

Medical Compendium including JĀLĪNŪS, *Kitāb-i ‘Ilal-i a‘rāḍ-I* (GALEN, *On Diseases and Symptoms?*); a Medical Text in Hebrew (unidentified); and ‘ALĪ IBN AL-‘ABBĀS AL-MAJŪSĪ, *Kāmil al-sinā‘ah al-tibbīyah* (*The Complete Book of the Medical Art* [*“The Royal Book”*]); and other texts

In Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew (with later additions in Samaritan and Arabic), manuscript on paper

Catania (Sicily), c. 1452

ii (modern paper) + original binding + ii (original paper flyleaves) + 307 + i on paper, contains three separate bifolios with a Samaritan writing, all Samaritan folios are written on paper with the watermark “Pirie’s Old Style” of a well-known nineteenth-century British manufacturer, other folios with the bell watermark intersecting at 90 degrees with the chain-line, no parallels in Piccard, bound out of order with some folios missing between ff. 277-278 (collation i<sup>26</sup>, ii<sup>20</sup>, iii-iv<sup>14</sup>, v<sup>24</sup>, vi-vii<sup>14</sup>, viii<sup>20</sup>, ix<sup>14</sup>, x<sup>15</sup>, xi-xiv<sup>14</sup>, xv<sup>20</sup>, xvi-xix<sup>14</sup>), the front board of the original binding (198 × 137 mm.) made of the reused paper leaves, pressed together, decorated and covered with writing, is preserved beneath two modern flyleaves, followed by two original flyleaves, and then 14 folios, all attached upside down with no original foliation, ff. 1 and 2 decorated with a geometric pattern, Samaritan parts are written in red ink, from f. 15 the text is written in Sephardic semi-cursive with the chapter titles and explicits in square script, all ruled in plummet, 27 lines to a page (justification 155 × 95 mm.): ff. 15-18 in Judeo-Arabic, ff. 21-22 in Samaritan script on nineteenth-century paper with some Arabic marginalia (27-28 lines to a page, justification 115 × 66 mm.), ff. 23-24 blank, ff. 25-39 in Hebrew written by two hands, the first 4 folios with more cursive oriental features, then, 269 folios (ff. 40-307) in Judeo-Arabic, 252 folios of which are foliated in Hebrew characters, but some folios are lost and quires are rebound in a wrong order (e.g., after f. 61 [original foliation] follows 79, after 94 follows 63-78, then 95 and so forth), ff. 83v-85: the table of contents of the following chapters, hand changes on f. 211, long marginalia on ff. 211v, 281, 281v, some folios seem to be lost between f. 277 and f. 278, lightly stained and damaged from damp throughout the manuscript although no writing is obscured. Bound in modern brown buckram. Dimension varies: 151 × 110 mm.; 176 × 130 mm.; 195 × 135 mm.

The languages, Judeo-Arabic (Arabic in Hebrew characters) and Hebrew, in this significant medical compendium testify to the rich cultural and religious diversity of medieval Sicily where Christian, Jewish, and Islamic communities co-existed. Copied for a Jewish physician, it includes an Arabic text (in Hebrew characters), likely a translation of a work by Galen, a Hebrew medical text with extensive Arabic terminology, and the important “Royal Book,” described by scholars as “the clearest overview of medieval medicine that we possess” (thirteen known copies in this language).

## PROVENANCE

1. A compendium of medical and anatomical treatises copied by a number of scribes around 1450-1460 in Catania (Sicily) and compiled by David ben Shalom; one section of the text concludes with a colophon on f. 17v stating that it was copied by Abu al-Hasan Sa‘ad ben Hibat Alla ben al-Hasan the Physician (*al-tabib*) in 1448 or 1456 in Catania. The final text in the manuscript includes a colophon on f. 169v dated 1452. David ben Shalom was likely a physician and owned this compilation for his practice. All books and fragments were copied in Sephardic semi-cursive script, with long vertical strokes for the lamed, and always ligatured *al* (aleph, lamed). Some letters foreshadow distinctive features of later Italian manuscripts, most notably the bet with a split curve.

2. Additional, non-medical works were bound with ben Shalom's compendium in the nineteenth century. The mixture of Samaritan and Arabic writings, with some on paper of a British manufacturer, suggests that in the nineteenth century the manuscript was owned by a Palestinian Samaritan. Although the well-known attempt of Catanian Jews to immigrate to Jerusalem in 1455 was discovered by authorities and failed, we can assume that ben Shalom or his descendants succeeded and brought this book with them to Israel.
3. Private Collection.

## TEXT

ff.1-14v, were added to this manuscript in the nineteenth-century:

ff. 1-12, various notes in Arabic, Samaritan, Hebrew and Arabic; ff. 1-7, in Arabic and Samaritan; ff. 8-9, in Hebrew, perhaps of magical character (f. 9); and f. 10, blank; f. 11, in Arabic; f. 12, notes in Judeo-Arabic;

f. 12v, in Hebrew,

בס"ד כג"מ דקידושין דף מ' ע"א

incipit,

אמר רבי אלעא הזקן אם רואה אדם שיצרו מתגבר עליו

The Hebrew text on f. 12v is an anonymous fragment of a commentary on the Talmudic tractate (Bavli), *Qiddushin* 40a ("Rabbi Al'a the elder said, If you see a man whose desire prevails over him..."), which is part of Jewish matrimonial law, more specifically, rules of engagement. Commentary on Talmudic tractates is one of the dominant genres of Jewish literature, the most famous of them being the works of Rashi and Maimonides.

ff. 13-14, f. 13, a few notes, mostly blank; f.13v, a fragment of a work about Jewish dietary norms; f.14, a few notes, mostly blank;

f. 14v, in Hebrew,

אמרתי הנה באתי לכתוב בספרי לכל אשר מצאה ידי בעזרת אשר כל לימוד ה' (שנת 5,570)

The decorated front page of a note book dated by the owner, probably a Moroccan Jew, 1810: "I said: Behold, I shall record in my book everything that my hand will find since everything is the study of God."

ff. 15-18v, in Judeo-Arabic, incipit,

אסמן ואל עסל מסכנין וחסה מרק אל אספי דבג'

f. 15v,

פי דכר אל אדויה אל קתאלה ותעדיד א'

f.17v, colophon,

כמל אל כתאב אל מלקב אל מגני פי תדביר אל אמרץ ומערפה אל עלל ואל איראץ תאליף אל שיר אל פילסוף אבו אל חסן סעד בן הבה אלא בן אל חסן אל טביב

A medical work in Arabic in Hebrew characters, the colophon mentions a book titled *Book of Illnesses and Symptoms*. A book under this name is known to have been written by Galen. It was translated into Arabic in the ninth century as *Kitāb-i 'Ilal-i a 'raḍ-i* by Jalīnūs (i.e., Galen), and this

is likely the translation of Galen's work. The present fragment was copied by Abu al-Hasan Sa'ad ben Hibat Alla ben al-Hasan the Physician (*al-tabib*) in 1448 or 1456 in Catania; the dating is given by a biblical verse, Gen. 27:19, and is ambiguous (that is, the numeric equivalent or *gematria* of this verse in Genesis gives the date, but can be interpreted as either 1448 or 1456).

From the ancient world, Arabic medieval medicine inherited roughly the same impetus as the European. This impetus, however, was differently absorbed. The theory-laden Rationalist approach of Galen spread throughout the Islamic states and became dominant. His entire medical corpus – 129 works – was translated by Hunayn ibn Ishaq in the ninth century (Meerson, 2013, p., 311).

ff. 19-20v, disorderly notes in Judeo-Arabic, Arabic, and three lines of medical formula in Latin;

ff. 21-22v, in Samaritan, with some Arabic marginalia;

ff. 23-24v, blank.

ff. 25-39v (Hebrew with medical, botanical and pharmaceutical terminology in Arabic), incipit of the fragment,

ימנעו העמק בנפש צורת בקשת הנקמה ולזה נפסד רושם צורת התאוה ... פרק תשיע בעינים  
המתחלפים אים ברפואות המשמחות הם מסמחות בדרכים שקדמו

f.27v,

השער השני ... במספר והביאור סוג כחות הרפואות

f. 38v,

ולזה החולי נעשה גולאב מיץ כולגוש מיץ אינדיבי כשוה וד' פעמים שעורם מיץ מאשנב וכפולו ליומ'  
וששית הכל סוכר לבן ויבושל הכל

The ninth chapter of the first and the beginning of the second book of a medical treatise. The first book describes illnesses and the second one describes remedies, sometimes in alphabetical order, and explains their potency; also contains potion formulas.

Until the conquest of Muslim Spain or Al-Andalus by the Berber dynasties of the Almoravides (1090) and Almohades (1145), Jewish medical thought could be considered as a part of the Muslim writings on the subject: examples include Solomon ha-Yisraeli (850-932) and Maimonides, who both wrote their books in Arabic. The conquest put an end to the age of religious tolerance, pushing Jews to settle in the Christian kingdoms, which in turn triggered the translation of medical treatises into Hebrew and the emergence of genuine Hebrew medical books that notably still used Arabic terminology extensively, as does this fragment (Meerson, 2013, pp. 311-12).

ff. 40-307v (in Judeo-Arabic, with original foliation, 1-252):

אל תדביר אדא כאן אל מרץ חאדתה מן אל דם

ff. 83v-85, colophon, "book seven is complete," and a table of contents.

f. 169v, colophon and a table of contents,

אל מקאלה אל תאמנה מן כתאב כאמל אל צנאעה אל טבייה אל מרוף

The date 1452 is given by a biblical verse, Prov. 4:7.

f. 177v,

אל באב אל סארס פי מדאואה מן אפרט עליה שה"ה אל ג'אע פאמא מן אפרט עליה שה"ה אל ג'מאע  
פי נבגי

f. 307v, explicit,

פי עלאג' אל אמראץ אלדי אסבאבה אל פאעלה לחא באדיה ואולא אל מרץ אל שגאג ואל גדוח

‘Alī ibn al-‘Abbās al-Majūsī (d. ca. 985), *Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab al-tibbīyah*, better known as *Kitab al-Malaki* ("The Royal Book") is one of the most important books of Arabic medicine. In the words of Paul Diepgen, it is "the clearest overview of medieval medicine that we possess" (Diepgen, 1963, p. 33). The book is divided in two parts: the first contains ten theoretical chapters (*maqala* 1-10) on anatomy (*maqala* 1-5) and symptoms (6-10); the second part contains nine chapters on therapy and the tenth chapter on chirurgy. Regarding the scope of the work, *Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab* is hardly inferior to the apogee of Arabic medical science, the famous *Qānūn* of ibn Sina (Ullmann, 1970, p. 146). The two books were frequently compared. As-Saizari referred to both of them in his *Book of Breathing*. Barhebraeus stated that *Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab* was unjustly displaced by *Qānūn*, while ibn at-Tiqtaqa even argued that many physicians of his time abandoned their study because of the dullness of *Qānūn*, and that it would be better for them to learn from al-Majūsī's book instead.

*Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab* was twice translated into Latin: the first time by Constantinus Africanus as *Liber Pantegni*, and then by Stephanus of Antioch as *Liber Regius*.

Arabic manuscripts are numerous (Troupeau, 1994, and Online Resources); the best preserved of them are Leiden Univ. MS Orient. 94, Berlin, Altes Mus., MS Arab. 6262, and Paris, BnF, MS Arab. 2871. *Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab* was printed in Bulaq in 1877 in one volume with ibn Sina's *Qānūn*, and a section of the Arabic original discussing anatomy was published with a parallel French translation by De Koning in 1903. Judeo-Arabic manuscripts, however, are much less common; only twelve are listed by the *Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts* (see (כאמל אלצנעה): e.g, Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS ebr. 358 (1293), St. Petersburg, RNL, MSS Evr. Arab. I 2164, 2165, 2193, 2201 (14<sup>th</sup> c.).

‘Alī ibn al-‘Abbās al-Majūsī (d. ca. 985), also known by his Latinized name, Haly Abbas, was a descendant of a Persian family from Ahwaz. He was a student of Abū Mahir Musa ibn Sayyar and a chief physician at the court of Abud ad-Daula Fana Husrau (reigned 942-982), to whom he dedicated his only book, *Kāmil al-ṣinaʿab al-tibbīyah*. Al-Majūsī was also the founder of the first hospital in Baghdad.

During the early Middle Ages, Jews living in Muslim countries not only spoke but also wrote Arabic. Letters, juristic documents, and medical treatises are the prime examples, although even philosophical and exegetical works, such as Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* and Maimonides' *Commentary on the Mishnah*, were also written in Arabic. This situation, of course, was not unique: the Jews in France spoke French; the Jews of Spain spoke Spanish, and so forth. Nevertheless, Hebrew literature survived and the Hebrew language still enjoyed the supreme prestige; hence, the tendency to express vernacular languages in Hebrew characters. Some addition of Hebrew lexica plus morphological adaptation resulted in the appearance of new languages which became dominant among the Jews: Yiddish in Ashkenaz and Eastern Europe, Ladino in Spain, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian in Muslim countries.

The Sicilian cities of Palermo, Messina, and Catania hosted the largest Jewish communities in Southern Italy. As everywhere, Jewish doctors enjoyed an outstanding reputation, attending to

the health of King Frederick III and even the pope. Since the second half of the fourteenth century, Jewish Sicilian doctors were granted permission to practice medicine outside their local towns *per totam Siciliam*. In 1455, a group of Jews from the aforementioned cities decided to immigrate to Jerusalem. The economic impact of this decision would have been so devastating for Sicily that Alphonse V ordered that the participating Jewish families be arrested and fined. Nevertheless, only a few decades later, in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabel exiled Jews from the territory of their newly united kingdom: in June from Spain, in December from Sicily, and in 1505 from the entire southern Italy (Dubnov, 1967-73, 2: 329-34).

## LITERATURE

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Ullmann, Manfred. *Die Medicin im Islam*, Leiden, 1970.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

Babylonian Talmud

<http://halakhah.com/>

Manuscripts of *Liber pantegni*

<http://www.kb.nl/bladerboeken/liber-pantegni>

National Library of Medicine, Encyclopedias, including *Kitāb Kāmil al-ṣināʿah al-ṭibbīyah* (in Arabic) including discussion of surviving manuscripts in Arabic  
[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/E5\\_E6.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/E5_E6.html)

Arabic medical textbooks, including *Kitab Kāmil al-ṣināʿah al-ṭibbīyah*  
[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic\\_medical/islamic\\_07.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic_medical/islamic_07.html)

Pirie paper:  
<http://paper.naa.gov.au/paper/663>

Jews in Catania  
[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0004\\_0\\_04070.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0004_0_04070.html)

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