

The Zabid Programme

(see <http://www.cefass.org.ye>, page “Zabid Programme”)

Origins and status

The Zabid Programme (ZP) is a project of the Centre Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales (CEFAS, French Centre for Archaeology and Social Sciences), Sanaa, Yemen, a research unit attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DgCiD, Directorate General of International Cooperation and Development) and to the Centre Français de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS, National Centre for Scientific Research, UMIFRE, French Research Institutes Abroad). The director of the CEFAS is the *ex-officio* director of ZP. The ZP was launched in 2000 under the leadership of Dr Anne Regourd (AR) (<http://www.anne.regourd.org>), following exploratory missions by the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes (IRHT, Institute for Research into the History of Texts). These missions were born of requests made by the proprietors of private libraries to CEFAS and the ZP developed on a basis of Franco-Yemenite cooperation. The Yemeni institution responsible for the manuscripts, as per the guidelines laid down in the chart relative to the preservation of the country's cultural heritage, is the Direction of the manuscripts of Yemen. The Al-Asha'ir Library, in Zabid, has hosted the work of the Programme since its beginning.

Contributing Institutions

Social Fund for Development (SFD), Sanaa

French Embassy in Sanaa, Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle (SCAC)

Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (EPHE)/Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), UMR 7192 (Collège de France) research unit: “History of the art of book and writings in the mediaeval and modern Near-East”

The International Manuscript Association (TIMA)

The Louvre, Department of Islamic Art and Department of Graphic Arts, Restoration Workshop

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)

The Centre for Manuscripts of Zabid (CMZ)

General Organism for the Preservation of the Historical Sites of Yemen (GOPHSY)

Aims of the ZP

The aim of the ZP is to **safeguard the manuscripts of private libraries** of religious scholars (*‘ulamâ’*) in a city, Zabid, where the practice of traditional religious instruction has been practiced for centuries. In 2000 a preliminary count revealed between 3000 and 3500 codices distributed among about fifteen libraries.

Why a safeguard programme?

The Zabid manuscripts are in danger of physical destruction from attacks by termites and other papyrophages. Also, and above all, the integrity of the collections is threatened by the illegal removal of manuscripts from Yemen. Finally, the ambient humidity in the city damages the texts and renders the codices fragile. The different threats each demand their own appropriate solutions.

Three safeguard initiatives

The safeguard of the manuscripts is addressed in three ways:

- by **cataloguing** them precisely and in exhaustive detail, in order to identify and conserve the most important data necessary to assure their traceability,
- by completely **digitising** the manuscripts, their bindings, and the watermarks and other characteristics of the paper,
- by their **conservation** and physical **restoration**.

How?

The achievement of these three aims is fundamentally dependent on the **training** of a local team of four people from and living in Zabid: 'Arafat al-Hadhrami, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ahdal, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ahmar and Farag Abu al-Khayr. They are aiming to become **autonomous**, thus ensuring future **sustainability** of the ZP. This is the reason why our two major preoccupations are the **acquisition** of equipment or, more generally, **tools**, and the establishment of **permanent funding** from a **Yemeni institution**.

The team's self-sufficiency in cataloguing is being strengthened:

- * May 2008, training in FLE/FOS (French as a Foreign Language/French for Special Purposes) concentrating on codicological terminology. The first of two sessions,
- * December 2008, training in the InDesign page layout software,
- * The provision of a collection of specialised reference works, ongoing,
- * Long term financial support has been secured through the Social Fund for Development (SFD) of Yemen.

Since January 2007 the SFD has been funding the salaries of four members of the team as well as expenditure on running costs and equipment. In the same spirit the SFD has funded the production of the publications produced by the PZ.

Timetable

Cataloguing

Programme achieved.

July 2008, the completion of training evidenced in the production in three volumes of the catalogue of the library of 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami. Autonomy of the team.

January 2008, agreements with the owners of three other private libraries were signed.

January 2009, beginning of autonomous cataloguing.

Digitisation

Programme ongoing.

July 2007, beginning of 2010, training in photography, the archiving of images and their preparation for publication. 2007-2008: equipment funded by the SFD (digital camera with stand, and flexible fibre-optic light tablet, FIBO).

The digitalization, library by library, will be subject to agreements negotiated with each proprietor.

Conservation / restoration

Programme ongoing.

June 2005, comprehensive proposal submitted by AR to the delegation of Yemen to UNESCO at the latter's request.

July 2008, a mission of evaluation undertaken by André Le Prat, Dir. of the Louvre's restoration workshop, Department of Graphic Arts, and funded by the Dept of Islamic Arts, The Louvre. Objective: to determine the training and equipment required for the conservation and restoration of manuscripts in private libraries and for the establishment in the future of a Centre for Manuscripts in Zabid (CMZ).

November 2008, funding provided by TIMA for training in the cleaning of manuscripts and for the supply of 250 conservation-grade boxes.

October 2009, training by Ursula Dreibholz.

2008, the creation of a Centre for Manuscripts at Zabid (CMZ) has been supported by the Ministry of Culture in Yemen, and the SFD. The CMZ, under the leadership of the minister of Culture, now has its director, 'Arafat al-Hadhrami. Its opening is expected to be in 2009. Its initial collection will be augmented by gifts and acquisitions. The Centre of the Manuscripts of Zabid is an ideal location for the conduct a policy of conservation and restoration and well able to accommodate a workshop for restoration.

Research

As a means of promoting more accurate and scientific cataloguing of manuscripts, a research has been initiated. Three areas of enquiry have been chosen: binding, paper, and inks.

Bindings

The collected results of field work on the techniques of bookbinding and on tanneries, on tanners and bookbinders from social and anthropological points of view, and involving an examination of the bindings of manuscripts in several private libraries will be summarized in a forthcoming article "Fifty Years of Bookbinding in Zabid" (2010). The dissertation of Marcella Rubino (Master, University of Geneva, under the direction of Silvia Nef and Anne Regourd, 2006) which is about the present-day bookbinders of Sanaa, as well as the work of Ursula Dreibholz on the bindings of very early Qur'ans (collection of the Grand Mosque in Sanaa), and that of Arianna d'Ottone on mediaeval bindings, provide points of comparison in time and space, which this research will need to exploit.

Papers

Descriptions of the watermarked papers of the manuscripts recorded in the *Catalogue cumulé des bibliothèques de manuscrits de Zabid*, as a first step towards the selection of the most interesting items for codicologists and historians. Additionally, a mission is envisaged which will study the fibres of some of the papers.

Inks

The feasibility of laboratory analysis of the inks used in a selection of the manuscripts by the SpectroRaman process is being investigated. The results will be compared with some ink recipes, recalled by Zabidi artisans, which were collected in the course of field research between 2002 and 2003.

Public Training Session

> 29.6-3.7.2002, course of training in cataloguing, CEFAS – Dâr al-makhtûtât / Manuscript Centre, Sanaa – 25hrs of Arabic-language training in the cataloguing of manuscripts. Six trainers, two of them from Paris, organised by AR for CEFAS.

Pilot Programme

From its inauguration in Yemen the ZP has had some aspects of a pilot project evidenced by the emphasis that has been placed on the study of the paper and binding of manuscripts. It is for this reason that a volume collecting Arabic translations of western language (French, English, German) reference works on paper is in preparation (publication CEFAS/DAI, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut).

> 2007, publication on line of *Catalogue partiel de la bibliothèque des waqf-s de Dhamar*, comprising records prepared under the aegis of the General Organism for the Antiquities, Museums and Manuscripts (GOAMM). End of 2008: signature by CEFAS and the authors of their agreement to online publication.

2009: putting on line. Under examination: bringing extant records into conformity with the more detailed model of cataloguing employed in Zabid.

> End of 2007, le GOPHSY (General Organism for the Preservation of the Historical Sites of Yemen)/Shibam (Hadhramaout) establishes contact with the ZP in order to realise a project to safeguard about forty manuscripts on the model of the Zabid catalogue.

End of March 2008, AR undertakes evaluation mission funded by the Yemeni Embassy at Paris.

April-May 2008, two projects, one to catalogue and digitise watermarks, the other to fabricate conservation cabinets are submitted for funding to the Ambassador of Yemen to Paris and the GTZ.

Dissemination

The *Chroniques du manuscrit au Yémen (CMY)* has as its principal mission the projection of information about projects concerning manuscripts in and of Yemen (<http://www.cefass.com.ye> and <http://www.anne.regourd.org>).

Since 2006, publication on line from the CEFAS website of two issues per year in Arabic and French versions.

The *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabid* has been distributed in more than fifteen countries in Europe, the Americas and the Arab world.

Recognition

A reception was held at the Embassy of Yemen in Paris, in September 2006, in honor of the ZP (<http://www.anne.regourd.org>, page “Events”).

Communications

A variety of articles on the ZP, in France, Yemen and elsewhere. See <http://www.anne.regourd.org>, page “Publications”).

Publications

Books

A. Regourd (ed.), *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabid. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 1, Sanaa, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, Fonds social de développement, records of manuscripts in Arabic, 2006.

A. Regourd (ed.), *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabid. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 1. *Les papiers filigranés*, Sanaa, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, Fonds social de développement, bilingual French and Arabic, 2008.

A. Regourd (ed.), *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabid. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 2, Sanaa, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, Fonds social de développement, bilingual French and Arabic, 2009.

A. Regourd (ed.). A. al-Ghumari *et alii*, *Catalogue partiel des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque des waqf-s de Dhamar*, Sanaa, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, in Arabic, complete, publication online end 2009.

A. Regourd (ed.), *Catalogue cumulé des manuscrits de bibliothèques privées de Zabid. 1. La bibliothèque de 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hadhrami*, fasc. 3, Sanaa, Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales, Fonds social de développement, bilingual French and Arabic, 2010.

A. Regourd (ed.), *Les papiers du manuscrit arabe* [a volume collecting Arabic translations of western language (French, English, German) reference works on paper], CEFAS / DAI (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut), 2010.

Articles

A. Regourd, « Les manuscrits des bibliothèques privées de Zabîd : enjeu d'un catalogue », *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 32(2002), 2002, 247-257.

A. Regourd, « Les routes commerciales entre Zabîd et l'Europe : les papiers filigranés de fonds manuscrits de Zabîd (Yémen, fin 18e-milieu 20e s.) », *Convegno Storia e cultura dello Yemen in età islamica con particolare riferimento al periodo rasûlide (Roma, 30-31 octobre 2003)*, Rome, Bardi ed., 2006, 173-198 + 8 fig.

A. Regourd, "Copying manuscripts and the transmission of knowledge: The case of Zabid (Yemen) with reference to a private library", *Hadeeth ad-Dar* 31, Koweit, déc. 2009, 3-4 p., bilingual English and Arabic.

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