



EBN HENDŪ, ABU'L-FARAJ 'ALĪ

EBN HENDŪ, ABU'L-FARAJ 'ALĪ b. Ḥosayn, also known as Ostād (b. in Ṭabarestān, no later than the early 350s/960s; d. in or after 422/1031), author of, inter alia, propaedeutic epistles on philosophy and medicine and of a gnomology of Greek wisdom, and generally renowned as a litterateur. Of Qomī origin (Ebn Esfandiār, p. 125, tr. Browne, pp. 54, 77f., n. 5) or of “ancient” Rāzī stock (Yāqūt, *Odabā'* V, pp. 168 f.), Ebn Hendū came from a family in the secretarial profession; he can be said to be a representative of the well-educated scribal class so prominent during the 'Abbasid period.

To his contemporaries, and consequently to later authors as well, Ebn Hendū was perhaps better known as a poet, wit, and Buyid courtier than as a scholar, as witnessed by Abū Ḥayyān Tawḥīdī (*Emtā'* I, p. 63, II, p. 135), Ṭa'ālebī (*Kāṣṣ al-kāṣṣā*, p. 167; *Yatīma*, Damascus, III, pp. 212-14; *Tatemma* I, pp. 155-65), Bīrūnī (pp. 113, 132), Bāḳarzī (*Domya*, pp. 113 ff.). Of his early career not much is known; if there is no confusion between him and an elder Ebn Hendū, he was employed in 'Azod-al-Dawla's *dīvān* (Abū 'Alī Tanūḳī apud Yāqūt, *Odabā'* V, pp. 168 f.) and sojourned in Baghdad during the years 373-75/984-86 (Abū Ḥayyān Tawḥīdī, *Emtā'* I, p. 63, II, 135). At Ray, he is said to have reaped great benefits as a member of the poetic coterie around the Ṣāḥeb Esmā'īl b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995; Cahen and Pellat; cf. Kraemer, p. 312; Ṭa'ālebī, *Yatīma* III, pp. 394-96). Probably, he stayed at Ray during the regency of Majd-al-Dawla's mother “Sayyeda” (d. 405/1014; Bayhaqī, p. 87). At one point he paid his respects to Faḳr-al-Molk the vizier in Baghdad (400-06/1009-15[?]; Yāqūt, *Odabā'* V, pp. 169 f.). During the second decade of the century, he served as



secretary in Gorgān, where he probably dedicated a panegyric to the Ziyarid Manūčehr b. Qābūs (r. 403-20/1012-29), only to lampoon him for miserliness when his reward fell short of his expectations. In consequence, he had to slip away to Nīšāpūr (ibid., pp. 168, 172). In the philosophical disciplines and, especially, in medicine, Ebn Hendū's teachers were Ebn Kammār in Nīšāpūr and, reportedly, Ḥasan 'Āmerī (Ebn Hendū apud Ebn Abī Oṣaybe'a, I, p. 323; Kotobī, II, p. 13).

In his writings, Ebn Hendū highlights the literary and intellectual environment of philosophy and science, particularly medicine, rather than contributing to these disciplines in a highly technical, "academic" fashion. His best known work in medicine is the introductory *Meftāḥ al-ṭebb*, in which he sets forth the theoretical principles of medicine in ten sections; according to the preface, he composed it in response to the wishes of medical scholars among his colleagues who had much appreciated his previous introduction to philosophy (Dietrich, pp. 198-202, no. 92, with quotations; cf. Ullmann, pp. 65ff.; Sezgin, *GAS* III, pp. 140-50). An issue hotly debated at the time is reflected in the author's argument against pious bigotry and for the validity of medicine (apud Bayhaqī, pp. 86f.; Ebn Abī 'Oṣaybe'a, I, pp. 323; cf. Kraemer, p. 124). The work is important not least for its discussion of the late pre-Islamic Alexandrian Galenists and of their activity as editors and redactors of sixteen Galenian treatises for the purposes of medical instruction (Dietrich, pp. 200 f.; cf. Ebn Abī 'Oṣaybe'a, I, pp. 108-09).

Ebn Hendū's interest in philosophy—here taken with some latitude—manifested itself in [*al-Maqāla/al-Resāla*] *al-Moṣawweqa fī'l-madkāl elā 'elm al-falsafa*, a propaedeutic tract. Excerpts, *moltaqaṭāt*, are extant in MS Rampur 2845 (Kraemer, p. 111, n. 22). However, his major extant philosophical work is the 'Graeco-Arabic' gnomologium, *al-Kalem al-rūḥānīya men al-ḥekam al-yūnānīya* (ed. Qabbānī, Cairo 1318/1900; Ebn Abī 'Oṣaybe'a, apud Gutas, p. 41). Bayhaqī lists two more philosophical titles, *Ketāb al-nafs* and *Onmūd' aj al-ḥekma*, unless the latter is a mere variant of *al-Kalem* (pp. 85-88, no. 46, esp. p. 86). The epistle to Abū 'Alī Rostam b. Šīrzād, which aimed at easy accessibility and understandability (*'alā sabīl al-taqrīb wa'l tafhīm*), would suggest a scholarly subject as well (ms. preserved in Tehran; see Brockelmann, *GAL*, S I, pp. 425 f.). His treatise on *nafs*, presumably Aristotelian psychology, has not been preserved (title in Bayhaqī, p. 86). With the exception of indirectly transmitted fragments, Ebn Hendū's further works appear to be lost as well.

Ebn Hendū's wide reputation in Persia is attested by manuscripts of his works



preserved in Persian libraries and by the authors here called upon. However, express quotations in Persian medical treatises appear to be rare (cf. Richter-Bernburg, p. 204).

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