

# Preface

This volume grew out of the workshop ‘Creating standards: orthography, script and layout in manuscript traditions based on Arabic alphabet’ held at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, University of Hamburg, on 10–11 October 2013. The convenors of the workshop (and the two first editors of the volume), followed the inspiring initiative of Michael Friedrich to compare standards in various manuscript cultures influenced by Arabic script. Our initial – and over-ambitious – plan was to (a) identify tendencies of standardisation in orthography, script and layout, (b) examine the extent to which these three domains of manuscript production are related and (c) delineate factors behind standardisation processes. During the workshop discussions and later in the process of editorial work, it became increasingly clear that the paths of standardisation in the domains of language, orthography and manuscript production are not necessarily connected, and the standards are perceived and measured differently in each of the domains. This is directly and indirectly confirmed by the chapters of this volume, most of which have more confident conclusions about standardisation processes in orthography rather than in other domains of manuscript production.

This book deals with various aspects of standardisation by stepping outside the disciplinary and regional boundaries and providing a typological cross-cultural comparison of standardisation processes in writing traditions influenced by Arabic where different cultures, languages and scripts interact. A wide range of case studies gives insights into the factors behind uniformity and variation in Judaeo-Arabic in Hebrew script (8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Esther-Miriam Wagner*), South Palestinian Christian Arabic (8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Paolo La Spisa*), New Persian (9<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> century, *Paola Orsatti*), Aljamiado of the Spanish Moriscos (15<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Nuria de Castilla*), Ottoman Turkish in the Arabo-Persian script (14<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Jan Schmidt*), a single multilingual Ottoman manuscript (late 16<sup>th</sup> century, *Branka Ivušić*), Sino-Arabic writing *xiaojing* in Northwest China (18<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Florian Sobieroj*), Malay Jawi script writing in the Moluccas (17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Jan van der Putten*), Kanuri and Hausa Ajami writing (17<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Dmitry Bondarev* and *Nikolay Dobronravin*), the Berber language Kabyle in Algeria (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Lameen Souag*), and Ethiopian *fidāl* script used in transliteration of Arabic (19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries, *Alessandro Gori*).

A comparative analysis of pathways of standardisation in the twelve manuscript cultures addressed in this volume allows for some generalisations, as follows. Contact situations do not necessarily lead to the exchange of standardised orthographic principles. In many cultures, the co-existence of Standard Arabic and non-standardised languages spoken and written in Muslim communities poses a

paradox: such languages are profoundly influenced by Arabic, but their orthographies are not modelled on the principle of standardisation. This apparent paradox is resolved by the prediction that standards in orthography – one of the domains of manuscript culture – are conceptually different from standards in other domains, such as format, layout and script. Each domain of manuscript culture develops microsystems of standardisation and different domains have different ‘areas’ of uniformity and standardisation in a given manuscript culture. Thus, a general tendency observable at the level of physical features of manuscript production is that layout and script types tend to be unified, irrespective of orthographic norms and, vice versa, orthographic norms develop irrespective of norms applied to physical domains of manuscript production.

The editorial process took us longer than we planned, and we are immensely grateful to the contributors for their patience and trust in our collaborative work. Our gratitude goes to all the presenters and participants of the October 2013 workshop for the inspiring exchange of ideas many of which have materialised in this volume. It was a great pleasure to work with Carl Carter, Maya Kiesselbach and Joe McIntyre who meticulously copy-edited most of the contributions. We thank you sincerely for your most helpful corrections, remarks and suggestions. Our appreciation goes to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments on various parts of the volume. We owe an immeasurable debt to Cosima Schwarke who has been a guiding lantern during our long journey. It is thanks to your day-to-day support in all editorial matters that this book finally sees the light. Our appreciation also goes to Astrid Kajsa Nylander who greatly assisted with the final layout of the book. We are most grateful to the editors of the series *Studies in Manuscript Cultures* for taking an interest in this volume proposal. This publication project would not have been possible without the financial support of the German Research Foundation (DFG) which funds the Sonderforschungsbereich 950 Manuscript Cultures in Asia, Africa, and Europe.

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