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Paul Ernst Kahle's research seen through the documents in his archive: the KADMOS project

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The KADMOS project (i.e. Kahle Documents Management, Organization and Study), started in 2010 with the advocacy and economic support of the Regione Piemonte, and focuses on the study, preservation and valorisation of the Paul Kahle archive. This collection, housed in the University of Turin, consists of a huge quantity of material (about 20 linear meters of documents, and a collection of manuscripts and printed books). A first, important step has been undertaken in the past few years concerning the manuscripts collection; the KADMOS project focuses on the archive, with the aim of reconstructing the whole collection as a legacy of an outstanding Orientalist as well as an important witness of a distressing and tragic period of history. The present paper illustrates the KADMOS project and its current achievements.

1. Paul Ernst Kahle, an outstanding figure in the field of Oriental studies

Paul Ernst Kahle² was one of the leading figures in the history of German Oriental studies during the 20th century. Born in Hohenstein (East Prussia) in 1875, in 1894 he started studying Theology and Oriental Languages in Marburg and Halle. After his PhD and further research on Hebrew, Samaritan, Arabic and Syriac manuscripts in Berlin, London, Oxford and Cambridge, he moved to Cairo (1903-1908) where he was to remain as pastor and acting headmaster of the German school (Kahle 1928). This period in Egypt was particularly important for his scientific formation since he collected many materials related mainly to Shadow Play literature and other topics he studied and partially edited in the following years. During the Egyptian period he also paid several visits to Palestine, where he studied Muslim holy sites, the Palestinian dialect of Bīr Zēt, and some Samaritan manuscripts.

After returning to Germany, Kahle lectured in Halle (1909-1914) and then became *ordinarius* in Giessen in 1914. In 1917 he met and married Marie Gesevius, daughter of a university Professor in Giessen. He moved to Bonn in 1923 where he was appointed Director of the Oriental Department and became secretary of the *Deutsche Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (DMG) and editor of its *Zeitschrift* until he was dismissed and forced to move to England. During his tenure as director of the Department he did much to promote not only Hebrew studies,³ but also Chi-

¹ Bruno Chiesa wrote § 1, Maria Luisa Russo § 2, Chiara Pilocane § 3, Francesca Bellino § 4.

² In the absence of a complete biography of Kahle, information about his life can be found in Fück (1966, 1-7), Black (1966, 485-95).

³ That he was a very good teacher is testified by the fact that he had such outstanding figures as Kurt Levy, Leah Goldberg and R. Edelman among his pupils.

nese and Japanese languages and cultures, expanding the department's collections and activities considerably.

In November 1938 his wife and one of his five sons were reported for helping a Jewish woman to clean up her shop after the Kristallnacht (M. Kahle 1998)⁴. In consequence he was removed from his post at Bonn University and from the DMG. After constant intimidation and harassment he and his family fled to England in 1939. In 1942 Kahle wrote a report on the University of Bonn for the British authorities which was to be of assistance to the Allied forces after the war (Kahle 1945). Kahle and his family stayed in Great Britain throughout the Second World War, in London and then in Oxford, where he worked in the Bodleian Library for approximately five years (1939-1945). In London he was engaged to catalogue the Arabic manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Collection. The result of this work is mostly unpublished and preserved in manuscript form in the Archives of Turin, Dublin, and Oxford.

Kahle was also appointed Schweich Lecturer of the British Academy in 1941. The lectures he gave formed the basis of *The Cairo Geniza*, one of Kahle's most important books (Kahle 1947; 1959; 1962).

After the war Kahle returned to Germany, where he became professor emeritus in Bonn. Until his death he was the doyen of a generation of European Orientalists.⁵ In 1956 he was invited to Pakistan as a representative European Orientalist, to give the Inaugural Address at the Pakistan History Conference. He died in Düsseldorf in 1964.

His long academic career reflects his manifold interests in Oriental languages.⁶ He is still a familiar name in Hebrew studies as co-editor of the Hebrew Bible, the so-called "Kittel-Kahle" (Kahle et al. 1937), as well as an expert on its mediaeval transmission. His work on the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible had already led to the publication of two other important studies, *Masoreten des Ostens* (Kahle 1913) and *Masoreten des Westens* (Kahle 1927; 1930). Kahle also edited original research related to various topics in the Arabic and Islamic fields; in particular he dealt with Arabic dialectology and published a collection of folk tales collected in Bīr Zēt during his journeys in Palestine (Kahle and Schmidt 1918; 1930), two editions of the *Kitāb al-Bahriyye* by Pīrī Re'īs (Kahle 1926; 1933), a volume of the *Chronicle* by Ibn Iyās edited in collaboration with Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Ibn Iyās 1931-1936), which is a work of great importance for the history of Egypt in the Middle Ages.⁷

⁴ This text was originally published in English in 1945. The 1998 edition includes a German translation of Kahle's report.

⁵ A commemorative volume on Kahle as an Old Testament scholar and Orientalist was prepared by pupils and friends soon after his death (Black and Fohrer 1968).

⁶ A first list of Paul Kahle's articles and reviews was published by Korn (1935). A second updated list can be found in "Verzeichnis der Schriften von Paul Kahle" (Kahle 1956, xi-xvii).

⁷ On his work on Arabic Shadow Plays (Kahle 1992) see below § 4.

2. *The Paul Kahle Collection and the KADMOS project*

Paul Kahle's monumental studies, based on research carried out in Germany, in England and in the Arab world, is preserved in huge "layers" of study materials - books, documents, manuscripts, reproductions, study notes, drafts of publications - which reveal the synchronic and diachronic stratification of various steps of study, revision, and correction. His personal story as an intellectual persecuted in Nazi Germany adds to our sense of his worth as a scholar.

The Paul Kahle Collection was purchased by the University of Turin in 1966, two years after Kahle's death, so that the University could acquire his great body of work of notable scientific value. It undoubtedly contains most of the original collection owned by Kahle: at the present state of knowledge, other parts of his archive are in the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Bonn and in the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich⁸. Research on how the Paul Kahle Collection came to be acquired by the University of Turin is still on-going, and we hope to give an account of it in a future publication. Meanwhile we would point out that the Collection consists of two main components: the archive and the library, both the personal property of Paul Kahle. The library consists of approximately 11,000 printed books and pamphlets. To this should be added a collection of about 300 Islamic manuscripts (in Arabic, Persian and Turkish) and some important fragments of Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts. The archive takes up about 20 linear meters of shelving and it includes scientific and personal papers.

In recent years the Department of Oriental Studies has devoted two projects to this Collection: the first, focused on Islamic manuscripts, has given rise to the publication of the catalogue of Islamic manuscripts (Tottoli, Russo, and Bernardini 2011). The second project, currently in progress, is dedicated mainly to the archive. This project, called KADMOS (*Kahle Documents Management, Organization and Study*), was conceived and planned with the specific aim of ensuring the preservation, the archival arrangement, and the proper valorization of this rich collection and making it available to the international scientific community. During its initial phases, the project has faced a series of issues: on the one hand, the wide variety of languages and subjects represented in the documents (English, German, Arabic, Hebrew, Coptic; subjects ranging from the Hebrew Bible to the Arabic historians, to Chinese porcelain) while, on the other hand, the fragile condition of the documents required specific attention.

Since these are problems of prime importance, the opportunities that emerged were also important: in the first place, as we have said, the chance to make this rich heritage available to the scientific community, restoring it to the role of cultural heritage which was intended as far back as 1966.

Giving access and making a documentary collection available means first of all to identify, describe, arrange the documents, create paths of study and research from which the scholar can make his own choice: for this reason, the project has

⁸ The archive of the University of Bonn is available on web (Bonn 2012) as well as the Institut für Zeitgeschichte of Munich (Munich 2012).

given great importance to the role of the study of these documents. In this way previously unknown material can be identified, and at the same time more in-depth studies can be made by present and future scholars. The specific nature of this archive led us to adopt specific criteria for carrying out these activities: Prof. Bruno Chiesa has guided the work with regard to the content; the Soprintendenza Archivistica per il Piemonte e la Valle d'Aosta has provided the project team with guidelines for the reorganization of the archive.

A multidisciplinary project team was set up, consisting of experts in Arabic and Hebrew language and literature, of archivists and preservation experts, to deal with the first, challenging part of the project: the phase dedicated to the study of documents and their identification, description and archival arrangement by subject, and, of course, their physical preservation.

The archive has been organized into two main sections: the "Archive" proper and the "Correspondence" sections. The former is composed for the most part of the scientific documents produced and collected by Kahle during his work and of many of his personal papers; the "Correspondence" section is entirely composed of letters received and sent by Kahle. The research described in this article by Chiara Pilocane and Francesca Bellino has been done on these two sections; together with Ilaria Bertone and Paola Lombardi, they organized the archive as it is at present. As for the physical preservation of documents, it represents another challenging stage of the project, due to the great variety of documents and supports, which were mostly not in good condition and required specific attention. Progressive steps have been undertaken to improve the condition of the collection, such as dusting, purchase of specific equipment, environmental monitoring: the preservation plan, currently ongoing, aims to ensure the long-term, sustainable endurance of this collection.

KADMOS is therefore a project in which human resources play a leading role; equally important, and connected to it, is the use of economic resources needed for the project. For both requirements, the Department of Oriental Studies is facing a huge commitment. Essential support for the project came in 2009 with the funding provided by the Regione Piemonte; in addition to the economic value of this contribution, it also has a symbolic value, since it represents the support ensured by an important local institution to a research project focused on a significant addition to the cultural heritage of Piedmont.

3. The correspondence

Much of Paul Kahle archive is made up of the correspondence. It is not unusual for correspondence series in personal archives to be proportionally – compared to other sections of the fonds – larger than in archives of institutions or offices. Nevertheless, the case of Kahle is extraordinary and his correspondence, from the point of view of its size, might even constitute a separate fonds. In speaking of size we refer both to the number of letters received and written and – which is no less interesting – to the number of correspondents Kahle had. To get an idea of the quantity of letters, we have to consider that letters kept in Turin University, most of which

date from the Thirties to 1963, except for a few older letters,⁹ take up about 8 linear meters of shelving. They are stored (about 32,800 leaves in all), in 87 boxes. As for the number of correspondents, 2,587 persons and/or institutions with whom Kahle corresponded have been identified. This is a huge quantity, even more so if we consider that Kahle corresponded with several of them for a long time: we find mainly scholars, but there is no lack of institutions, such as libraries and universities, and relatives too. Among the most exceptional cases in terms of number of letters are, to name but two examples, Otto Spies (German Orientalist, 1901-1981) and Matthew Black (Scottish minister and Biblical scholar, 1908-1994): units of description related to these two scholars amount respectively to 396 and 859 leaves.

Concerning size, we have also to remember that the Turin fond does not represent the total amount of what still survives of Kahle's archive: two other parts of Kahle's archive are housed in the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität of Bonn and in the Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich. Unfortunately, the Bonn and Munich fonds are not inventoried and we cannot know the exact size of the correspondence sections; only for Bonn do we find notice of some general groups of letters, dated between 1910 and 1913 and between 1934 and 1938. And even considering the Turin and Bonn archives together, there still remain chronological gaps in the correspondence: this means that almost certainly there existed other letters that are lost to this day.

To come back to documentation kept in Turin, most of the letters are now divided into two series: one arranged by correspondent and another one arranged by subject. The large majority of documents is part of the first series, whereas the second series – which includes only 25 units of description – has been created merely to avoid dispersion of a few folders that Kahle himself originally assigned to letters written by and to different people about the same topic. Finally, there are ten units of description that do not belong to the two aforementioned series for various reasons (empty envelopes, Kahle's drafts with no addressee, letters signed only with first names and so on). To date the units of description of the Paul Kahle archive are in total 2,622.

Having said that, and moving on from data regarding size of correspondence to a couple of observations about its nature, the most important feature to be noted is the almost constant presence of Kahle's drafts. For personal fonds, to reconstruct correspondence between two persons, we often have to look through two different archives, archive of person "A" to find letters sent to him/her by person "B" and vice versa. That is not the case – or it is only minimally the case – of Paul Kahle's correspondence: he preserved meticulously his drafts, which are mostly typewritten but in manuscript too. Even though obviously – perhaps to a greater extent than letters received – some drafts have been lost, thanks to Kahle's systematic nature and punctiliousness, we have the rare privilege in this archive of being able to reconstruct some correspondences in their entirety.

⁹ The oldest letter is dated April 24, 1896 (unit of description C2576), the most recent is dated April 23, 1963 (C498).

Secondly, it may be worth noticing the presence of letters from and to other people (other than the person to whom the unit of description is entitled); Kahle had kept these letters together with those of his correspondent because they somehow referred to him/her: these are letters of introduction, letters written to give or obtain information regarding the correspondent and so on. For this reason too, links arise between various units of description, that is to say between various files of correspondents. These links are traceable to the archive's database, where a search on every single name recorded can be carried out, by means of a system that matches filter criteria and a basic search of keywords.

Furthermore, there are also a few letters that Kahle "stored" together with study material and – as this is, for different reasons, inseparable from them – are today kept in the "Archive" section. Vice versa, various and very interesting study materials sent to Kahle by his correspondents were kept enclosed in letters and have been catalogued and filed into the correspondence section: the presence of this sort of attachment is indicated in the "Description" column of the database. This means that besides inner organization of correspondence and besides links between letters, there also exist very important connections between letters and study material, i.e. the other macro-section of the archive: it follows that investigation and understanding of Kahle's notes and studies in most cases may not forgo a consultation of letters that Kahle received from and wrote to other scholars who dealt with the same subject or with related subjects. A good example of such a connection is represented by the letters regarding the work on Palestinian dialectology described below.

4. The "Islamica" series: the archival materials related to Palestinian dialectology

Along with the correspondence, the Archive preserves a large number of documents related to Kahle's writings as well as to a variety of other topics untouched by him in his publications but that give evidence of his activity as a researcher. During the re-ordering, all the archival documents were associated to a specific "phase" of Kahle's work. Accordingly, the records in the database specify both which phase this is and indicate for each of the documents which "state of processing" it corresponds to.

As in other cases, some of the Arabic "sources" studied by Kahle derive from the field work carried out during the years he spent in Egypt and Palestine. A number of key figures/informants provided him with different materials that Kahle edited, at least partially, in far-off times and places. In the case of the dialectological materials related to Palestine, the Archive preserves the original manuscript containing all of the texts collected by Dschirius (Abu) Jusif, along with the correspondence between Kahle, Schmidt and Dschirius and many documents dealing with all the phases of publication of *Volkserzählungen aus Palästina*. A couple of examples will suffice to show how these materials have been catalogued in the Archive of Turin and the information they can provide, especially in relation to Kahle's meticulous method of working (Tottoli 2009, 11).

The two volumes of *Volkserzählungen aus Palästina* (Kahle and Schmidt 1918-1930) contain a huge collection of folk tales collected by Dschirius in Bīr Zēt and the villages around it in 1910-1911. In the preface to vol. 1 Kahle explained the various research phases: first of all Dschirius wrote the tales down in Arabic script, as told by forty-four male and female informants (Schmidt and Kahle 1918, 252). Kahle was not present during this phase, while Schimdt, being there, collected information on the context in which this community lived which afterwards became an integral part of the study. In a second phase Dschirius revised the Arabic texts, but we don't know if he made the changes during successive hearing(s) or at home [Fig. 1].¹⁰

Later, with the help of his sister, Dschirius transliterated the texts using a phonetic system [Fig. 2]. In a letter preserved in the Archive Dschirius gives details of the system chosen, with a table and a few examples as applied to some stories [Fig. 3]. The shift from Arabic script to transcription was very important indeed since it was carried out by an Arabic speaker provided with a fairly well-developed linguistic sensibility who supplied Kahle with the key to understanding the dialect.¹¹

It has to be emphasized that Kahle's and Schmidt's collection of texts was published not primarily as a work of literature but on account of its linguistic, folkloric and general ethnological interest. This kind of work was totally in conformity with others of that time. Before Schimdt and Kahle, analogous volumes of folk poetry, proverbs and narratives from Palestine were published by Gustav Dalman (1901) and Enno Littmann (1902). Then Littmann (1905) published *Modern Arabic Tales*, which is a collection of tales in Arabic script only, with no glossary or notes, that looks very similar to *Volkserzählungen aus Palästina*, both in its original purposes and in the manner in which the texts were collected and (partially) edited. Littmann (1905, 1, vi) chose to publish the tales in Arabic characters firstly but for practical considerations, since, he said, "the orthography of this Arabic is at the present stage naturally an arbitrary one, and many of the spellings here adopted may later be abandoned" and "for a scientific study of the vernacular Arabic can of course not be based on texts printed in Arabic type". Therefore, the original Arabic manuscript of the tales collected by Dschirius will be very important for comparison with the work of Littmann.

The following phase of work documented by the Archive definitely involved Kahle, who selected the texts to be published; Schimdt established an order based on the content. Therefore, Kahle changed the number of the texts chosen, as shown by a concordance written down on a page of the manuscript. The documents in the Archive show how Kahle went on checking details even after publication. As regards the transliteration, perhaps after revising the work done by Dschirius and according to the new corrections suggested by H. Stumme and E. Littmann, as evidenced by letters preserved in the archive, Kahle prepared a new version.

¹⁰ According to Seeger (2009, 1-4), the first writing and the transcription have also involved some degree of "standardization" of the language of texts, as well as that of their literary quality.

¹¹ Seeger maintains that Schmidt's and Kahle's work represents a proper literary work focusing upon a written language whereas the emphasis in his own collection rests upon oral communication.

The next phase was the translation. Schmidt produced a first handwritten German translation; afterwards this was typed and the drafts were revised various times by Kahle who strove to achieve a good standard. Along with these documents the Archive preserves a folder titled “Those I have selected” that contains a typewritten copy of the English translation of all the tales edited in the two volumes. This English translation is still unpublished and the author is unknown.

The last phase documented by the Archive concerns publication. The copy of *Volkserzählungen aus Palästina* preserved in the Archive provides information on this phase too. In fact over time Kahle took many notes of extra glosses and annotations and for that reason his own copy has to be considered as a testimony of a long process of re-working/re-writing.

According to Ulrich Seeger, who completed the field work recording Kahle-Schmidt’s texts together with other tales from the same area, the old transcriptions of the texts were “reliable” records of the language as spoken in that area. The grammar is largely homogeneous and agrees with the data Leonard Bauer (1926) collected in his major work *Das Palästinensische Arabisch. Die Dialekte des Städters und des Fellachen*¹² in respect of the grammatical explanations and the chrestomathy containing vernacular texts of the same type. Nevertheless, Seeger has found features of this dialect not mentioned by Kahle suggesting that some of these “failures” are due to the work of “standardization” of the texts made during the transcription (Seeger 2012). The study of the original Arabic manuscript will therefore be very important since it is the source closest to the oral version of the informants. Moreover, the outline of the grammar of Bīr Zēt as published in the printed edition covers around fifty pages, but many more documents are kept in the Archive. Those who study the dialect of this region will probably find useful information in them.

The correspondence in the Archive reveals both the problems Kahle encountered in editing texts first written down in Arabic and the choices he adopted after consulting several outstanding dialectologists with whom he was in contact. He exchanged, for instance, some letters with Littmann who revised Dschirius’ text and provided Kahle with many corrections that he promptly reproduced in the “Nachträge - Berichtungen” (Schmidt and Kahle 1918, *94-96) at the end of the section on the language of the texts. Dschirius also provided Kahle with explanations about the transliteration, the pronunciation of some consonants, and the vocabulary. Kahle quoted parts of these letters in the section “Zur Umschrift und Aussprache der Laute” and in the glossary (Schmidt and Kahle 1918, *48-51).

We would like to conclude this brief survey of the materials of the Archive by mentioning the work done by Musa Alloush (‘Allūsh 1990), the owner of the oldest pharmacy of Bīr Zēt, who published an Arabic version of the two Schmidt-Kahle volumes, developing specifically modified and adapted Arabic characters to reproduce the phonetic transliteration by Dschirius-Kahle faithfully. During his field-work in the region, Seeger asked Alloush to recite some of Kahle-Schmidt’s

¹² Particularly important is also the description given by Blau (1960).

tales and recorded them.¹³ The opportunity to have the original Arabic manuscript, now preserved in the Archive of Turin, will undoubtedly stimulate new research in the field of historical dialectology.¹⁴

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¹³ The recorded texts available on line are nos. 22, 24, 33, 37, 80, 81.

¹⁴ Interesting research in this field has been done by Halloun (2008).

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Fig. 2. Transcription of the Arabic texts as made by Dschirius's sister.

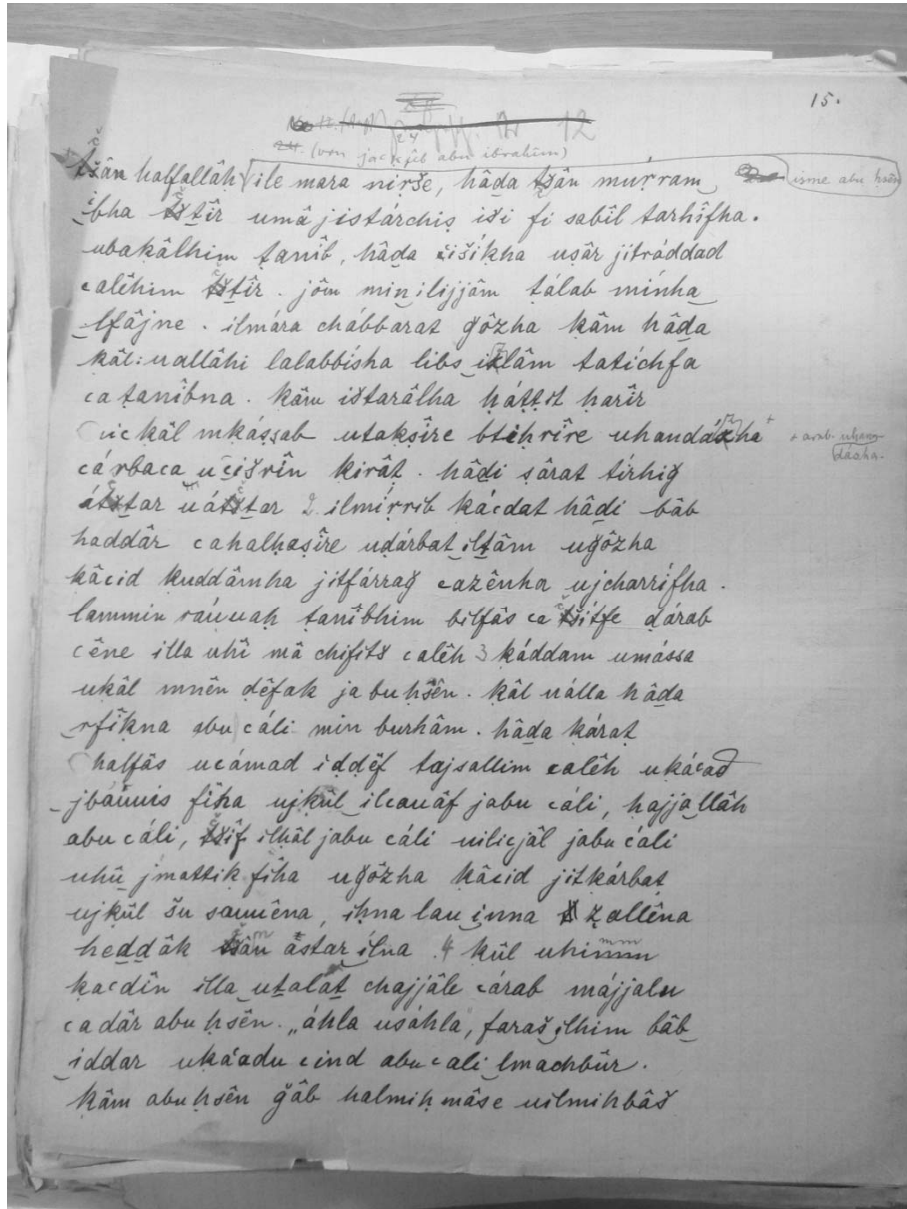


Fig. 3. Letter by Dschirius that concern the pronunciation of consonants (dated: December 15, 1913).

