

Traces of ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī’s Copy of Avicenna’s *Šifā*’ in Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale, 377*

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Ms. Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale, 377¹, the only exemplar of the Metaphysics (*al-Ilāhiyyāt*) of Avicenna’s *Kitāb al-Šifā*, preserved in the Bibliothèque Orientale at Saint-Joseph University, Beirut, is a rather peculiar witness. A first reason of interest is due to its circulation in a fairly unusual milieu for this kind of work. According to the information reported in the colophon (fol. 376r), the ms. was copied by ‘Abd Muṣṭafā Ibn Yaḥyā on 7 Dū al-Ḥiġġa 1183/April 3rd, 1770. Then, before being acquired by Father Louis Cheikho in Beirut in 1894², the ms. was in possession of the Monastery of the Holy Saviour (*Dayr al-Muḥalliṣ*) of the Basilian Salvatorian Order of Mašmūša, in Ġūn, as reported by a note of *waqf* on fol. 2r (T1 below) written by Father Anṭūn Būlād (d. 1871), responsible for the organization of the library of the monastery.

* This brief note stems from a talk given at the Workshop: “La réception de la philosophie arabe dans les provinces ottomanes du Proche-Orient,” organized by Maroun Aouad within the framework of the International Associated Laboratory *PhAO* and the Projet *PhASIF* and held at the “Saint-Esprit” University in Kaslik (Lebanon) on February 7, 2017. I am deeply indebted to Prof. M. Aouad for giving me the great opportunity to participate in the Workshop. I also wish to thank the collaborators of the *PhiC-PhASIF* Project directed by Prof. Aouad, particularly Dr. Jawdath Jabbour, Teymour Morel and Stefano Di Pietrantonio, for sharing with me photographic reproductions and all information available to them concerning the ms. Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph, Bibliothèque Orientale, 377, as well as Father Makarios Haidamous from the Monastery of the Holy Saviour in Ġūn, for his precious help in reading and deciphering the handwriting of Father Antoine Bulad. I am also indebted to the director of the *PhiBor* ERC Project (<http://www.avicennaproject.eu/>), Prof. A. Bertolacci, who allowed me to work on the manuscript tradition of the Metaphysics of Avicenna’s *Šifā*, and to all his collaborators.

¹ The ms. is recorded in the catalogue by CHEIKHO Louis (1925), “Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale, IV. Philosophie, Écriture Sainte,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph* 10, p. 105-180 (p. 124-5). A description is also provided in the Abjad online database of the *PhiC* Project (<http://abjad.phic-project.org/>) and in that of the *PhiBor* Project directed by A. Bertolacci (<https://phibor.sns.it/de/>).

² As recorded in CHEIKHO, “Catalogue,” p. 124-5.

T1. *Waqf*, fol. 2r, upper margin³:

<p>Endowment of the Saviour Monastery of Mašmūša from the author [of this note], the priest Anṭūn Būlād</p>	<p>وقف دير المخلص مشموشة من كاتبه القس انطون بولاد ب م</p>
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Three major destructive episodes stroke the monastery: the first in 1777, the second in 1860 and the third one during the civil war (1975-1990). During the second of these episodes, in 1860, a huge number of manuscripts previously owned by the monastery got dispersed. Reportedly, only a very small number of manuscripts was saved from dispersion, and Father Anṭūn Būlād played an active role in the attempt at recuperating them⁴. Supposedly, ms. BO, 377 was among the codices that were subtracted to the library of the monastery in that occasion. The provisional results of an ongoing research on the manuscript tradition of the *Ilāhiyyāt* of Avicenna's *Šifā'*⁵ allow to state that the presence of ms. BO, 377 in the library of the Basilian Salvatorian monastery represents, if not an *unicum*, at least a rare case in the history of the transmission of the work.

A second point of major interest is represented by the numerous marginal annotations preserved in ms. BO, 377. Some of them are quotations, among which excerpts of Abū al-Barakāt al-Baġdādī's *Kitāb al-Mu'tabar* (fol. 39v) and of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's *Al-Taḥṣīn al-Kabīr* (fol. 2r) have been identified. Some others are collational notes. An annotation of the latter type (T2 below), copied in the margins of the fifth treatise of the *Ilāhiyyāt* in the same handwriting as the main text⁶, deserves special attention, for it provides an insight into a copy allegedly owned by the 'Allāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325), who played a prominent role in the early reception of Avicenna's *Šifā'*⁷.

³ I wish to thank Father Makarios Haidamous for his help in reading this inscription.

⁴ See ROISSE Philippe (ed.) (2010), *Manuscrits arabes del Libano*, Editions du CEDRAC, Beirut, p. 58-59.

⁵ Conducted within the framework of the *PhiBor* Project; for updated provisional results of this survey, see <http://www.avicennaproject.eu/index.php?id=31>.

⁶ The note transcribed in T2 is affected by scribal errors; some corrections are suggested in the apparatus.

⁷ He is the author of one of the only two commentaries on the *Šifā'* attested before the 16th century; see WISNOVSKY Robert (2013), "Avicenna's Islamic Reception," in ADAMSON Peter (ed.), *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, Cambridge University Press, p. 190-213, esp. p. 194.

T2. Collational note, fol. 154v – transcription and translation

“This because, inevitably, either humanity inasmuch as it is humanity is considered in an indefinite manner —and there is no answer to the indefinite, because what is indefinite of humanity can be that which concerns Zayd as well as that which concerns ‘Amr— or this designated humanity is considered so that the designation has been added to humanity”: in this way [it is written] in the manuscript of the ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, and above it was written: “it is not found in certain manuscripts.”

«وذلك لأنه لا يخل¹ إما أن يعبر² فيها إنسانية من حيث إنسانية على سبيل الإهمال فلا يكون عن المهمل جواب لأنه يصح أن يكون المهمل من الإنسانية ما في زيد ويصح أن يكون ما في عمرو وإما أن يعبر³ فيها هذه الإنسانية المشار إليها فيكون⁴ الإشارة قد زادت على الإنسانية» كذا وجد من⁵ نسخة العلامة الحلي وكتب عليها: «لا يوجد في بعض النسخ» صح صح

¹ Sic; corrigendum: يخلو

²⁻³ Fort. corrigendum: يعتبر

⁴ Corrig.: تكون

⁵ Fort. corrigendum: في

The note (T2) reveals the presence of an interpolation in the text of the manuscript that the ‘Allāma al-Ḥillī had at hand. The text of the interpolation (from “*wa-dālīka*” to “*alā al-insāniyya*”) must have been originally meant as a commentary on *Ilāhiyyāt* V.1, p. 199,14 - 200,5⁸, where Avicenna states the necessity to add a determinate quantification to “humanity *qua* humanity” in order to answer questions concerning it (i.e. it is necessary to designate a particular humanity by adding a designation to the very notion of “humanity”)⁹. The commentary, arguably preserved in some ancestor of al-Ḥillī’s ms., was erroneously interpolated and misplaced in al-Ḥillī’s copy, where it was seemingly integrated in correspondence to *Ilāhiyyāt* V.1, p. 199,13¹⁰. T2 also reveals that Al-Ḥillī’s ms. must have been compared with at least another copy that lacked this explicative note, so that someone suspected the interpolation and wrote the remark “*lā yūğadu fī ba ‘ḍ al-nusaḥ,*” “it is not found in certain manuscripts.” If the note in the margin of ms. BO, 377 could be trusted, it would provide a precious description of an early witness of the text. Noteworthy, the text allegedly

⁸ IBN SĪNĀ (1960), *Al-Šifā’, al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 2 vols., ed. MŪSĀ M. YŪSUF, DUNYĀ Sulaymān and ZĀYID Sa’īd, Al-Hay’a al-‘amma li-šū’ūn al-maṭābi’ al-amīriyya, Cairo.

⁹ Paraphrasing Avicenna’s argument: if asked, about humanity, if it is A or not-A (two contradictories), one should not answer: “humanity inasmuch as it is humanity is not A,” but “inasmuch as it humanity, it is not A nor anything else.” In case of two affirmative terms (e.g. “white” and “one”), no answer at all should be given, for humanity inasmuch as it is humanity has, in its definition, neither being white nor being one. To be able to provide an answer, one should refer to a particular, designable humanity (e.g. the humanity of Zayd).

¹⁰ This is the point to which the note found in the margin of ms. BO, 377 corresponds.

interpolated in Al-Ḥillī's ms. corresponds almost *verbatim* to a marginal note that is found in mss. İstanbul, Nuruosmaniye Kütüphanesi, 2710¹¹, fol. 320v and Cairo, Maktabat al-Azhar al-Şarīf, Baḥīt Collection 44988, 331 *falsafa*¹², fol. 427v. These two thirteenth-century copies of Avicenna's *Şifā'* arguably circulated within the circle of Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Nağm al-Dīn al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī in Marāğa¹³, which might very plausibly explain the presence of the interpolation in the manuscript of the 'Allāma al-Ḥillī, who reportedly was a student of both Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī, and read the *Ilāhiyyāt* of Avicenna's *Şifā'* with Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī¹⁴. The erroneous interpolation that affected the ms. owned by al-Ḥillī might, therefore, be a unique piece of evidence of the thirteenth-century teaching activity concerning the *Ilāhiyyāt* in the circle of Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, of which ms. BO, 377 is a valuable and trustworthy witness.

Conclusively, ms. BO, 377 is a witness of extreme interest because of its peculiar circulation, and because, though being a rather late witness of Avicenna's *Ilāhiyyāt*, it provides precious insights into earlier stages of transmission of the text.

¹¹ Dated: 25 Rabī' al-Awwal – 25 Şawwāl 666 / 21 December 1267 – 15 July 1268.

¹² Dat. 7th/13th century in ANAWATI Georges C. (1950), *Essai de bibliographie avicennienne*, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, p. 70.

¹³ The copyist of ms. Nuruosmaniye, 2710 was even a student of al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī, and both manuscripts preserve marginal notes that attest a collation with the ms. of Naşīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī; for a reconstruction of the circulation of the two mss., see DI VINCENZO Silvia (2018), "Early Exegetical Practice on Avicenna's *Şifā'*: Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Marginalia to Logic," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 28/1, p. 31-66.

¹⁴ See AL-RAHIM Ahmed H. (2003), "The Twelver-Şī'ī Reception of Avicenna in the Mongol Period," in AL-RAHIM Ahmed H. and REISMAN David C. (eds.), *Before and After Avicenna: Proceedings of the First Conference of the Avicenna Study Group*, Brill, Leiden, p. 219-232 (esp. p. 228-230) and SCHMIDTKE Sabine (2004), "Ḥelli, Ḥasan b. Yusof b. Motahhar," in *Encyclopedia Iranica* vol. XII, fasc. 2, p. 164-169.

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