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PREFACE

The third *Simone Assemani Symposium on Islamic coinage* was held in Rome between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> September 2011. This was organized by Arianna D'Ottone of the Italian Institute of Oriental Studies of the Sapienza University of Rome, together with the Department of Humanistic Studies of the University of Trieste and with Prof. Msgr. Cesare Pasini, Prefect of the Vatican Library. These were joined by many specialists in the origin and the development of Islamic coinage over the centuries.

The choice of Rome for this symposium, after Padua and Trieste was appropriate, as it was here that Simone Assemani began his education at the Maronite College<sup>1</sup>, and from where he began his extensive and complex travels first to Mount Lebanon, then to Vienna and finally to Venice and Padua<sup>2</sup>. Also since the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Vatican Library has held some of the remarkable works of his ancestors<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> P. RAPHAËL, *Le rôle du Collège maronite romain dans l'orientalisme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, Beyrouth 1950, p. 142-144.

<sup>2</sup> Biography, study and contextualization in the community of scholars in the late eighteenth century-early nineteenth century: A. PONTANI, B. CALLEGHER, *Un orientalista a Padova: primi appunti su "L'arabico Assemani" (1752-1821)*, in *Simposio Simone Assemani in Simposio Simone Assemani sulla monetazione islamica*, Padova 2005 (Numismatica Patavina 5), p. 11-29; A. PONTANI, *Simone Assemani*, in *Padua felix*, O. LONGO ed., Padova 2007, p. 259-270; EAD., *Dall'archivio di Simone Assemani (1752-1821): documenti e carteggi*, "Quaderni per la storia dell'Università di Padova", 40 (2007), p. 3-66; EAD., «Or vedete, amico carissimo...»: appunti sulla «cassetta gialla» del medagliere naniano di Venezia, in C. MALTEZOU, P. SCHREINER, M. LOSACCO eds., *ΦΙΛΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ. Studi in onore di Marino Zorzi*, Venezia 2008, p. 309-337: 315-318. Of some importance for the connection to the story of the abbot Maltese Joseph Vella (1749-1814): P. Preto, *Una lunga storia di falsi e falsari*, "Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche", 3 (2006), p. 11-38.

<sup>3</sup> The events of bio-bibliographical Assemani members of his family residing in Rome are

Assemani's family, of ancient Lebanese origins, produced many prominent figures in the Maronite community in Rome who served in the cultural institutions of the Papal States: Joseph Simon (1687-1768) was Prefect of the Vatican Library<sup>4</sup>. Later his nephew Stephen-Evodio (1711-1782) titular Archbishop of Apamea<sup>5</sup>, had the same role. Giuseppe Luigi (1710-1782) taught Syriac at the Sapienza University of Rome<sup>6</sup> while Antonio, grandson of Stephan-Evodio and brother of Simon was scriptor of the Syriac language in the Vatican Library and interpreter-translator of Arabic for various Vatican congregations<sup>7</sup>.

In the letter inviting all interested scholars to this symposium we asked for proposals for the subjects to be discussed. There were many suggestions: the history and iconography of the new issues of the Arab-Sassanian and Arab-Byzantine period, the coinage during the transition from the late Umayyad to the first Abbasid period, the interdependence of the Umayyad coinage and that of medieval Europe, Central Asia and possibly that of the Far East, the study of the supply and demand for money (minting and circulation: sequencing of dies and the volumes of new issues), and new readings and interpretation of literary sources of the coinage of the Umayyad and proto-Abbasid period. Last but not least we included Paleography in a period characterized almost entirely by legends and their graphical variations throughout the centuries.

We also received suggestions for a common framework for the comparison of the coinage in the Umayyad and Sassanian periods, to include also sigillography and inscriptions about the economy and currency of the period. Some presentations were made without leaving a written copy amongst which, perhaps the most interesting, were those of Frederic Bauden (University of Liege) *The oldest surviving treatise on Islamic coinage* (Waki 's Kitāb al-Sarf wa-l-Naqd wa-l-Sikkah) and its contribution to the study of Umayyad and early Abbasid numismatics and of

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described in N. GEMAYEL, *Les échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe*, 1-2, Beirut 1984, p. 414-518 and in *Encyclopédie Maronite*, I, Kaslik 1992, p. 437-445.

<sup>4</sup> G. GRAF, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*. B. 3, *Die Schriftsteller von der Mitte des 15. bis zum Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Melchiten, Maroniten*, Città del Vaticano 1949, p. 444-455; RAPHAËL, *Le rôle du Collège maronite* cit., p. 123-136; G. LEVI DELLA VIDA, s.v. *Assemani, Giuseppe Simonio*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* (= *DBI*) IV, 1962, p. 437-440.

<sup>5</sup> GRAF, *Geschichte* cit., p. 455-457; RAPHAËL, *Le rôle du Collège maronite* cit., pp. 137-139; G. LEVI DELLA VIDA, s.v. *Assemani, Stefano Evodio*, in *DBI*, IV, p. 441-442.

<sup>6</sup> GRAF, *Geschichte* cit., pp. 457-458; RAPHAËL, *Le rôle du Collège maronite* cit., p. 140-142; G. LEVI DELLA VIDA, s.v. *Assemani, Giuseppe Luigi*, in *DBI*, IV, p. 436-437.

<sup>7</sup> GRAF, *Geschichte* cit., p. 458, Raphaël, *Le rôle du Collège Maronite* cit., p. 144. This is not lemmatized Assemani independently in *DBI*, but its data are s.v. *Assemani Simone*. For the relationship between the two brothers, cf. Biblioteca Museo Correr, Venezia, *Epistolario Moschini*, fasc. *Assemani, Simone*. In the letter to Simone Assemani Stefano Borgia (1731-1804), Padova 9 agosto 1800, he recalls the function of scriptor of his brother Antonio and declines the offer of a similar place in the Vatican Library, a choice that would result in a transfer from Padua to Rome.

Aleksandr Naymark (Hofstra University – New York) *The Transitional Period in the East: Coinage and Monetary Circulation in Sogdiana from Qutaiba b. Muslim to Abu Muslim*. Other of these papers focused on the biography of Simone Assemani amongst which that of Piero Lucchi (Library of Museo Correr in Venice) *I segreti della Cattedra di S. Pietro di Castello a Venezia: Un contributo poco noto di Simone Assemani* in which he shows that the relic of the Chair of St. Mark in St. Pietro di Castello in Venice is false<sup>8</sup>.

However these Proceedings do not contain all the papers that were read during the meetings. Some scholars were unable to attend at the last moment (see Figure 1.) while others who did attend were not able to present the findings of their research not yet completed and yet others preferred to send texts with arguments different than those discussed during the two days.

Thus this book contains most of the papers presented at the meeting in Rome but other papers are also included reflecting the interesting and lively debate about Islamic coinage, it's characteristics in the different epochs and different regions all of which is original work in progress. In the end there are two essays of those, due to the organization, had no way to present them in that place for reasons of time. From this will come further studies, both narrowly focused and inter disciplinary, which will enrich the future Simone Assemani symposiums.

These two days in Rome were made possible thanks to the generous collaboration and the irreplaceable competence of Arianna D'Ottone. Special thanks are also due to the Prefect Mgr. Cesare Pasini for the hospitality in the charming Barbarini room in the Vatican Library. We are also grateful to Professor Matilde Mastrangelo, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Sapienza University of Rome, and to Professor Claudio Zaccaria, Director of the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Trieste, for their invaluable support in the organization of this initiative.

Organizing these periodic meetings, for the writer and I presume for Arianna D'Ottone is a pleasure. Our intellectual curiosity pushes us into some areas of study which are not always popular and often complex given the multiplicity of skills required to understand events in periods long ago, for which too often we still have either gaps in our knowledge or stereotypes to fall back on. The ideas expressed in these Proceedings may not be acceptable to everyone but these, nonetheless, will advance our research into the economy of the Islamic world and enrich the future meetings of the Simone Assemani Symposium<sup>9</sup>. And with these beliefs we deliver the Proceedings of the Third Symposium Simone Assemani to congressmen and scholars.

<sup>8</sup> The subject was anticipated in P. LUCCHI, *Due abati. Prime note al carteggio Giovanni Cristofano Amaduzzi e Simone Assemani*, Atti della settima e ottava giornata amaduzziana, Savignano sul Rubicone 2011, p. 275-318.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. L. ILISCH, *Islamic Numismatics (North Africa to Central Asia)*, in *A Survey of Numismatic Research 2002-2007*, M. AMANDRY, D. BATESON eds., Glasgow 2009, p. 479-504: 479-480.