

The general aim of the project is to produce a critical edition, with an English translation, of a medieval Arabic self-care medical manual titled *Ghunyat al-labīb haythu lā yūjad aṭ-ṭabīb*, or "Wealth of Information for Intelligent Man When the Doctor Is Not around." Apart from the edition of the Arabic text and its English rendering, the study will include: a historical and cultural introduction; the discussion of the textual content of the manual, its many-sided analysis and interpretation included; commentaries to the Arabic edition and English translation; a glossary of Arabic technical terms, i.e. pertaining to medicine, pharmacology, magic etc.

Compiled by a Cairene physician known as Ibn al-Akfani (d. 1348), the manual was addressed to those who could not, or did not want to, consult physicians. Written in the form of a simplified, "domestic" compendium of advice regarding health and treatment of various ailments, the manual reflects the state of knowledge and world-views not only of its author, but also of its readers. Therefore, one of the key research problems concerning the analysis and interpretation of the manual's text will involve verification of clues regarding the state of knowledge, system of beliefs and ways of thinking about health and disease as prevailing among educated dwellers of Arabic-Islamic Near Eastern urban centers, that is the social group whose members were the intended readers of the text.

At the same time, determining these particular aspects of medical culture will constitute an attempt to at least partially unearth data related to the healing traditions and practices of domestic medicine, which questions still remain beyond the reach of scholars of Arabic-Islamic healthscape of the pre-modern period. In order to properly read the information which Ibn al-Akfani's compendium offers, the research will involve a broad contextualization of its text and will situate it in relation to other historical writings of the time. The relevant procedures will involve implementing methods such as those typical for manuscript studies, anthropology of knowledge, medical anthropology, literary history, cultural history and Oriental studies and will be based, above all, on a significant corpus of Arabic-language sources produced between the 12th and 17th centuries and providing an insight into Arabic-Islamic medical discourse.

Analysis, interpretation and contextualization of the textual contents of the manual will be preceded by decoding its Arabic text basing on at least ten of the preserved manuscript copies, which date back to different periods and originate from different places. Within a broader framework of textual criticism the contents of the manuscripts will be collated so as to identify errors and distortions and reconstruct the archetype version as close as possible. An important part of research pertaining to the Arabic edition and English translation will involve preparing linguistic, historical, cultural and medical commentaries.

There have been a number of reasons behind selecting the research topic. One of them is related to the fact that neither Ibn al-Akfani's *Ghunyat al-labīb*, nor any other Arabic-Islamic self-care medical manual have never been a subject of any scholarly research or study. What is more, the many-sided question of household medicine and self-treatment as practiced by the historical populations of Near Eastern cities, and the Arabic-Islamic discourse related to it, has been neglected by contemporary scholarship and has never been systematically studied. This disinterestedness in domestic medical manuals as sources for the history of medicine and culture, and the almost complete absence of references to the "popular" sector of health care in the scholarly output dealing with the medieval Arabic-Islamic medicine were important reasons behind selecting the research topic. As the Arabic-Islamic self-care medical manuals constitute a virgin source of information on variety of issues related to Arabic-Islamic medical culture, the uncovering this information, bringing it to light, using it in the research and thus approximating the otherwise inaccessible historical reality, have all been an equally important inspiration behind undertaking the project.