorlage of a long-known Byzantine Hebrew treatise (ספר מרפא לעצם), the paper will also reconsider previous appraisals of translation techniques and the scope of the “Byzantine Karaite Literary Project” (Zvi Ankori).

Jewish Voices in Medieval and Pre-modern Middle East through Genizah Poetry

Ahmed M. Sheir (Trinity College Dublin, Ireland)

This paper aims to uncover the socio-cultural history of Middle Eastern Jews, especially during Ayyubid and Mamluk Egypt (12th -16 centuries), through an investigation of Genizah poetic texts. It aims to present the problems of Jews and the state of their coexistence and interreligious dialogue with Christians and Muslims of the Middle East. In this regard, the work seeks to show the role of Genizah poetry in shaping the cultural and social voice of Jews across the medieval and pre-modern Middle East and the Mediterranean. The paper traces and conducts a parallel examination of relevant historical and travelogue sources, especially those written by Jews and Christians of the Middle East. This mutual investigation aims to present an accurate and credible image of hidden aspects of the socio-cultural history of medieval Middle Eastern Jews within a transcultural literary-historical perspective.