ON THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE *ILĀHIYYĀT* OF AVICENNA’S *KITĀB AL-SHIFĀ* *

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In a pioneering article published in 1986, Hans Daiber has masterly shown that Indian libraries represent extremely rich, and largely unexplored, depositories of manuscripts of Arabic philosophical works.1 The Arabic manuscripts discovered by Daiber in Indian libraries regard also some of Avicenna’s most important works on philosophy.2 Several manuscripts of Avicenna’s masterpiece on metaphysics, the *Ilāhiyyāt* ([Science of] Divine Things) of the *Kitāb al-shifā* (Book of the Care), are preserved in India: further manuscripts of the same work will predictably be discovered in other libraries worldwide by scholars that will follow the example of Daiber’s ground-breaking research. In the footstep of Daiber’s aforementioned study, the present contribution tries to collect, order and update the information on the manuscript tradition of Avicenna’s *Ilāhiyyāt* available in secondary literature.

The first section of the present essay will provide an inventory of the known codices of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, adding a few items to the list that can be drawn from the bibliographies of C. Brockelmann, G.C. Anawati and Y. Mahdavī,3 and showing the extremely wide circulation of Avicenna’s

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work in the Islamic world. In the second section, the chronology of these manuscripts will be taken into account, pointing to another remarkable feature displayed by the Ilāhīyyāt, namely the extremely long period of time during which this work was copied. The final section will evaluate the editions of Avicenna’s work presently available in light of the data discussed in the previous two sections, pointing to the necessity of a new, better grounded and more precise, critical edition.

In some cases, the manuscripts containing the Ilāhīyyāt preserve also all or some of the other parts of the Shifā. Incidentally, thus, the information provided here will shed light also on the manuscript transmission of the sections on logic, natural philosophy and mathematics of Avicenna’s philosophical magnum opus.

I. INVENTORY

Excluding the manuscripts of private collections, and without taking the fragments into account, more than one hundred manuscripts of Avicenna’s Ilāhīyyāt are recorded by Brockelmann, Anawati and Mahdavī; to these, some others (one manuscript preserved in Cairo—below, no. 17—and the ones in the libraries of Ankara, Damascus, Khoy and Princeton) can now also be added. The available data can be provisionally arranged in the following list, with some caveat. First, the indications provided by the aforementioned bibliographies are not always clear and correct: some manuscripts reported as containing the Ilāhīyyāt, for example, do not in fact contain it. Second, with the progress of research new manuscripts of the Ilāhīyyāt from other geographical areas of the Middle East and Europe will probably be brought to light. Thus, the next step in this path of research, i.e. the systematic scrutiny of the catalogues of libraries preserving Arabic manuscripts, and of the funds

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See the manuscripts of this kind mentioned below, n. 72, and the ones used by Asanzādah al-Amulf for his printed version of the Ilāhīyyāt (below, section III). Also Hans Daiber’s personal library contains an Arabic manuscript of the Ilāhīyyāt, copied in 865/1461 (provisionally catalogued as Daiber Collection III, 131; I wish to thank Prof. Daiber for having kindly put at my disposal a copy of this codex).

Ms. Istanbul, Körprülı 1604, fol. 62r, l. 11–62v, l. 6, for example, is an almost literal quotation of Ilāhīyyāt viii, 6, p. 357, 4–9: this fragment occurs in the ‘Usf min kalām al-shaykh, fol. 62r–v, comprising passages from Avicenna’s Ta’tīqāt, ed. A. Badawi (Cairo, 1973), p. 78, 24–8 (I owe this information to D.C. Reisman).

See, for example, below, n. 23, 36, 62.