



'ALĪ B. 'ABBĀS MAJŪSĪ

'ALĪ B. 'ABBĀS MAJŪSĪ ARRAJĀNĪ, physician from Fārs and author of an Arabic work on medicine (d. 384/994 [?]); probably the most important medical writer between Rāzī and Ebn Sīnā. Except for his own *al-Malakī*, the only sources of information are short notices in Ebn al-Qeṭṭī's *Ekbār al-'olamā' fi aḳbār al-ḥokamā'* and Ebn Abī Oṣaybe'a's *'Oyūn al-anbā' fi ṭabaqāt al-aṭebbā'*, supplemented by Ḥājjī Kalīfa, who mentions the date of his death as given above. The information they furnish can be summarized as follows: 'Alī b. 'Abbās Majūsī was of Persian extraction and a student of Abū Māher Mūsā b. Sayyār. He studied the works of the ancients and was the author of the well-known medical encyclopedia (*konnāš*) *Kāmel al-šenā'at al-ṭebbīya*, known as *al-Malakī*, which he composed for 'Azod-al-dawla (r. 338-72/949-83). In all likelihood this information is simply an abstract of the introductory paragraph of 'Alī's work (I, p. 2). The dearth of information in Ebn al-Qeṭṭī is all the more surprising since he includes numerous notices on physicians and other scholars of the Buyid period. Apparently the chronicler(s) whom he excerpted did not mention 'Alī any more than did Ebn al-Nadīm in his *Fehrest*. The silence of contemporary Baghdad-based authors may indicate that 'Alī never left Iran. In his *Dayl* to Meskawayh's *Tajāreb al-omam*, al-Rūdrāwarī at least mentions *al-Konnāš al-'Azodī fi'l-ṭebb* as a work dedicated to 'Azod-al-dawla, but he does not name its author. Ḥājjī Kalīfa's source for the date of 'Alī's death remains unknown.

Most of our information about 'Alī's life has to be gleaned from *al-Malakī*. The *nesba* Arrajānī, found in many manuscripts, indicates that at least his



ancestors came from Arrajān, a flourishing district and town in Fārs on the border with Kūzestān. (There seems to be no reason to reject this reading in favor of Ebn Abī Oṣaybe‘a’s unique reference to Ahvāz.) The *nesba* Majūsī has always been understood as a reference to his forefathers’ religion; Zoroastrians still formed flourishing communities in Fārs in the 4th/10th century (see, e.g., Eṣṭakrī, pp. 118-19, 139; Moqaddasī, p. 439). His father’s name, ‘Abbās, is not the kind of name typically taken by a neophyte, a fact which suggests that conversion to Islam took place in the generation of ‘Alī’s grandparents, if not earlier. He seems to have been lacking in Muslim zeal, since no mention is made of the prophet Moḥammad in his introductory remarks (I, p. 2), while his argument for the excellence of medicine is based entirely on pragmatic reasoning without recourse to the Qur’ān or the Sunna. Moreover, by calling himself ‘Alī b. ‘Abbās Majūsī, the author intentionally calls attention to his Zoroastrian background (I, p. 12). The source of the *konya* Abu’l-Ḥasan, which is found in some manuscripts and the colophon of the printed text (I, p. 434), is not known. ‘Alī’s teacher in medicine was Abū Māher Mūsā b. Yūsuf b. Sayyār, whom he kept in respectful memory (I, p. 12). Nothing is known of his life, except that he worked as a practitioner whose treatments of “fevers” were particularly successful, and that he was active as an author on medical subjects. The fact that he calls himself *al-motaṭabbēb* points to medical practice, and he may have been associated with the hospital at Shiraz founded by ‘Azod-al-dawla, who was, after all, the dedicatee of *al-Malakī*. A *terminus ante quem* for the date of its composition is furnished by the fact that in 367/977-78 the caliph Ṭā‘e’ granted ‘Azod-al-dawla a second *laqab*, Tāj-al-mella, which the author would not have left out. A *terminus post quem* is less easy to establish; his use of *alqāb* compares to that of Ebrāhīm Ṣābī, who addresses ‘Azod-al-dawla as *al-malek al-ḡalīl*, in his correspondence of the years 364-67/975-78 (ed. Š. Arslān, Beirut, n.d., passim). ‘Alī’s reference to the dedicatee’s *kezāna*, for which he wrote his work, calls to mind the splendidly furnished library that ‘Azod-al-dawla founded in Shiraz (Moqaddasī, p. 449).

Kāmel al-ṣenā‘at al-ṭebbīya accurately describes ‘Alī’s intentions: to compose a textbook containing everything a physician should know, from a knowledge of the four elements, to anatomy and physiology, pathology, diagnosis, therapy by medicines, and surgery. In his introduction he gives a survey of works by major medical authors and reviews each of them. While it was a commonplace for authors to expose the shortcomings of their predecessors in the prefaces to their own works, ‘Alī gives a relatively detailed and balanced account of medical works available in his time. He begins with Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms*,



mentions Galen's numerous monographs, and passes to the handbooks by Oribasius, Paulus Aegineta, Ahrun, Yūḥannā b. Sarābīūn, Masīḥ Demašqī, and Rāzī. He discusses in most detail Ebn Sarābīūn's *Konnāš* and Rāzī's *al-Manṣūrī* and *al-Ḥāwī*; apparently these were the works he considered most important or, perhaps, knew best. One book he did not mention in his survey but made extensive use of is the *Aqrābādīn* by Sābūr b. Sahl; other sources not named by 'Alī could most probably be determined by more detailed studies of particular sections of the *Kāmel*.

In the two parts of *al-Malakī*, on theoretical and on practical medicine, both divided into ten *maqālas*, 'Alī gives a well-organized, comprehensive account of medical knowledge. But his book was soon superseded by Ebn Sīnā's *Qānūn*, which supposedly presented medical theory in a clearer fashion, though it was not held to equal the *Kāmel* in the presentation of the practical part. In both Arabic and Persian medical literature, the *Qānūn*'s influence was much greater than that of the *Kāmel*, as is shown, e.g., by the number of commentaries written on the *Qānūn*. In Persian medical writing, 'Alī's work was acknowledged as a source, e.g., in Esmā'īl Jorjānī's *Daḳīra-ye Ḳvārazmšāhī* (504-06/1110-13), by the anonymous author of the non-datable compendium *Mūjaz-e kommī* (9th/15th century?), in 'Abd-al-Razzāq's equally non-datable *Ḳolāṣat al-tašrīḥ* (10th/16th century?), and in the extensive pharmacopoeia *Toḥfat al-mo'menīn* by Moḥammad Mo'men b. Moḥammad Moqīm Tonokābonī (1090/1679). While this is certainly a less than complete list of authors who made use of the *Kāmel*, it presents a picture of an influence far less all-pervading than that of Ebn Sīnā's *Qānūn*. 'Alī was not quoted by [Abū Manṣūr Mowaffaq b. 'Alī Heravī](#) and [Abū Bakr Rabī' b. Aḥmad Aḳawaynī Boḳārī](#), two Persian writers from the late 4th/10th century (Abū Manṣūr does, however, mention Abu Māher, 'Alī's teacher). Although it seems possible that Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Ḳvārazmī used *al-Malakī* for his *Mafātīḥ al-'olūm* (E. Seidel), it had evidently not yet become widely known in eastern Iran. Though Neẓāmī 'Arūzī does recommend the *Kāmel* to the advanced student as an outstanding work in the field, he holds that the *Qānūn* outshines all other efforts by far.

In the West, the *Kāmel* was first introduced by Constantinus Africanus (ca. 1015-87) in his *Liber pantegni* (printed, e.g., in *Opera omnia Ysaac*, Lyon, 1515); in 1127, Stephanus of Antioch translated it anew and titled it *Regalis dispositio* or *Liber regius* (printed, e.g., Venice, 1492).



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