

7th International Conference ALIENTO

(Linguistic and Intercultural Analysis of Short Sapiential Statements and their Circulation East/West,
West/East)

ANR 13-BSH3-0009-01

Nancy/Lunéville – Paris 16-19 October 2017

The Circulation of Sapiential Texts: Similarities, Divergences, Implications

Results of the Project, Presentation of the ALIENTO Database and its consultation system

Call for papers

The ALIENTO programme is getting to an end. Time has come to show the results we have obtained and confront them with our expectations at the beginning of the project. During the conference, we will present the database and will also report on the progress made thanks to the relationships we have built and to our exchanges throughout all these years of common work—the topics discussed, the shared experience and discoveries that took place at our conferences, workshops, symposia, the new directions to be taken, similar projects and open paths for the future.

This is why we are planning a 4-day conference—2 days in Nancy (ATILF) and Lunéville and 2 days in Paris (Inalco) with three different aspects:

- 4 topics for paper presentations in 4 half-days
- 2 half-days for database presentations and testing from two different perspectives and a half-day dedicated to other databases related to the ALIENTO database, followed by a discussion
- one half-day lectures at the Château of Lunéville to celebrate the ties between Lorraine, Spain and the Orient.

We wish to deal with the following closely related 4 topics:

1) Back to the Sources of Medieval Wisdom

We shall examine the ancient corpora (Greek and Latin philosophical corpora / Byzantine compilations / the Syriac corpus / Babylonian texts / religious corpora – Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ben Sira, Pirque Avot, Avot of Rabbi Natan, Loqman...) with relation to the Brief Sapiential Statements¹ exchanged in the Iberian Peninsula during the Middle Ages; the theme of Alexander from the angles

¹ The Brief Sapiential Statement (BSS) refers to “every short statement (from one word to two or three sentences) considered as a unity and containing a lesson, a piece of advice, a moral, or a (moral or social) judgement”.

of Alexander's death, the philosophers' remarks around his tomb, the king-philosopher instructed and advised by Aristotle...).

2) The Modelling of a Common Wisdom through Time and Space

We shall discuss here the intercultural circulation of the brief sapiential statements from ancient times to the present—transfer of patterns, meanings and images, transformations, adaptations to the context and the methods of appropriation, recreation, intercultural transmission... Attention will also be drawn to the invention of the tradition and to the effacing of the sources (sapiential corpora of the Renaissance onwards, Erasmus' *Adagia*, Juan de Mal Lara's *Philosophia vulgar...*).

3) Medieval Wisdoms and the Circulation of Knowledge

We shall examine here the links between wisdom and philosophy, the circulation of concepts from a type of wisdom or a science to another; from one type of text to another (connections between fables, *exempla* and maxims essentially, but also with encyclopaedias...); the transmission of ideas from one culture to another through translation and also the going back and forth of people and books, which explains the diffusion of sapiential texts—travellers (sages and scholars), translators and benefactors...

4) Written Wisdom and Oral Wisdom

Here we will highlight the relations between maxims, sentences, apophthegms on the one hand and with proverbs on the other hand—opposition between “proverbs of the people” / “proverbs of the elite” in some medieval compilations, for example; the patrimonialization of wisdom—the passage from the compilation of sentences and sapiential books to lists and books of proverbs; the emergence and foundation of paremiology and phraseology—development of scientific categories, their relationships with the native categories, categorization criteria etc. It will be possible to question here the relevance the different theories on the linguistic categorization have to the Brief Sapiential Statements.

Lorraine, Spain and the Orient

Two research teams involved in ALIENTO are based in Lorraine and the Lorraine Region has granted financial support to the project. We wish to underline the fact that, although the scientific concerns and subject matter of the ALIENTO project may seem unconnected with Lorraine, the project is, indeed, well rooted in its history. Arabo-Andalusian Spain and Lorraine are not that far apart. Jean de Vendières (Lotharingia), abbot at Gorze, was sent as ambassador for Otto I to Abd ar-Rahman III in Cordoba (953 to 956) where he was received by the great scholar Hasday ibn Shaprut. In 1091, the Prior Walcher of Lorraine arrived in England where he became prior of Great Malvern Priory. In England, he met the erudite Petrus Alphonsi of Huesca (Aragon), a converted Jew, who taught him Arabic astronomy, astrology and mathematics.

Closer to us, Abraham Brisac created in the city of Lunéville at the end of the 18th century a Hebrew printing house where in 1804 he printed a philosophical work written by Salomon Ibn Gabirol (medieval author from Spain, 11th c.) and in 1807 the *Musre ha-Philosophim*², sapiential work which happens to be one of the books of the ALIENTO corpus. Finally, Lunéville is the birthplace of the great

² This is the 12th-century translation from Arabic into Hebrew of the *Kitab adâb al-falasifa* (the Book of anecdotes of the philosophers) by Yehudah Al-Harizi (Spain). This edition is a clear testimony of the interest in this work almost 700 years later.

orientalist René Basset who collected, translated and published *1001 Arabian Nights*³, lived in the Maghreb and whose two sons, born in Lunéville, are orientalists specialised in Berber studies. Aboubakr Chraïbi, professor in the department of Arabic studies at the Inalco, republished René Basset's major work in 2005.

We thus wish to remind the existence of these connections with three lectures which will be held at the Château de Lunéville and followed by a city tour and a gala dinner on October 16th.

Wisdom in the form of databases

This meeting will be the occasion to open the ALIENTO database to the public and to present for the first time the database to researchers. This presentation will allow us to go back to the different phases of the project with its expectations, its successes and its difficulties. At the ATILF (Nancy), the methods used to extract the data from the annotated texts to obtain the matchings of the Multilingual Brief Sapiential Statements will be explained essentially from the technical and computational angle (calculations of similarities; consultation interface; upgradable platform...) and discussed.

At the Inalco, the database will be presented in terms of challenges and results. Following the exposition of the different stages, we will present the protocols of annotation we implemented and we will show the database resources available to researchers and the different types of search queries. Consultation of the database will be possible and we will analyse some of its results.

The project will be analysed in the light of other databases focusing on medieval sapiential literature and medieval or contemporary proverbs in different languages (French, Spanish, German...). Their articulation and their complementarity will be considered from technical and computational angles as well as from a linguistic and textual perspective. The BDD presentation will emphasize the convergences between databases and ALIENTO and the possibility of common developments.

Discussions with the coordinators of the projects, the public, the involved researchers (computational scientists, linguists, literary specialists) and the potential contributors will follow and the topics will be able to bear on the technology used to obtain the results, the corpora, access and openness, copyright, data sustainability, their upgrading, the nature of the links to be established depending on the goals of each project, the necessary improvements, etc.

The debates will be filmed, the presentations posted on our website, and the papers and conferences published in the collection *ALIENTO – Echanges Sapientiels en Méditerranée*

Abstracts should be submitted by March 30, 2017 to:

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³ Many tales in the second volume are moral or exemplary, some of which come from Abubéquer of Tortosa (Abu Bakr al-Tortuxi, Spain, 11th c.) or from collections that circulated in Al-Andalus.

Description of the ALIENTO project

(Linguistic and intercultural analysis of short sapiential statements and their transmission East/West, West/East)

In the ninth century, the rich Arab tradition of the *adab* finds its way into Spain, or rather al-Andalus, a country that played a prominent role in the exchange of knowledge from the East to the West in the 11th and 12th centuries especially via the monasteries in the North of the Iberian Peninsula. It is also in al-Andalus where the *adab* literature meets the Jewish sapiential tradition of the Midrashic literature. New collections are composed, including original works from the 10th and 11th centuries, and from the 12th century on, *exempla* and philosophers' sayings are translated into Hebrew, Latin and the Romance languages. Much of this complex heritage is found in the extensive Spanish paremiological literature, which is at its highest in the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as in contemporary Spanish, Judeo-Spanish and Maghrebian collections of proverbs.

Although the main lines of these exchanges are well-known, we still lack specific information on the circulation of these short sapiential statements (our basic research units) as well as on the successive translating choices made by the translators, their cultural reinterpretations or the importance of some loanwords over others. If sapiential textual filiations and translation sequences should be treated cautiously, this is particularly true of the sapiential statements to be found in these texts. Due to the difficulty in understanding them, these volatile elements, whose categorisation varies with time and cultures, have never been the subject of a comprehensive textual study which could recount their sources, circulation and evolution across the different spoken or written languages of the three cultures living in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle-Ages. The paremiological studies have mostly produced compilations of proverbs (thesauri), critical editions and erudite studies, dedicated to a single work, a single language or a single culture, except for the remarkable ground-breaking work on the *Philosophical Quartet* (1975) by D. Gutas. The few existing databases are for the most part monolingual contemporary corpora of *paremiae* or otherwise have a translation-based perspective.

Therefore the aim of the ALIENTO project is to work out concordances, even partial, close or distant connections, in order to reassess inter-textual relations by comparing a great quantity of data and by interconnecting encoded texts written in different languages.

This is why the project, which needs a close interdisciplinary collaboration between computational researchers (ATILF), linguists and specialists in literature (MSH Lorraine + INALCO and the international network of collaborators), will develop a piece of software transferable to other similar texts to be used with a large reference corpus made up of 8 related texts –582 pages for an estimated 9,570 sapiential statements–, which circulated in the Iberian Peninsula (in Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, Spanish and Catalan).

The produced software will extract and connect short sapiential statements through concordances generated by the specific encoding system scientifically developed and explained in an encoding manual XML-TEI. ATILF will create a multilingual interrogation programme (in French, Spanish and English) of the matched data and will give access online to the ALIENTO corpus annotated texts via the CNRTL in order to ensure a permanent archiving of the texts.

At the end of the project we will have:

- a body of texts in a multilingual corpus, digitised, tagged in XML/TEI and publicly accessible, linked to a set of data about the texts and their authors.
- a set of short sapiential units with their XML/TEI annotations, accessible free of charge.
- a trilingual questioning interface that will display the concordanced statements contained in these works, with information that could be used to study them, irrespective of the language.
- an encoding methodology and a piece of software for matching data that could be used with other similar corpora.