

Ursula Dreibholz  
P.O.Box 1177  
Sanaa  
Yemen Republic

e-mail ursdreib@y.net.ye  
tel/fax 967.1 / 412-588

Report on the week of instructions in simple preservation techniques to the people of the manuscript project of Dr. Anne Regourd in Zabid, Yemen Republic (31.10-05.11.2009)

I left Sanaa for Zabid in the morning of Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2009 and arrived there in the early afternoon. I also took all the material and equipment with me in my car. The first meeting with the participants took place that same evening in the hotel. Present were:

Arafat Al-Hadhrami  
Abdulrahman Al-Ahmar  
Farang Abu Al-Kheir  
Yasser Khalil, the translator  
Abdulrahman Al-Ahdal was absent because of back problems.

Farang is the person to be responsible of the action of preservation for the team.

It was decided to have the daily meetings in the small library of Arafat al-Hadhrami, and due to the fact that most people were working in the mornings we had the meetings from 4 h in the afternoon to 7 h in the evening every day from Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup> to Wednesday, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>. On Thursday, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> I went back to Sanaa.



First I transported the material and equipment from the hotel to the Hadhrami house. A bigger table for the work was provided. All participants, except for Abdulrahman Al-Ahdal, who was still sick and made only a short appearance on one day during the week, had to get familiar with the equipment at first. Before we started I emphasized that all this material was very expensive and had to be handled with care and no part of it could be wasted through neglect. I demonstrated the use of the gloves

and respirator as well as the brushes for cleaning. The small vacuum cleaner was disassembled and put back together several times by the participants in order that all would understand how to operate it and how to replace the dust bags and the hepa-filters.

The adaptation of the thermometer had to be postponed until a computer person could be found. That was achieved on the third day, when Suleiman al-Ahdal, who works with the team in making the lay out of the catalogues, came to the library and with the help of the user guide activated the thermometer and explained its exact use and functioning to Arafat Al-Hadhrami who will be the person who is going to do the measurements in his own library and at the al-Ash'aer Library. I transmitted the plan Dr. Regourd had given me in this respect and emphasized again and again that correct note-taking of the measurements over a period of time was absolutely necessary. Since taking the measurements is very easy Arafat agreed to measure the temperature and RH inside and outside of the cupboard housing the manuscripts twice a day for a week in his library – in the morning and then in the afternoon when it is hottest, and then doing the same in the al-Ash'aer Library for another week, and then alternating between both libraries again – hopefully for several months.



The next step was the training for the folding of the prefabricated boxes. Although Farag will be the person to do this work I had everyone fold one big and one smaller box just for practice. Farag continued throughout the week to fold some boxes and was almost finished at the end of the week – only 10 boxes remained to be folded.

The biggest part of the time, though, was dedicated to the careful cleaning of the manuscripts with the Japanese brushes. I was pleasantly surprised that the manuscripts in the Hadhrami library were generally very clean and had almost no debris or dust accumulated between the pages. Nevertheless, I again and again emphasized the careful handling of the manuscripts. There should be some soft support placed under one side of the book during the cleaning in order to prevent the spine to be pressed down flat, which would endanger it to be damaged. A shawl was used for the time being but it would be desirable to have some foam rubber pieces cut at an angle. Again, I let everyone have a

try at the cleaning, but Farag was definitely the one who was in charge of this operation and already cleaned several manuscripts in the course of the week. He has a good feeling for this delicate material and handles the manuscripts very carefully; he also uses the brush very lightly and does not use too much pressure.



The unbound manuscripts were put into the provided archival bags and then placed in the boxes. These bags are problematic. Only one size fits the smaller box exactly – the medium size, the small size can be used as well, but the bigger bags are too big even for the big boxes. They also have to be folded over at the top because they are too high, and if one is not careful there is the danger of the manuscript to be folded as well. Farag, so far, has shown to be a careful and conscientious worker, but there is always the danger that something may happen in a moment of less concentration.



I visited Farag in his workshop one morning and was impressed how practical he had arranged everything and how cleanly he worked. But it would be very good for him to spend some time in the Dar al-Makhtutat in Sanaa to get a broader idea about preservation and conservation.

During this time there was no need to use the respirators because the manuscripts were very clean. Nor did I force them to use the latex gloves – in my opinion they are less than desirable anyway, except in cases of very dirty or polluted manuscripts. One definitely has a better feeling for the paper without them and the danger of damage is less. Besides, the heat in Zabid would make the use of them very uncomfortable. But I stressed repeatedly that hands had to be thoroughly washed before working on the manuscripts.

The pictures to document the training are attached.

Ursula Dreibholz

11. November 2009

List of photographs to be attached to report 1

2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 (?), 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37, 39, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 50, 53, 54, 56, 58, 59, 60, 61

2. U demonstrates rubber gloves to Farag, Arafat, Yasser
3. F with respirator and brush
5. F adjusting strength of intake on vacuum cleaner
7. F assembling parts of vacuum cleaner
9. F cleaning corners in cabinet with vacuum cleaner
11. F opening vacuum cleaner
12. F further opening vacuum cleaner
13. F taking out dust bag
14. F pressing down hepa-filter (U guiding his hand....)
19. F starting folding a box
- 20-28. F continues folding the box
29. Abdulrahman Al-Ahmar starting folding a box
- 30, 31. Arafat folding a box
32. Arafat with finished box
- 36, 37, 39. F folding more boxes
42. U demonstrates cleaning a manuscript with a brush
- 43, 44, 45. F brushing

46. U, Farag, Arafat and Yasser discussing how to properly handling a manuscript
50. trying to find something to temporarily hold down the pages while brushing
53. manuscript cabinet
54. F and manuscript
56. Suleiman the computer man with user guide
58. Arafat at the computer and U with temperature and RH measuring device – unfortunately, on the photograph one cannot see that the device is already switched on and registering
- 59, 61. U and F with finished boxes containing already some manuscripts with and without bags
60. stacks of finished boxes in background