



Universiteit
Leiden

Disclosing Arabic Papyri from the Leiden University Library

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferable from two different institutes.

Supervisor Name	Institute
Prof Dr Petra M. Sijpesteijn	Leiden University Institute for Area Studies
Dr Arnoud J.M. Vrolijk	Leiden University Library

Project description

Provide a brief description of the project (max. 300 words)

Leiden University is famous for its library's large collection of Oriental manuscripts. Part of this collection is a group of 104 Arabic documents written on papyrus and paper (Or. 8264 and 12885). These documents date from the 7th through 10th century CE and cover a wide range of subjects (private life, administration, commerce, law, religion and scholarship) which are generally not treated in later composed narrative sources. As such, they not only form an indispensable source for social and cultural history, but they are also the only contemporary source for the formative centuries of Islam. Historians of the early-Islamic Near East agree on the importance of documents such as those kept at Leiden University Library.

These documents remain uncatalogued and, with the exception of a few,¹ none of them have been published. Access to this important collection is difficult and remains limited to a few scholars affiliated to Leiden University. Over the last years, Petra Sijpesteijn and Jelle Bruining (LIAS) have worked through the documents making a provisional catalogue and selecting documents for publication. Plans for an online publication of the catalogue, including images, have been discussed with Leiden University Library. Now, a concerted effort is needed to make the next step.

With the help of Research Trainees, we will realize these plans. The trainees will be part of a small research group consisting of the applicants and Jelle Bruining. They will provide metadata and descriptions in order to finalize the catalogue and will assist in making the catalogue available online. Further, each trainee will prepare an edition and historical contextualization of at least one document. The trainees will become acquainted with (1) the scholarly discipline of papyrology and (2) the social history of early Islam, (3) gain experience with online publishing and dissemination, and (4) will prepare a scholarly publication.

¹ S.N. Nosedá, "A Third Koranic Fragment on Papyrus: An Opportunity for a Revision", *Rendiconti classe di lettere e scienze morali e storiche* 137 (2004), 313-326; P.M. Sijpesteijn, "An Arabic Land Lease from Ṭuṭūn", in *Papyrological Texts in Honor of Roger S. Bagnall*, ed. R. Ast, H. Cuvigny, T. Hickey (Durham NC: 2013), 301-306.

Research Trainee Profile

Each proposal requests two Research Trainees. Describe the general tasks of the research trainees, whether they need any preliminary knowledge (regarding the topic and/or research methods) and which skills the research trainees should have. Also specify which type of students are eligible to apply (Ba, Ma, ResMa).

BA3, MA and ResMA students can apply to the traineeship. Research Trainees should have a demonstrable knowledge of Modern Standard Arabic at an advanced level (B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages²). They should also be familiar with the medieval history of the Near East.

The Research Trainees are expected to take the course 'Culture and Society in the Medieval Muslim World' (MA Middle Eastern Studies) or to have successfully participated in this course in the academic year 2014-2015 or 2015-2016.

General tasks of each of the Research Trainees:

- Providing and entering metadata in an online database on the basis of descriptions made by Petra Sijpesteijn and Jelle Bruning and, where necessary, a comparison with the originals.
- Editing at least one papyrus from the Leiden University papyrus collection.
- Studying this papyrus in its historical context.
- Preparing a scholarly publication of the edition and its context.

Collaboration

If applicable: Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words)

The research project involves a variety of disciplines. The philological and papyrological expertise available at LIAS is needed to decipher and interpret such early-Islamic documents as those of Leiden University's papyrus collection and, hence, to catalogue them. When a catalogue is available in a searchable format, scholars in the fields of history, religion, and linguistics will be able to consult the Leiden University papyrus collection.

In addition to the catalogue, the research project will design an online pre-publication forum where editors discuss draft editions with experts and users of the collection can leave notes. Leiden University Library has much experience with digital accessibility and online dissemination. It has often worked with trainees for whom it created templates that allowed them to work with the Library's sophisticated systems. Whereas the metadata supplied by the Research Trainees will help finding the most suitable format for the pre-publication forum, Leiden University Library's expertise is needed in order to make the catalogue and the pre-publication forum as accessible and useful as possible. Only when LIAS and Leiden University Library join forces, the Library's papyrus collection will be available to the digital humanities.

Deliverables

Enumerate intended project results: papers, research proposals or otherwise. (max 200 words)

- Online catalogue of all Arabic papyri in the Leiden University papyrus collection.
- Interactive pre-publication forum.
- Ca. 35 editions of papyri from the Leiden University papyrus collection, published as one volume in the *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava* series. At least two of these editions will be prepared by the Research Trainees.

Planning

Provide a breakdown of the project into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)

² This level is the 'end qualification' for the language acquisition part of Leiden University's BA program 'Middle Eastern Studies', as stated in the OER.

N.B.: The 104 documents of the Leiden University papyrus collection contain ca. 150 texts.

- Month 1: The research group will discuss the format and content (incl. metadata) of the online catalogue and pre-publication forum with Leiden University Library. Leiden University Library creates the interfaces.
- Month 2: The Research Trainees will enter the data of 15 texts in the catalogue. At the end of month 2: the research group will evaluate the format with Leiden University Library.
- Months 3-9: The Research Trainees will enter the data of the remaining 135 texts and will prepare an edition of at least one document. At the end of month 9: the Research Trainees present the edition to the research group and submit the draft edition to the pre-publication discussion forum.
- Months 10-12: The Research Trainees work on the final version of the edition and prepare its publication. Last work on the catalogue.

Student Application

Provide information on how to apply e.g. required documents for application (resume, motivation letter etc.) and an email address where student applications should be sent to.

Applications should be sent to j.bruning@hum.leidenuniv.nl and should include a resume, motivation letter and a transcript of courses (incl. grades) in PDF format. Name the files 'FAMILY NAME – Resume', 'FAMILY NAME – Motivation letter' and 'FAMILY NAME – Transcript'.