

## Reviews

SAVAGE-SMITH, Emilie, *A New Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Volume I: Medicine*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, XXVI + 896 pp + XLV plates.

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, catalogues (that is, accurate, detailed, reliable ones) are among the absolutely necessary instruments for anyone dealing with primary sources. Yet it is equally true that, at least for most of the libraries with holdings of some relevance, to revise and update the extant catalogues according to modern standards is a dire need (albeit certainly not the most grateful of tasks for a researcher). Academia should therefore be deeply appreciative of the fact that an acclaimed scholar has presented the erudite results of her unsparing effort in this area. The fruit of a long-term project extended for almost twenty years, this massive catalogue is, to begin with, an eagerly awaited research tool and, thanks to the wealth of materials made available in it, an invaluable one indeed. In fact, until its publication, researchers could only access the Arabic holdings of the

Bodleian Library through two Latin catalogues, the most recent one dating from 1836!

After a brief historical introduction to the Bodleian Arabic collections by Colin Wakefield (pp. xxix–xxxvi), the bulk of the catalogue is arranged in 11 thematic sections that cover a total of 229 volumes containing 378 medical items (which, in turn, represent 243 different treatises). As for the rationale of the selection of items, the reader is provided a sensible justification of the criteria for excluding stone-books such as al-Tīfāshī's as well as similar treatises with a main focus on things non-medical, and for including Ibn Bukhtīshū's medicine-centred *Book on Animals* (pp. xxiii–xiv).

The thematic sections according to which all the selected material is classified are as follows. (1) Graeco-Arabica (entry nos. 1–34\*, pp. 3–132) covering, in chronological order, translations of (as well as epitomes and commentaries to) Greek texts, both authentic and spurious, from the Corpus Hippocraticum, Dioscorides, Galen, Rufus, Magnus of Emesa and Paul of Aegina. This subsection is completed with one

solitary and attention-deserving translation from Latin (or maybe rather from some vernacular): that of Nicolaus of Salerno's *Antidotarium*, preserved in a Judaeo-Arabic manuscript (no. 34\*, pp. 122–131). (2) General manuals (nos. 35–88, pp. 133–376), ranging from the mid-ninth century to the end of the seventeenth century. Besides some examples of classic treatises, thirteen incomplete copies of Ibn Sīnā's *Qānūn* and a great many commentaries, epitomes and epitome-commentaries connected to it (nos. 55–71, pp. 220–318) attest to its success and pivotal role in the eastern Islamic medical tradition. In connection with entry no. 35 (Masīḥ al-Dimashqī's *Hārūniyyah*, pp. 133–135), the missing reference to S. Gigandet's edition and French translation of the text (Damascus, 2002) is one of the very rare omissions worth noting in an otherwise impressive network of bibliographic references all throughout the volume. (3) Medical poetry (including several anonymous pieces) is also well-represented (nos. 89–98, pp. 377–400), as are (4) medical monographs (nos. 99–118, pp. 401–461). Among the latter, a whole gamut of subdisciplines is gathered: aphorisms and philosophy, medical geography, oph-

thalmology, sexual matters, diagnosis and prognosis, phlebotomy, medical dictionaries and historiography of medicine. There follow (5) therapeutics both general and specific (nos. 119–157, pp. 463–562), (6) dietetics and regimen (nos. 158–169, pp. 563–592), (7) pharmaceuticals (nos. 170–214, pp. 595–724; in fact, 'pharmaceutics' is here an admittedly practical but still arguable portmanteau for pharmacognosy and pharmacopoeia, as reflected in treatises on materia medica on the one hand and in formularies on the other), (8) prophetic medicine (nos. 215–222, pp. 725–749), (9) plague tracts (nos. 223–226, 751–760), an exceedingly interesting section on (10) magical-astrological medicine (nos. 227–240, 761–789) and, finally, (11) "modern palimpsests" (nos. 241 and 242, pp. 791–796).

For each and every one of the 378 items that make up the catalogued collection a most complete physical and textual description is given, which extends to colophons and marginalia in addition to the actual contents. The description of the items is particularly helpful as it includes fairly thorough references to additional copies known to be held in other libraries, as well as to modern

editions, translations and studies – a painstaking exercise that includes intra-Bodleian cross-references to Judaeo-Arabic copies (nos. 34\*, 54, 99, 126, 148, 212) and even to Hebrew translations (nos. 1, 5, 34\*, 42, 49, 52, 54, 99, 144, 162, 212).

Before going any further, we will take the liberty to make one petty remark on the always daunting task of establishing and adhering to some tenable editorial criteria. Though one may agree or disagree with the seeming arbitrariness of keeping the undotted *tā' marbūṭah* of MSS while freely altering (both by omission and addition) the ever-problematic *hamzah* (cf. p. xxv), it comes as rather a shock to find a form such as *Ibqurāṭ* (too frequent to be a mere typo, but actually at variance with *Ibuqrāṭ*). This *Ibqurāṭ* was perhaps born out of analogy with the well-known Classical Arabic solution for foreign *muta cum liquida* consonant clusters but, as far as this reviewer's knowledge extends, it appears to be new and hitherto unheard of in the literature.

To go back to the matter in hand, contrariwise to the scarcely profitable and nevertheless all too common practice of merely providing the customary *bas-malah-ḥamdalah* of Arabic MSS,

here *incipits* (and to a lesser extent *explicitis*) are not seldom given in extenso (cf. nos. 10 [p. 32] or 76 [p. 335] for some extreme examples of this praiseworthy practice). In two instances, the entire text of a fragmentary piece is made available, namely Ibn Wāfid's fragment on drugs with Indian names (no. 174, p. 629) preserved in a mid-twelfth-century unicum (to the literature mentioned therein one should add the more recent edition of the *Kitāb al-wisād* [Toledo, 2006], which includes the Arabic text) and an anonymous untitled formulary fragment (no. 198, p. 694). In fact, parsimony is in no way a feature of the present volume. To the eyes of the historian of science, the unwearied industry of the cataloguer is probably nowhere better reflected than in the production of a set of outstanding synoptic tables for some of her items. For entry no. 14 (Dioscorides' pharmacognostical treatise), she presents an identification of all of the 289 plants depicted in the illustrations in Books 3–4, plus their concordances with both Wellmann's Greek edition and Dubler-Terés' Arabic text (pp. 45–64). In like manner, a transcription and Latin identification is provided for all of the 152

recipes in the Judaeo-Arabic copy of Nicolaus' *Antidotarium* (no. 34\*, pp. 125–130). When dealing with Ibn al-Nafīs' *Shāmīl* (no. 77, pp. 337–339), the author collated six additional manuscript copies (from Cambridge, California, Cairo, Aleppo, Damascus and Baghdad) with the four Bodleian MSS in order to reconstruct, with utmost accuracy, the structure of this medical encyclopaedia. Also noteworthy is the complete table of contents of a certain Sarābiyūn b. Ibrāhīm's *Al-fuṣūl al-muhimmah* as presented in the Bodleian unicum (no. 122, pp. 472–475), to which the author adds a very welcome index of authorities mentioned in the text (p. 471) – a similar index of *auctoritates* is also given for Ibn al-Burqumānī's and al-Labīb al-Harawī's treatises on hygiene (nos. 163 and 164, pp. 579–580, 583–584 respectively), for Ibn Samajūn's *Compendium* (no. 173, pp. 621–622) and for al-Tiflīsī's *Almanac* (no. 177, pp. 638–639). By the same token, the researcher is spared the trouble of finding out personally the epigraphs of the whole of the fifty chapters of Ibn Hibāt Allāh's *Treatise on the Nature of Man* (no. 199, pp. 407–410).

Moreover, well beyond this basic information (essential, yet too often curtailed, if not utterly neglected, especially in older specimens of the genre), one of the most remarkable, commendable features of the catalogue under review is the great detail of codicological description, enriched by the ground-breaking application of such innovative methods as the Sharp Scale of Opacity (the particulars of which the reader will find on p. xxvi). As a clear example of the many combinations of interests that may be aroused not only by the Bodleian manuscripts themselves but also by the author's exhaustive treatment of the material, let us draw the reader's attention to the items described under entry nos. 106–107 and 132–134 (pp. 426–430 and 512–516). There, the Semitist will find some hints about the irregular linguistic features of MSS Bruce 45 and 50, two mid-eighteenth-century volumes on parchment written at Gondar (Ethiopia) by copyists with a less than full mastery of the Arabic language. The codicologist's interest, on the other hand, is served by the provision of first-hand data on several peculiarities of the writing and frame-ruling. The historian of Arabo-Islamic medicine will discover two

intriguing medical miscellanies whose very existence is connected with the hitherto underexplored phenomenon of the transmission of Graeco-Arabic medicine in the African periphery of the Islamic world (and even beyond, through translations into Amharic). No. 133 (pp. 514–516), for instance, is an alleged extract from a book on medicine by an enigmatic Hirmis / H.rmūs b. al-Bayṭār (for which the author suggests a conflation of the Greek Hermes and the thirteenth-century Andalusī pharmacognostic Ibn al-Bayṭār), whereas no. 134 (pp. 517–518) is an anonymous book on electuaries containing recipes said to have been taken from Ibn Sīnā, Galen and Aristotle. Incidentally, on the second of the two treatises authored by the otherwise unknown Aḥmad al-‘Abdallāwī al-Maḥallāwī (no. 107, pp. 428–430), the argument for the highly plausible emendation of the title from *Kitāb al-Azraq* into *Kitāb al-Arzāq* is slightly blurred by a most infelicitous slip on page 428 line 23, where *al-Azraq* obviously stands for *al-Arzāq* as elsewhere in that entry. All in all, the extraordinary nature of these apparently lesser marginal texts strongly urges scholars to heed the long-heard call of Stefan

Strelcyn for further research on the field (*Médecine et plantes d'Éthiopie. Les traités médicaux éthiopiens*, Warsaw, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1968).

In addition to the catalogue proper (further illustrated with a remarkably tasteful and altogether instructive selection of forty-five full-colour plates), the volume includes three appendixes containing exhaustive concordances for manuscripts, authors and dated items, as well as no less than four indexes for titles, copyists, owners-donors-vendors and *auctoritates* (both authors and titles cited), alongside a general index. These valuable reader-oriented additions shall prove serviceable for the researcher and render the catalogue only the more useful.

In sum, the present Catalogue is as much of a jewel as many of the precious items it meticulously describes. It is definitely a must-have for the library of every researcher in the history of Arabo-Islamic medicine, but also the codicologist will find within it a bountiful collection of fresh data to harvest and fully exploit. May the future volumes of this projected series of catalogues of the Bodleian's Arabic manuscripts maintain the high standard set by their predecessor.

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