Proposal for two co-ordinated panels (or a single panel of short papers) at the Fordham Medieval Conference, ‘Manuscript as medium’

Comparative perspectives on language contact in European and Asian manuscripts: multilingualism, glossing, translation

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This pair of panels (or single panel, depending on the time allotted) is offered by the research network ‘Manuscripts Between Languages: East and West’. This network brings together researchers interested in the medieval manuscript inheritance as testimony to contact, merger and transfer between languages. Six colleagues from the network will each present a manuscript from their specialist field of interest. In each case the speaker will interrogate the manuscript in question as a documentary witness to the dynamics of language contact, in terms of two recurrent themes: (a) contact between vernacular languages and the language associated with a prestigious international religion, (b) the relationship between language contact and the emergence of new national identities and literatures. Our developing comparative approach aims both to explore common interpretative frameworks and sets of research questions for interrogating such manuscripts, and to highlight transnational points of contact and exchange between eastern and western worlds throughout the medieval period.

The papers could ideally be presented as two linked panels with each manuscript being allotted up to twenty minutes, allowing time for subsequent discussion. To highlight the overarching themes of our research, we suggest the following groupings:
Panel 1: ‘Manuscripts Between Languages: Language Merger and Contact’ : Clarke, Whitman, Rand
Panel 2: ‘Manuscripts Between Languages: Collaboration and Multicultural Production’: Galambos, O’Hogan, Ní Mhaonaigh

Alternatively, if the organisers would prefer to allot a single panel space to this group of papers, we are ready to cut our contributions to short presentations of 10 minutes each, again allowing time for discussion in a 90 minute panel. In that case the papers would best be sequenced as are the abstracts below, moving from east to west in terms of manuscript origins.

1. Contested vernacular readings: the Satō-bon Kegon mongi yōketsu and the Tōdaiji fuju monkō

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The Satō-bon Kegon mongi yōketsu and the Tōdaiji fuju monkō were inscribed on opposite sides of a scroll held in the personal library of Baron Satō Tatsujirō in Tokyo, which was reproduced in a two-colour collotype edition before the original was destroyed in U.S. bombing in 1945.

The Kegon mongi yōketsu is thought to have been produced at the end of the 8th century, most likely at the scriptorium at Tōdaiji in Nara, the imperial capital. It is a copy of a Korean text, the Hwaŏn munŭ yogiŏ, written by the monk Pyowŏn at Hwayongsa temple in the Sillan capital of Kyŏngju. The original text is a Huayan sutra commentary, written in Chinese by a Korean. The Satō-bon manuscript has rudimentary vermilion morphosyntactic glosses of the type known in Japan as wokototen. The glosses enable the text to be read either in Japanese or in Korean; the glossing technique has its roots in Korean practice, but has been argued to be the source for later complex glossing techniques developed in Japan. In fact the
text cannot be defined as either ‘Chinese’ or ‘Korean’ or ‘Japanese’; it is written using the graphic medium of the contemporary cosmopolitan language (Chinese) to be read in one or more local vernaculars.

*Tōdaiji fujū monkō* on the reverse side is a series of prayer and sermon fragments, probably composed under commission by Nara monks in the early 9th century. In the 30 to 40 years after the *Kegon mongi yōketsu/Hwaŏn munŭ jogyŏ* had been copied and glossed on the recto side, this text had become dispensable. The *Tōdaiji fujū monkō* is composed in a mixture of Chinese, morphosyntactic glosses, and the characters later known as *katakana*, which originated as phonogram glosses. In less than half a century, Japanese vernacular reading had developed into vernacular writing.

The paper will examine this artefact as a document of the dynamics of language contact in east Asia, focussing on glossing as a mode of transfer and mediation between languages.

2. Multilingual manuscripts along the Silk Road: The Book of Omens

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The Book of Omens (*Irk Bitig*) is a tenth-century manuscript codex discovered a century ago in the Buddhist library cave near the city of Dunhuang in north-west China. The larger part of the manuscript (about 100 pages) contains a divination text written in the Uyghur runic script; but there are also fifteen pages of Buddhist content in Chinese, which are believed to have been added to the book later on. Although the manuscript generated considerable interest in Turkic studies, this attention focussed entirely on the Uyghur text as evidence for early Turkic culture and religion; the Chinese part was thought unimportant and remained almost
entirely unstudied. By considering the manuscript as a whole, much more can be learned about the production and use of the codex.

The paper will use this manuscript as a case study arguing for seeing the production of manuscripts as an ongoing process, which continues after the initial act of copying the main text and may include subsequent additions, marks and notes. All of these have the potential to tell us how the manuscript was used by later owners. It will also be shown that the Chinese part of the codex, written in a rather inexperienced hand, contains numerous phonetic substitutions (i.e. mistakes) that indicate that the person copying those parts had a relatively low level of literacy in Chinese, or may not have been Chinese at all. In these ways the Book of Omens attests to the multilingual nature of scribal culture along the Silk Road in the tenth century, showing how manuscripts could include various combinations of languages and scripts.

3. The case of the Cairo Genizah: Fragments from the First Order of Fustat
Michael Rand (mcr47@cam.ac.uk)

The First Order of Fustat is a document preserved in the Cairo Genizah, a Hebrew manuscript trove containing several hundred thousand fragments that was ‘discovered’ in the attic room of a synagogue in Old Cairo. It documents the liturgical practices of the local Palestinian Jewish community, and was composed early in the 13th century by Yedutun ha-Levi, the cantor of the Palestinian synagogue in Fustat who tried to save the remaining vestiges of the Palestinian liturgical rite from being replaced by the Babylonian liturgy.

The manuscript is trilingual: 1) liturgical instructions in Arabic, the local vernacular, 2) prose liturgical texts as well as most of the liturgical poems in Hebrew, and 3)
lections, sections of liturgy and several liturgical poems in Aramaic. This
distribution of languages reflects the historical/cultural situation of the community
in whose name it was produced. Over many centuries Hebrew, the fundamental
liturgical language of the Jews, had been supplemented and partially supplanted by
Aramaic; subsequently, the gradual penetration of Islam into the life-fabric of the
peoples of the Near East meant that Arabic replaced Aramaic as the vernacular,
but Aramaic persisted because it had by this time been enshrined in religious and
cultural life.

The section to be discussed is represented by six fragments, three of which join
together into an almost-complete manuscript leaf. It describes the custom of the
sanctification over wine (qiddush) in honor of the New Moon of Nisan, the first
month of the Jewish liturgical calendar during which Passover is celebrated. The
ceremony was accompanied by the recitation of liturgical poems (piyyutim) and
lections from the Aramaic translation of the Bible (Targum). Being a peculiarity of
the Palestinian liturgical tradition, it was described here in an effort to save the
custom from extinction.

One of the Aramaic liturgical poems is a versified precedence debate in which each
of the months in turns offers arguments in favour of its own pre-eminence. In the
end, Nisan emerges victorious. This particular poem was composed by Sahlan ben
Avraham, a major figure in the Babylonian (!) community of Fustat in the 11th
century, but it clearly goes back to models from Byzantine-period Palestine. It will
be highlighted as a late representative of a genre that has deep roots not only in the
Palestinian tradition of liturgical poetry, but in the poetic traditions of the Ancient
Near East as a whole.

Beyond the immediate context of the attempt to preserve the Palestinian liturgy,
the First Order of Fustat serves to underscore the multi-lingual and multi-local
nature of Jewish life within the Medieval Islamic Near East. The Jews of this time, at least the learned among them, could be expected to have command of at least three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and the vernacular Arabic. The paper will show that the broad geographical and cultural horizons implied by this internal diversity was typical of the medieval world at large in the areas dominated by Islam.

4. Multilingualism at the court scriptorium of Roger II of Sicily: the Harley Trilingual Psalter

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Harley 5786, containing the Psalms in parallel Greek, Latin, and Arabic translations, was produced in Palermo between 1132 and 1153. In this paper I argue that the manuscript was almost certainly produced at the royal scriptorium of Roger II. There is clear evidence of scribal collaboration and influence across the three languages and scripts. For instance, although the rubricated initials in the Greek and Latin columns were for the most part written by different scribes, there are occasions where the Latin initials seem to mimic the corresponding Greek ones. On one occasion, an error that occurs in the Latin and the Greek columns has been corrected in both of them. In addition, the ruling pattern and *mise en page* indicates that work in the three languages was being done simultaneously, with quires being passed on once each scribe had completed the columns assigned to him in one of the three languages. Close analysis of the manuscript therefore indicates that it was created in a scriptorium that accommodated scribes proficient in Greek, Latin, and Arabic scripts. In the period under discussion, this can only mean the royal scriptorium of Roger II, and in the conclusion of the paper I demonstrate how this psalter can be seen as fitting into the image of Roger as a multi-lingual ruler, particularly keen to emphasise his legitimacy over all the linguistic groups present in mid-twelfth century Sicily. The manuscript will serve as
an illustration of the special place of Sicily in this period as a locale for transfer and merger in both eastward and westward directions.

5. Language merger in an anthology of sacred poetry: the Irish Liber Hymnorum

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This paper is focussed on the Irish Liber Hymnorum, a collection compiled around the beginning of the eleventh century and preserved in two richly-decorated manuscripts from around 1100 AD. Each of the two manuscripts preserves a version of the same collection of hymns and liturgical or para-liturgical texts, with scholarly prefaces, scholia, and in some cases extensive marginal para-texts. Latin and the vernacular are inextricably linked in this collection. Some of the hymns are written in Latin or Hiberno-Latin, others are in Old or Middle Irish, and in one important case the poem switches back and forth between the two languages within metrical units and grammatical clauses. Prefaces, glosses and marginal texts are written in a combination of Latin and Irish in which code-switching between the two languages appears to be unmarked or randomised, even within a single sentence or clause. This suggests that a specialised intermediate bilingual variety may have been a recognised medium of communication among the scholars responsible for the editing of the exemplar. All this takes place in manuscripts whose rich illumination programme suggests that they were intended for display as well as philological study and (perhaps) liturgical performance.

This paper will argue that the Liber Hymnorum manuscripts can best be explained as examples of the emerging fashion in eleventh-century Europe for the compilation of anthologies of earlier poetic works, potentially characterised in terms of a (new? newly articulated?) sense of national literary identity. I will present comparative
data from a group of roughly contemporary manuscripts associated with Canterbury, including the ‘Cambridge Songs’ manuscript (MS Cambridge, UL Gg. 5.35), to suggest the international context in which the Irish Liber Hymnorum may have been compiled and disseminated. The manuscripts will be presented against the background of the competing dynamics of vernacular poetic tradition on the one hand and the transnational power of the Latin language and Latinate textuality on the other.

6. Multi-lingualism and multiculturalism in a vernacular manuscript: the Book of Ballymote
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The Book of Ballymote is a late fourteenth-century manuscript containing diverse material composed over several centuries preceding the time of its production. Its dominant language is Old and Middle Irish; however, its professional scribes collaborated in the use of Latin at pivotal points throughout. Moreover, a diverse range of Latin texts underlie the materials that constitute the textual core of the manuscript. Linguistically, therefore, the Book of Ballymote is poised on the brink between the discourse of vernacular Irish learning and the international discourse of Latin-language authority. However, as far as its content is concerned it is carefully balanced as a product of Classical and Biblical learning deliberately presented in an Irish-language guise. In its pages the multi-faceted narrative of the Irish past is set within the enveloping conceptual framework provided by the Six Ages of the World and the foundational narratives of Classical heroic narrative.

Assessing how the Book reached this equilibrium presents an opportunity to explore the changing nature of ‘manuscripts between languages’ in the later Middle Ages, using the Irish context as a case study. The manuscript gathers materials composed over a wide range of time from the eighth century onward; as a
compilation, however, its material illuminates a changing intellectual culture which saw the locus of learning move from ecclesiastical centres into those in which secular learned families held sway, between roughly the eleventh century and the thirteenth - the period in which the texts contained therein were recast and codified. Through this wide-angled lens the Book of Ballymote will emerge as a distinctive kind of manuscript nestling between and among languages.