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Introduction

Manuscripts provide the key documentary evidence for understanding the history of cultural life across the breadth of Europe and Asia, throughout the long stretch of time that it is convenient to call the Middle Ages. As historical artefacts, they enable us to engage with the voices of medieval people, frozen in fragments of written discourse that are connected in varying degrees to the realities of contemporary communication.[1] Across the full extent of this geographical range and long time period, manuscript cultures created the sites for meetings between languages, worked out in sometimes similar and sometimes contrasting ways from eastern to western extremes.[2] The case studies in this collection range in date from the ninth century to the late fourteenth century CE and are concerned with specific regions from Ireland to Japan.

Linguistic interaction takes many forms in these heterogeneous sources. In some cases, we witness a virtual merger, with code-switching between languages so prominent that the resultant whole is a bilingual composition.[3] Other manuscripts present a dialogue between a pair of languages that relate to each other in diglossic terms, typically through interlinked learned and vernacular levels on a single page. There may, for example, be a main text in one language and an apparatus of glosses (scholia, marginalia, paratexts) in another. Alternatively, the marginalia may be couched in a mixture between learned and vernacular codes, and this in turn may reproduce a linguistic amalgam used in

1 Literature on medieval manuscript studies is extensive, ranging from introductory surveys aimed at the general reader, such as De Hamel 2016 and Wellesley 2021, both with a European focus, to detailed analysis of specific collections and traditions, as in Cherubini and Pratesi 2010, Galambos 2020, Vergiani, Cuneo and Formigatti 2017. Comparative studies remain relatively rare, but see Quenzer, Bondarev and Sobisch 2014 and Bausi 2015, as well as Agati 2009 (with a focus on codicology). The contributions in Albritton, Henley and Treharne 2020 are set in the context of important recent advances in the study of medieval manuscripts in a digital age. We are grateful to Dr Elizabeth Boyle, Maynooth University, for comments on this introduction, and for the reference to Wellesley 2021 (above) and to Ovenden 2021 (n. 8 below).

2 For a valuable set of studies involving Latin in interaction with other languages, see Garrison, Orbán and Mostert 2013. Communication across languages in various forms underlies the productive approach adopted in Kornicki 2018 in his study of East Asia.

3 See for example Pahta 2012 for late medieval English examples.

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schoolroom or court at the time of composition.[4] Regional languages, used in local or informal communication, can be seen reacting in complex ways to the overshadowing presence of an international, universalising language. One aspect of this in the context of a globalising religion – be it Christianity, Buddhism or Islam (to name only the most obvious examples) – is the appearance of manuscripts in which power-relationships between languages are visibly enacted on the page.[5] Here too, however, there is a wide range of variation – even within the history of Christianity, for example, the monolingual authority of the Latin text was asserted in Western Europe in a way that finds no direct equivalent in the Greek world.[6] On another level again, a dynamic synergy may be covertly at work through the practice of translation, which hides the source language under the cloak of another language altogether.[7] A text couched in a single surface code may thus be the result of a vigorous yet invisible interaction between source and target languages.

This collection of twelve studies of individual manuscripts presents cross-cultural evidence for these and other types of inter-language exchange, from horizons as diverse as the Atlantic West, Carolingian Europe, the Byzantine world, the Silk Roads, and East Asia. The essays function individually as discrete contributions, each aiming to 'curate' a single artefact as witness to the diversity out of which it emerged. Taken together, the essays highlight a range of overlapping themes and approaches, illustrating language interaction in global religions, pedagogical exchange, and in the construction of secular societies. The focus for each contributor remains the individual manuscript under scrutiny, but we hope that the implicit analogies will vindicate the comparative approach while adding resonance to the discipline-specific research enterprises on which they report.

Each manuscript holds meaning as a single, integrally united artefact, whatever the diversity of its constituent elements and the complexity of its production history. One particularly complex (and tragic) witness is provided by the scroll examined by John Whitman, which is no longer extant in its own

4 On the dynamics of medieval code-switching in the West, see the valuable case study by Blom 2017.

5 Pollock 2006 explores the interaction between the literary culture of Sanskrit and other cultures and languages in pre-modern India.

6 See the survey by van Liere 2014, 80–109.

7 For a recent collection of essays discussing the practice of translation in the medieval West, see Beer 2019.

right, since it has been destroyed in war.[8] Dating originally to the early ninth century, it survives only as a photographic reproduction made in 1939, presenting in two separate facsimiles what had originally been the opposite sides of a single sheet. Both show how Chinese writing was adapted in different ways by neighbouring peoples. On the recto side (the *Kegon mongi yōketsu* manuscript), a Korean cleric, P'yowŏn, wrote one of the earliest surviving Korean liturgical texts, but with punctuation marks and glosses that would enable it to be read either in Korean or in Japanese. The reverse side (the *Tōdaiji fujumonkō* text) provides the earliest example of the graphic adaptation of Chinese, the *katakana* syllabary, to write a text so that it could be read in the Japanese language. As Whitman notes, the significance of each side, in the respective Korean and Japanese cultural contexts, has long been recognised in scholarship. Considered together, however, they become part of a new discourse, because they illuminate graphic nodes across and between languages – yet they also problematise the methodology of anyone who tries to assert without qualification that such a text is written in one language rather than the other.

The adaptation of the writing system of another prestige language, Latin, in the fifth century, made possible the emergence of fully-fledged manuscript cultures for the vernacular languages of Britain and Ireland. Two ninth-century manuscripts presented here illustrate how Latin and Irish on the one hand, and Latin and Welsh on the other, remain enmeshed in an educational context with vernacular glosses on Latin embodying the link, just as was the case with the Satō scroll. There, the Korean text was written around the turn of the ninth century CE, with the Buddhist prayers (*Tōdaiji fujumonkō*) being added some thirty years later. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 904 is almost exactly contemporary, and presents an analogous confrontation between languages. It may be more than merely coincidental that in each case the receiving language is that of an island people engaging with a centrally powerful culture (Chinese in one case, Latin in the other) which had itself engaged in an earlier process of transference, its sacred texts having originated in a still more ancient language (Sanskrit and Greek respectively).[9] The St Gall manuscript contains a copy of a foundational

8 For the phenomenon of a culturally crucial manuscript destroyed in war and now knowable only at second hand, a potent Western example is the richly-illuminated *Hortus Deliciarum* manuscript of the late twelfth century, destroyed in the Franco-Prussian war and reconstructed on the basis of earlier drawings and transcriptions from it (Green et al. 1979). For a general study of the destruction of manuscripts and books, compare Ovenden 2021.

9 See further Moran and Whitman (2022) on the analogy between the linguistic interplay of Sanskrit with Chinese in East Asian Buddhism, and that of Latin and Old Irish in the Christianity at the western extreme of Eurasia.

study of the linguistics of the Latin language, the 'Foundations of Grammar' (*Institutiones Grammaticae*) of Priscian, which was originally written in Constantinople for Greek-speakers of the sixth century CE, but later became a canonical text in the Latin schools of Carolingian Europe. Priscian's own text thus reflects the coming together of two linguistic traditions, Latin and Greek; but a further layer of multilingual interaction also features in this manuscript. As Pádraic Moran shows, copious commentary adorns its pages in the form of glosses both in Latin and in Old Irish, and often in a variety that fuses the two languages, showing how students of Priscian's work practised a deeply cross-linguistic style of engagement with grammatical science.[10]

A Welsh manuscript from the end of the ninth century (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 153), examined here by Lars Nooij and Peter Schrijver, originated in an educational sphere akin to or overlapping with that which gave us the St Gall Priscian. The Cambridge manuscript enshrines another prominent Latin text, this time one that evokes the mysterious nature of learning itself: 'The Marriage of Mercury and Philology' (*De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*) composed around the turn of the fifth century CE by Martianus Capella, a native of Roman North Africa. Glosses in Welsh and Latin bear witness to a long period of sustained study of this complex allegory in a multilingual environment. A further linguistic dimension is involved when the manuscript's history is brought down to its transfer from Wales to England (perhaps Canterbury) by about the 930s. Its multiple layers preserve records of mingling speech-communities involving various vernaculars – British Celtic, Germanic and possibly also Irish – but also, crucially, a spoken variety of Latin itself. As Nooij and Schrijver show, the lone mixed Welsh-Latin gloss in this manuscript possibly bears witness to the survival of a spoken variety of regional British Latin as late as the end of the ninth century.

This theme, the phenomenon of an international learned language generating spoken varieties, throws up a further possible analogy in the form of the evidence for Sanskrit preserved in the bilingual Sanskrit-Khotanese phrasebook on a scroll from the Library Cave at Dunhuang (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Pelliot chinois 5538), examined here by Sam van Schaik. This pedagogical text was added later to the verso of a scroll which also preserves on its recto a bureaucratically formal Khotanese letter of 970 CE. The Sanskrit-Khotanese document exemplifies the relationship between a local, regional language and

10 On the antecedents of the interaction between Greek and Latin witnessed by the text and manuscripts of Priscian, see Scappaticcio 2015, with her emphasis on multilingualism as the rule not the exception in the early history of grammatical science (see especially 16–17).

an international language that was used more widely in educational and religious contexts. As van Schaik argues, it also preserves a kind of everyday communicative Sanskrit, the preserve of merchants and Buddhist monks. If the Martianus Capella manuscript shows Latin used informally, even colloquially, in early medieval Britain, the Dunhuang phrasebook shows Sanskrit similarly becoming a mode of practical communication, in a community where speakers of many different mother tongues must have mingled.

As a nodal point on the Silk Roads,[11] Dunhuang's strategic location made it the site for many forms of cultural exchange. This is demonstrated by the evidence of a further manuscript of similar date and provenance: London, British Library, Or. 8212/161, dated to around 930 CE. The manuscript in question, the *Irk Bitig* 'Book of Omens', is celebrated for the unique Turkic composition that it contains. As Imre Galambos demonstrates, however, the very importance of the Turkic text has been allowed to overshadow the two Buddhist texts in Chinese characters with which the manuscript begins and ends. Looking at the manuscript from a purely codicological perspective, its physical form also bears witness to a further level of cross-cultural influence: this is not a scroll but a codex, a book-form that may only have been possible because of the emulation of forms of book-production that had originated in the West, ultimately in Late Antique Europe.

The physical constitution of the book is likewise significant in the case of Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, suppl. gr. 911. This is a mid-eleventh-century copy of the Gospel of Luke in Greek, but it is accompanied by additional material and a translation in Arabic. The fact that the pages are turned to the left identifies it as a product of the Byzantine Greek world. As Christian Høgel shows, however, a skilful balance is achieved between the opposing directions of the two writing systems employed in this manuscript. A product of multilingual Sicily, it exemplifies the harmonious juxtaposition of two of the learned languages deployed in that island, characterised as it was by extraordinary modes of co-existence. Although Greek here retains its liturgical primacy, the supplementary information in Arabic indicates an arabicised audience requiring such tools to engage meaningfully with a Gospel text.

An Arabic-speaking audience is also suggested in the case of another product of multilingual Sicily from about a century later: London, British Library,

11 The term 'Silk Road(s)' remains a convenient shorthand, although its late nineteenth-century origins render it problematic as an historiographical construct (see Waugh 2007). The interdisciplinary archaeological survey in Whitfield 2019 is a valuable experiment in pushing the boundaries of the term to the widest possible extent.

Harley 5786. This is a trilingual psalter with Greek, Latin and Arabic translations of the Psalms set out in three columns. As Cillian O'Hogan observes, it may have served the practical purpose of helping speakers of Arabic to follow a liturgical rite conducted in Latin. The explanation for this configuration is as much political as religious. By situating the production of the manuscript within the politics of the court of Roger II of Sicily (who died in 1154), O'Hogan shows how the Harley Psalter speaks to the multilingualism which was a central feature of Roger's political programme, even when individual subjects and communities among the general population are likely to have remained monolingual.

Michael Rand crosses the Mediterranean to discuss another trilingual liturgical compilation composed a little later, in the first quarter of the thirteenth century: the First Order of Fustat, from the extraordinary trove of documents of the Cairo Geniza. Here again, the local spoken variety of Arabic is used for liturgical instructions, while Hebrew and Aramaic are deployed in the liturgical texts themselves. The relative distribution of these two sacred languages accurately reflects the space that they each occupied in Jewish liturgical practice at the time. Hebrew was the primary language of the synagogue, including in liturgical poetry (*piyyutim*), while Aramaic was generally associated with Targumic translations of specific passages of scripture and occasional *piyyutim*. This pattern is exemplified by the opposition between these two languages in the text edited and translated here by Rand.

To the century or so before the composition of the First Order of Fustat belong a pair of twin Irish manuscripts, those of the *Liber Hymnorum* or 'Book of Hymns'. Some of the hymns in question may have had a para-liturgical function, but the linguistic mixture and *mise en page* of the manuscripts suggest that this hymnal collection was much more likely to have served as a repository of venerable poetry. Whereas in the First Order of Fustat manuscript the paratext was written in Arabic, evidently serving as the functional vernacular, in the *Liber Hymnorum* the interpretative commentary surrounding the hymns is written in a hybrid of Latin and Middle Irish. But this variety is not a casual or private language, and the manuscripts are not simply collections used for private study. Instead, the carefully graded sequence of scripts and the richly illuminated initial letters indicate that the *Liber Hymnorum* manuscripts were also used for display and may even have served as sacred relics. Here, Michael Clarke suggests, the hymns of the saints of Ireland were being exalted as a national literary canon in manuscripts whose form emulated those of the manuscripts of canonical Latin authors produced internationally in the same period.

Alongside the prevailing pattern of fusion and mingling exemplified by these manuscripts, there is also evidence for deliberate self-assertion and

carefully cultivated statecraft. The *Liber Hymnorum* arguably encodes exceptionalist claims on the part of the Irish Church in the eleventh century. The Harley Psalter reflects the cultural ideology of its royal patron, Roger II, in a way that was bound up with the wider political and religious currents of twelfth-century Sicily. Another aspect of this theme is borne out by Camillo Formigatti's study of a late fourteenth-century palm-leaf manuscript from Nepal (Cambridge, University Library, MS Add.1698). Formigatti uses this artefact to give a glimpse of the cultural policy of King Jayasthitirājamalla (1382–1395). The manuscript contains two Newari commentaries on fundamental Sanskrit works, not only opening up direct access to this literature for Newari speakers but also, it is argued, providing avenues of inspiration and cross-fertilisation at a time when Classical Newari literature was coming into being.

Vincenzo Vergiani introduces another fourteenth-century palm-leaf manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, MS Add.2832) with the same two languages, Sanskrit and Newari, but providing evidence for language interaction of a very different kind. Here again we have an accurate copy of an important Sanskrit treatise, in this case on horse-medicine. Some decades later, however, a draft of a loan-agreement was added to the manuscript, and this item is written entirely in the Newari language. We have, then, an educated group literate in Sanskrit but also in their own vernacular language, Newari, who are willing to switch to the latter for written documents pertaining to the practical business of daily life. Vergiani shows that this binary linguistic approach continued, even as a Newari literary culture was developing in the time of King Jayasthitirājamalla.

Our final contribution moves to the western edge of Europe at the same moment, the last decade of the fourteenth century on the Atlantic seaboard of Ireland. As Máire Ní Mhaonaigh explains, the encyclopaedic conspectus of world-knowledge and literary tradition in the Book of Ballymote (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 P 12) exhibits a cultural self-confidence in its presentation of the past of Ireland and the world. The voice is predominantly mediated through the vernacular language, Irish, but it too reflects a dual-pronged engagement with the politics of competing codes. Even when the surface code is the vernacular, the underlying structure and authority of the collection is bound up with its resemblance to Latin encyclopaedic manuscripts current in the compilers' community of learning. The lesson here is that two languages may be in intense interaction even when only one of them, for the most part, is visible on the surface of the text.

Taken together, this collection of manuscript studies serves as a reminder that the essence of the life and creativity of medieval languages lay in fluidity and contact. The demarcation of manuscript studies within single-language

academic disciplines has often obscured this reality. A manuscript might, for example, be made famous as the conduit in which an earlier text in a learned language was transmitted to posterity; or it might be prized for glosses and marginalia representing early evidence for the beginnings of a new literature couched in the spoken vernacular of its makers. The first master narrative prizes a backward-looking classicism, the second celebrates a cultural nationalism whose ultimate purpose, all too often, was to validate the sense of identity experienced by those who own it or associate with it today. Neither narrative engages unconditionally with the concrete realities of the manuscript itself; and when that reality is restored to the foreground, the picture becomes more complex and uncertain, but simultaneously more nuanced and real.[12] This is the insight and the challenge to which we respond in this series of case studies. In drawing our examples from a wide range of sources and contexts, illustrating the endlessly variant manifestations of the culture of the book in our period, we hope that the analogies as well as the concrete points of connection between the individual case studies will underline the value of this cross-disciplinary approach.

This approach is a hallmark of the work of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures of the University of Hamburg which ranges across a variety of disciplines, considering an expanse of cultures, all the time with manuscripts to the fore. We are grateful to the Centre and in particular to its Director, Michael Friedrich, for publishing this collection in its 'Studies in Manuscript Cultures' (SMC) series, and to Caroline Macé who provided outstanding editorial assistance and directed the publication expertly through the press, suggesting very many invaluable corrections and improvements throughout. We are also indebted to Laurence Tuerlinckx who typeset the volume skilfully, correcting a number of errors in the process, and to a trio of attentive reviewers, Giovanni Ciotti, Steffen Döll and Jörg Quenzer. Our greatest debt is to our twelve contributors whose productive discussions on manuscripts between languages, as part of the workshop we organised at St John's College, Cambridge (7–8 May 2015), brought the idea for this collection into being. For their co-operation and patience in the intervening period, we are very grateful. The manuscript pages studied in the present collection allow readers to construct transnational history with a sense of entangled complexity which will, we hope, prove illuminating.

12 For a comparable approach to cross-cultural transfer in manuscript design and production, differing from ours in that it is focussed more on illuminations rather than on text, see Keene 2019.

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