



Final summary report

During the last year of the project (2009-2010) the beneficiary has focused his research closely on the activities inherent in the performance of the main tasks.

The main objective of the project was to prepare a new critical edition of the theological treatises by the Melkite bishop of Gaza Sulaymān ibn Ḥasan al-Ġazzī's, who lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries. To do this, the modern method of textual criticism, the so-called neo-Lachmannian, has been utilized and the language of the manuscripts, middle or mixed Arabic, has been analyzed and studied. To this purpose, the work focused on the retrieval and collation of manuscripts, as well as the identification of the sources which the author has used in order to write his works. For this reason two research missions were carried out: one in Paris and one in Syria and Lebanon. The Christian Arabic manuscripts of the BnF library in Paris were consulted, and as a result, a new and unexpected source of the al-Ġazzī's treaties was found, studied and analyzed. This MS. is the *Parisinus Arabicus 6981*. MS. *Parisinus Arabicus 213* belongs to the same Christian Arabic MSS. fund. Our research has shown that this latter code contains two fragments of the famous Muslim encyclopedic collection known under the name of the *Rasā'il Iḥwān al-Ṣafā'* (The Epistles of Brethren of Purity). The discovery is important because it allows us to demonstrate that these epistles were circulating in Christian milieus of the seventeenth century to which the MS is dated¹. Furthermore this discovery makes supports the hypothesis that I announced in my article, setting out the similarities between the Bishop of Gaza's treaty on the microcosm and the Brothers of Purity's Epistles². Ultimately it is quite conceivable to think that al-Ġazzī knew the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. Our subsequent study of the sources, however, allowed us to ascertain that the main source that the bishop of Gaza has used was the *Kitāb al-Burhān* (the Book of the Demonstration). This work, along with other theological writings of Theodore Abū Qurra and John of Damascus, has affected the production of the Palestinian Christian Arabic literature in the Middle Ages. The new edition of Sulaymān al-Ġazzī's theological treatises finally will allow scholars not only to better appreciate Palestinian theological thought in the

¹ I published the main results of this research in my last article «Deux fragments des Iḥwān al-Ṣafā' dans une collection arabe chrétienne», *Le Muséon* 123 (2010), 203-227.

² See P. LA SPISA, «Un trattato sul microcosmo di Sulaymān Ibn Ḥasan al-Ġazzī», in P. Masri, N. Edelby (ed.), *Mélanges en mémoire de Mgr Néophytos Edelby (1920-1995)*, Beyrouth 2005; p. 239-282.

Fatimid era, but also to more accurately understand how the circulation of learned literary texts in the premodern Arab world knew no confessional boundaries.

Another mission was accomplished in the summer of 2009, this time to Syria and Lebanon, with an aim of locating other manuscript sources. One was found in the monastery of Balamand in northern Lebanon near Tripoli: the MS. *Balamand 135*. It was not used by the previous editor of the al-Ġazzī treatises. The pictures of the manuscript from the Sinai (Egypt) were obtained with the collaboration of Marco Di Bella, who has been kind enough to send it to us.

After these two last missions the beneficiary concentrated himself to prepare the edition. Another aspect to highlight is the work on the language of the manuscripts was carried out. This is called middle or mixed Arabic, because of the mixture of specific linguistic features, such as those of classical Arabic together with colloquial Arabic and hybrid Arabic forms that do not belong to either standard linguistic register. Our edition will show the linguistic features of the manuscripts. The importance of this kind of language is crucial, since it was the vehicle of transmission of knowledge within what has been labeled the Orthodox Arabic Melkite Church, since the Islamic conquests (VIIth-VIIIth century) until the Arabic language reform during the period of the Arab Renaissance (*Nahḍa*) in XIXth-XXth century. Correcting the language of manuscripts by respecting the standards of modern spelling would be an anti-historical work, since the main objective of each critical edition should be a reconstruction of the past. In this respect we believe that on the one hand the new edition updates our knowledge of the thought of the bishop of Gaza Sulaymān as well as on the age in which he lived and the language in which most probably he wrote; on the other it refines the methodology usually adopted by scholars by preparing a critical edition of texts written in middle Arabic.

From the editorial point of view, the main results are the publication of three articles, two of which are the proceedings of two conferences in which the beneficiary took part. Because of the delay accumulated during the first year, unfortunately at the date of the end of the project the draft edition has not yet been sent to the publisher's collection *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. We hope, nonetheless do so it in early 2011.

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