



# Viewing Texts: Word as Image and Ornament in Medieval Inscriptions

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## What we do...

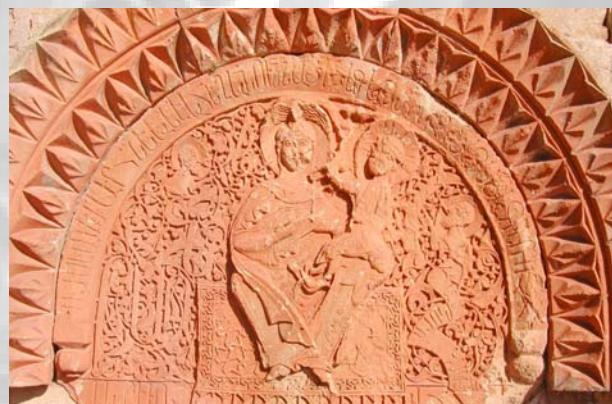
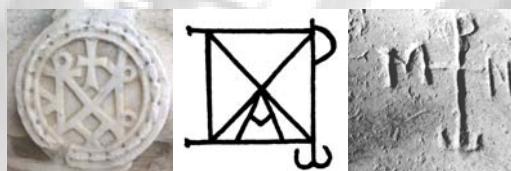
Our Network examines text as art. It focuses on inscriptions, carved or painted on monuments of architecture in the middle ages, in the Islamic and Christian Mediterranean.

## ...Why we do it...

- Because these texts, often examined by scholars in search of information, have not been studied as art, despite the fact that the size of the script used, the (lack of) legibility, the location (high up or out-of-the way), or the length of the text indicate that the textual contents were only one element in the make-up and design of the inscription.
- Because we wish to improve our understanding of the artistic and social interactions between cultures across the Mediterranean. Public text is an important element in the construction of the cultural identity of a community. In the medieval Mediterranean, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious context, public text could contribute to shape the identity and memory of social groups; to segregate cultural and religious clusters; or, on the contrary, to foster their cohesion within a shared public space. We wish to explore this question, and its implications for the contemporary world.

## ... And how we proceed.

Our project gathers a group of international experts of different disciplines: art, architectural history and epigraphy of the Byzantine, Classical and Islamic world. In the course of three informal workshops open by invitation, our project carries out a multi-disciplinary investigation of different aspects of text as image.



## Our Activities

### a. Workshops

The value of text as image is investigated in three workshops, each exploring one set of aspects:

- *The Limits of Text.*

Tim Greenwood (*University of St Andrews*), Jeremy Johns (*University of Oxford*), Ioanna Rapti (*Centre d' Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance*), Scott Redford (*Koç University*), Charlotte Rouéche (*King's College, University of London*), Avinoam Shalem (*University of Munich*), Alicia Walker (*Washington University in St Louis*).

- *Memory and Performativity.*

Matthew Canepa (College of Charleston), Elizabeth James (University of Sussex), Jeremy Johns (University of Oxford), Scott Redford (Koç University), Charlotte Rouéche (King's College, University of London), Alicia Walker (Washington University in St Louis).

- *Informal Writing and Multi-linguism* (summer 2010)

### b. Bibliography and online exhibition:

Our project aims at constructing a bibliography that may be made publicly accessible, and become a point of reference for those interested in any aspect of text as image in the Mediterranean medieval world.

A selection of our copyright free images will also go online, to illustrate the intersections of text-writing and image making in the medieval world.

### d. Papers and publications

The final outcome of our project is a multi-authored volume on Text as Image.

SPENDITU FECIMU GNA CIVIS FELICU SORBU TRE PATHO  
PRI ROBT AC PALACIO REGPRI FELICITU EXISTETU  
PIU LE GU ARE GIA MIN GESTA ENRA ARE TRA CORS  
DRES AC IMPER INDULTU PRECURIE REFIGARE SIPP  
EDE DE BOTE STE LU DICTU PSI LEGIS RESTIDE ZIC AD COND  
DEDE DE RZ CONFIRMU RB DRA GRAD DIGREM DOF ADT SUF  
RU BENIGNU ADMITU NEZ CONSIDERAT PGT ZACEPTA  
SEP NR PRE DE CE SOR IBU RECOLE DE SPEM ORIEZI  
DIRE TE PUERIC IEZ FIDE LAT ELUSCIDAE NIBUE

## Some of our questions

Were words inscribed on objects always meant to be read? By whom?

How were words perceived by illiterate viewers?

How do texts institutionalise and affect the memory of communities in public spaces?

How did viewers react to texts they cannot read or recognise?

How does informal writing (graffiti) affect the visual identity of buildings?