

# Studia graeco-arabica

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### *Cover*

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v  
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

extracto de *Kitāb al-kašf ‘an manāhiġ al-adilla*. La segunda traducción – *Kašf ‘an manāhiġ al-adilla* (*Desvelamiento de los métodos de demostración*) – toma como fuente el texto de M.J. Müller (Munich 1875; reimpresión 1991) *Philosophie und Theologie von Averroes*. La última traducción presenta un extracto del *Tahāfut al-tahāfut* (*La destrucción de la destrucción*) según la edición de M. Bouyges (Beirut 1930, pp. 580-8). Las traducciones se presentan con sus debidas notas al final de ellas que constituyen una gran ayuda para el lector no solo porque refieren las obras utilizadas y la bibliografía complementaria sino también porque aclaran el sentido de expresiones o términos quizás menos familiares para aquellos que no se ocupan especialmente de la filosofía en el mundo árabe.

VA

J.M. Gázquez, *The Attitude of the Medieval Latin Translators Towards the Arabic Sciences*, SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, Firenze 2016 (Micrologus' Library, 75), 213 pp.

This interesting book is devoted to the statements comparing Arabic and Latin culture expressed, often in their prefaces, by a number of translators from Arabic into Latin whose activity spans from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It appears from the survey of such statements that these scholars shared in the intent to account for their work by putting special emphasis on the high value of the texts they were translating. The Arabic works are often presented by their translators as a mean to redress the “scientific ignorance and poverty of Western Christendom” (p. 14). It is well known – and probably the most famous expression of this feeling is that of Daniel of Morley in his *Philosophia* – that the treasures stored in the *armaria infidelium* attracted wonderment tinted with jealousy. Several scholars in their pioneering and still fundamental works called attention to this intellectual attitude typical of the Latin Middle Ages: suffice it to mention Marie-Thérèse d’Alverny. A systematic inventory of the statements of the medieval translators from Arabic into Latin is a welcomed way to flesh out this idea.

The book comprises five chapters plus an Introduction (pp. 1-8) and a Conclusion (p. 183). Chapter II (pp. 20-133) counts as the main bulk of the work, containing as it does most of the passages taken from the works of the translators. It falls into two parts: the first is short, and is devoted to the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries (Paul of Cordoba, d. ca 860, and Gerbert d’Aurillac, i.e. Pope Sylvester II). The second one is much wider, covering from the 11<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup>. In this part find their place quotations from the works not only of the translators, but also from the scholars who promoted the translations and their circulation. There are entries on Constantine the African, Stephen of Pisa, Petrus Alfonsi, Adelard of Bath, Hugo of Santalla, Peter the Venerable, Robert of Ketton, Hermann of Carinthia, Plato of Tivoli, John of Seville, Avendauth, Dominicus Gundissalinus, Gerard of Cremona, Daniel of Morley, Mark of Toledo, Philip of Tripoli, Michael Scot, Hermann the German, and Arnald of Villanova. Also lesser known translators feature in this survey, like Walcher, or John of Worcester, or Bonaventura of Siena (the translator of the *K. al-mī rāġ, Liber Scalae Machometi*), Armengaud Blaise and John of Capua. An entry is devoted to Ramon Llull (pp. 116-20), and another to King Peter of Aragon (pp. 128-9).

The short Chapter II (pp. 135-7) is devoted to “The Importance of Spain” in this process, and narrows the focus on the importance of the Iberian Peninsula for the sciences, as accounted for by Gerbert of Aurillac and John of Salisbury. Other documents are discussed in Chapter IV, entitled “Criticisms of the Translation Process” (pp. 139-51). These documents include the well-known protest against the translators and their works raised by Roger Bacon both in his *Opus tertium* (*multa fuerunt male translata et precipue de philosophia...*) and elsewhere. Then a chapter comes on “Toledo, the Medieval City of Knowledge” (pp. 153-82), where the rise and growth of the “legend of the

city of Toledo as the mediator between cultures and religions” (p. 153) is described. Predictably, the core of this chapter is Gerard of Cremona and the *elogium* at the end of the well-known *Vita Gerardi* written by his *socii* at his death, with its beautiful closing verses *Hunc sine consimili genuisse Cremona superbit / Toleti vixit Toletum reddidit astris*. Gázquez says: “Having decided to pursue his intellectual training in Toledo, from the moment of his arrival he was so fascinated by the opportunities the city offered him that he decided to stay there for the rest of his life and to devote himself entirely to the translation of the works that he found there. His love for the city did not go unrequited: Toledo granted him the most sought-after gift of all, coveted by all Christian scholars of astronomy: the Arabic translation of Ptolemy’s *Almagest*. Gerard’s translation into Latin brought him everlasting fame (...). The final verses (...) are particularly significant (...). These verses praise the city of Cremona for giving life to this peerless son. But the rhetorical figure of the final anaphora (...) is used to show that it was Toledo that filled his life, and Toledo that returned him to the stars” (p. 159). Testimonies about the intellectual life at Toledo are taken from scholars as diverse as the Muslim astronomer al-Zarqālī (d. 1087) and Mark of Toledo, who authored the second translation of the Qur’ān into Latin. One might have expected here an in-depth discussion of the question of the so-called “school of Toledo”, an item of past literature on the topic that is still worth being checked against the opinions advanced in contemporary scholarship. This remains a desideratum in this book. Nevertheless, the chapter is interesting for the documentation it offers, taken from the works of scholars living in or travelling to Toledo. A final chapter is devoted to the translations into Castilian promoted by Alfonso X the Wise, either directly from Arabic or from the Latin versions, (pp. 173-82).

These grounds lead Gázquez to conclude that “The words of many of the translators express the enthusiasm and admiration that drove them forward in their attempts to develop a new spirit of scientific endeavour and to help to rid the Christians of their ignorance and their philosophical and scientific penury. In spite of the gaps we may find, the Latin translators were able to save many Greek or Arabic texts which, due to the passing of time and the ravages of history, have been lost in their original language” (p. 183).

All this, as I have said, is very interesting; however, there are certain points which, in my opinion, are open to objection. My main perplexity consists in that I am not clear if the lack lamented by the translators and that summarised by Gázquez in the quotation above really match. The translators generally express a dismay about the lack in Christendom of that knowledge of nature, its laws and secrets, that is filled out by the treasures stored in the *armaria infidelium*: the *Almagest* best exemplifies the science sought for (and found). However, in the general appraisal mirrored in this book as well as in several other contemporary essays on the topic, this is rendered by a series of notions that, at least for me, are not as clear-cut as they should be. In particular, it is not clear to me what, in the quotation that follows, stands for “scientific knowledge”, “philosophical and scientific heritage” and “classical culture”. Gázquez says: “The level of *scientific knowledge* in the Latin world fell dramatically between Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages. Scientific production in Latin had been conspicuous by its absence in the first centuries after the fall of Rome, and the idea that the Christian world had squandered its *philosophical and scientific heritage* was now widely held. The legacy passed on at the end of Antiquity had become pauperized and reduced to its minimal expression. The last flashes of classical culture had appeared in the Iberian Peninsula in the works of the Visigoth fathers St Leander, St Ildefonsus and St Isidore of Seville, who created a synthesis of the knowledge of the Ancients and transmitted it to the Middle Ages in the *Etymologies* and in *De Rerum natura*” (p. 5, my emphasis). Were we to judge by this account, a dark age of ignorance was interrupted only by the lights, admittedly feeble, of the encyclopaedias mentioned above. Now, my guess is that one thing is

the science of nature in the sense in which Daniel of Morley speaks about it, comparing in a vibrant account the Toledan discoveries and the bookish teachings imparted in Paris, and another one is the continuity of the Graeco-Roman classical culture during the Middle Ages. On this specific point, the absence even from the bibliography of reference studies like Pierre Courcelle's *Les lettres grecques en Occident de Macrobe à Cassiodore* (1948) is revealing. A clear-cut distinction of the two concepts of "scientific knowledge" (i.e. the science of nature in the sense given to it by the translators) and "Greek legacy" would help the debate about the role of the translations from Arabic into Latin to be freed from confusions.

CDA

R. Pergola, *I luoghi del tradurre nel Medioevo. La trasmissione della scienza greca e araba nel mondo latino*, Pensa MultiMedia Editore, Lecce 2016 (La stadera. Collana di linguistica, letteratura e glottodidattica), xxxii + 168 pp.

At first sight, the reader of *I luoghi del tradurre* may get the impression that this volume is the double of *The Attitude of the Medieval Translators Towards the Arabic Sciences* reviewed above, because the two books contain a series of entries each on a medieval translator from Arabic into Latin, and most names obviously overlap. In reality, the two books are surely and inevitably twin brothers, but they are different and in some sense complementary, as I hope will appear from this brief account.

*I luoghi del tradurre* falls into three parts and seven chapters, five of which belong to the second part. After an introductory essay authored by P. Mazzotta – which however is only very loosely connected with the subject-matter of the book, dealing as it does with the issue of translation in contemporary socio-linguistic theories – Chapter 1 (pp. 5-36) sets the scene for the analysis to be conducted in Part II, and outlines the historical context of the translations.

This first chapter provides a synthesis of a quantity of studies that can count as a *status quaestionis* on the contemporary scholarship about the medieval translations. Unfortunately, some slips risk to lead astray the reader not already acquainted with the subject, and this is especially regrettable given that it is precisely to such a readership that the book is addressed (Preface, p. x). The sentence "A Costantinopoli, sebbene gli interessi teologici prevalessero su quelli scientifici, l'attività di traduzione e revisione dei testi di Aristotele conobbe un momento aureo con Giacomo Veneto e Guglielmo di Moerbeke" (p. 6) suggests that the place where both translators were active was indeed Constantinople, thus raising in the reader the question "why on earth should there have been an activity of translation from Greek into Latin in Constantinople, and for which readership?". And indeed, Pergola goes on with the following: "Spagna, Sicilia e Costantinopoli mantennero il ruolo di principali centri di traduzione anche nel corso del XIII secolo, ma ora la scelta delle opere da tradurre, diversamente da quanto era avvenuto sino a poco tempo prima, non era più effettuata solo dai traduttori perché le traduzioni venivano prodotte o commissionate sia per colmare lacune nei diversi campi del sapere sia per sostituire traduzioni oscure o imprecise a causa dei passaggi intermedi da lingua a lingua; esempio celebre di questa nuova tendenza è Guglielmo di Moerbeke" (*ibid.*). Apart from some other problems of detail into which my present purpose does not compel me to enter, this inevitably suggests that there was in Constantinople a learned audience that commissioned or at least acted as the intended audience of William's translations from Greek into Latin – something that did not happen at all. It is true that in the relevant entries, respectively pp. 103-4 on Giacomo Veneto, and pp. 105-7 on William of Moerbeke, Pergola provides the biographical details available on both translators, thus enabling the reader to realise that the former was indeed active in Constantinople in