



UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE



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1
Quaderni dei Fondi Manoscritti e Rari

The Collection
of the Islamic
Manuscripts
on **Medicine**
and **Magic**
at L'Orientale

Edited by
Francesca
Bellino

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The Collection of the Islamic Manuscripts on Medicine and Magic at L'Orientale

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Preface

ROBERTO TOTTOLI

Over its nearly three hundred years of history, the University of L'Orientale has accumulated a significant body of archival and documentary collections. Among these, the collection of Oriental manuscripts stands out as a vital asset and a culmination of various acquisitions and historical circumstances over time. Comprising approximately 400 items, primarily from the Islamic world, the collection has grown through diverse channels, much like the holdings of many libraries: undocumented acquisitions, purchases, bequests, or deposits from scholars who once taught at the university. Like the collections of more renowned institutions, the formation of this corpus has been shaped by contingencies, including periods of greater or lesser financial means, donations, and other sometimes fortuitous means. In terms of scope, it ranks alongside the few significant Italian collections in this field.

This volume inaugurates the series “Quaderni del Fondo Manoscritti e Rari,” conceived to promote the preservation, scholarly study, and dissemination of knowledge concerning this distinctive and multifaceted collection. It aims to serve as both an initial reference tool for researchers and a tribute to the many scholars who, over the years, have contributed partial studies of these manuscripts. Their efforts, though valuable, are now due for revision and expansion.

Significantly, this inaugural volume, focusing on manuscripts of medicine, pharmacopoeia, and magic, marks an innovative approach that merits recognition of the editors and contributors. In addition to cataloguing the contents, authorship, and subject areas of the manuscripts—more areas will be addressed in future volumes—this work places special emphasis on the provenance and acquisition history of the materials. It also includes a rich array of images that highlight significant data and marginalia, reflecting contemporary codicological research practices. While it may not be feasible to undertake this level of detail for all manuscripts, the approach taken here honours the historical significance of these rare and valuable artifacts.

The study exemplifies the kind of interdisciplinary methodology essential to this type of research, drawing on Arabic and Islamic studies, codicology, and the history of Orientalism.

It is to be hoped that this inaugural volume will be succeeded by others, gradually advancing toward a comprehensive and authoritative catalogue encompassing the Oriental manuscripts, the rare book holdings, and the special printed collections, in accordance with the spirit and academic standards set by this first publication.

Roberto Tottoli
Rettore

Introducing “Quaderni del Fondo Manoscritti e Rari”: Its Significance and New Directions in Research

FRANCESCA BELLINO

This volume is the first thematic catalogue in the series “Quaderni del fondo manoscritti e rari” of the University of Naples L’Orientale. It focuses on a selected group of 22 manuscripts, primarily of Yemeni origin, dedicated to medicine, pharmacopoeia, and magic, along with a noteworthy Arabic edition of the *Canon of Medicine* by Avicenna published in Rome in 1593.

The manuscript collection of L’Orientale, from which the selected manuscripts originate, comprises approximately 400 items. The actual number of individual works, however, is likely higher, owing to the presence of composite manuscripts containing multiple texts. The cataloguing and indexing of the collection are still ongoing and will require considerable time and effort to complete.

This volume constitutes the first substantial scholarly contribution devoted to a thematically coherent subset of the collection. The chosen theme is conceived in dialogue with the subject of a major exhibition on Islamic magic bowls, curated by Roberta Giunta and Michele Bernardini, held in the spring of 2025 to mark a significant donation to the University.

The focus of this catalogue, together with the provenance of the manuscripts it describes—nearly all originating from the collection assembled by Tommaso Sarnelli (1890-1972) in Yemen during the early 1930s—offers a rich and nuanced portrait of the transmission and circulation of scientific, religious, and magical knowledge from the 15th to the early 20th century. These texts, along with their manuscript carriers, moved between East and West, traversing regions across the Islamic world, including Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, Persia, and the Indo-Persian cultural sphere. The manuscripts featured in this volume bear witness to the dynamic interactions among authors, copyists, physicians, medical practitioners, and Islamic scholars—figures who transmitted not only textual content but also a wide range of cultural knowledge. This includes medical materials such as prescriptions, remedies, drug formulas, and annotations on therapeutic efficacy; magical practices including incantations, magic squares, and talismanic formulas; and religious elements such as prayers and devotional texts. What emerges from this first thematic catalogue, therefore, is a rich and multifaceted research framework that encompasses both the textual content and the codicological features of the manuscripts.

The richness and diversity of the manuscripts and archival documents preserved at L'Orientale provide opportunities for alternative thematic selections or novel combinations, which will, it is hoped, illuminate compelling scenarios of knowledge transmission and cultural practices across regions of Asia and Africa, areas that the manuscripts implicitly suggest and reveal upon detailed examination and study. Indeed, we are convinced that focusing on smaller portions of the collection—through close and synergistic collaboration among scholars with diverse expertise, such as Arabic and Islamic studies, codicology, archival science, the history of Oriental studies, and, where relevant, the history of Islamic art—offers a promising approach to complement the ongoing efforts of systematic cataloguing. We therefore hope that the series hosting this inaugural volume will serve as a forum for exploring these and other potential avenues of research.

This catalogue represents the first result of a collaborative effort coordinated by Francesca Bellino. Developed alongside the cataloguing of the manuscripts themselves, this work was undertaken with the specific aim of enabling a more focused study of a particular segment of the manuscript collection. With this in mind, this catalogue is structured in two interrelated parts that complement and inform one another.

The first part gathers a series of studies addressing distinct yet interrelated thematic concerns. Francesca Bellino provides an in-depth examination of Tommaso Sarnelli and his collection, together with analyses of the medical, pharmacopoeial, and scientific manuscripts he gathered, and the manuscript traditions to which they belong (Chapters 1–3). Luca Berardi examines a rare printed edition associated with the manuscript collection (Chapter 4). Giovanni Maria Martini contributes a study on magical manuscripts, focusing on their textual and visual characteristics (Chapter 5). Finally, Antonella Muratgia addresses codicological aspects of the Yemeni manuscript tradition represented in the collection (Chapter 6), with particular attention to bindings, scripts, inks, and papers.

The second part presents detailed entries for the 23 items under consideration, including content descriptions and codicological features. Francesca Bellino was responsible for the entries on the manuscripts on medicine, pharmacopoeia, and agriculture (Catalogue Entries 1–13, 15–20), whereas Luca Berardi prepared the entry on the printed edition of Avicenna's *Canon* (Catalogue Entry 14), and Giovanni Maria Martini on the manuscripts relating to magic (Catalogue Entries 21–23). The codicological analyses for all entries were conducted by Antonella Muratgia and Luca Berardi.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Rector of L’Orientale University, Professor Roberto Tottoli; the Director of the BiMA Centre (Biblioteca Museo Archivio Digital Humanities), Professor Andrea Manzo; and the Director of the Department of Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean, Professor Roberta Giunta, for their invaluable support and sponsorship of this catalogue, published within the newly established series “Quaderni del fondo manoscritti e rari”. Their recognition of this work as a key initiative contributes significantly to enhancing both the visibility and the scholarly study of the manuscript and rare book collections housed at Palazzo Corigliano (Naples).

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all those who have contributed significantly to the completion of this volume: Professor Maria De Vivo, Director of Digital Humanities; Rosario Valentini and Angela Bosco, for their assistance with the catalogue photographs; Giancarlo Lacerenza, Mariano Cinque, and the entire team of “Il Torcoliere” – Officine Grafico-Editoriali di Ateneo – for their work on the final printing stage; and the SIBA (Sistema Bibliotecario di Ateneo e Archivio Storico).

PART 1

Introduction to the Collection

Chapter 1

The Collection of Oriental Manuscripts at L'Orientale

FRANCESCA BELLINO

1. A Haphazard Legacy: The Formation of a Manuscript Collection through the Scholarly Activities of Orientalists at L'Orientale

Unlike other collections of Oriental manuscripts housed in similar institutions, the collection preserved at the University of Naples L'Orientale does not stem from a unified initiative led by a single scholar. Furthermore, it is not the result of the discoveries made during the 18th-century expeditions to China undertaken by the missionary Matteo Ripa (1682-1746). While the Collegio dei Cinesi, founded by Ripa in Naples, evolved into an institution dedicated to the study of Asian and African languages and cultures, eventually becoming the present-day University of Naples L'Orientale, this particular collection has a distinct origin (Fatica 2020).

Instead, the collection of Oriental manuscripts of L'Orientale is the product of various institutional and personal connections, particularly during the first half of the 20th century. These connections culminated in the donation or acquisition of separate sets of manuscripts, now housed in the Rare and Manuscripts Room of the Asian Section of the Library, situated in Palazzo Corigliano, the headquarters of the Department of Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

The collection currently comprises nearly 400 items, including manuscripts and handwritten notebooks. Approximately two-thirds of the collection consists of Islamic manuscripts written in Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and Persian, as well as Zoroastrian manuscripts composed in Persian. The remaining third primarily contains texts in Southeast Asian languages, with Thai being the most prevalent. In addition, the collection includes smaller subsets of manuscripts: a limited number in Amharic of Ethiopian origin, various in Chinese and Japanese, and a single manuscript in Georgian. These materials are distinguished by their diverse linguistic characteristics, geographic origins, intended functions, target audiences, as well as their varied genres, subject matter, and physical formats.

As a collection assembled from the holdings of Orientalists, military personnel, physicians, and travelers, it includes not only manuscripts formerly owned by these individuals but also a variety of archival materials, including handwritten documents dating back to the 19th century. Notably, the collection preserves several significant items, including notebooks containing drawings and translations by Colonel

Gerolamo Emilio Gerini (1860-1913); drafts of unpublished works by the Arabist Lupo Buonazia (1844-1914); handwritten drafts by the Indologist Angelo De Gubernatis (1840-1913) for his seminal publication *Gli studi indiani in Italia* (1891); and manuscript notes by Alessandro Coletti (1928-1985), a noted Italian scholar of Iranian languages, concerning various Indo-Iranian languages. In addition to these, the collection includes archival materials from scholars who taught Oriental studies, notably Gherardo De Vincentiis (1845-1907) and Enrico Cocchia (1859-1930).

1.1. The Origin and Provenance of the Oriental Manuscripts

The collection of Oriental manuscripts may be broadly categorized according to their origin and provenance, as well as the languages in which they are written.

Islamic collection. The most substantial component of the collection comprises Islamic manuscripts, which can be classified into several subgroups based on language. These, in turn, can be subdivided further according to their provenance. The manuscripts span a chronological range from the 14th to the 19th century. The Islamic manuscript collection further testifies to various traditional bookbinding methods, including leather bindings, with envelope flaps, half-leather bindings, and two-leather bindings. Additionally, it displays a rich diversity of calligraphic styles.

Arabic collection. The Arabic manuscript collection comprises 264 items, a number that is likely to increase when uncatalogued manuscripts and fragments are taken into account.¹ These manuscripts date from the late 14th to the 19th centuries and encompass a wide range of subjects, including religious sciences, medicine, pharmacology, astronomy, *adab*, rhetoric, logic, grammar, and literature. These manuscripts were acquired at various times and originate from multiple distinct collections.

- a) 8 manuscripts, commonly referred to as the “Ibādī manuscripts”, were discovered by an Italian mission in Yefren (Cyrenaica, Libya). Francesco Beguinot (1879-1953), an Ethiopist and professor of Berber language at L’Orientale, first identified a group of lithographs and manuscripts in the archive of an Ottoman Turkish provincial governor (*mutaşarrıf*) of Yefren in Tripolitania. In the same year, Giuliano Bonacci, a journalist and correspondent for *Corriere della Sera* in Libya, uncovered additional materials (1912a and

¹ During the process of reorganizing and arranging the collection, additional Arabic manuscripts were uncovered, together with archival materials and drafts that have yet to be fully processed. Consequently, all figures cited in this chapter should be considered provisional, as numerous fragments and manuscript components remain to be identified and catalogued.

1912b). Thanks to Beguinot's intervention, the entire collection was donated to the Royal Oriental Institute by the Ministry of the Colonies in 1913. The Arabist Roberto Rubinacci (1915-1992) later published a commented list of these texts in the *Annali* (1949; see also Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua 1984). During the recent reorganization of the collection, 61 photographs taken during the 1913 mission were also recovered.

- b) A total of 29 manuscripts (possibly 30, depending on classification), along with a Persian manuscript, were acquired by Dr. Tommaso Sarnelli, an Arabist and colonial physician in Yemen, and arrived at L'Orientale in 1950 (according to Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua 1984, 211). Most of these manuscripts, which primarily concern medicine and pharmacopoeia, originated in Yemen, where Sarnelli resided between 1931 and 1932. The Rectorate Archive of L'Orientale preserves the memorandum of sale for the entire collection dated 1951, which originally comprised approximately 400 items. Sarnelli donated a portion of the collection to the Oriental School in Rome in 1970 (according to Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua 1984, 211). Many of the volumes, including the manuscripts still preserved at L'Orientale and originating from the original collection, bear Sarnelli's ex-libris, in addition to those of previous Yemeni owners. The manuscripts were first catalogued by Clelia Sarnelli Cerqua (1948) and later by Giuseppe Celentano and Clelia Sarnelli Cerqua (1984).

The remaining Arabic manuscripts were acquired in two further stages:

- c) In 1966, a substantial group of 178 Arabic manuscripts was purchased from a Turkish family that had been residing in Cairo and entered into the possession of L'Orientale in 1971 (according to Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua 1984, 211). This collection encompasses a wide range of subjects, including theology, history, rhetoric, logic, grammar, *adab* literature, poetry, magic, medicine, astronomy, and onyromancy. Together, they offer a representative overview of a typical Ottoman-period manuscript library.
- d) The Arabic collection also includes four Qur'āns, dated between 1454 and 1787, three of which are illuminated copies. According to Clelia Sarnelli Cerqua (1948), they originated in Cairo; however, other sources indicate that they were purchased in Naples in 1971 from a family of Turkish origin based in Cairo.²

² These Qur'āns were featured in an exhibition organized in Naples at the National Library for the MELCom conference in 2019.

In the future, the study of these materials will shed light on several aspects that are still little known about their origin and provenance.

Turkish-Ottoman collection. The three Turkish-Ottoman manuscripts originated from Egypt and were purchased, along with those in Arabic, by a Turkish family living in Cairo. In addition to these, there is also a fragment of a 17th-century manuscript in Chagatai Turkish, acquired by the Turkologist Alessio Bombaci (1914-1979) during an Italian archaeological mission in Afghanistan in 1957 (Berardi 2018, 29-36).

Persian collection. The collection comprises approximately 20 Persian manuscripts, which encompass a diverse range of texts with varied origins and topics. These manuscripts were primarily acquired in the 1980s from the Parsi community in India. Most of the manuscripts are Zoroastrian works, partially described by Giovanni Cereti (1998). The collection also contains notebooks with writing exercises and classical Persian literature, such as Sa'di's *Gulistan* (Muratgia 2019).

Ethiopian collection. The collection also comprises 10 Ethiopian manuscripts, which were donated by the Orientalist Lanfranco Ricci (1916-2007) and, more recently, by Paolo Nastasi, an Italian of Ethiopian descent. These manuscripts represent the Christian traditions of the Horn of Africa and are typically produced on parchment with wooden covers.

Asian collection. The collection of Oriental manuscripts also includes other manuscripts written in Asian different languages that have various origins and provenances (Muratgia 2019).

Georgian collection. The only Georgian manuscript in the collection is the work of Bernardo Maria of Naples (1628-1707), a Capuchin missionary sent by Propaganda Fide to the Kingdom of Kartli (Eastern Georgia) between 1670 and 1677. This manuscript preserves copies of texts Father Bernardo transcribed at the court of the King of Kartli. Upon his death, his materials were preserved by the Congregation of the Holy Trinity of Torre del Greco. In the early 20th century, by royal decree, these materials were transferred to the National Library. Of the five manuscripts catalogued, four were sent to the National Library, while the most complete manuscript was deposited at L'Orientale.

Thai collection. In the 1990s, the family of Colonel Gerolamo Emilio Gerini (1860-1913), a military instructor and counsellor at the court of King Rama V of Siam from 1892 to 1911, donated his collection of 40 Thai manuscripts to L'Orientale. The Gerini collection comprises four ornately decorated Samut Thai

manuscripts, books, notes, drawings, and maps. These manuscripts comprise long sheets of paper, folded in an accordion format (up to 12 meters long). The manuscripts, dating from the late 18th to early 20th century, focus on Buddhist topics and were likely a gift from the King of Siam to Gerini. Among them, a *Treatise on the Elephants* from 1801 is the most extensive. Other works in the collection include *The Virtues of the Buddha* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*.

Chinese collection. There are seven manuscripts in Chinese, all of which have uncertain origins.

Japanese collection. The Japanese collection comprises minutes related to the introductory tables for the study of Japanese cursive, published by L'Orientale in lithographic form, as well as *Giappone Vittorioso* (1909) by Enrico Cocchia (1859-1930).

1.2. The Formation of the Collection of Oriental Manuscripts

Between the 1940s and the 1990s, several scholars affiliated with L'Orientale conducted studies on select groups of texts within the manuscript collection (Sarnelli 1943, 1947, 1957; Rubinacci 1949; Sarnelli Cerqua 1982 and 1992; Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua 1984; Cereti 1998). These studies typically treated the materials as individual units of interest, focusing primarily on their provenance, such as the Yemeni or the Ibadite manuscripts held in Libya, or their thematic content, as in the case of the Sarnelli collection of medical manuscripts.

Aside from a few descriptive articles cataloguing the contents of these manuscripts, no further scholarly attention has been given to the collection by researchers from the institution. As a result, the various manuscript groups remained largely neglected for decades. However, in the early 2000s, librarians Antonella Peirce and Antonella Muratgia initiated a systematic effort to recover, organize, and preserve the entire collection. Their work unfolded in several key phases. First, each manuscript was assigned an entry number, shelved with a designated shelf mark, and catalogued online with basic bibliographic and codicological information. Subsequently, restoration and conservation efforts were undertaken, supported by annual funding from the Regione Campania, which enabled the restoration of over half of the collection. Finally, the manuscripts were consolidated and housed in a dedicated storage area within a monumental library room, thus establishing the collection in its current form with controlled public access.

Thanks to the efforts of the Zaydi Manuscript Tradition Project, and through the mediation of its coordinators Sabine Schmidtke and Valentina Sagaria Rossi, all Arabic manuscripts (excluding fragments) have been digitized. The project ai-

med to promote all collections in Italy containing manuscripts of Yemeni origin (see the chapter by Antonella Muratgia in this volume).³

Recently, Paul Love attempted to place this collection “in the world of maritime and terrestrial trade that linked the northern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean from the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries” (2018, 335). He reconstructed the trajectory that led to the formation of the initial core of the collection of Oriental manuscripts, tracing the movement of Ibadite manuscripts and lithographs from the office of an Ottoman official in the city of Yefren, located in the mountainous region of Libya, to the library in Naples. In his opinion, however small, this core of manuscripts reflects the Ibadite culture in terms of period and contest since “it comprises eighteenth- and nineteenth-century copies of historical, juridical, and prosopographical works composed during the period of thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries when the Ibadi tradition began to crystallize” (2018, 443).

In addition to highlighting specific aspects of this core group of texts, Love offers some more general observations on the leading figures behind the collection: soldiers, officers, and academics connected to the nascent Italian and French colonial empires. This interpretation, which links the Ottoman presence and colonial dynamics to the formation of both large and small manuscript collections from various regions of the Arab-Islamic world and beyond, offers a particularly valuable framework for contextualising the library materials that arrived in Naples from the diverse areas and under varying historical circumstances.

A significant forthcoming development in the study and dissemination of these manuscripts, viewed as cultural artefacts originating from diverse regions of Asia and Africa, is the publication of a catalogue by Brill. As of June 2025, this project is still ongoing. It was initiated by Roberto Tottoli in 2018, temporarily interrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and resumed in 2022 under the direction of Francesca Bellino. This initiative, which brings together a team of scholars from *L'Orientale* with expertise in a range of languages and disciplinary backgrounds, will enhance accessibility for the academic community and foster new opportunities for interdisciplinary research.

2. The Arabic-Islamic Manuscript Collection of *L'Orientale*

Within the manuscript collection of *L'Orientale*, a particularly significant core is formed by the corpus of Arabic manuscripts, notable for both the diversity of their

³ <https://hmmml.org/research/zmt/>.

geographic origins and the breadth of their disciplinary content. This corpus can be divided into three main subsets. As previously mentioned, the Tommaso Sarnelli Collection comprises Arabic manuscripts from various regions of the Islamic world, with a particular concentration from Yemen. These texts cover a broad spectrum of themes, including medical treatises and works related to magical practices. The second subset consists of Ibādī manuscripts from Libya. The third group includes Arabic manuscripts formerly owned by an Egyptian family of Ottoman descent. This collection likewise reflects a wide range of provenances—primarily Egypt and Turkey—as well as a rich diversity of subject matter.

The Arabic-Islamic manuscript collection of L'Orientale is thematically diverse, reflecting the breadth and depth of knowledge transmitted through the manuscript culture of the Islamic world. The materials may be grouped into several major thematic sections:

Qur'ānic Literature. This section includes copies of the Qur'ān as well as manuscripts dedicated to Qur'ānic studies, including *tafsīr* (exegesis), *qirā'āt* (variant readings), and *ʿulūm al-Qur'ān* (Qur'ānic sciences).

Theology, Dogmatics, and Religious Sciences. This group features manuscripts on theology and dogmatics, along with collections of *ḥadīth* and religious sciences. Among them are three Yemeni works from the Zaydī tradition. The remaining items, originating from the Turkish cultural sphere, include commentaries on the *ʿaqā'id* (creeds) of Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar Nağm al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. 1142), a prominent Māturīdī theologian and Sunni jurist of the orthodox tradition.

Islamic Law. This section comprises legal manuscripts from both the Zaydī school (primarily Yemeni) and the Sunni tradition (predominantly Ottoman), with a notable presence of texts from the Ḥanbalī school.

Ibādī Texts. A smaller but distinct subset includes manuscripts from the Ibādī tradition.

Mysticism. This category features works focused on Sufism and spiritual practices.

Dialectics, Philosophy, Logic, and Ethics. Manuscripts in this group explore rational and speculative disciplines central to Islamic intellectual traditions.

Arabic Language, Rhetoric, and Metrics. These manuscripts address grammatical, rhetorical, and stylistic aspects of the Arabic language.

Arabic Grammar. A subset dedicated to later commentaries and glosses on classical grammatical texts.

Literature. This section includes works of poetry, adab literature, and anthologies.

Medicine and Pharmacopoeia. Manuscripts devoted to traditional medical knowledge and pharmacological practices.

Various Sciences. A final category encompassing works on arithmetic, astronomy, magic, and calligraphy.

Although this categorization remains provisional and may require further refinement, it underscores the thematic richness of the collection and the diversity of religious, legal, scientific, and literary traditions it encompasses. It offers valuable insight into the complexity and interconnectivity of knowledge in the premodern Islamic world. The coexistence of scientific and sapiential texts alongside religious and linguistic works reflects the encyclopedic character of many private libraries and personal collections within the Arabic-Islamic tradition. This, in turn, reveals a broader cultural commitment to the transmission and preservation of comprehensive and multifaceted bodies of knowledge.

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Chapter 2

Tommaso Sarnelli's Collection

FRANCESCA BELLINO

1. Tommaso Sarnelli: Colonial Physician and Arabist

Tommaso Sarnelli (Giugliano, 1890–Naples, 1972) was a prominent figure in the first half 20th-century Italian Oriental studies. Sent to Somalia in 1917 as a civilian health worker, he earned a diploma with a specialization in ophthalmology and colonial medicine in 1924–25 at the newly established School of Tropical Pathology in Bologna, directed by Giuseppe Franchin.

From the perspective of Oriental studies, his formal academic training took place at the Oriental Institute of Naples, where he studied under the distinguished Berberist Francesco Beguinot (1879–1953), one of Italy's foremost experts on Berber language and culture.

Alongside his medical career, Sarnelli pursued an ambitious project aimed at studying indigenous medical practices, drawing on extensive fieldwork conducted in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. His earliest travels date to 1917, when he undertook research on ocular pathology, particularly trachoma, in Italian Somaliland. Beginning in 1924, he travelled to Tripolitania to investigate local ophthalmological practices and the manifestations of a condition referred to as *lātab*. In 1925, he carried out his first linguistic study of the Berber dialect spoken in the oasis of Sokna, in Libya.

During his missions in Tripolitania, Sarnelli developed an increasing interest in the medical traditions of local populations. In a notable article published in 1925, he describes his encounter with Arab-Islamic, Berber, and sub-Saharan African health knowledge, highlighting its complexity and cultural syncretism:

Qui la mia attenzione era stata costantemente attratta e dalle cose mediche degli Arabi del luogo, e di quelle dei Berberi – tutte impregnate, queste, di un sentore di Mediterraneo – nonché dalla Medicina che i Negri sudanesi, ex-schiavi, avevano colà recata con sé in esilio, racchiusa nell'involuppo della magia e dell'animismo e pervasa e dominata dalla loro concezione cosmogonica sorprendentemente complessa, ma come sommersa nell'apparente puerilità del loro Pensiero (Sarnelli 1925).

In the subsequent years, Sarnelli undertook numerous research expeditions across Africa and Asia, including a visit to Cyrenaica in 1928, North Africa in 1929, and Benghazi in 1930. In the second half of the 1930s, he was appointed

director of the Centre for Indigenous Medicine at the Modena Institute—the new headquarters of the Bologna school—due to his sustained interest in observing and documenting the medical practices of colonized populations. Between 1930 and 1932, he resided in Yemen, where he was also involved in health-related activities associated with Fascist colonial policy. This was followed by further missions in South-Western Arabia (1933), where he studied cutaneous leishmaniasis and other parasitic infections, and in India (1938). Upon his return, he delivered a lecture on modern schools of ancient medicine in India at the Academy of Sanitary Art History in Rome, which was published in the *Rivista di biologia coloniale*.

Throughout his career, Sarnelli tackled several specific medical topics related to ocular diseases in tropical climates, including manifestations of ophthalmia, conjunctivitis caused by contact with serpents, post-disease plastic surgery, tropical blindness, and forms of leucoma. His research reflects a multidisciplinary approach that integrates medicine, anthropology, history of science, and Oriental studies from a perspective deeply influenced by his political and colonial views.

Tommaso Sarnelli's travels throughout the early to mid-20th century were pivotal in shaping his research on tropical ophthalmology and various ocular diseases. His fieldwork focused on illnesses prevalent in multiple regions, particularly those related to the harsh environmental conditions of tropical and subtropical areas (see Sarnelli 1926, for his programmatic considerations, later resumed in Sarnelli 1932 and 1938b). In 1928, Sarnelli began his travels in Cyrenaica, where he studied trachoma, a bacterial eye infection common in arid climates. His research in North Africa continued this focus, further exploring the widespread occurrence of trachoma across the region, Tunisia in particular. His interest in ocular diseases was not limited to trachoma; in 1930, during his time in Benghazi, he examined cases of conjunctivitis, a common eye condition that he linked to both environmental and social factors.

Between 1930 and 1932, Sarnelli spent an extended period in Yemen, where he not only investigated various ocular diseases but also became involved in sanitary missions linked to the colonial administration. His time in Yemen was marked by significant research on local health issues, which he later published on in 1934, focusing on the sanitary conditions he encountered.

His work continued to broaden throughout the 1930s, and in 1937, Sarnelli studied the alarming prevalence of blindness in tropical countries. This work included research on the impact of various diseases, such as trachoma and leucoma, which were common causes of blindness in the regions he studied. During the same year, he also conducted specific research in Arabia, examining leucoma, a condition characterized by corneal scarring that could lead to blindness (Sarnelli 1938a: 1938-1939).

Sarnelli's research extended beyond the study of common eye diseases. In 1933, during his trip to Southwestern Arabia, he studied cutaneous leishmaniasis, a parasitic disease that causes skin lesions, as well as other parasitic infections prevalent in the region. This marked a shift in his research towards tropical diseases that were more systemic, affecting both the skin and internal organs (Sarnelli 1939a).

In 1935, Sarnelli's research expanded to include the study of ocular manifestations of ophidism, particularly how snake bites affected the eyes. He also explored cases of conjunctivitis caused by serpent sputum, highlighting how local environmental and cultural factors contributed to specific health issues. By 1936, Sarnelli's research had turned toward the development of plastic surgery techniques for correcting eye damage caused by tropical diseases. This focus on surgical intervention was part of his broader interest in addressing the long-term effects of eye diseases in regions with limited medical resources.

In 1937, he also focused on Italian Africa, revisiting the issue of trachoma, a major public health concern in many African countries at the time (Sarnelli 1937). His research during this period was crucial in understanding how endemic diseases affected the populations in these colonized regions (Sarnelli 1938a; 1938-1939). By 1938, Sarnelli's research on tropical ophthalmology had reached a comprehensive stage, as he began to study a variety of ophthalmic conditions specific to tropical climates. His work laid the foundation for subsequent advances in the treatment and prevention of eye diseases in these regions, particularly addressing the challenges inherent to tropical and subtropical environments.

2. Colonial Medicine between Science, Ideology, and Propaganda

Tommaso Sarnelli's scientific and educational work fits perfectly into the ideological framework of Italian colonialism during the twenty years of Fascism, when overseas medicine played a central role not only as a health tool but also as a political and cultural instrument. In numerous writings and lectures, including *Medicina coloniale, medicina politica* (Colonial Medicine, Political Medicine, 1938), Sarnelli articulated a vision of colonial medicine as a form of "scientific conquest", serving both to protect the bodies of Italian soldiers and colonists, and to discipline the bodies and minds of indigenous populations.

In this perspective, medicine is presented as a "preparatory doctrine", not only technical, but closely linked to the fascist ethos and the civilising mission of the empire. Colonisation is defined as "the search for and conquest of well-being beyond the natural borders of the homeland", and the colonial doctor as a central figure in

the conquest not only of territory, but also of climate and environment. His role is not limited to clinical care. Still, it extends to ensuring a “biological balance” between European man and the hostile environment, placing himself at the heart of the “preventive function” necessary for the consolidation of colonial presence (Sarnelli 1926).

In his writings, Sarnelli explicitly highlights the military and political orientation of the Fascist view on medicine, emphasising how “doctors accompany and follow the movement of armies”, ensuring “maximum efficiency” of the troops through protection from disease. Within this rhetoric, the colonial doctor is celebrated as a “modern hero”, “in himself a noble political figure”, representing the Fascist ethos: rational, disciplined, persevering, and committed to the “struggle of science against evils deeply rooted in the races” (Sarnelli 1932).

In this context, medicine was deployed as an instrument of colonial governance and regeneration, exerted through the physical and moral control of the “indigenous population”, described by Sarnelli as “labile, sick, excitable, suggestible” and therefore in need of guidance and restraint (Sarnelli 1939). Physical health became the prerequisite for “social peace” and colonial medicine was presented as a bulwark of European civilization against superstition, instinct, passivity, and the supposed rational inferiority of the colonized (Sarnelli 1941).

This vision also found material and museological expression in the First Triennial Exhibition of Italian Overseas Territories, held in Naples from May 9 to October 15, 1940. On that occasion, Sarnelli curated a room dedicated to indigenous medicine within the Health Pavilion, exhibiting objects and instruments collected “over many years among the indigenous peoples of Libya, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Hejaz, Yemen, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and India”. As he noted, this material was intended to constitute the foundation of a future Museum of Italian Africa.

In his speech at the Royal Congress of the School (Naples, 15 May 1940), Sarnelli reaffirmed the importance of medical training oriented toward colonial enterprise, emphasising the role of the University and the Oriental Institute in preparing “colonial doctors” within a broader political and ideological framework.

His educational activities also included numerous conferences on topics such as “tropical ophthalmology” and “colonial pathology”, held at international venues and, in some cases, in Arabic: Asmara and Benghazi (1930), Western Saudi Arabia, Palestine and Transjordan (1934), Rome (1936, 1938), Tripoli (1936) and India (1938). These presentations, given in contexts that were strategic for Italian foreign and colonial policy, contributed to the spread of the Italian model of colonial medicine, conceived as a tool for health control, political domination, and “civilising mission”.

3. Tommaso Sarnelli's Experience in Yemen (1930-1932): an Observatory on Indigenous Medicine

During his medical mission in Yemen from May 1930 to February 1932, Tommaso Sarnelli played a pivotal role both as a colonial physician and as an Arabist, contributing to the systematic collection of medical data in a geopolitical environment strongly influenced by Fascist colonial policy. His activities coincided with Italian foreign policy objectives in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East and were closely linked to local political dynamics, including encounters with leading figures such as al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (see MS ARA 8) and the governor of Sanaa (see MS ARA 9).

Sarnelli observed a variety of diseases in Sanaa and the surrounding areas, which, in his opinion, were closely linked to “vertical climatology” and “vertical pathology”, concepts that reflected the adaptation of diseases to changing altitudes and the different pathological manifestations associated with particularly difficult environmental conditions. Among the most common diseases diagnosed and documented, Sarnelli reported: malaria, ulcers, leprosy, scurvy, trachoma, and eye diseases.

In this context, Sarnelli's medical experience was not limited to clinical diagnosis, but also extended to an analysis of the science of health preservation (*‘ilm ḥifẓ al-ṣiḥḥa*), which encompassed hygiene and prevention practices related to various aspects of daily life. These included food hygiene, clothing and dress, rest and work, sexual relations, travel and transport, physical exercise, cosmetics, maternity and childcare, and the approach to old age.

In addition, Sarnelli devoted attention to the consumption of *qāt*, a plant that has significant social, cultural and medicinal value in the region, used for recreational, spiritual and medical purposes.

Sarnelli identified two main currents influencing medicine in Yemen:

1. *Folk medicine*: Defined as medicine derived from ancient empiricism, often linked to magical and theurgical traditions. The pharmacotherapy of this medicine was based on the use of plant, animal and mineral drugs, which came not only from Yemen but also from other Asian regions, such as Persia, India, Indonesia, and China. These remedies were stored in *martabān*, traditional containers that have been used since ancient times.
2. *Arabic medicine*: A more formalised and theoretical system, based on ancient texts and transmitted through literature. Although Sarnelli believed that Arabic medicine had been reduced to a literary tradition, its teaching continued to be crucial in the daily medical life of the Yemeni people.

Sarnelli's observations highlight a syncretic view of indigenous medicine, where the popular component was mixed with "high" medicine, derived from classical Arab schools, to create a healthcare system that combined empirical and theoretical experience, magical and religious traditions with more scientific medical practices.

Sarnelli's experience in Yemen resulted in a series of publications and scientific papers, including: *Tracoma* (Sarnelli 1934a), a study on the manifestations and prevalence of the disease in tropical environments; *Nosografia* (1934b), a treatise on the different types of diseases found in colonial environments; *Notizie preliminari sui risultati della mia missione nell'alto Yemen con particolare riguardo alla medicina indigena* (1934), a report on medical experience and observations in Yemen; magical and literary relics used in popular medicine in Yemen (1935, 1938b), a research on the symbolic and therapeutic function of magical and literary objects in the local medical context.

Until 1955, Tommaso Sarnelli continued to teach at L'Orientale while actively pursuing his research, with a particular emphasis on Arabic medicine. From the early 1940s onward (Sarnelli 1942) and throughout the remainder of his career, he concentrated on the study of Arabic medical traditions, gradually adopting a more moderate stance—at least in his published work. His research focused on what he referred to as indigenous or ethnomedical systems of healing (i.e., *etnoiatrica*).

In the post-war period, Sarnelli produced a comprehensive overview of Arabic medicine, with the aim of exploring the intersections between indigenous healing practices and the established scholarly medical tradition (Sarnelli 1957). He also undertook detailed studies of several manuscripts and authors encountered during his earlier research missions. Among these, the most notable is the *Book of Simple Remedies* by the Andalusian physician Aḥmad al-Ġāfiqī (d. ca. 560/1165), whose valuable manuscript he discovered in Tripoli (Sarnelli 1947; 1958). He also worked on the *Kitāb al-Luma'a al-Kāfiya*, authored by the Yemeni ruler al-'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Rasūl al-Ġassānī (Sarnelli 1948).

4. The Indigenous Medicine Collection of Tommaso Sarnelli

As early as the 1930s, Tommaso Sarnelli began formulating plans for a collection dedicated to indigenous medicine, concurrent with his field travels. In 1933, he presented an initial proposal to his professor of Tropical Medicine, then teaching at Sant'Orsola Hospital in Modena. His vision included the establishment of a school that would provide scientific, technical, and spiritual training for physicians. This institution was to be accompanied by a museum, complete with a laboratory and library. Through this school, Sarnelli aimed to translate indigenous

medical texts from various regions of the world, publish a dedicated periodical, and produce manuals and guides. At its core, the project sought to establish an Italian corpus of indigenous medical knowledge.

This project was later transferred to the Royal Oriental Institute in Naples. Beginning in 1937, Sarnelli delivered lectures and taught courses in Tropical Pathology and Hygiene, as well as Indigenous Medicine, to students enrolled in the degree programs in Colonial Sciences and in African, Asian, and American Languages, Literatures, and Institutions.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the titles of the courses underwent some modifications, becoming Tropical Pathology, Colonial Hygiene, and Indigenous Medicine. During this period, negotiations were also initiated for the establishment of a school in tropical medicine; however, the project was ultimately never realized.

With the outbreak of the war in 1940, Sarnelli sought to transfer the project to Rome and appealed for the support of IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente), engaging the assistance of the Orientalist and traveller Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984) and securing the backing of Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), a leading figure in Italian fascism. This further attempt, hindered in part by the deteriorating international situation, was never brought to fruition.

Sarnelli taught continuously at the Oriental Institute in Naples from 1935 to 1955, offering courses in Tropical Pathology, Tropical Hygiene, and Indigenous Medicine. Numerous documents concerning his teaching activities are preserved in the archives of the Rectorate.

In the post-war period, Sarnelli sought to expand and eventually sell what would come to be known as the Sarnelli Collection, a highly valuable compilation of ethnographic and scientific materials documenting indigenous medical and healthcare practices among populations from various regions of the world. On 25 July 1951, Tommaso Sarnelli sold the collection to the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples through a formal agreement that recorded the transfer of around 400 “pieces” or “items”. These materials were organized into five thematic sections, each containing material of considerable relevance to colonial medicine and to the comparative study of traditional healthcare systems across different cultural contexts.

- 1) Instruments, apparatus, tools, vessels, and utensils related to indigenous medicine, surgery, and pharmacy: This section encompasses a diverse range of instruments and equipment used in traditional medical practices from various geographical areas, including Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and India. Objects such as surgical tools, containers for storing medicinal sub-

stances, and instruments used in the preparation of traditional remedies are documented here.

- 2) Indigenous medicinal substances: A collection of medicinal substances originating from plants, animals, and minerals, used in various indigenous medical traditions. These remedies, often found in local pharmacopoeias, were prepared using traditional methods based on natural resources available in the local environment. The items in this section document local healing practices and the use of natural resources.
- 3) Objects related to indigenous hygiene: This part of the collection includes items associated with personal hygiene, clothing, food, and cosmetics. It also examines hygienic practices associated with the use of tonics, stimulants, and nervine excitants, providing insight into health and well-being within indigenous cultural contexts. Additionally, it includes objects related to the maintenance of both psychological and physical health, such as those used for improving psychological conditions through substances and ritual practices.
- 4) Objects and documents related to ethnomedicine and its relationships with magic and religion: Indigenous medicine is closely intertwined with magical and religious practices, and this section documents the intersection of medicine and magic in numerous cultures. It includes ritual objects, religious texts, and tools used in therapeutic ceremonies, as well as documents and rituals that explore the relationship between physical healing and spirituality. In many of these traditions, medicine is not just a matter of physical care, but also a spiritual act tied to the health of the soul.
- 5) Sources and indigenous literary testimonies of ethnomedicine: This section consists of manuscripts, printed, and lithographed texts covering various aspects of indigenous medicine, pharmacology, hygiene, botany, and medical practices associated with magic. The collection includes ancient medical texts that remain in use today, reflecting the traditional knowledge of health, remedies, and therapeutic practices among indigenous populations.

As originally conceived, at least according to the memorandum of sale, this collection not only documented indigenous medical practices but also reflected the colonial interests and fascist ideologies of the period, which regarded colonial medicine as an instrument of cultural and political domination. Sarnelli did not merely amass objects; he undertook systematic efforts to catalogue and organize information on indigenous medicine, motivated by the belief that studying these practices could enhance the understanding and administration of healthcare among populations under colonial rule.

At present, only a portion of these “items” is preserved at L'Orientale, consisting primarily of the manuscripts and printed works on Arabian medicine, pharmacopeia and other topics that Sarnelli had collected.

5. The Sarnelli Collection of Arabic Manuscripts

The manuscripts examined for this catalogue predominantly belong to the Sarnelli Collection.

Almost all originate from Yemen and were either purchased by or gifted to Sarnelli during his stay there between 1931 and 1932. These manuscripts attest to Sarnelli's official role as a physician in Yemen, including his service at the court of *imām* al-Mutawakkil Yahyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn, ruler of Yemen (Fig. 1) also through the establishment of a laboratory (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Under the photograph is a caption in Arabic stating that it depicts Dr. Sarnelli together with *imām* al-Mutawakkil Yahyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (1869-1948), ruler of Yemen, Ibrāhīm and Ismā'īl in Sanaa in Rabī' al-awwal 1350/July 1931 in the Italian clinic



Fig. 2. The interior of the Italian Laboratory in Sanaa

The fine craftsmanship of specific manuscripts, along with the inclusion of works unique within the medical literature, attests to Sarnelli's rigorous research,

his integration into Yemeni society, and his productive political and scientific relationships with local physicians. At the same time, the donor's notes and marginal remarks—likely recorded during his time in Yemen—document the collaborative research he conducted with local physicians and reflect his broader interest in various diseases, which informed his selection of treatises for the collection.

Most Yemeni manuscripts bear an ex-libris label, likely produced in Yemen, as evidenced by the use of Arabic script (Figs. 3, 5, 6, 8). In some instances, this label includes a single or double number (Figs. 3, 5, 6, 8); in others, it is accompanied by a second label (affixed in Naples) indicating that the manuscript is part of the “Sarnelli Collection of Indigenous Medicine” (Fig. 5). In some cases, Sarnelli inscribed the title of the work within the ex-libris label itself (Fig. 6); alternatively, he added bibliographical references, donor information (Fig. 7), or the date of donation beneath the label (Fig. 8, 10). In other cases, the donor explicitly acknowledged its gift to Dr. Sarnelli in the manuscript's note of possession (Fig. 9).

Fig. 3. MS ARA 20, on the back of the cover, an inscription in Arabic indicating that the book came into Sarnelli's possession in the month of Šawwāl; under his ex-libris



Fig. 4. MS ARA 10, f. ar: A red pencil annotation records the date of the manuscript's acquisition (Dr. Sarnelli) and the name of the donor (min al-sayyid 'Abd Allāh al-Daylamī)

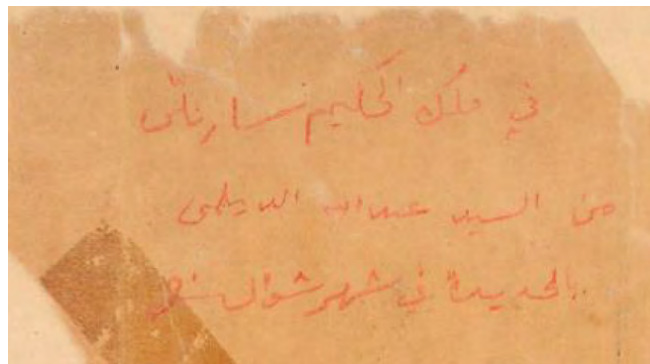




Fig. 5. MS ARA 13, on the back cover, ex-libris of Sarnelli and a further label, added later by the "Sarnelli Collection of Indigenous Medicine", indicating the contents of the manuscript: the *Kitāb Šifā' al-aḡsām wa-l-qulūb* (The book of the healing of bodies and hearts) by al-Kamarānī



Fig. 6. MS ARA 9 f. Iv: Annotations on the back cover of the *Kitāb al-Muḡnī*

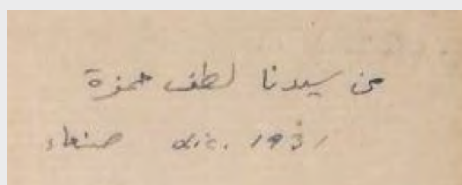


Fig. 7. MS ARA 9 f. 1r: Name of a donor, location, and date: Lūṭf Ḥamza, Sanaa, December 1931



Fig. 8. MS ARA 15: Note of donor and day of donation: from Dr. Sukkāri 12/2/31



Fig. 9. MS ARA 14, on the title page of *Luqat al-Manāfi* by Ibn al-Ġawzī, there is an inscription indicating that this copy is dedicated to Dr. Sarnelli

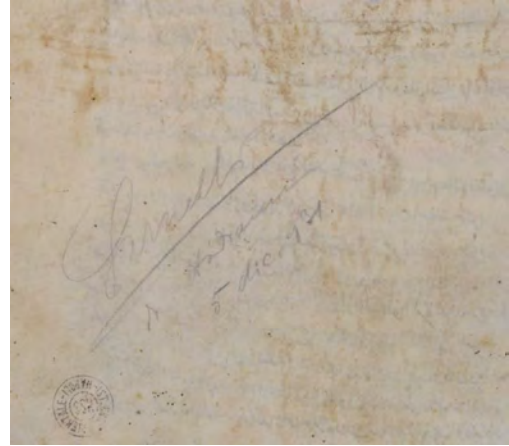


Fig. 10. MS ARA 34: The copy of the *Taṣḥīl al-manāfi* is signed in pencil by Sarnelli and by someone named Hadrami (?), from whom it was probably purchased on December 5, 1931

Sarnelli's reading notes occasionally appear in the manuscripts examined for this catalogue (Figs. 11, 12, 13). These light pencil annotations, though sporadic, are significant as they attest to Sarnelli's interest in this type of literature and likely reflect his engagement with, if not active use of, the texts, probably dating back to his time in Yemen. Together with the numerous annotations made by copyists, physicians, and medical practitioners, these records demonstrate the extensive use of these texts well into more recent times, reflecting an enduring interest in a wide range of empirical practices alongside theoretical and conceptual knowledge.

The manuscript traverses both time and space, offering clues about its transmission and history. It serves not only to reproduce and preserve a work that may have been copied, transmitted, and at times commented upon, summarized, or translated, but also to provide valuable paratextual information. Such elements reveal details about the manuscript's successive owners. In the case of this particular collection, the texts pertain to medicine pharmacopoeia and magic and were often copied and circulated by physicians or medical practitioners. Their long-standing presence within the community is evidenced by ownership inscriptions and medical prescriptions noted on the opening or closing folios.

The manuscripts collected by Sarnelli in Yemen are richly annotated with medical recipes, notes on the efficacy of various remedies, prayers, invocations, and

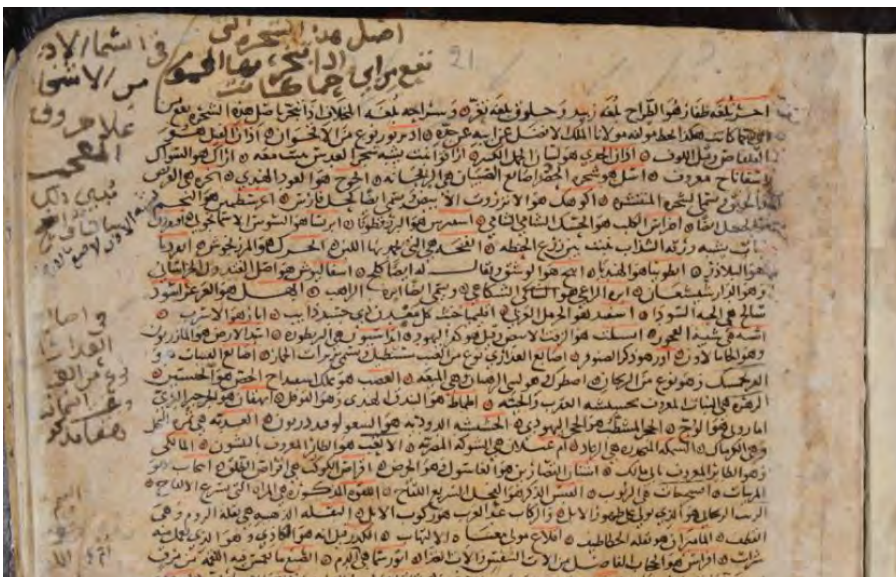


Fig 11. MS ARA 49 f. 21r:
notes by a copyist and by
Sarnelli

magical formulas, often inscribed on the first and last folios and occasionally in the margins. The paratextual apparatus accompanying these transmitted works is equally significant, as it documents traditions of use, commentary, and the dynamic interplay between the authoritative text copied within the manuscript and the practical knowledge of physicians and practitioners recorded, through these notes, in the margins or surrounding the text.

Moreover, this apparatus reveals a notable fluidity between medicine, religion, and magic. This interconnection is underscored in various studies by Sarnelli, as well as in his own project to build the collection, wherein the three dimensions (medicine, religion, and magic) were regarded as inseparable (Fig. 14).

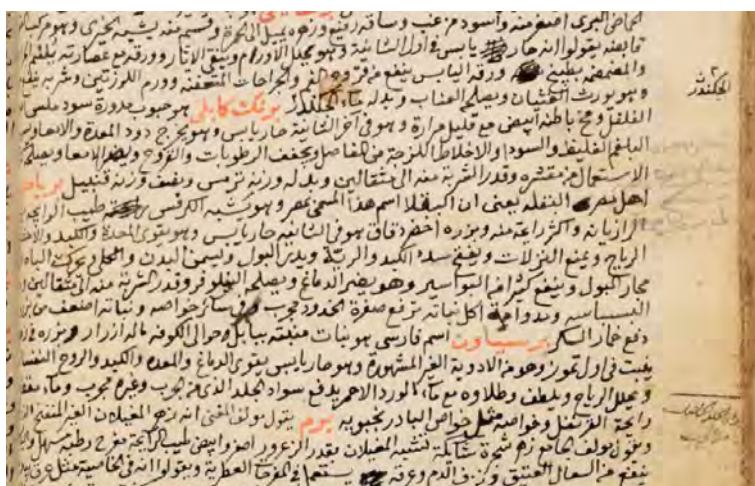


Fig. 12. MS ARA 7, f. 34v:
notes by Sarnelli in the list
of remedies



Fig. 13. MS ARA 7, f. 44v: notes by Sarnelli in addition to those of the copyist

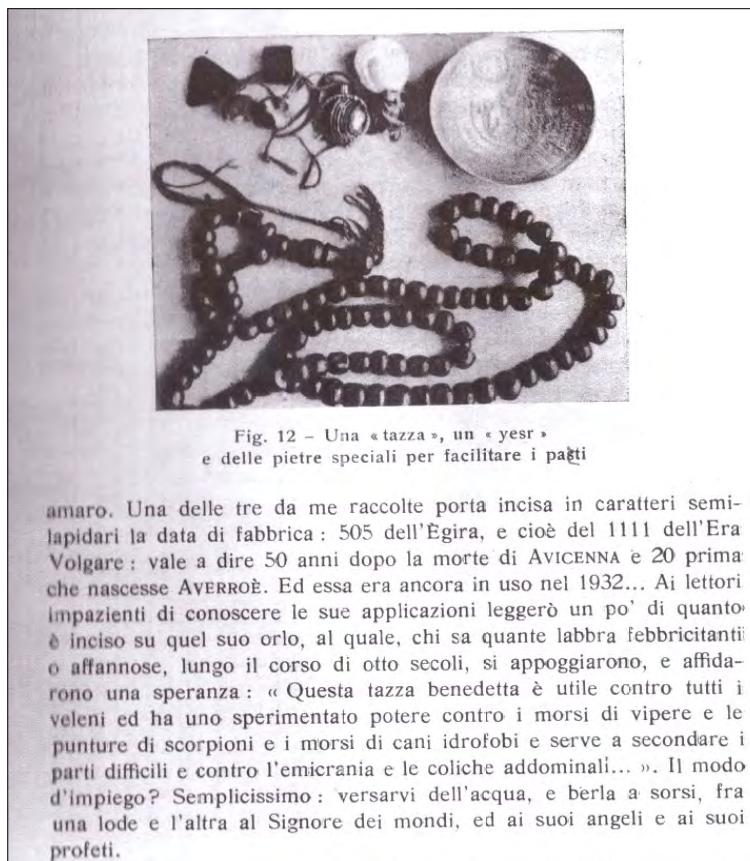


Fig. 14. Information about a magic bowl (probably in the former Sarnelli collection) purchased in Yemen in 1932

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Chapter 3

Arabic Manuscripts on Medicine, Pharmacopeia, and other Sciences at L'Orientale

FRANCESCA BELLINO

1. The Manuscripts of Medicine, Pharmacology, and Pharmacopeia of the Sarnelli Collection against the Background of the Islamic Medical Tradition

The collection housed at L'Orientale comprises a diverse array of Arabic manuscripts that extensively engage with Islamic medical traditions, with particular emphasis on Yemeni and regional medical and magical practices (MSS ARA 72, 139, 244). The holdings span multiple genres within Islamic scientific literature, encompassing works on medicine (MSS ARA 5, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 34, 49, 106, 143, 152), pharmacology and pharmacopeia (MSS ARA 2, 7, 8, 10, 17), and even a treatise on agriculture (MS ARA 21). Collectively, these manuscripts provide valuable insights into pre-modern medical and healing traditions, which likely continued to circulate—and perhaps to be actively practiced—during the early 1930s, when Sarnelli traveled to Yemen.

The manuscripts collected by Sarnelli in Yemen—both those he acquired directly and those donated to him—display a wide range of textual quality and typology. They include copies linked to prominent figures of the Rasulid court, as well as more commonly produced and broadly circulated texts. These manuscripts span a diverse array of genres. Although they do not encompass the entire scope of classical and post-classical medical literature, they nonetheless provide valuable insights into the ways in which medical knowledge was practiced and transmitted in Yemen and across the broader region. As noted by Celentano and Sarnelli Cerqua (1984, 212), several of these manuscripts are rare, and some may be unique, with no known counterparts in other catalogues. Noteworthy examples include *Kitāb Mağmaʿ al-ḥulāṣa fī al-ṭibb* (The Compendium of the Summary in Medicine) by al-Sayyid Fathī al-Muḥariz (MS ARA 2), which appears to be absent from existing bibliographic records; an Arabic translation of Muzaffar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Kāšānī's *Qarābādīn* (Pharmacopoeia) (MS ARA 8(1)); and Kamarānī's *Kitāb Šifāʾ al-ağšām* (The Book of the Healing of Bodies) (MS ARA 13(1)). These works, in particular, exemplify the transmission of medical knowledge between the Indo-Persian world and the Arabian Peninsula, reflecting a complex network of scholarly and professional relationships among physicians and scribes who copied, compiled, and circulated these texts.

From a genre-based perspective, the manuscripts in this collection can be broadly classified into three primary categories: (1) works devoted to medicine, (2) texts focused on pharmacopoeia, and (3) works addressing other scientific disciplines. Each category encompasses a range of formats, including encyclopedias, compendia, commentaries, and specialized treatises.

(1) The medical corpus within the Sarnelli collection includes works that categorize diseases, describe symptoms, and outline therapeutic protocols. Several texts are specifically concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of various illnesses (e.g., MSS ARA 2, 8 (2), 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 34, 49, 106, 143, 152). Notably, the collection also contains works in the genre of prophetic medicine (e.g., MS ARA 14). As is characteristic of post-classical medical corpora, the collection features commentaries on earlier foundational works, reflecting their circulation and transmission across regions such as Yemen and within Indo-Persian scholarly networks. Manuscripts within these genres constitute the most distinctive and valuable component of the Sarnelli collection, representing the intersection of local (and possibly peripheral) medical traditions with broader intellectual currents of the post-classical and modern periods.

(2) In addition to medical works, the Sarnelli collection includes several pharmacological texts (e.g., MSS ARA 2, 7, 8 (1), 10, 17). These treatises describe the preparation of both simple and compound remedies, as well as substances and their therapeutic applications. These pharmacological works are particularly important for their documentation of local practices and nomenclature.

(3) The collection also contains scientific literature, including a Yemeni manuscript on agriculture (MS ARA 21).

Despite the diversity of subjects, all the manuscripts demonstrate a close relationship between the medical and pharmacopeial traditions conveyed in the texts and their practical, experiential application. This is evident in the numerous notes, annotations, additions, and marginal glosses that appear throughout the codices. Ownership inscriptions—often abundant, informative, and frequently dated—provide valuable evidence regarding the significance of these manuscripts within the context of medical practice, which clearly required ongoing engagement with and adaptation of inherited traditions. A significant number of the manuscripts bear ownership signatures from physicians (*ṭabīb* or *mutaṭabbīb*) or pharmacists (*ʿaṭṭār*), further emphasizing their role in the medical field. Additionally, many copies contain recipes, prescriptions, prayers, and medical annotations on folios preceding and following the main text, situating the manuscripts within a complex network of therapeutic practices and scientific knowledge. This intricate relationship between

the textual, material, and paratextual components necessitates a holistic approach that considers each manuscript's content alongside its codicological features.

In addition to the major works preserved in these manuscripts, the medical recipes found in the opening and closing folios of many codices represent a crucial component of indigenous and Arabic medical practice. These formulas often combine plant-based ingredients with animal extracts and minerals, reflecting a holistic pharmacological approach grounded in empirical tradition. Typically recorded in concise, practical formats, these entries were intended for everyday use by local physicians, healers, and practitioners, offering practical guidance on the preparation and application of remedies.

The Sarnelli Collection at L'Orientale represents a rich and varied archive of traditional medical knowledge, drawn from a wide geographical range, with particular emphasis on Yemeni and Arab-Islamic traditions. Simultaneously, the texts reflect sustained interactions with Greek, Arabic, Indo-Persian and other medical systems. Together, these manuscripts offer not only valuable insights into therapeutic practices but also into the cultural beliefs, magical traditions, and transregional exchanges that have shaped medical knowledge in the Islamic world.

2. Arabic Medicine

The works categorized under Arabic medicine reflect the richness and diversity of the Arabic-Islamic medical tradition, particularly in their systematic classification of diseases, detailed symptomatology, and corresponding treatments. These texts also exemplify a methodological approach rooted in careful clinical observation and the use of natural remedies.

The significance of the extant manuscript copies at L'Orientale lies not only in the content of the texts themselves, but more importantly in the annotations added by copyists and subsequent owners. In some cases, the recommended treatments include recipes that were employed in both medical and magical contexts, thereby highlighting the fluid boundaries between these two spheres (see the chapter by Giovanni Maria Martini in this volume).

2.1. General Medical Treatises of the Classical Period: Classification, Symptomatology, and Treatment of Diseases

Among the medical treatises addressing the classification, symptomatology, and treatment of diseases from the classical period, a notable example is MS ARA 20, which preserves the *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man 'ajaza 'an al-ta'līf* (The Book of Enabling One Who Is Unable to Compile), authored by Abū al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī (known in the Latin tradition as Abulcasis, d. 400/1009). This work, which encompasses a wide

range of subjects, from surgery and pharmacology to dietetics and cosmetics, stands as a landmark in Andalusian medical literature. It is regarded as a comprehensive medical and surgical encyclopaedia, offering detailed information on a broad spectrum of illnesses, injuries, treatments, and operative procedures. Structured into thirty *maqālāt* (treatises), it also includes descriptions of over 200 surgical instruments.

The manuscript copy preserved at L'Orientale is incomplete, containing only the first part (*al-ḡuz' al-awwal*), as noted on the front cover. Despite its fragmentary state, this 18th-century copy features several notable scribal traits. Many folios show faded or washed ink, later retraced in darker ink (Fig. 1). Numerous marginal notes reflect the copyist's active engagement with the text, incorporating comments and supplementary observations. Annotations at the beginning of the manuscript suggest that it functioned, at least in part, as a working copy. At the same time, the consistent and meticulous handwriting indicates that the scribe may have undertaken a process of collation during transcription. Notes and ownership stamps on the title page further indicate the manuscript's multiple owners and prolonged use. Additional marginalia on the initial folios—such as recipes, medical prescriptions, and astrological annotations, likely related to young girls, perhaps daughters of a former owner—offer further insight into the manuscript's history (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Example of overwritten text in MS ARA 20, f. 77r, where the original faded script has been copied, producing a vortex-like visual effect



Fig. 2. MS ARA 20, f. 8r: astrological notes probably referring to the children (*awlād*) of one of the owners of the manuscript

Another work of particular significance in the medical literature is the *Kitāb al-Muġnī fī tadbīr al-amrād wa-ma'rifat al-īl wa-l-a'rād* (The Book that Suffices on the Management of Diseases and the Understanding of Illnesses and Symptoms), a treatise from the Abbasid period that offers a systematic classification of diseases along with their symptomatology and treatments. The work was authored by Abū al-Ḥasan Sa'īd b. Hibat Allāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 495/1101), court physician to the caliph al-Muqtadī (r. 467/1075–487/1094), to whom the treatise is dedicated. Organized by illness, it demonstrates a highly methodical approach to medical knowledge: each illness (*marād*) is described in terms of its cause (*sabab*), symptoms (*'arād*), and the appropriate regimen (*tadbīr*) for its treatment (*īlāġ*), with some entries also including specific prescriptions (*ṣifa*).

The manuscript copy preserved at L'Orientale (MS ARA 9) highlights the systematic nature of the work. It opens with a detailed index of the illnesses discussed (*fihrist al-amrād*, ff. 3v–6v), reflecting a structured approach to organizing medical knowledge (Fig. 3). This methodical design continues with 201 tables, where terms for illness (*marād*), cause (*sabab*), symptom (*'arād*), regimen, and treatment (*tadbīr*), and end (*zawāl*) of the illness are consistently marked in red (Fig. 4), enhancing both navigability and didactic clarity. Annotations on the opening and closing folios, added by various owners, include recipes, medical advice, and astronomical calculations. Some are dated; others are attributed only by personal names. The manuscript was ultimately donated by Luṭf Ḥamza to Sarnelli in Sanaa in 1931 (see Chapter 2 by Francesca Bellino, Fig. 7).



Fig. 3. Ms ARA 9, f. 3v: index of diseases covered in the *Kitāb al-Muġnī*

Fig. 4. MS ARA 9, f. 54r: Example of a table showing information on illness, causes, symptoms, regimen and treatment

2.2. General Medical Treatises of the post-Classical Period: Classification, Symptomatology, and Treatment of Diseases

Other manuscripts in the collection comprise commentaries on earlier medical treatises as well as significantly later works that engage with, adapt, or respond to earlier medical traditions.

One such manuscript, MS ARA 12, preserves the *Kitāb Ṣarḥ al-Qānūnġah fī al-tibb* (The Book of the Commentary on the *Qānūnġah* on Medicine) by al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-As-tarābādī (d. 813/1410–11). As indicated in the introduction (f. 1r), the text is a *ṣarḥ* (commentary) on the *muḥtaṣar* (compendium) titled *al-Qānūnġah*, composed by Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Ġaġmīnī al-Ḥwārizmī (d. 745/1344). Ġaġmīnī's com-





Fig. 5. MS ARA 12: note of ownership on the back cover dated 1230/1814

pendium itself is an abridged version of Ibn Sīnā's (d. 427/1037) canonical medical text, *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* (The *Canon* of Medicine). Although al-As-tarābādī's work functions as both a commentary on a commentary and a medical compendium, it nevertheless attests to the enduring authority and intellectual legacy of Avicenna's medical writings in later Islamic scholarly traditions as well as the dissemination of this type of knowledge when Sarnelli

was in Yemen (see Chapter 4 by Luca Berardi in this volume).

Structured into ten *maqālāt* (treatises) and multiple chapters, the manuscript at L'Orientale lacks both the title page and introduction but contains several marginal notes. Its title is notable for including the term *qānūnḡah*—a diminutive or derivative of *al-Qānūn*—likely referencing a condensed or adapted version of Avicenna's *Canon*, or a similarly titled independent treatise. As with other texts in the collection, it belonged to a physician (*al-ṭabīb*), as noted on the back cover (Fig. 5). A diagram of the disease tree (Fig. 6) highlights the text's practical role in this medical tradition. The marginal note preceding the diagram, along with scattered marginal glosses (*ḥāṣhiya*) throughout the manuscript (Fig. 7), reflects its reception and continued use within the later Yemeni medical context.

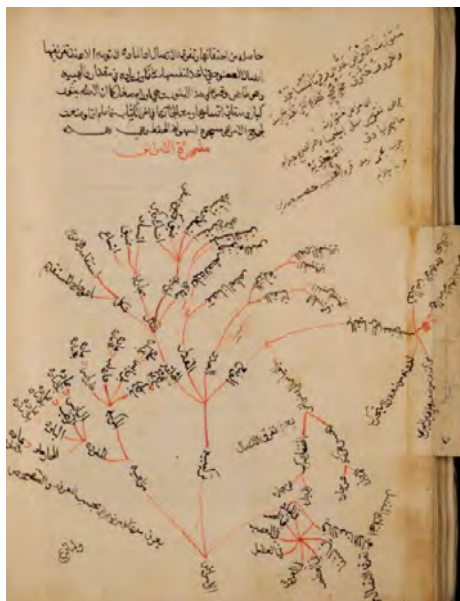


Fig. 6. MS ARA 12, f. 45v: disease tree diagram (*ṣaḡarat al-amrāḍ*)



Fig. 7. MS ARA 12 f. 85r: marginal notes (*ḥāṣhiya*)

As far as diseases are concerned, MS ARA 13 contains two distinct medical treatises on diseases affecting individual parts of the body and general diseases, which summarize and comment on information from earlier works. The first of these (MS ARA 13 (1), ff. 1v-136v), entitled *Kitāb Šifā' al-aḡsām wa-l-qulūb fīmā yaḥtāğahu al-ṭabīb fī al-maṭbūb mim mā aḡrā bihi al-naḡ' allām al-ḡuyūb* (The Book of Healing for bodies and souls regarding what the physician needs to know about the patient, from that which the knower of the unseen has made beneficial) authored by Ḡamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḡayṭ al-Kamarānī al-Qurašī (d. 857/1453), addresses both localized and systemic illnesses, integrating therapeutic practices from the author's personal experience and earlier authorities. These include not only Islamic scholars (*mašā'ib*) but also figures from classical antiquity such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle, demonstrating the syncretic nature of Arabic medical knowledge.

This manuscript copy of the work preserved at L'Orientale dates back to 999/1590-91 and attests to the spread of this knowledge in Yemen during the Rasulid period. In the marginal notes, there are important annotations probably made by those (therapists or medical practitioners) who used the text for the specific use of certain medicines endorsing its validity and usefulness (*fā'ida*) (Fig. 8).

Another significant example of a late medical synthesis is *Kitāb al-Rahma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḡikma* (The Book of Mercy concerned with Medicine and Wisdom) by Muḥammad al-Mahdawī b. 'Alī Ibrāhīm al-Ṣanawbarī al-Yamanī al-Hindī (d. 814/1412). This work, as Sijpesteijn describes, “combines traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad related to medical matters, classical humoral theory, and the experience of practising doctors regarding the workings of the human body, the physiological effects of various foodstuffs, and actions necessary to maintain bodily health, as well as the treatment of ailments and diseases” (Sijpesteijn 2022, 81). The manuscript copy held at L'Orientale (MS ARA 106 (2), ff. 53r-112v) belongs to the recension attributed to al-Ṣanawbarī, rather than the version associated with al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). It opens with a chapter on natural phenomena, followed by sections addressing general illnesses and specific conditions affecting various body parts and internal organs, along with their corresponding treatments. The manuscript



Fig. 8. MS ARA 13 (1) f. 35r: example of a marginal note illustrating the benefits of a specific remedy (*fā'ida*)

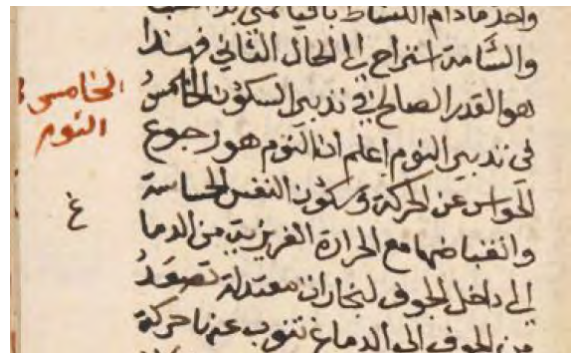


Fig. 9. MS ARA 106 (2), f. 80r: keywords highlighted in red in the margins

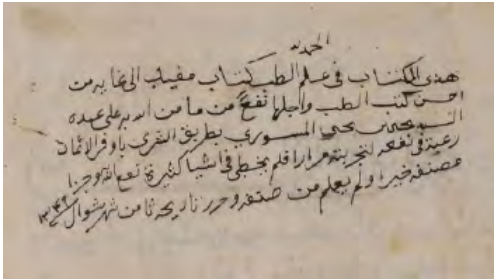


Fig. 10. MS ARA 34, f. 1r: dated annotation (1349/1931) indicating that the work is a useful and practical medical compendium



Fig. 11. MS ARA 34, f. 48r: folio displaying the use of different colours and the variations in script size, together with a note by Sarnelli on a passage concerning "the effectiveness of prayer"

is written in black ink, with red marginalia highlighting key terms related to chapters, ailments, and remedies (Fig. 9). Additional annotations—likely added by a later hand—indicate the text's continued use in local medical practice.

The Orientale collection also comprises works that engage in intertextual commentary, a characteristic of the literature of the later period. Notably, in Yemen, Sarnelli discovered a work closely related to the manuscripts described above. Indeed, MS ARA 34 contains the *Taṣḥīl al-manāfi' fī al-tibb wa-l-ḥikma* ('The Simplification of the Benefits of Medicine and Wisdom'), authored by the Yemeni scholar Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azraq (or al-Azraqī, d. ca. 889/1485). Composed around 815/1412, this medical compendium was intended to be both practical and accessible (Fig. 10). In addition to drawing on the *Kitāb al-ṣifā' li-aḡsām* by al-Kirmānī (also al-Karamānī, see MS ARA 13 (1)) and the *Kitāb al-Raḥma* by al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 815/1412) (see MS ARA 106 (2)), the author explicitly cites the *Kitāb Luḡat al-manāfi'* by Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1201) (see MS ARA 14), along with other medical treatises from the later Islamic period. The text's practical function is further highlighted through the intentional use of color and size variations, which guide the reader's attention and improve its usability (Fig. 11). The text was copied in 1299/1881 and features annotations by Sarnelli himself.

An interesting aspect of the works from this late period is their circulation between different regions, as evidenced by manuscripts containing works by Egyptian authors transmitted to Yemen.

A notable example of the transmission of post-classical Egyptian medical literature is MS ARA 15, which contains the first and second parts of *Taḍkirat ūlī al-albāb wa-l-ḡami' li-l-aḡab al-uḡāb* (A Memoir for Those of Understanding and a Collection of Wondrous Marvels) by the prominent Ottoman Egyptian physician and scholar Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1599). Influenced by Ibn al-Bayṭar (d. 646/1248), this



Fig. 13. MS ARA 15, f. 313v: final section of the text, with annotations and deletions

Fig. 12. MS ARA 15, f. cv: at the top, a note comparing the number of simple and compound medicines with those listed by Avicenna; in the centre, a medical note discussing the correlation between the hourly divisions of day and night and the humours, according to Hunayn b. Ishāq; and a further, later, illegible note

widely circulated medical handbook is preserved in numerous manuscript copies throughout the Arab world and the West.

The manuscript version held at L'Orientale, though incomplete (beginning with the letter *dāl*), is significant for its evidence of sustained and dynamic use. Marginal annotations—some of which are dated—include notes on individual drugs, commentary on simple and compound remedies, comparisons with Avicenna and Hunayn b. Ishāq, as well as various medical recipes (Fig. 12). These additions, likely made by both the copyist and later owners, highlight active engagement through key terms, supplementary information, and explanatory glosses. Notably, parts of the final section have been deliberately erased (Fig. 13).

The composite manuscript MS ARA 106 contains two treatises on diseases and treatments. The first (MS ARA 106 (1), ff. 1r–51r) is *Kitāb al-Masābiḥ al-saniyya fī ṭibb al-bariyya* (The Book of the Radiant Lamps in the Medicine of Humankind) by Egyptian scholar and jurist Ṣihāb al-Dīn al-Qalyūbī (d. 1069/1659), focusing on disease and diet therapy. Opening with an overview of general pathology and the principles of disease—particularly humoral theory—



Fig. 14. MS ARA 106 (1), f. 35r:
Instructions for a talisman against the plague



Fig. 15. MS ARA 106 (1), f. 51r: end of the work and
notes on recipes for the use of certain substances

the treatise proceeds through ten chapters on ailments affecting different parts of the body, concluding with a section on culinary and medicinal herbs. Marginal notes identify key terms related to illnesses, organs, and substances. Some sections, such as one describing a talisman against the plague, illustrate the intersection of therapeutic and magical practices (Fig. 14). Following the main text, ff. 51r-2r include medical recipes and notes on the therapeutic uses of herbs and substances covered in the final chapter (Fig. 15).

The second treatise in MS ARA 13 (2) (ff. 137v–192v) is *Kitāb al-Muwaṣṣil li-l-āgrād fī mudāwāt al-amrād fī al-ṭibb* (The Means to Achieve Goals in the Treatment of Diseases in Medicine) by ‘Abd al-Laṭīf b. Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā al-Muṣārri’ (fl. before 1094/1682-83), a general medical compendium focused on the causes and treatment of disease. Structured into chapters, it covers the symptoms of specific illnesses, the properties—both beneficial and harmful—of various foods and drugs, and principles of hygiene and prophylaxis. This late work exemplifies the systematic condensation and rearticulation of earlier medical knowledge.

Although lacking a title page, MS ARA 19 (2) contains a version of *al-Risāla al-Ṣihābiyya fī al-ṣinā’a al-ṭibbiyya* (The Shihabian Treatise on the Medical Art) by Ḡamāl al-Dīn al-Māridinī (10th/16th century), a therapeutic manual originally comprising eighty chapters. Completed in 1130/1718, this acephalous copy omits chapters 3-15 and chapter 79. At the manuscript’s end (ff. 68v-69v) are several verses, formulas on beneficial substances, and ownership notes. Notably, folio 29r illustrates adaptations of treatments to the Yemeni context (Fig. 16). The refined copyist employed various coloured inks (Fig. 17). The text’s conclusion features cancellations and erasures; a significant portion is illegible, and the copyist’s name on f. 69r has been erased (Fig. 18).



Fig. 16. MS ARA 19 (2), f. 29r: comments and notes on the text

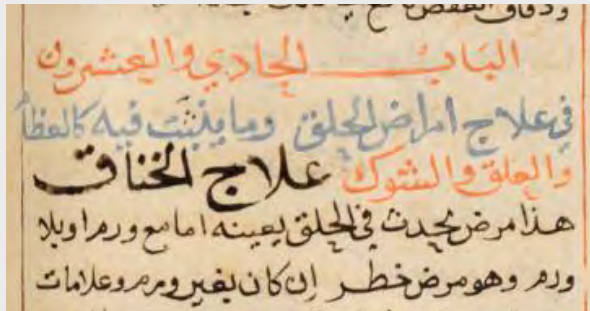


Fig. 17. MS ARA 19 (2), f. 31v: use of different colours



Fig. 18. MS ARA 19 (2), f. 66v: deletions at the end of the text

2.3. Unidentified Works on Medicine and Diseases

The collection of L'Orientale also includes works on medicine and diseases that have not (yet) been identified and that, for various reasons, deserve special attention due to their content or specific aspects related to the copies that preserve them.

Although the title and author of MS ARA 143 remain unknown, the manuscript appears to be the second volume of a larger work organized alphabetically by disease. It opens with a detailed analysis of headaches (*al-ṣadāʾ*), employing a rigorous methodology that systematically compares sources from both ancient Greek and classical Arabic medical traditions. The entries cite a wide range of authorities, from Galen to al-Rāzī, including key texts such as *Kitāb al-Ḥawī* (The Comprehensive Book of Medicine) and commentaries on the *Kullīyyāt* (Canon of Medicine).

The manuscript copy housed at L'Orientale, transcribed in 1254/1838 by Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Dāwarānī, features numerous red-ink underlinings highlighting keywords and section titles. The scribe inserted interlinear additions, suggesting emendations or supplements during transcription. Marginal annotations, in multiple hands and sometimes in *nastaʿliq* script, further demonstrate the manuscript's dynamic use (Fig. 19). An anatomical illustration of the digestive system is also included (Fig. 20).

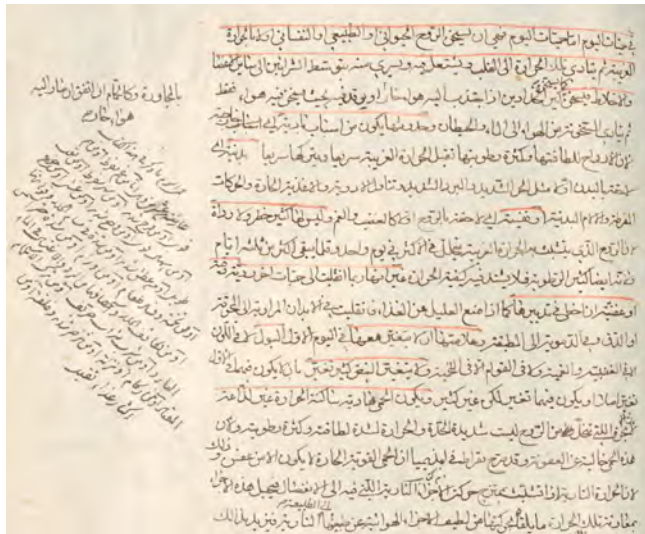


Fig. 19. MS ARA 143, f. 188r: interlinear additions, underlining in red ink, and comments in *nastaʿliq* in the margin of the text

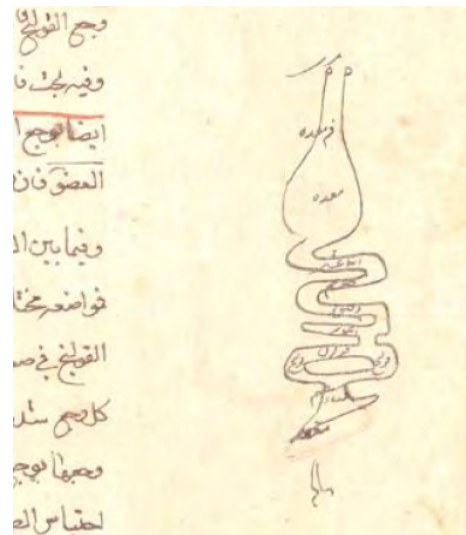


Fig. 20. MS ARA 143, f. 149v: digestive system

The second unidentified work, preserved in MS ARA 19, is a composite manuscript comprising two distinct medical treatises on diseases and their treatments, transcribed by different scribes and subsequently bound together. The first treatise, MS ARA 19 (1) (ff. 1r–22r), is undated and incomplete, missing both its beginning (acephalous) and conclusion (apodous). It focuses on diagnosing and treating common illnesses, particularly those affecting the respiratory and digestive systems, and provides guidance on hygiene and prevention.

Additionally, unidentified materials—such as MS ARA 246 (not examined in this study)—along with various fragments and loose folios preserved at the Library of L'Orientale, may in time contribute to the identification of further works within this genre and deepen our understanding of the existing corpus.

2.4. Treatises on the Diagnosis and Treatment of Specific Diseases

In addition to works that offer a general and, above all, comprehensive account of all known diseases, there also exist treatises dedicated to individual ailments, examining their symptoms and therapeutic interventions in detail. Among these, MS ARA 5 stands out. Despite its general title, *al-Risāla al-mušfiya li-l-amrād al-muškila* (The Healing Treatise on Difficult Diseases), it specifically addresses hypochondria (*al-marāqiyya*), examining its causes, symptoms, and therapeutic approaches. The author, Fayḍi Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. 1151/1738), a notable theologian and physician, offers a sophisticated analysis of the interplay between psychological and physical health, distinguishing cases linked to bilious imbalance from those arising from other physiological or emotional factors (Fig. 21).

The composite MS ARA 8 contains a *risāla* (MS ARA 8 (2), ff. 78v–86v) of unknown title and author, detailing various forms of erysipelas, syphilis, and smallpox, alongside their treatments. Although undated, the copy was completed in 1100/1689 by the practitioner-copyist Muḥammad Mu'min (*al-mutaṭabbib*) b. Šams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Māzandarānī. This text appears to continue the preceding pharmacological work, *Qarābādīn* (MS ARA 8 (1)), suggesting a coherent scholarly project or a close conceptual link between these fields. Notably, the manuscript was collated by the physician-copyist on behalf of Muḥsin, son of the Zaydī *imām* Muḥammad al-Mu'ayyad II of Yemen (1087/1678–1092/1681).



Fig. 21. MS ARA 5, f. 14r: Chapter on the signs of hypochondria

2.5. Late Collections of Medical Writings and Miscellaneous Works

Collections of medical texts and recipes represent another distinct genre, often popular in nature and blending medicine with magical practices. MS ARA 152, copied (possibly) by Muḥammad b. al-Šayḥ Mūsā al-Ībāwī, exemplifies this type of compendium. Although lacking a title page, the manuscript is identified by a colophon inscription on the back cover noting completion of the *maḡmūʿ* (collation) in 1247/1832 (Fig. 22). This oblong composite volume mainly comprises medical recipes and therapeutic formulas, with several folios featuring magic squares and *Brillenbuchstaben*, stylized, often angular letters used decoratively or esoterically in Islamic manuscripts (Fig. 23). It also contains instructions on the medicinal use of formulas, including their preparation in beverages, alongside vernacular poetic stanzas. The manuscript alternates between different scripts—some vocalized, others not—and includes passages in what appears to be Egyptian dialect (Fig. 24). Notably, it does not belong to the Sarnelli collection.



Fig. 22. MS ARA 152, On the back cover, the scribe, identified as Muḥammad b. al-Šayḥ Mūsā al-Ībāwī (?), inscribed that the collation (*al-maḡmūʿ*) was completed on Dū al-Qaʿda 1247/April 1832

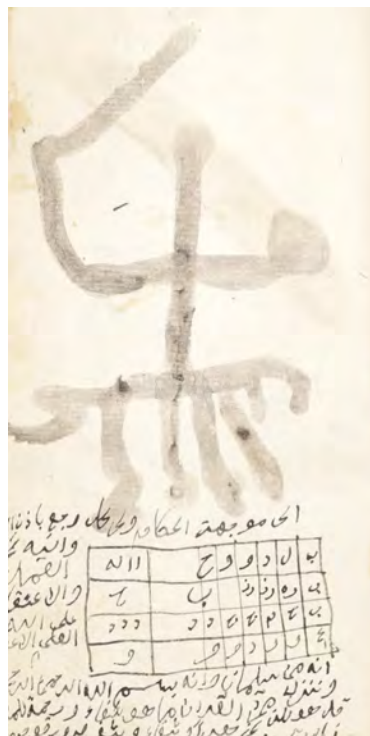


Fig. 23. MS ARA 152, f. 15r: magic squares and decorative elements that convey esoteric meanings

3. Prophetic Medicine

The genre of Prophetic Medicine (*ṭibb al-nabawī*) reflects the evolution of Arabic medical traditions during the post-classical period, when Islamic scholars synthesized earlier medieval knowledge while integrating religious and spiritual elements. A notable example is *Luqaṭ al-manāfi‘ fī ‘ilm al-ṭibb* (Selections of the Benefits of Medicine) by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Abū al-Faraġ Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200). This work exemplifies the fusion of religious and scientific traditions, focusing on Prophetic medicine and addressing various physical diseases and treatments. The treatise, comprising seventy chapters—although chapters 68 (incomplete), 69, and part of chapter 70 are missing in MS ARA 14 (Fig. 25)—draws extensively on medical teachings attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as those of later Muslim scholars. Situated at the crossroads of faith and empirical inquiry, it illustrates how religiously informed medicine coexisted with and enriched scientific medical developments in the Islamic world. The manuscript copy reflects the seamless



Fig. 24. MS ARA 152, f. 16v: strophic poem (*muwašṣah*) by al-Šayḥ ‘Abd al-Ġanī



Fig. 25. MS ARA 14, f. 2v: end of the list of chapters with references to the relevant pages



Fig. 26. MS ARA 14: back cover with Sarnelli ex-libris, prayers and verses



Fig. 27. MS ARA 14, dv: incantations and magic formulas, including one containing letters of the alphabet and numbers in Hebrew

integration of medicine and religion, extending even to the paratextual sections and the folios preceding and following the main text. These folios are filled with therapeutic advice for treating specific ailments, such as smallpox or bladder inflammation, as well as medical dosages and recipes, magical healing prescriptions, religious notes and invocations, and pious ejaculatory prayers (Fig. 26 and 27). The manuscript is dated and dedicated to Tommaso Sarnelli in 1931.

4. Yemeni Medicine (Rasulid Era)

During the Rasulid period (13th-15th centuries), Yemeni medicine emerged as a distinctive synthesis of indigenous practices, Arab-Islamic medical traditions, and Indo-Persian influences. Reflecting the cosmopolitan intellectual environment of the time, it preserved classical doctrines while adapting them to local contexts and practical needs.

MS ARA 49 contains *Kitāb al-Lum‘a al-kāfiya fī al-adwiya al-šāfiya* (The Book of the Sufficient Sparkle on Healing Medicines) by al-‘Abbās b. ‘Alī b. Rasūl al-Ġassānī (d. 778/1376). This work exemplifies the fusion of medical and hygienic knowledge characteristic of late Arabic medicine, drawing on Empedocles’ elemental theory alongside the humoral doctrines of Hippocrates and Galen. It offers a comprehensive compendium covering anatomy, physiology, semeiology, physiognomy, food and drink hygiene, medical climatology, pharmacology, and pharmacognosy.

The treatise begins with foundational discussions on the elements, humours, constitutions, and temperaments, and proceeds to address both preventive and therapeutic care, with particular attention to life-style factors such as sleep, physical exercise, and sexual health. The central section follows Avicenna’s anatomical scheme, detailing diseases organ by organ, while showing the author’s critical and independent engagement with classical authorities, sometimes diverging from them (Fig. 28). Particularly notable is its pharmacological focus, featuring a glossary of Yemeni synonyms for simple drugs and a section on compound remedies (Fig. 29). Intended as a practical and accessible manual, the work reflects the empirical spirit of its time and the intellectual vitality of the Rasulid court. The manuscript is also densely annotated with magic formulas and *Brillenbuchstaben* (spectacle letters) (Fig. 30).



Fig 28. MS ARA 49 f. 47r:
marginal notes concerning
the care of the child (*fi tadbir
al-tifl*)



Fig. 29. MS ARA 49, f. 20v:
notes next to the chapter on
the explanation of the names
of drugs and difficult terms
arranged according to the
letters of the dictionary (*fasl
fi tafsir asma' al-adwiya wa-
l-alfaz al-muskila 'ala huruf
al-mu'jam*)

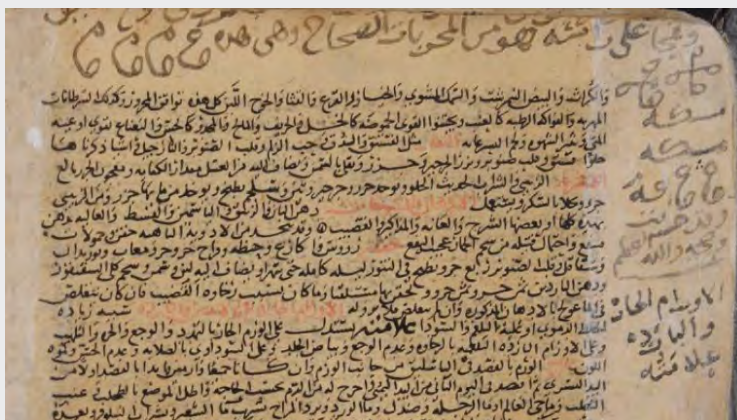


Fig. 30. MS ARA 49, f.
44v: sample of spectacle
letters (*Brillenbuchstaben*)
written on the margin of the
manuscript

5. Arabic Pharmacology

Pharmacology constitutes another central genre within the collection, closely intertwined with medical practice. The pharmacopeial treatises preserved at L'Orientale provide invaluable insights into the preparation of simple and compound remedies in Arabian and Yemeni medical traditions. These texts document the use of medicinal plants, minerals, and animal-derived substances, reflecting a sophisticated empirical knowledge grounded in both inherited scholarship and regional specificity.

Similar to medical literature, the pharmacological works can be categorized into two groups. The first comprises texts from the classical period, including foundational treatises on pharmacopoeia and remedies that circulated widely across the Islamic world and underpin later post-classical compendia and commentaries (See chapter 4.1). The second group consists of post-classical treatises, reflecting the medical and pharmaceutical exchanges within the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in Yemen, and its interactions with the Indo-Persian world (See chapter 4.2). Manuscript copies of both groups in the collection are unique and culturally significant witnesses to these intertwined traditions.

5.1. *Treatises on Simple and Compound Remedies of the Classical Period*

Although the Orientale collection preserves only one treatise from the classical period, it is significant for illustrating the circulation and reception of this literature within the Arabian Peninsula.

The *Minhāğ al-bayān fīmā yasta'mil al-insān* (The Clear Method in What Humans Employ) by Yahyā b. 'Isā Ibn Ġazla (d. 493/1100), also known in the Latin tradition as Buhahylyha Bingezla, d. 493/1100), is a comprehensive pharmacological treatise that covers drugs, potions, and both simple and compound foods. Composed for the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadī bi-amr Allāh (r. 467/1075–487/1094), it features an alphabetical listing of plants and medicinal substances. The work synthesizes Greek and Islamic knowledge, drawing on authorities such as Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen, Oribasius, as well as prominent Arabic scholars including Ḥunayn b. Ishāq and al-Rāzī. It exemplifies the role of Arab medical literature as a crucial vehicle for preserving, adapting, and expanding classical pharmacological knowledge. It was subsequently translated into Latin and, under the title *De Cibis et Medicinis Simplicibus*, circulated in Europe, where it gained prominence in the Western medical tradition as a methodological manual on simple and compound remedies.

The manuscript copy at L'Orientale (MS ARA 17) is acephalous, opening with an alphabetical list of medicinal substances organized by initial letters. Numerous marginal notes throughout attest to active engagement with the text (Fig. 31). The man-

Fig. 31. MS ARA 17, f. 107v: Marginal notes indicating the benefits (*fā'ida*) of specific remedies highlighted in red



uscript concludes with devotional elements, including religious invocations, the names of zodiacal constellations, and a series of medical recipes (Fig. 32).

5.2. Pharmacological Treatises of the Post-Classical Period: *Yemeni Pharmacopoeia*

The collection housed at L'Orientale preserves several manuscripts that exemplify the dynamic interplay between the transmission of classical pharmacopeial works and the emergence of localized traditions, integrating established knowledge with new insights. These texts demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the therapeutic use of natural substances, highlighting the preparation and application of remedies—often derived from locally sourced plants—to address a broad spectrum of diseases. Central to Arabic pharmacology was a strong tradition of empirical observation and experimentation, which fostered a rich legacy of herbal medicine influencing diverse cultures and medical systems.

The *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī al-mufradāt fī al-tibb* (The Authoritative Book on Materia Medica in Medicine) is a key example of Yemeni pharmacological scholarship during the Rasulid period. Authored by al-Malik al-Ashraf 'Umar b. Yūsuf—the third Rasulid ruler (r. 694/1294 and 696/1296) and a distinguished scholar of medicine, astronomy, and genealogy—the work reflects the intellectual and scientific rigor fostered at the Rasulid court.

This alphabetical compendium demonstrates how pharmacological knowledge was systematically organized, localized, and transmitted in Yemen. MS ARA 10 is structured in two parts, covering simple medicaments from *alif* to *yā'* (first *ḡuz*: *alif*–*ṣād*; second: *ḍād*–*yā'*) (Fig. 33). The entries frequently cite foundational works such as Ibn al-Bayṭār's *al-Ḡāmi'* (ع), Ibn Ḡazla's *Minhāḡ* (ج), a treatise by al-Tiflīsī (ف), and al-Zahrāwī's *Abdāl* (ذ), with abbreviations marked in red (as can be seen in Fig. 34). Marginal notes expand upon these sources or introduce supplementary material, including vernacular Yemeni terminology and concluding astrological observations (Fig. 35). In particular, the inclusion of local plant names in dialect provides insight into regional pharmacological practice and reflects an effort to bridge scholarly authority with practical application.

Thus, the *Mu'tamad* functions both as a repository of classical pharmacological knowledge and as a distinctly Yemeni adaptation, shaped by the linguistic, botanical, and medical particularities of the region. It stands as a testament to the Rasulid commitment to fostering scientific inquiry through royal patronage and the systematic compilation of medical and pharmacological knowledge.



Fig. 32. MS ARA 17, f. 183r: final notes, recipes, zodiac



Fig. 33. MS ARA 10, f. 90v: decorated heading (*sarlawh*) that introduces the second part (*ḡuz*) of the compendium



Fig. 34. MS ARA 10, f. 164r: An enlarged letter marks the beginning of the section listing medicines that begin with the letter *wāw*. The three letters in red indicate the sources from which the information was obtained



Fig. 35. MS ARA 10, f. 169v: some final astrological notes

Another particularly noteworthy manuscript (MS ARA 2) completed in 1114/1702 is *Kitāb [mağma] al-ḥulāṣa fī al-ṭibb* (The Book of the Compendium of Summary in Medicine) by *al-faqīr al-sayyid* Fathī al-Muḥarriz (?) al-adīb. This is a compendium pharmacology structured into four *maqālāt* (treatises) and twenty-five chapters which meticulously records its intellectual sources—figures such as Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Bayṭār (d. 646/1248), Ibn ʿaṣla (d. 493/1100), Abū al-Munā b. al-ʿAṭṭār al-Isrāʾīlī (fl. 13 cent.), Ṭābit b. Qurra (d. 288/901), al-Rāzī (d. 313/925), Ibn Tilmīdī (d. 560/1165), Ishāq b. Ḥunayn (d. 298/910)—highlighting the intertextual nature of Arabic medical writing.

Some drawings—depicting a scorpion and a flower-patterned serpent—appear alongside the text and are executed by the same hand as the main script. These illustrations are particularly significant, as they reflect the copyist's active engagement with the material and contribute to the manuscript's didactic and visual coherence (Figs. 36, 37, 38). In addition to its core pharmacological content, the manuscript contains later additions, including a medical *risāla* of unknown title and author (ff. 135r–136r), as well as various recipes, religious admonitions, and further medicinal formulations (Fig. 39). Its uniqueness, coupled with its apparent absence from known manuscript catalogues, enhances its historical and scholarly significance.



Fig. 36. MS ARA 2, f. 12v: reference to a scorpion accompanied by a drawing



Fig. 37. MS ARA 2, f. 15v: reference to snakes accompanied by a drawing

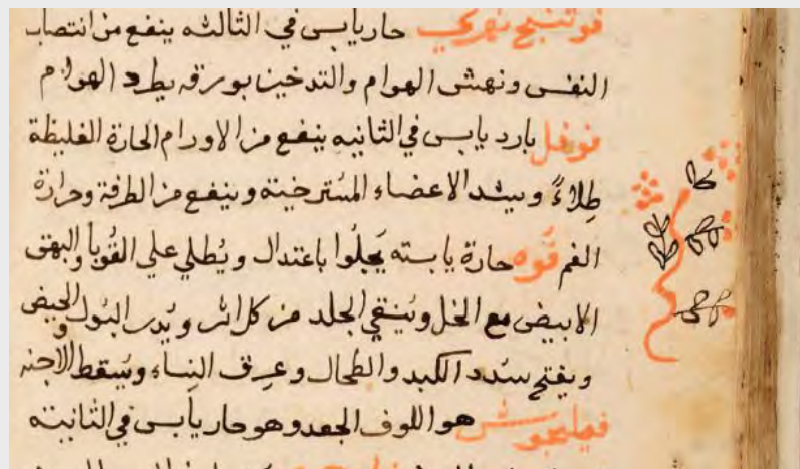


Fig. 38. MS ARA 2, f. 37v: drawing of a plant illustrating the species discussed in the text



Fig. 39. MS ARA 2, f. 138r: recipes and final notes

5.3. *Treatises of the Post-Classical Period: Yemeni Pharmacology and the Indo-Persian Network*

During the Rasulid period, the Arabian Peninsula—and Yemen in particular—functioned as a vital crossroads for medical knowledge, facilitating the transmission and adaptation of Indo-Persian traditions within the broader Arab/Arabic-Islamic medical framework. This dynamic cultural exchange is reflected in pharmacological treatises and translated texts that circulated in Yemen during and after this period, revealing a continued engagement with Persian and Indian milieus.

MS ARA 8 represents a crucial point of transmission within the broader Indo-Persian pharmacological network that significantly shaped medical traditions in the Islamic world, particularly in Yemen. The manuscript contains a Persian pharmacological treatise, the *Qarābādīn* (Formulary) by Muẓaffar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Šifāʾī al-Kāšānī (d. 963/1555-56), a physician and man of letters. Unlike the better-known *Aqrābādīn* of Ibn al-Tilmīd—structured in 25 chapters—this work is organized alphabetically by compound medicaments (*murakkabāt*). Its significance is further underscored by its Latin translation and publication in Paris in 1681 under the title *Pharmacopoea Persica*, attesting to its global reach and enduring relevance.

Copied in 1100/1689 by Muḥammad Muʾmin al-Māzandarānī, the manuscript was later collated in 1130/1718 on behalf of Muḥsin, son of the Zaydī Imam Muḥammad al-Muʾayyad II (reg. 1087/1676–1092/1681), thus embedding the work within the Zaydī scholarly milieu of Yemen. Following the *Qarābādīn*, the manuscript includes an untitled *risāla* (ff. 78v-86v) on erysipelas, syphilis, and smallpox, further emphasizing its practical and medical value.

The *Qarābādīn* exemplifies the technical precision and utilitarian nature of Persian pharmacology. It includes a wide range of compound remedies (powders, syrups, tablets, and ointments) prescribed for specific ailments. The copyist employed red and brown inks to highlight key terms, occasionally marking the end of lines with interlinear notations or placing supplementary information in the margins (Fig. 40).

The manuscript also reveals signs of practical use: numerous marginal annotations, added recipes, and therapeutic notes by later owners indicate that it functioned as a dynamic reference, adapted over time in response to medical practice. Additional materials are included at the end of the codex, such as medical recipes, a *waṣīyya* (ethical will) to Luqmān dated 1319/1901, notes on Friday prayer obligations (*ḥaḍḥ*), and other therapeutic content (Fig. 41).

As further evidenced by a note most probably in Gujarati on the back cover (Fig. 42), this manuscript serves as a striking example of how Indo-Persian pharmacological knowledge was received, adapted, and recontextualized within the Yemeni medical tradition, highlighting the layered processes of textual transmission in the Islamic world.



Fig. 40. MS ARA 8, f. 40r:
In several instances, the final word of a line is written above the end of the line, a common scribal practice used to save space or maintain visual alignment



Fig. 41. MS ARA 8, f. 88v: recipes and various medical and pharmaceutical notes

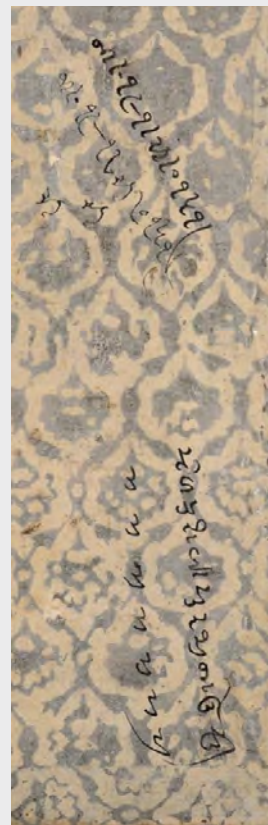


Fig. 42. MS ARA 8: a note in Gujarati on the back cover

Another significant example is *Tuhfat al-mu'minīn* (The Gift of the Believers, Ms ARA 7), a Persian pharmacological treatise on simple and composite medicines authored in 1669 by al-Tanakābunī (var. al-Tunikābunī) and dedicated to the Safavid ruler Sulaymān I (r. 1077/1666–1105/1694). The work was later translated into Arabic by the Yemeni scholar al-Širwānī in Medina in 1163/1750, in collaboration with the dervish Ḥikmat Allāh and the shaykh Ibrāhīm Fayḍ Allāh. This bilingual transmission highlights both the widespread influence of Persian medical literature and Yemen's scholarly commitment to making such works accessible in Arabic.

Drawing on earlier Islamic pharmacological sources and enriched with familial knowledge, the *Tuhfat al-mu'minīn* quickly became a foundational text in Islamic medicine, notable for its clarity, breadth, and practical utility. It was widely translated and circulated across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The original treatise is structured into eight chapters covering medicinal substances, food-based therapies, poisons, pharmaceutical measurements, drug preparation, compound formulations, and therapeutic methods (Fig. 46 and 47). The extant manuscript is divided into five *taṣḥīṣ* (diagnostic sections) and two *qism* (sections) on *dustūrāt* (prescriptions), with remedy names highlighted in red ink. The first part is alphabetically organized and includes transliterations and Arabic translations of pharmacological terms, along with their equivalents in Persian, Turkish, Greek, and Syriac (Fig. 45).

The manuscript features numerous deletions, marginal annotations, and additions by both the original copyist and later owners (Fig. 44). The initial and fi-



Fig. 46. MS ARA 8 f. 193v: instructions for preparing a beverage with a kind of illustration shown alongside



Fig. 47. MS ARA 8 f. 258r: coded language formulas for specific substances and properties

nal folios are especially rich in supplementary notes, listing medicinal substances, recipes, therapeutic advice, and an alphabetically arranged inventory of drugs. A further list of simple remedies appears at the end of the work, although it seems to begin again in the opening folios (Fig. 43). Several ownership notes and dates are also recorded at the beginning and end of the manuscript.

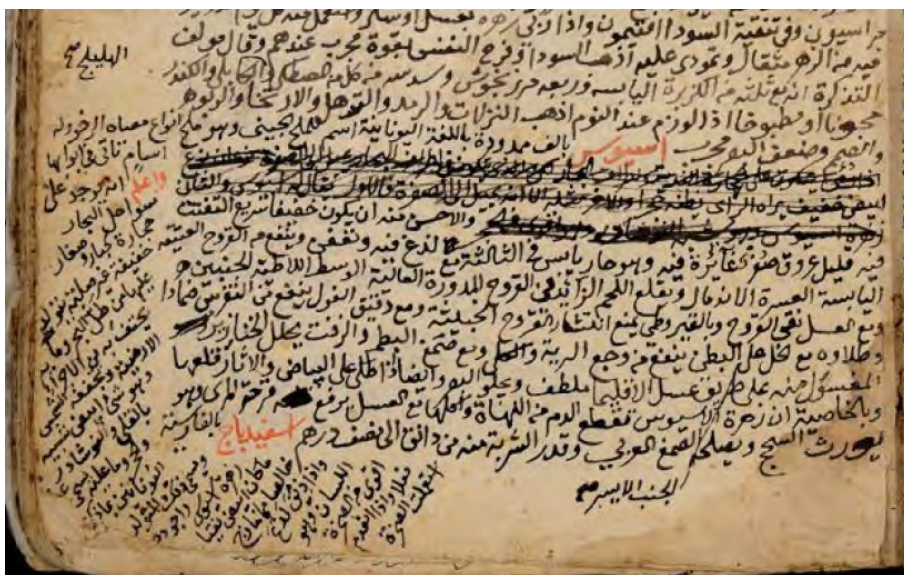


Fig. 44. MS ARA 7, f. 19r: deletions, marginal annotations, and additions made by the copyist himself, as well as, in some instances, by subsequent owners



Fig. 45. MS ARA 7, f. 91v: example of a variety of terms listed for remedies in various languages



Fig. 43. MS ARA 7, f. br: end of the list of simple medicines described in the work followed by recipes and magic formulas

6. Other Sciences: Agriculture

Among the manuscripts acquired by Sarnelli and now preserved in his collection is an agricultural treatise from Yemen (MS ARA 21), as indicated by his ex-libris. This anonymous agricultural treatise, whose title, author, and date of transcription remain unknown, examines the seasons according to the calculations of both farmers and astronomers. It addresses a range of agricultural topics, including seasonal winds, sowing, grafting techniques, fertilization, irrigation, pruning, and related practices. The work opens with a *basmala* and states that what follows is an abridgment of the *Kitāb al-Filāḥa al-Rūmiyya* (Book of Roman Agriculture) by Qusṭun (i.e., Qusṭus), generally identified with Cassian the Elder (fl. 6th–7th century), author of the *Geoponica*. This work was translated into Arabic by Sirḡīs b. Hilayya al-Rūmī (active ca. 9th–10th century). Other agricultural texts are also cited, including the *Filāḥa al-Nabāṭiyya* (Book of Nabataean Agriculture) by Abū Bakr b. Waḥṣiyya (fl. 9th–10th century).

The manuscript copy preserved at L'Orientale is a carefully organized copy, in which chapter headings and the names of certain cited authorities are rubricated in red ink. The few marginal notes consist of annotations or additions made both by the copyist's own hand (Fig. 48) and by a secondary hand, which appears primarily to have copied significant phrases or expressions into the margins (Fig. 49).

Fig. 48. MS ARA 21, f. 10r:
notes in the margins by the
copyist

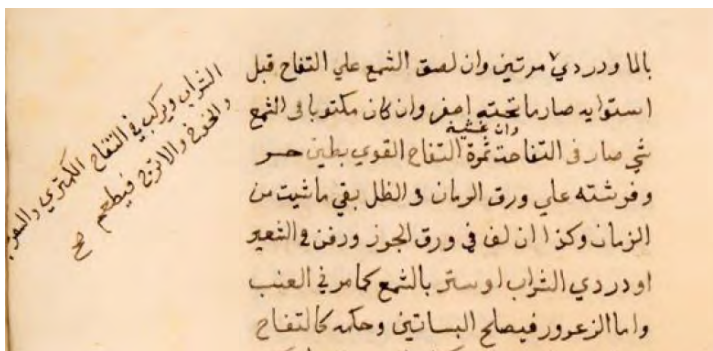
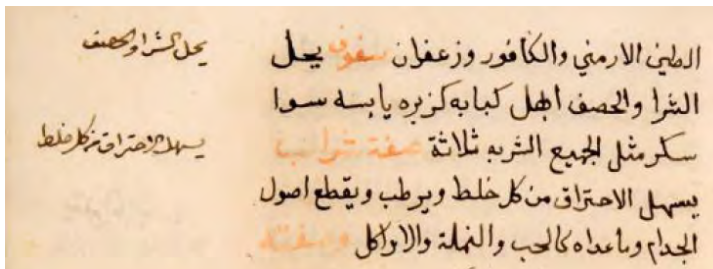


Fig. 49. MS ARA 21, f. 44r:
notes in the margins by a
second hand



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Chapter 4

Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine* in the Sarnelli Collection: A Journey of a Medical Text from the Islamic World to Renaissance Rome—and Back

LUCA BERARDI

The printing press using Arabic script was introduced in the Ottoman Empire only in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the printed publications gained popularity among Islamic audiences only in the centuries that followed. Until then, the transmission of the written word in Islamic lands occurred almost exclusively through manuscripts, thanks to the painstaking work of countless copyists, both professional and amateur. Notwithstanding, it was not uncommon for printed texts published outside the Islamic world to find their way into private libraries—for instance that of a Yemeni physician—where they stood alongside the medical manuscripts described in this catalogue.

Such is the case of a fortuitous discovery made by the doctor and Orientalist Tommaso Sarnelli during his mission in Yemen in the early 1930s (see Chapter 2 by Francesca Bellino in this volume). He described this episode in his diary, recalling it as “the dearest memory” of his experience in South Arabia:

One day, while roaming the alleys of the old town of Sanaa, I saw a voluminous book under the arm of a *ṭabīb* (i.e. physician)—a book that made my Italian heart leap with joy. It was a copy of the *Qānūn fī al-ṭibb*, the “Canon of Medicine”, by Avicenna, printed in Arabic by the Medici Oriental Press in Rome in 1593. ... The book was greasy and worn-out, its corners warped, still impregnated with the scent of spices and drugs, its binding torn and frayed ... It was a tool of the trade for the *ṭabīb* of Sanaa, still bearing the marks of constant consultation throughout its pages ... (Sarnelli 1943, 418-420)

The ongoing use of this sixteenth-century printed edition well into the twentieth century is further documented by a photograph showing Sarnelli himself reading Avicenna's work “alongside physicians and medical practitioners of of Sanaa” (Sarnelli 1934, 36) (Fig. 1). Sarnelli managed to purchase that book, which, in his opinion, vividly attested to both the enduring relevance of the Islamic medical tradition and the pivotal role of the Italian Renaissance in its transmission. In this way, the copy of Avicenna's *Canon* used by the Yemeni physician eventually became part of his book collection, now housed in the library of L'Orientale.



Fig. 1. Tommaso Sarnelli and Yemeni physicians reading the *al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* in Sanaa. The picture is in Sarnelli (1934)

1. The *al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* of Ibn Sīnā/*Canon of Medicine* of Avicenna between East and West

The *al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* (Canon of Medicine) was composed by Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), known in Europe as Avicenna, a philosopher, physician and polymath, born in Afshana in present day's Uzbekistan. The work can be regarded as the most authoritative product of the movement of Islamic rediscovery and revival of the ancient Greek medical tradition, based on the authorities of Galen and Hippocrates. Indeed, the *Canon* is a monumental medical encyclopaedia, which integrates and reinterprets Galenic medicine within the framework of Islamic scientific knowledge. It is structured in five books, each systematically addressing a major domain of medical science: general principles, practical remedies, pathology and diseases, symptoms and diagnostics, and an extensive pharmacopoeia of compound drugs (Musallam 1987). Its clear, hierarchical organization reflects Ibn Sīnā's strong pedagogical sensibility (Vercellin 1991). Thanks to these qualities, the *Canon* remained the most authoritative and influential reference work for the study and practice of medicine for several centuries, not only across the Islamic world, but also throughout medieval and early modern Europe.

From the eleventh century onward, European scholars began translating Arabic books in an effort to recover Greek works that had been lost in the West. In this context, Gerard of Cremona (ca. 1114-1187), a leading figure of the Toledo School of Translators, translated the *Canon* into Latin. Although this version was flawed by textual inaccuracies, it gained wide recognition and became the primary medium through which Avicenna's work was transmitted to medieval Christianity (Siraisi 1987, 19-40; Veit 2006). With the introduction of the printing press, an impressive number of Latin editions of Avicenna's *Canon* were published across Europe (Siraisi 1987, 361-366). In particular, Andrea Alpago (c. 1450-1521), a Venetian physician active in Damascus, prepared a revised and philologically refined edition of Gerard of Cremona's translation. Alpago's version, first published posthumously in Venice in 1527, became the standard for subsequent Latin editions of the *Canon* that appeared in Europe in the following centuries. It was only at the end of the sixteenth century that the first printed edition of the Arabic text of Avicenna's medical encyclopaedia appeared. Published by the Medici Oriental Press in Rome in 1593, this state-of-the-art work was largely the result of the tireless efforts of Giovanni Battista Raimondi, who directed the press for thirty years.

2. The Medici Oriental Press and Giovanni Battista Raimondi's Editorial Project

The Medici Oriental Press (*Typographia Medicea*) was established in Rome in 1584, by Cardinal Fernando de' Medici (1549-1609). The driving force behind this ambitious cultural project was Giovanni Battista Raimondi (ca. 1536-1614), a prominent Orientalist and mathematician. A passionate advocate for Arabic learning, Raimondi's scholarly interests spanned a wide range of scientific disciplines, from botany to astronomy. The press was conceived as a commercial enterprise, whose broader cultural and religious aim was, however, the dissemination of printed texts in the Levant, in order to promote the spread of the Catholic faith among Eastern Christian and Muslim communities (Borbone 2012, 21-22). In authorizing the establishment of the Oriental Press, Pope Gregory XIII

ordered the printing of all available Arabic books on permissible human sciences which had no religious content in order to introduce the art of printing to the Mahomedan community so that by the same means knowledge of the Mahomedans' errors and of the truth of the Christian faith could gradually get through to them (quoted in Jones 1994, 97)

To this end, Raimondi's project involved not only the publication of Christian Arabic texts but also included high-quality editions of scientific works by Muslim scholars, published in their original languages.

In preparation for the publications, Raimondi commissioned skilled travelers—such as the brothers Giovanni Battista Vecchietti (1552-1619) and Girolamo Vecchietti (1557-ca. 1640)—to acquire a large collection of valuable Oriental manuscripts from the Levant. Particular attention was recommended for texts that might preserve traces of lost Greek works (Farina 2012, 40-50, 60-65; Richard 1980). Beyond Raimondi’s meticulous concern for the philological accuracy of the editions, the books produced by the Medici Oriental Press also stood out for their exceptional aesthetic quality. The design of the Arabic type was entrusted to the renowned French type-cutter Robert Granjon (d. 1513- 1590), while Raimondi himself took great care in providing high-quality calligraphic models. As a result, the publications of the Medici Oriental Press established a typographic standard for Arabic script whose elegance remained unmatched for centuries.

The books enjoyed rather limited circulation in Europe, where the audience of Arabic readers was quite small. In particular, the Medicean Arabic edition of the *Canon* was read in Northern Europe by several scholar in conjunction with the more common Latin editions of the work (Jones 1994, 95-96). However, the books, especially the ones with scientific content, such as the *Canon*, were primarily intended for the Eastern market. From the outset, Raimondi instructed his envoys in the Levant to conduct “market surveys” to assess the potential receptivity of Muslim audience toward printed books (Farina 2012, 48-49). To make the books more appealing to Muslim readers, who were accustomed exclusively to handwritten texts, and disguise their European provenience, the monolingual publications of the Medici Press carefully imitated the external features—calligraphic style, ruling, headings, triangular-shaped colophons, and pagination—of Arabic manuscripts. In the case of the Medicean *Canon*, the only element that betrayed its Italian origin was a small colophon at the end of the index (Fig. 2).

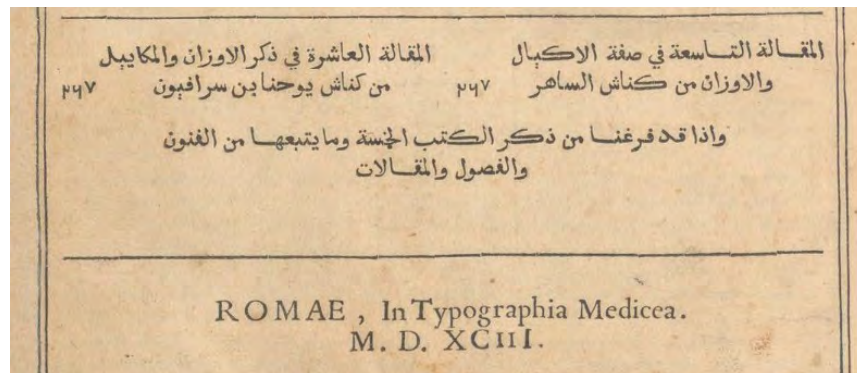


Fig. 2. RARI ARA XVIII
A 3, f. 34r: Detail from
al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb

On several occasions during the 1590s, Giovanni Battista Raimondi sent books from the Medici Oriental Press—including copies of Avicenna's *Canon*—to North Africa, the Middle East and Persia, with the assistance of Catholic priests and Carmelite friars (Jones 1987, 99-100). In 1619, the Italian traveller Pietro Della Valle (1586-1659), reported that, while staying in Isfahan, the capital of Iran, local dis-calced Carmelite friars presented Shah 'Abbās (1571-1629), the Safavid ruler, with Arabic books printed by Raimondi in Rome. According to Della Valle, the shah was so impressed by the books, that he expressed the intention to introduce printing technology in his country (Della Valle 1843, 737-738).

However, events unfolded differently. The famous French Orientalist Antoine Galland (1646-1715) reported having found a beautiful copy of the Medicean edition of Avicenna's *Canon* in a bookseller's shop in Istanbul. He lamented that, despite the low selling price, the book sadly lay unnoticed, because Muslim readers did not appreciate printed texts (Borboni 2012, 19-20). Indeed, the Medici Oriental Press ultimately proved to be an unsuccessful commercial venture. The high editorial and typographical quality of its publication did not guarantee a favourable reception in either Western and Eastern markets, and a substantial portion of the printed volumes remained unsold. In the case of Avicenna's *Canon* nearly half of the 1,750 printed copies failed to find buyers (Fani 2012a, 75).

3. The *Kitāb al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* of the Sarnelli Collection at L'Orientale

The *Kitāb al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* that Sarnelli found in Sanaa was just one of those books that had made their way from Rome to the Islamic lands. As he noted in his diary, it bore evident signs of continual use. Throughout its pages there are marginal notes in Arabic written by various readers in different hands (Fani 2012b) (Fig. 3). The oldest is dated to Šawwāl 1098/1687, and a more recent one to 17 Ša'bān 1211/15 February 1797. The book was restored, with the addition of a recycled binding. This cover, already old and torn when was bound to the *Qānūn*, evidently came from a less voluminous book. The boards were slightly smaller than the pages of the Medicean edition, and both the spine and the fore-edge flap were integrated with leather inserts to accommodate the thicker text block of the new volume. On the old leather doublure, hidden beneath a piece of printed paper, an anonymous hand had penned a list of the Ottoman sultans along with their respective accession dates, up to Muṣṭafā II (r. 1695-1703) (Fig. 4). These clues suggest that the book likely first arrived in an Arab province of the Ottoman empire, probably Egypt or Siria, where it underwent rebinding. Only later, in the eighteenth century

or afterward, it reached Yemen, where it eventually became part of the library of the *ṭabīb* encountered by Sarnelli.

In brief, this book plastically evokes the fluid circulation of medical knowledge between West and East, and vice versa, that spanned centuries. This intellectual round-trip began with the rediscovery of Greek medical tradition within the Persianate Islamic world, and continued with the Renaissance pursuit of Islamic scientific sources which animated intellectual circles in Rome. Arabic books printed in Europe were then adopted as practical tools by anonymous Muslim physicians, eventually returning to Italy due to the interest for “indigenous medicine” during the colonial period.



Fig. 3. RARI ARA XVIII A 3, f. 1a: ownership notes, partially deleted, on the pages of Ibn Sina's *Qanun*



Fig. 4. RARI ARA XVIII A 3: doublure (detail)

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Chapter 5

Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale

GIOVANNI MARIA MARTINI

1. A small but Representative Sample of Islamicate Occult Literature

The collection L'Orientale holds only three Arabic manuscripts that can be classified to some extent as “magical”. Two of these manuscripts are part of the Sarnelli Collection (MSS ARA 139 and ARA 244), while a third manuscript is of Egyptian production and was acquired in Cairo in 1971 (MS ARA 72). Yet despite their small number, this three codices form both textually and materially (the two aspects of the manuscript that very often show close relations) a representative corpus of many of the general trends of magical—and more generally occult—literature in the Islamic world.

The first above all concerns the very problem of defining, thus classifying and cataloging, this genre of literature. Namely, can we properly speak of “magical” literature? And if so, in what sense? There is at least one key theoretical aspect underlying this question. It concerns the different ways in which Islamicate intellectual history has conceived (and continues to conceive) the idea of “magic”. Simplifying as much as possible, if the general sense usually given to the term “magic” today is “an art capable of determining the course of events by resorting to the use of unseen forces”, this definition appears too broad in Islamic terms. Or rather, according to classifications of sciences developed in the Islamic world, this broad definition encompasses disciplines and practices that are often perceived as diametrically opposed to each other. Indeed, on the one hand we find practices considered licit (*ḥalāl*) or even meritorious, essentially based on prayers, and Qurʾānic passages, classified among the “religious sciences” (*al-ʿulūm al-ṣarʿiyya*); a kind of Qurʾānic theurgy. On the other we find practices deemed illicit (*ḥarām*), aberrant, which were brought under the concept of *siḥr*, magic/sorcery; almost always these were classified among the “natural sciences” (*al-ʿulūm al-ṭabīʿiyya*) (Martini 2020).

This theoretical subdivision between licit and illicit practices is sometimes preserved in literature, but very often the opposite also happens, that is, a kind of coexistence, or even fusion, of different materials. This phenomenon, which is very often found in texts and material culture related to the occult sciences in the Islamic world, is also what we notice on many occasions in the magical Arabic

manuscripts of L'Orientale. What emerges in these cases, in essence, is the hybrid character of this literature, which when looked at from a certain angle turns out to be eminently magical, while from another perspective it continually trespasses into Islamic religious literature.

These two vast and important domains, religion, and magic, are then joined by yet a third. This is medicine, insofar as a large part of the recipes, formulas, talismans, contained in these texts are intended for prophylactic, protective, and healing purposes. Reason why according to a still different point of view these texts also fall under medical literature. It is no coincidence, in fact, that two of the three “magical” Arabic manuscripts held by L'Orientale are part of Sarnelli's collection. They were acquired in Yemen and were of interest to Sarnelli insofar as they were used, along with more properly medical texts, in what was then called “indigenous medicine”.

Another significant aspect of this small body of texts is that it represents quite well the spread and penetration of occult practices in all spheres of society, among the common people as well as the political and intellectual elite, which is reflected in the presence and coexistence of a literature of high origin, cultured, refined, with a, so to speak, “low”, popular one. This indeed seems to be a trend in occult literature that appears to be valid for all historical and cultural contexts. After all, it is perhaps no exaggeration to say that belief in certain ideas and practices is one of the distinguishing features of the pre-modern world, and therefore it is quite natural that it united all social and intellectual strata.

2. Connecting Textual Content and Codicological Aspects: Mutual Reflections between the “Soul” and the “Body” of a Manuscript

In the case of the three manuscripts under consideration, their textual content and context of production are relatively well reflected in the codicological and material aspects. Thus, we have MS ARA 72, about whose contents we know if not quite everything, a great deal; namely, the title, the author, the date of copying and the date of composition of the original, and which stands as a homogeneous manuscript, with margins free of glosses, copied in a fair calligraphy by a single copyist, who signs himself in the colophon. It is a good example of Islamicate magical-occult literature of scholarly production. The author of the work is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454), a relatively well-known intellectual, who was born in Antioch, in Ottoman context, but lived at length in the Mamluk territories, especially Cairo. Direct contacts

with Sultan Murad II (r. 1421-1444, 1446-1451) are speculated, but beyond this he is a fairly well-known figure because of the great influence of his writings in the milieu of the Ottoman court (Gardiner 2017).

MS ARA 72 is a manuscript that fits into a story and tells a story; that is situated in an intellectual discourse that can be well located and contextualized. The work it contains is a commentary by al-Biṣṭāmī on a work by perhaps the best-known author of Islamic occult literature, Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225). The original work of al-Būnī is titled *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī al-awrād al-rabbāniyya* (The Luminous Ray Regarding the Dominical Litanies); al-Biṣṭāmī's commentary, according to the title given in the present witness, is named *Kaṣf al-asrār al-rabbāniyya fī šarḥ al-lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* (The Unveiling of Dominical Secrets through the Commentary of The Luminous Ray). From other sources we know that while in Cairo al-Biṣṭāmī studied al-Būnī's *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* with a specific person: an intellectual belonging to a distinguished scholarly household whose name was ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ġamāʿa (d. 819/1416–1417) (Gardiner 2012, 115–116; Gardiner 2017, 22). Moreover, by matching the records in the colophon of MS ARA 72 with those of another manuscript witness of the same work, we learn information of primary importance about it, namely the place and date of composition: al-Biṣṭāmī completed his commentary in Green Island (*Ġazīrat al-Ḥaḍrāʾ*), a locality near Alexandria, on 17 Ṣafar 822, that is, 15 March 1419 (for more details see the entry on MS ARA 72 below in this catalogue). Having this information in mind, it is remarkable to note that also the present manuscript is Egyptian, copied in 1028/1619.

This relative wealth of information allows us to appreciate the historical and cultural witnessing function that the object in our hands unfolds by connecting people, places, and times far apart, illustrating the complexity and breadth of boundaries of the intellectual history of the Islamic world. There is a dialectic, an ongoing dialogue, back and forth in time, between our seventeenth-century copy and the fifteenth-century archetype of al-Biṣṭāmī's commentary; just as there is between al-Biṣṭāmī's fifteenth-century commentary and al-Būnī's thirteenth-century work. It is precisely in such a dialectic that our witness, MS ARA 72, contributes information about the genesis of the archetype (place and date of composition) while simultaneously the story of the archetype's genesis confers meaning on our later copy. Also, we have al-Būnī, a North African author from the early thirteenth century, who writes a work. We have al-Biṣṭāmī, an Anatolian, from the first half of the fifteenth

century, who two hundred years later decided to study this work in Cairo with an intellectual, ‘Izz al-Dīn Ibn Ġamā’a, who boasted of his own unbroken oral transmission of that very work, passed down through generations, from al-Būnī himself. Al-Biṣṭāmī, after studying al-Būnī’s work with Ibn Ġamā’a, decided to write a commentary on it, no longer in Cairo, but still in Egypt, near Alexandria. Finally, we have a reader and copyist, also an Egyptian, who in the early seventeenth century—another two hundred years have passed—copied that commentary. These individuals are the protagonists in a narrative of the continuity of interest in the same work—and in the topics treated in it, of course—over a space-time span of five centuries ranging from the Maghreb to Anatolia and which, in this specific case, has Mamluk Cairo and Egypt as its pivot, both from the point of view of intellectual history and in terms of chronological and geographical coordinates.

Compared to MS ARA 72, the two manuscripts obtained by Sarnelli in Yemen, MS ARA 139 and MS ARA 244, turn out to be very different both codicologically and in terms of content. They appear as miscellanies, multi-text composite manuscripts, in which most of the works contained are fragmentary, many acephalous, others incomplete, almost all untitled, whose authors are unknown or pseudepigraphs. They have no noble authorship, so to speak; and they have uncertain origin. Copied by different hands, very often written in haste, with careless handwriting, as if they were personal notes, sort of notebooks. The margins are often thickly filled with glosses, comments. They convey the impression of being an extemporaneous production, texts assembled in the course of time, to meet the needs of the moment. But at the same time, unlike the Egyptian manuscript of al-Biṣṭāmī’s commentary, they bear on themselves tangible traces of protracted use over time, the signs of having been consulted and used on several occasions, of having “served” someone and something, until the fateful moment when they came into the possession of Tommaso Sarnelli.

There is also another aspect that distinguishes Sarnelli’s two Yemenite manuscripts from the Egyptian MS ARA 72, that is, their dating. MS ARA 244 unfortunately bears no dates and remains of uncertain dating, although all the heterogeneous sections of which it is composed appear late anyway. On the other hand, MS ARA 139, despite the many incomplete works it hands down, bears three dates. Two colophons are dated 1343/1925 (f. 95r) and 1344/1925–1926 (f. 107v), respectively. There is also a donation note, in which Sarnelli recalls that the codex was presented to him in 1931 (MS ARA 139, f. 1r). In short, these

Yemenite codices—no doubt at least MS ARA 139—bring us into the twentieth century, into modernity. They mend time, stitching together the cuts made by the surgeons of history: medieval, pre-modern, modern; they ferry into the near past ideas, practices, formulas, and symbols formed and rooted in the remote, sometimes very remote past. They bear direct witness to the beliefs and practices of Yemen in the first half of the twentieth century, while foreshadowing a possibility that is as realistic as it is, in some ways, disorienting: the survival of those very beliefs and practices in the contemporary.

They also tell us something, implicitly, about the formation of the Sarnelli Collection. The donation note in the exergue to MS ARA 139 confirms relevant information about the eminent position Sarnelli held during his Yemeni sojourns. Indeed, the text, written in pencil in Italian, states that it is a “Gift of Seif el Islam Ali, son of the Imam, Sanaa, 14/9/1931-9” (ARA 139, f. 1r).

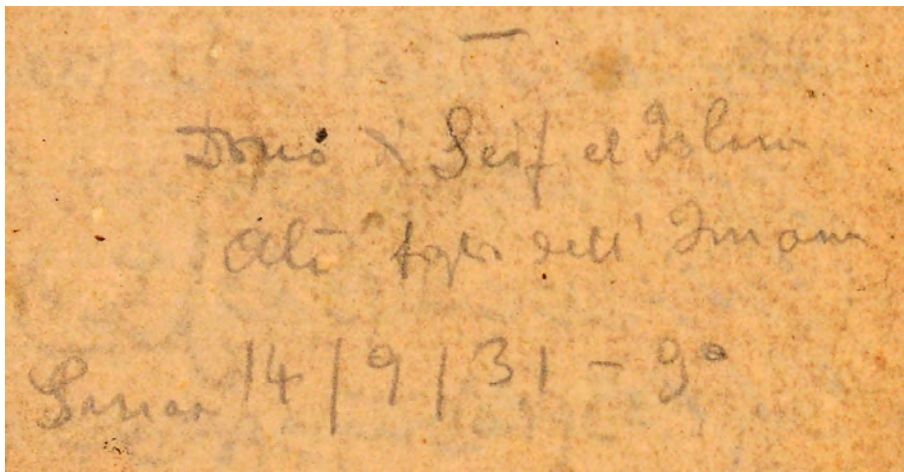


Fig. 1. MS ARA 139, f. 1r. Donation note (detail)

It seems in all evidence a reference to ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā, a lesser-known son among the very many of the renowned Imam (and ruler) of Yemen Yaḥyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (reg. 1918–48). A princely present that matches with other valuable manuscripts, either for provenance or for rarity, that are part of the corpus formed by the Italian physician, and that contribute historical and cultural value to the Sarnelli Collection (see Chapter 2, especially sections 3 and 5; for more details see also Chapter 3 in this volume).

3. A Short Survey of Distinctive Content Elements of Islamicate Occult Literature Featured in the Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale

In the last part of this brief introduction, I considered that it would be useful to present a brief survey of the elements that recur most often in these manuscripts, believing that this would be a simple and straightforward way to make them better understood and to make them somewhat more accessible and less alienating than they would be without clarifying the main particularities of their contents. As mentioned at the beginning, these elements are part of that repertoire which, declined in ever new and different ways, is attested in almost all magical literature and, more generally, in all objects and material culture traceable to the sphere of occult sciences, such as amulets, talismans, and others, in the Islamic context. As an example, if we want to make a reference to one of the most valuable collections at L'Orientale (which, due to its own characteristics, naturally dialogues with the medico-magical manuscripts) we will say that much of this repertoire is also found engraved on the magic bowls of the Aron Collection (on which see Giunta 2018; and Bernardini and Giunta 2025).

3.1. *Qur'ān and Divine Names*

The first of these elements, which is ubiquitous and has been discussed in numerous venues, including by the present author, and on which I will not dwell here, is the use of Qur'ānic texts, including divine names (Donaldson 1937; Hamès 2007; Martin III 2011; Al-Saleh 2014; Martini 2020; and the bibliography cited therein). As an example of the pervasive presence of this truly constitutive element of occult practices in the Islamic context (both those considered licit or illicit, both those considered part of the religion or harmful magic) the contents of many of the figures illustrated below will hopefully suffice.

3.2. *Magic Squares*

Another remarkably popular component are the so-called Magic squares and Latin squares, which in Arabic are termed *awfāq* (sing. *wafq* or *wifq*) (Sesiano 1996; Sesiano 2002; Savage-Smith 2023). Of very ancient origin, they are found used in various contexts long before the advent of Islam. Among the oldest documented attestations are those in Chinese culture. The simplest and most widespread of all is a 3×3 square. It, in the Islamic context, eventually reaches a proper name, *Budūḥ*, which gives us the measure of the importance and effectiveness ascribed to

it (Macdonald 2004). This name is derived from the four letters in the corners of the square in its alphabetical version, in which the numbers are replaced with the corresponding Arabic letters.

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

ب	ط	هـ
ز	هـ	ج
و	أ	ح

Fig. 2. 3×3 magic square named Budūḥ in its numerical (left) and alphabetical (right) versions

٤	٩	٢
٣	٥	٧
٨	١	٦

ب	ط	هـ
ز	هـ	ج
و	أ	ح

Fig. 3. MS ARA 72, ff. 26r and 32v (details): 3×3 magic square named Budūḥ in its numerical (left) and alphabetical (right) versions

٤	٩	٢
٣	٥	٧
٨	١	٦

٤	٩	٢
٣	٥	٧
٨	١	٦

Fig. 4. MS ARA 139, ff. 4v (left) and 326r (right): two examples of 3×3 magic square named Budūḥ in its numerical version

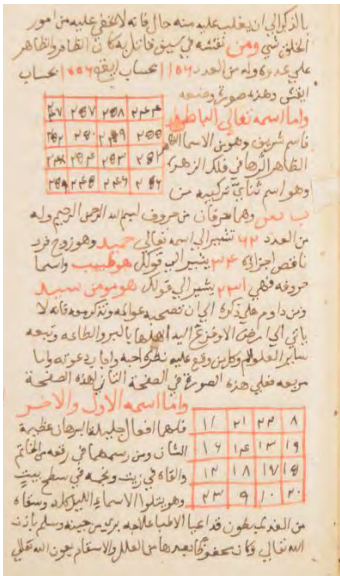


Fig. 5. MS ARA 72, ff. 86v-87r: general view of two pages containing five *aufaq*, four numerical and one alphanumeric, elaborated from the numerical values of the letters of some divine names

3.3. The Seven Signs

Another major element of the Islamic occult repertoire is a sequence of seven symbols that some authors believe indicates the “supreme name of God” (Doutt 1909, 155–157; Winkler 1930, 55–119). Numerous variants are attested in the primary literature in the form of the individual signs composing the sequence and, in some cases, in the order of their arrangement (Winkler 1930, 114–116), and the instability of this combination of symbols also surfaces from the many variants recorded in MSS ARA 139 and 244. No matter what their meaning is, it is important to point out that, in the same way as magic squares, these seven signs are pervasive in Islamic occult imagery, just as they are also widely attested in the magical manuscripts of the Sarnelli Collection.



Fig. 6. One of the main versions of the Seven Signs (Winkler 1930, 115)

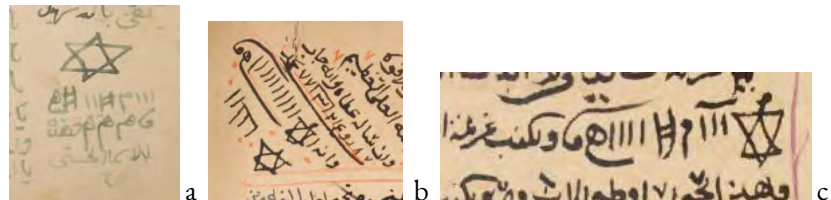


Fig. 7. a-c MS ARA 139, ff. 19v, 23v, and 30r (from left to right): samples of the Seven Signs in the margins and in the body of the text

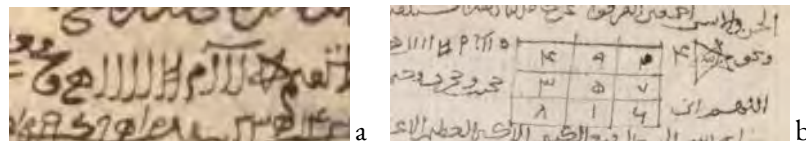


Fig. 8. a-c MS ARA 244, ff. 4v, 21r, and 45v (from left to right): samples of the Seven Signs in the body of the text



Fig. 9. MS ARA 139, f. 38r:
repeated use of the Seven
Signs on a single page

3.4. The Seal of Solomon

Another element that is rarely missing in this kind of literature is the so-called Solomon's seal, which in this context may take the form of a five- or six-pointed star (pentagram or hexagram) (Doutté 1909, 156–158; Winkler 1930, 119–133). It will have been noted that the star/Solomon's seal in fact also constitutes one of the Seven Signs (esp. Winkler 1930, 133–137). Moreover, as will be seen even better in the pages to follow, such a geometric figure very often represents the main form of which a talismanic figure is formed in the Islamic occult literature.



Fig. 11. MS ARA 72, f. 53r: two “calligraphic” Solomonic seals in red ink in the shape of a six-pointed star (hexagram) whose constituent segments are produced by the stretching of the word *Huwa* (هو), “He”, referring to God, repeated six times. The name *Allāh* is inscribed in black ink in the six inner acute angles of each star

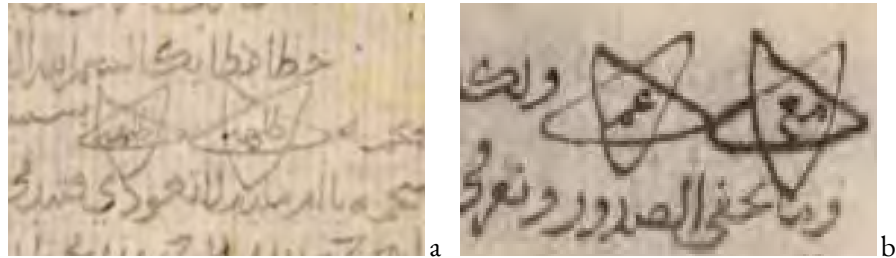
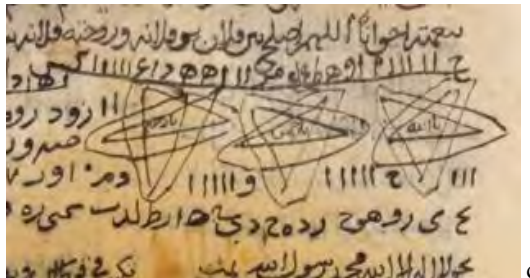
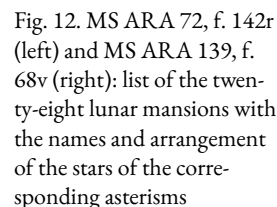


Fig. 10. a-c MS ARA 244, ff. 7v, 22r, and 42r (from left to right; details): samples of Solomon’s Seal in the form of a five-pointed star (pentagram) inscribed with Arabic words and letters

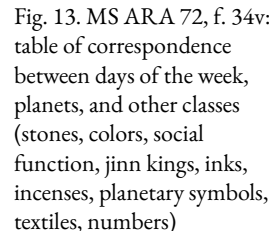


3.5. Astrological Elements

Universally attested in magical literature in general, including in the Islamic context, are astrological elements of various kinds. For example, in two of the three Arabic magical manuscripts of L’Orientale (MSS ARA 72 and 139) we find sketched lists of the twenty-eight lunar mansions (*manāzil al-qamar*) and the corresponding constellations and asterisms. Other astrological elements very much present are references to the seven planets.



Charts, lists, tables of correspondence, rectangular in shape, such as the one on the side, but often circular as well, are indeed another of the most prominent visual elements in magical literature and occult literature in general. Their function is essential, because they are connected to the very theoretical principles on which all magical art is based according to premodern thought, particularly the principles of universal analogy and sympathy, according to which there exist correspondences and links that are as invisible as they are real and binding between what is above and what is below, that is, between all classes of existents. Knowing these correspondences and knowing how to act on them encapsulate in synthesis all magical



science. The tables of correspondences that almost obsessively punctuate this literature, therefore, prove to be key elements: synthetic representations of the warp and weft that weave existence, making it a unified whole, a continuum, and at the same time maps that enable the wise to move and act in the cosmos with insight.

3.7. *Brillenbuchstaben* (Spectacle letters)

Another recurring element in both literature and material culture related to magic in the Islamic context are the so-called *Brillenbuchstaben* (Spectacle letters; caractères à lunettes), which are also well known in other contexts, such as but not limited to Jewish magic (Doutté 1909, 158; Winkler 1930, 150–167; Canaan 2004, 167–69). “Spectacle letters” is not a term attested in the primary sources but rather coined in modern studies. These are signs that have eyelets at the ends of the figure from which they derive the name by which they are designated. Their meaning appears highly enigmatic, to the point that some argue that they are completely meaningless. In some modern studies the term *Brillenbuchstaben* appears to be used just as a synonym for “seals” and “charaktères”. I am not personally convinced of these terminological overlaps, but one must admit that as with many of the other fundamental elements of the occult sciences there is a lack of systematic studies on these mysterious characters that would shed more light on their genesis, use and meaning. The impression is that under the generic definition of “Spectacle letters” are grouped various categories of signs and characters believed to possess magical function. Of particular note are numerous “magical alphabets” handed down in Islamic occult literature consisting in whole or in part of signs that visually and formally fall precisely within the modern definition of *Brillenbuchstaben*. Again, regardless of the definition and possible meanings of the *Brillenbuchstaben* it should be noted that while the work of al-Biṣṭāmī in MS ARA 72 never uses these signs they are instead extremely recurrent in the two magical manuscripts from Yemen belonging to the Sarnelli Collection.

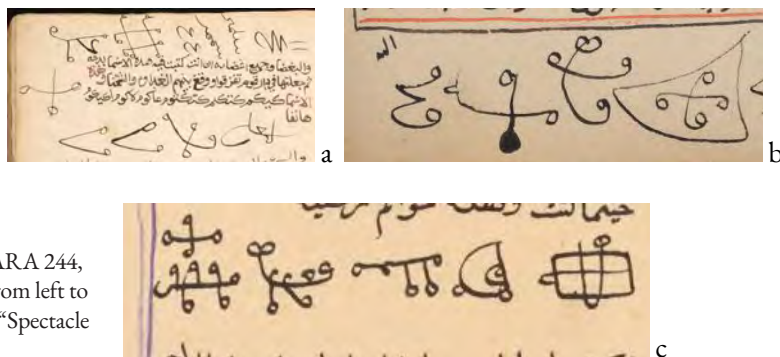


Fig. 14. a-c. MS ARA 244, ff. 8v, 41v, 55v (from left to right: samples of “Spectacle letters”

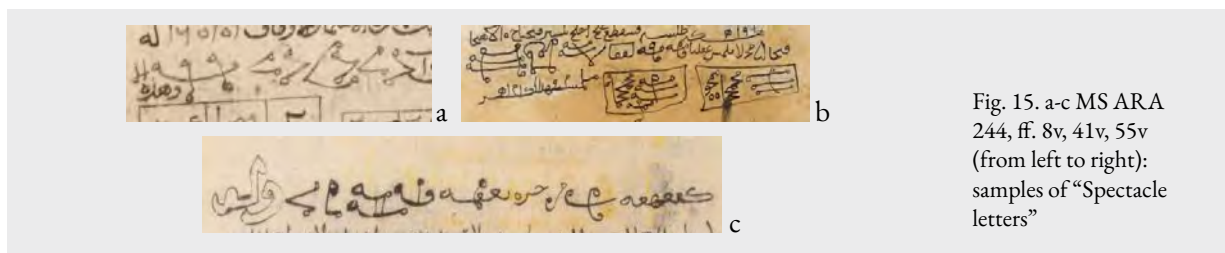


Fig. 15. a-c MS ARA 244, ff. 8v, 41v, 55v (from left to right): samples of “Spectacle letters”

3.8. Occult Alphabets

Discussing “Spectacle Letters”, magical alphabets have been mentioned. This, too, is a modern definition, alternating with others, such as “occult alphabets”. Occult alphabets appear to be yet another application of the principles of universal analogy and sympathy that structure the scaffolding of pre-modern cosmology, because each of these alphabets presents forms that would in some way recall this or that planet, this or that thing, therefore triggering, aiding, and guiding occult operations. They are attributed by the esoteric Islamic tradition to eminent figures in the history of pre-Islamic or early Islamic philosophy, spirituality, and occultism, on the boundary between history and legend, such as ancient Greek philosophers, or Hermes Trismegistus; others are traced back to peoples and civilizations of the past, others are related to the planets and therefore referred to in scholarship, sometimes, as “planetary alphabets” (Hammer 1806; al-Bisṭāmī 2686, ff. 187v–185r). Because of their characteristics, I would be inclined to describe them as symbolic alphabets, in the sense of consisting of symbolic figures, close to the idea of an ideogram. Occult alphabets are not properly cipher languages, although the boundary between these two types of writing does not always appear clear, and although in magical texts and objects there are forms of writing that it seems more correct to define as cases of cryptography or, even, “pseudoscriptures” (al-Yaman 1984; Bosworth 1997).

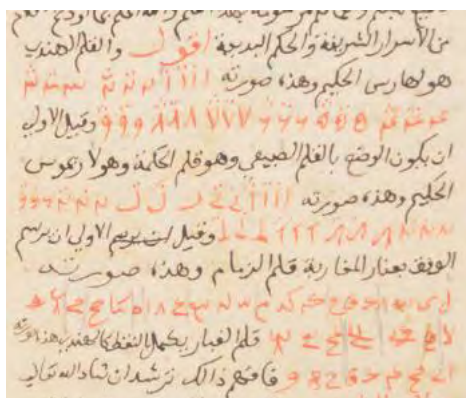


Fig. 16. MS ARA 72, f. 135v: list of three occult alphabets

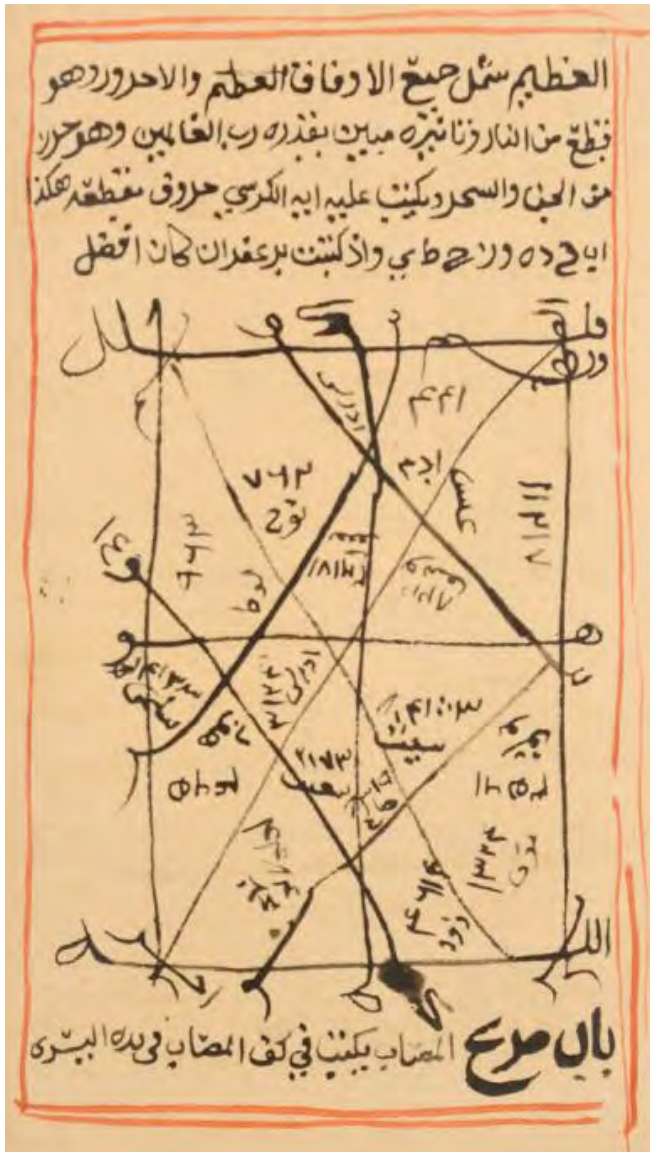


Fig. 17. MS ARA 139, f. 321v: Talismanic figure to be placed in an amulet for protection against jinn and black magic (*sihr*)

3.9. The Talisman:

A Synthesis of Occult Symbology

I conclude this survey by pointing out another of the most important and representative elements contained in treatises on magic, which is naturally reflected in magical objects, of which it often represents the very constituent element. These are innumerable talismanic figures, with different shapes, often geometric, sometimes anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, with the most disparate properties, and the recipes related to their composition and activation (Ruska et al. 2000; Canaan 2004; Hamès 2007; Porter, Saif and Savage-Smith 2017; Garcia Probert and Sijpesteijn 2022). Indeed in most cases all the elements mentioned so far—Qurʾānic passages, magic squares, the Seven signs, Solomonian seals, astrological symbols, spectacle letters, occult alphabets and whatnot—converge and are found, all or in part, within a talisman, that is, an image-object that is believed to be in some way “animated” and to exert a certain force and function, of which the elements described so far turn out to be ultimately the constituent elements. The three magical manuscripts of L’Orientale are replete with this type of figure, some significant examples of which are shown below.

Fig. 20. MS ARA 139, f. 51v:
 “Double” talismanic figure
 consisting of an unidentified
 zoomorphic element (left) and a
 geometric element (right) referred
 to in the text as “Seal of Solomon”,
 (*hātām Sulaymān*) containing the
 statement that “God benefits the
 one who bears it on himself and
 the one who writes it”.

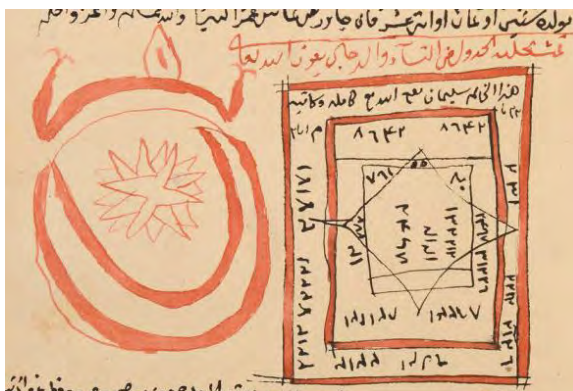


Fig. 21. MS ARA 72, f. 78r.
 Talisman of the letter *ʿAyn*, to
 which numerous prodigious
 properties are attributed. Its
 basic shape consists of the letter
ʿAyn (ع), the name Allāh (الله)
 and the name ʿAlī (علي)



4. Magic Book and Magical Object

In this survey of content elements representative, or rather constitutive, of the Islamic magical imagery, I have so far insisted on the correspondences and similarities between the contents of magic books and magical objects. Having ascertained this closeness, however, I would like to conclude this introduction by highlighting, in part perhaps simplifying, in part provoking, what appears to be instead an essential difference between the “magic book” and the “magical object”, which plays in our favor to bring the book—namely the manuscript book, being the subject of this catalog—back into focus. It is the fact that the magic book stands to the magical object as power stands to the act. That is, that all the symbols, signs, figures, seals, talismans, contained in the book are inactive, “in theory”, where in the talismanic object they are active, “in act”. This situation gives special status to each of these two elements: the book and the object. But remaining with the book, and its physical form, that is, the codex, which is what interests us most in this venue, it should be noted that its being “in potency”, “in theory”, gives it an indefinitely broader character of possibility than the object. The magic book, the recipe book, the grimoire, is indeed like a vast sea of possibilities from which the sage can draw from time to time the information suitable for the casting of innumerable spells and the crafting of innumerable talismans. It is everything and nothing, paradoxically. It is all the spells, formulas, seals and talismans it contains, together and simultaneously, and it is none of them. The magical object, on the other hand, operates, is in act, but for that very reason it is given, it is determined, defined, functioning in the same way and to the same end forever. This essential difference between the magic book and the magical object is reflected in the identification of the ideal recipient of each: the grimoire is the tool of the magician, necessarily knowing and necessarily acting; the object is intended for the client-patient. This parallelism is certainly not peculiar to the magical realm. It is true of all texts that are technical works relating to some “science” requiring specific expertise. This includes, of course, medicine, to reconnect with the other main topic of the manuscripts presented in this catalog. Precisely as the book of magic is intended for the magician and the magical object for those who request it, so the book of medicine is, at least in theory, intended for the physician, where the remedy that the physician deduces from the book is intended instead for the sick person.

The manuscript codices collecting texts on medicine and magic, the subject of the present catalog, do not tell stories and do not edify, do not entertain, and were not addressed to a general reader. Rather, they are “books of science”, both theory

and application, sapiential works addressed to the wise, often composed and copied personally by men of science, or intended for them in the first or last instance. This simple observation is met punctually in the story of the medico-magical codices of the collection surveyed in these pages, which were purchased, received as a gift, collected, by a man of science, Tommaso Sarnelli, and which in an institution of science have then arrived as the last act of their journey. Among the many possible destinations, the University L'Orientale indeed appears particularly well suited to house these special objects, as it is composed by individuals—teachers, librarians, students—who embody, or at least aspire to embody, the spirit of the scholar: one who is called by vocation to engage with these works, and for whom they were originally intended.

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Chapter 6

The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition Preserved at L'Orientale

ANTONELLA MURATGIA

In the final decades of the last century, there was a remarkable surge of interest in Islamic manuscript codices, as evidenced by the establishment of journals, editorial series, catalogues of collections, and digitization projects. Within this renewed attention, the Yemeni manuscript tradition—more specifically that of the Zaydī scholarly heritage—holds a distinctive place, one that has only recently begun to be explored in European and North American library collections. What draws scholars is not only the textual content, the glosses, commentaries, and scribal notes that reflect the rich intellectual diversity developed in Yemen, but also the distinctive features of a material manuscript culture. The vast majority of Yemeni manuscripts remain in Yemeni libraries and, more importantly, comprise a heritage of around 50,000 items still in the possession of scholarly families who composed and copied them (Hollenberg, Rauch, Schmidtke 2015). Ṣan‘ā, Zabīd, Ta‘izz are the principal centers of production and preservation.

The first collection of Yemeni manuscript collection to arrive in Europe was that of Eduard Glaser (1855–1908), a Bohemian Arabist and explorer who travelled to Yemen on four occasions between 1882 and 1894. The first part of his collection—264 manuscripts—was sold in 1884 and 1886 to the Königlische Bibliothek zu Berlin, now the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Two additional collections were sold by Glaser in the following years: one to the British Museum in London (328 volumes, in 1889) and another to the Austrian National Library in Vienna (282 volumes, in 1894). Glaser also acted as an intermediary in the acquisition of part of the collection belonging to Giuseppe Caprotti (1862–1919)—an Italian merchant to whom we shall return shortly—by the present-day Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (157 volumes, in 1902).

However, the country that holds the largest number of Yemeni manuscripts outside Yemen is Italy, with approximately 1,900 documents gathered by Caprotti during the years he spent in Yemen between 1882 and 1919 (D'Ottone 2004). These were sold in 1909 to the Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, thanks to the mediation of Arabist Eugenio Griffini—the first scholar to work on this collection of manuscripts—for the sum of 30,000 lire, raised through a subscription campaign supported by Milanese banks and aristocracy. The Ambrosiana collection was catalogued and published in four volumes by Oscar Löfgren and Renato Traini and is now fully

digitized. Caprotti is also responsible for the presence of about 150 Yemeni codices in the Vatican Library, a corpus which, as of 2019, still awaited in-depth study.

Another little-known collection preserved in Italy is the Dubbiosi Collection, comprising 223 Yemeni manuscripts assembled by Emilio Dubbiosi (1890-19??), a military physician and zoologist about whom little is known, who directed the Italian Health Mission in Ṣanʿā from 1930 to 1938, serving as the personal doctor of Imām al-Mutawakkil Yaḥyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (1869–1948). His collection was donated in 1990 to the library of IsMEO (Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente), and is currently housed in the library of the IsIAO (Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente), within the African and Oriental Collections Room of the National Central Library in Rome. During Dubbiosi’s time in Sanaa in the residential district of Bīr al-ʿAzab lived the renowned Turcologist, Arabist, and codicologist Ettore Rossi (1894–1955), who was also a manuscript collector. Rossi was in contact with Cesare Ansaldi, an Italian physician who travelled to Yemen in 1929 and 1932 and authored a volume on *Yemen* published in a series by the Ministry of the Colonies (Declich 2021). Both Ansaldi, with his eight Yemeni manuscripts, and Rossi, with his 55 manuscripts, donated their collections to the Library of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana.

Smaller collections of Yemeni manuscripts in Italy are also held at the Istituto per l’Oriente Carlo Alfonso Nallino (IPOCAN) in Rome—assembled by the Italian Arabist Carlo Alfonso Nallino (1872–1938)—and at the Istituto Centrale per il Restauro e la Conservazione del Patrimonio Archivistico e Librario (ICRCPAL) also in Rome—acquired by which derives from the collection belonged to Tommaso Sarnelli, of which the largest part is now preserved at L’Orientale and with which the present catalog is specifically concerned.

Thanks to European and North American cataloguing and digitization projects focused on Yemeni materials—both those located in situ itself and those held abroad—as well as through collaboration with Yemeni non-governmental organizations, it is now possible to access a rich amount of catalographic entries of Yemeni manuscripts via the OCLC/WorldCat search engine or digitized sources through Princeton’s Digital Library (dpul.princeton.edu/islamicmss). One must also mention the Zabid Project, a Franco-Yemeni program for the preservation of manuscripts held in private libraries in Zabid, initiated by the Centre Français d’Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales de Sanaa (CEFAS), now known as the Centre français de recherche de la péninsule Arabique (CEFREPA), which produced a cumulative catalogue of the manuscripts housed in the city’s private libraries (Regourd 2006-2009).

The Library of L'Orientale holds approximately 300 Arabic manuscripts, of which 42 have been identified as representative of the Zaydī literary tradition—which is considered now as one of the richest and most diverse within Islamic civilization. Twenty of these Yemenite items are presented. The identification of these Yemeni manuscripts was made possible thanks to the Zaydi Manuscript Tradition (ZMT) project, one of the most significant digitization initiatives for the preservation of Yemeni—particularly Zaydī—heritage, developed since 2000. Launched in 2016 by the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton, in partnership with the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML) at Saint John's University (Collegeville, Minnesota), the project also involved L'Orientale and its Yemeni holdings.

1. Specific Features of Yemeni Manuscripts

From a textual perspective, Yemeni manuscripts represent a cultural heritage of exceptional intellectual variety, encompassing the dissemination of scientific knowledge in its broadest sense, as well as theology and exegesis produced in study centers associated with mosques and village communities known as *hiġra* (scholarly villages, a distinctive local phenomenon in which villages inhabited by descendants of the Prophet enjoyed special tribal protection) (Ansari and Schmidtke 2018). These are today the subject of academic research and investigation.

But even from the standpoint of bookmaking, Yemen developed its own distinctive traditions and practices, so much so that today Yemeni manuscripts constitute a valuable source for research into regional manuscript production. Beginning with the 11th century, Arab authors—such as al-Muʿizz b. Bādīs (d. 454/1062), Zirid ruler of North Africa, who authored a treatise on the art of bookbinding—devoted considerable attention not only to this topic but to the broader field of book arts: leather tanning, inks, and the preparation and composition of paper. Two treatises of Yemeni origin contain important information on manuscript practices. The first is by Abū Muḥammad al-Hamdānī (d. 335/945), a renowned Arab geographer who described the preparation of golden inks using mercury. The second is Yemeni manuscript by al-Malik al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf al-Ġassānī (d. 694/1294), Rasulid ruler of Yemen, whose compendium of artisanal techniques includes details about papermaking in Yemen and the materials involved (Gacek 2002; Scheper 2015).

2. The Bookbindings

Yemen was one of the most active regions in the Islamic world in the arts of bookmaking and bookbinding, from the earliest centuries of Islam. Within the walls

and minarets of the Great Mosque of Sanaa, fragments of bindings have been discovered that reveal the use of the box binding format—an early binding structure used in the Yemeni world (Barakat 2017). This is one of the oldest known types of binding in the Islamic tradition, with covers extending beyond the fore edge flap to offer enhanced protection for the text. The box binding structure was soon abandoned, and extant examples are extremely rare.

Leatherworking developed into a major industry that fed trade throughout the Islamic world. Many Arabic texts praise the high quality of leathers produced in Yemen and the advantages of its tanning (*dibāḡa*) and dyeing (*ṣibāḡa*) methods (Gacek 2009). Leather was used for a wide variety of purposes, including bookbinding. From the early Islamic period, leather was the most common material used to cover manuscript bindings. Especially renowned were the leather bindings produced in the city of Ṭāʾif, in Arabia, an important bookbinding center already by the 10th century. Goat and sheep skins were generally employed to cover the boards of the manuscript bindings (Barakat 2017).

In Yemen, during the period of the Rasulid dynasty (826/1229– 858/1454) numerous bindings were made using boards (the inner part of the binding later covered with leather) composed of recycled sheets, covered in leather and decorated with stamped motifs. This technique was later abandoned in favor of paper covers, which were significantly more economical. The leathers were tanned following a Yemeni process later adopted in Egypt. This process included washing with fresh water to remove unpleasant odors, resulting in a cleaner and more flexible leather. The skins were then rubbed with a terracotta tile and immersed in a solution of vegetal materials. Oil could be added to increase gloss and softness. Finally, the leather was washed again until all traces of the tanning materials were eliminated. While the leather was still damp, decorative elements were added, generally through blind tooling—a preferred technique in Yemen—with only limited use of gold (Barakat 2017).

Traditional Islamic bindings were characterized by a flap, an extension of the back cover that folds over the fore edge of the book. In certain eastern Islamic regions, such as Iran, the use of the flap gradually declined and was eventually abandoned by local artisans.

In the corpus included in this catalogue, several leather bindings with intact flaps have survived, despite minor repairs that have not substantially altered their materiality or hindered their identification. The bindings of MSS ARA 8, 10, and 14 preserved in the collection of L'Orientale are almost certainly original. The last example features cornerpieces and cartouches decorated using the block-stamp technique (a method distinct from blind tooling, involving hot stamping with a metal plate engraved *in intaglio*).



Fig. 1a. MS ARA 8: Lower cover with envelope flap. Fig. 1b. MS ARA 14: Lower cover with envelope flap. Fig. 1c. MS ARA 14: Tail

It is important to note that determining the originality of a binding—specifically, whether it is contemporaneous with the text—requires that the binding was constructed specifically for the manuscript we now hold in hand, has accompanied the text and its successive owners, and shows signs of wear, use, and potential repairs over time. Such a determination can only be made through technical

analyses using precise instruments, which are typically unavailable in most library settings. Some fragments from our bindings have been loaned for investigation as part of a doctoral thesis project at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”. These include twelve fragments—some extremely small—recovered from our manuscript collection and stored in a folder pending further study. At present, they are undergoing diagnostic analysis, which will be essential for future conservation efforts. The results, along with the fragments, are expected to be returned shortly.

After the first flourishing centuries of Islamic manuscript production and the establishment of scriptoria and bookmaking workshops, tastes and ideas began to circulate widely across Islamic lands. One major innovation in bookbinding, widely adopted in many workshops, was the so-called *çahârkûşe* binding (Scheper 2015). The Turkish term, of Persian origin, means “four corners” and refers to a style also known as “half-leather” or “partial leather” binding. The earliest examples of this type are found in the Turkish-Ottoman area from the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries and typically feature leather spines and corners (or leather spines and a leather frame), with covers made of glossy marbled paper treated with shellac or similar substances—a technique that originated in Iran and Ottoman Turkey. In Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula, this technique differed slightly in materials: the leather had a coarser grain, and the paper used for the covers was fibrous rather than glossy. Manuscripts dating from before the 10th/16th century with this kind of binding were almost certainly rebound at a later time (Scheper 2015).

Çaharkuşe bindings—more economical than full leather bindings—are widely represented in the manuscripts featured in this catalogue. Again, it is not possible to determine with certainty whether these bindings are contemporary with the texts or the result of later restoration or reuse. MS ARA 2 features a cardboard cover and a probably original spine with a blind-tooled floral motif. MS ARA 15 is similar, with a flap and covers in thick green fibrous paper, and a cartouche with a floral design on the flap spine but not on the main spine—suggesting the latter was replaced during a restoration.

MS ARA 13 presents another interesting case: it features a leather spine and flap, with covers and the flap tongue in green paper (green tones appear dominant among our Yemeni manuscripts). It is possible that the original covers were different, and that an earlier spine with a curved profile, like in MS ARA 7, was laid over the surface. The current spine and paper layer conceal the earlier structure, still perceptible to the touch.

A representative example of a *çaharkuşe* binding is MS ARA 12, a relatively late specimen from the 13th/19th century. It features a flap and marbled paper cover decorated with wave patterns in yellow, red, and green.



Fig. 2a. MS ARA 12: Lower cover with envelope flap. Fig. 2b. MS ARA 12: Spine. Fig. 2c. MS ARA 12: Tail

Another noteworthy example is MS ARA 7, which also shows a curved spine likely added at a later stage. The brown stiff cardboard boards and the better-preserved pastedowns show traces of a now-lost leather border. Both boards are decorated with vines, floral motifs, and grapes, all applied using the block-pressed technique on paper. This method, used on pastedowns and flyleaves made of leather or fabric, has its roots in Persian binding and decorative developments of the late 8th/14th and early 9th/15th centuries, which were later integrated into the repertoire of Mamluk binders. In this case, the covers also bear decorations made with the same technique. MS ARA 17 may have a very similar cover, although its poor condition and plain paper pastedowns prevent the identification of more than a central incised geometric motif. MS ARA 19 also features paper pastedowns decorated with the same technique (Fig. 3 a-b).

Some manuscripts underwent rebinding in the past two centuries as part of a now-obsolete restoration practice that involved replacing the original binding with a “modern” one. This was done either because the original was missing or too badly damaged, or due to the custom of unifying the appearance of a library’s holdings—typically a private library. These bindings consist of stiff boards with a leather spine, four or five false raised bands, and gold-stamped titles. While destructive from a modern conservation perspective, this approach was applied even to a Mamluk Qurʾān once held in the collection, not included in the catalogue: MS ARA 16, dated 833/1429. Fortunately, its gold-decorated pages—typical of Mamluk workshops—have remained intact.



Fig. 3a. MS ARA 17: Upper cover. Fig. 3b. MS ARA 19: Upper doublure¹

A final example of Islamic binding is found in a printed book: RARI ARA XVIII A 3, *Kitāb al-Qānūn fī al-tibb* by Ibn Sīnā (See Chapter 4 by Luca Berardi), known in Europe as Avicenna, dated 1593. This volume has had a remarkable journey: originally published in Italy as the first Arabic edition of the *Qānūn*, it eventually made its way to Yemen and was sold to L'Orientale by Tommaso Sarnelli along with the rest of the Yemeni collection. One of its most distinctive features is its binding: it follows the Islamic tradition, in heavy brown leather with a flap, and decorations in the Safavid style, though not of Iranian origin. The binding includes gold ornamentation, corner pieces, a central almond-shaped medallion, and cartouches with arabesques, with smooth leather pastedowns. The time and place of its rebinding remain uncertain, though a note on the verso of the first leaf provides an indicative date in the first half of the 12th/18th century.

Where it has been possible to reconstruct the quires (traditionally, Yemeni manuscripts are formed of quaternions, i.e., gatherings of eight leaves and sixteen pages), we found a greater number of quaternions than quinions. Unfortunately, about one-third of the manuscripts have undergone resewing to repair torn or missing leaves at the inner margins. In some cases, the sewing was done not using the original sewing stations, but creating new ones after reconstructing the missing parts. Alternatively, the sewing has been done very tightly along the margins of the gatherings, making it impossible to obtain complete codicological data regarding the original structure.

3. The Scripts

From the point of view of the script, Yemeni manuscripts maintain a characteristic model that we find in almost the entire collection presented in this catalog. The manuscripts were almost always written in a calligraphic style widely used in Arab and Islamic countries: the *nashī* script. This script appears sometimes orderly and elegant, but often chaotic and irregular, without any ruling border (*miṣṭara*). In later examples, the writing occasionally tends toward the *riqā'* style.

A notable feature of the Yemeni *nashī* is its partial vocalization and the use of specific diacritical conventions. For instance, a mark shaped like a <v> appears above the letters *ḥā'*, *rā'*, *sin*, *ṣād*, and *ʿayn*, and a dot below *dāl* and *ṭā'* to denote unpointed forms. The Yemeni style is present in more than half of the manuscripts, such as MSS ARA 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 20, 34, 72, and 139.

In composite or multi-text manuscripts—for example, the fragmented MS ARA 244—certain sections follow this traditional Yemeni system. Such palaeographic features may aid philologists in roughly dating the manuscript, albeit with a broad time range.

4. The Inks

The inks used in the Yemeni specimens range from black to various shades of red, with occasional samples of yellow or violet ink. Notably, none of these inks (called *ḥibr* in Arabic for iron-gall inks and *midād* for carbon inks) have caused damage to the paper. Chrysography, or the art of writing with gold or silver using a pen or brush, is rarely encountered in the Yemeni *corpus*. In a few cases, individual words or headings are written in gold, though more commonly gold appears in marginal frames (*ḡadwal*) surrounding the main text, often in conjunction with red ink.

This artistic tradition, which has ancient roots, saw further development during the Islamic Middle Ages. A particularly early reference is found in the 3th/10th-century Yemeni treatise by al-Hamdānī, which includes recipes for producing paints in which gold is refined by adding mercury (Porter 2021). While the use of gold and silver in calligraphy and the techniques for illuminating manuscript decorations are widespread across the Islamic world, they appear only infrequently in the Yemeni manuscripts under consideration here. Among the surveyed specimens, the only manuscript in the catalog featuring gold in the script is the second text of the Egyptian MS ARA 72 (ff. 163v–165v), being a religious poem (Fig. 4). The gold ink was clearly visible under the electron microscope and appears to have been made by using gold powder as ink rather than as paint applied with a brush. The fact that

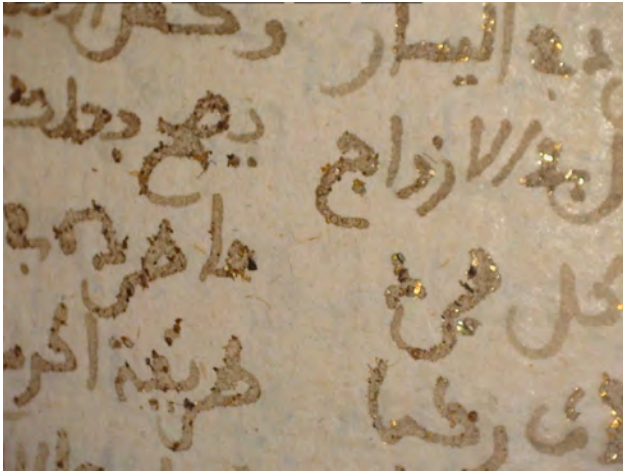


Fig. 4. MS ARA 72, f. 163r
Gold ink

it is ink is supported by the swelling on the sides of the letters, where the pen moved more carefully, depositing more pigment on the edges. Additionally, evident traces of adhesive—often yellow brown in colour—are visible where the paint layer is thinner.

5. The Papers

The paper used in manuscripts usually serves as a valuable source for reconstructing the history of trade and exchanges, the movement of people and ideas, and sometimes offers surprising insights.

According to historical accounts, during the eastward expansion of the Islamic world in the early Abbasid period, Muslims encountered the art of papermaking in China and subsequently in Samarkand, a major centre in Central Asia.

The raw materials primarily consisted of linen and hemp rags, along with other textile fibres readily available across the Islamic world. From these contacts, they adopted and refined the techniques of paper production originally developed in China. Primarily, they used linen and hemp rags and textile fibers, which were abundantly available. These high-quality fibrous materials were transformed into pulp using a wooden pestle, manually operated with the aid of a simple lever.

It is generally believed that Arab papermakers introduced innovations such as modifying the size and format of the paper sheets and enhancing their durability through a waterproofing treatment. This was achieved by applying a starch-based sizing, typically made from rice or wheat.

Locally produced paper, exported to Europe, quickly replaced parchment as the primary writing support. Parchment remained in use in the Maghreb until the 9th/15th century, in the Christian tradition of the Horn of Africa until the 14th/20th century, and in the manufacture of luxury Qur'āns. Only from the 8th/14th century did the trade routes for paper reverse: European paper makers, primarily Italian, acquired production techniques, introduced innovations in manufacturing, and made paper economically more competitive for export to the Islamic world. Watermarked paper, invented in Fabriano in the 13th century, both economical and refined, gradually supplanted local paper production throughout the Islamic world, from east to west. Later, from the 10th/16th century onward, a

countermark was often added to the watermark, usually bearing the initials of the paper manufacturer and sometimes a production date.

In the 16th century, a type of watermark paper of Venetian origin—featuring the symbol known as “Tre lune” or “Three Crescents”—began to circulate widely, dominating the Arab market from the 11th/17th to the 13th/19th centuries, with frequent attestations in Africa and Ottoman territories on the Arabian Peninsula. The widespread acceptance of this watermark in Arab lands can be attributed to its perceived neutrality: unlike other European watermarks bearing overtly Christian iconography, the motif of the three crescents did not carry religious connotations that would hinder its use in Islamic contexts. It was perceived as “neutral” iconography.

The twelve Venetian paper districts produced thirty-seven officially recognized paper types regulated by state guidelines from the early 12th/18th century. Among these, five categories—known collectively as “Carte da commercio” (Commercial Papers)—were primarily destined for export to the Ottoman market. The “Tre lune” paper, one of these five classes of commercial types, denoted not only an Italian watermark but also a relatively thick, high-quality paper designed to solve the problem of transparency between opposing surfaces of the same sheet, a problem exacerbated by particular inks used in the Eastern manuscript traditions. Among the best-known Venetian brands were Andrea Galvani of Pordenone (1722-1809), whose watermark Tre lune and countermarks (“AG” and “Andrea Galvani Pordenone”) appear in MS ARA 34, as well as Bernardino Nodari. In May 1769, and again in 1775, the “Inquisitor of Paper” initiated inquiries to regulate the production of Commercial Papers, aiming to prohibit the use of the “Tre lune” mark on papers not intended for “Turkish use”.

Italian paper reached the Levant and North Africa through the ports of Tripoli, Tunis, and Alexandria, departing from the ports of Trieste, Genoa, and, especially during the 19th century, also Livorno. From Livorno sailed Tuscan paper produced by the mills of Ferdinando Betti and the Palazzuolo brothers, bearing the “Tre lune” watermark and countermarks with the names of the mills, or the Magnani Pesciastina paper, also with “Tre lune” watermark and the countermark “AL MASSO”. With the decline in Venetian paper quality from the mid-18th century onward, Tuscan paper successfully replaced it in Arab markets.

In the 19th century, Turkey saw the emergence of paper production imitating European watermarks. A common watermark on Yemeni manuscripts shows a crescent with a human profile inside a shield, accompanied by an Arabic coun-

termark: *Beyāz Abū Šubbak İstambūlī* (“Paper of Abū Šubbāk of Istanbul”). An example appears in MS ARA 15 (bifolios A–B and G–H), which also includes a variant with a crescent and human profile within a three-pointed shield. In Yemen, the *Abū Šubbāk* brand quickly became synonymous with high-quality paper.

In a notable turn in this transregional history of material exchange, by the late Ottoman period the Galvani paper mills in Pordenone began producing paper for the Yemeni market that imitated the *Abū Šubbāk* watermark. The image of a crescent with a human profile inside a shield—used by Andrea Galvani and found in multiple Yemeni manuscripts—came to be recognized across the Middle East as *Abū Šubbāk*, literally “the man in the window” (Regourd 2015, 2018). This association is supported by correspondence from the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), who, after his expulsion from Mecca in 1885, continued to correspond with contacts in Arabia, so that they could send him copies of two Arabic manuscripts he had been unable to procure during his long stay in Mecca. In one exchange, the local emissary reported advancing five *riyāl* to scribes to acquire high-quality *Abū Šubbāk* paper for the reproduction of two Arabic manuscripts Hurgronje had been unable to obtain during his stay in the Holy City. These manuscript copies, now preserved in the Leiden University Library, were made on Galvani paper from Pordenone bearing the crescent-and-profile watermark—thus conflating *Abū Šubbāk* with both the Istanbul-produced *Beyāz Abū Šubbak İstambūlī* and the Italian-made “man in the window” paper (Witkam 2018).

It is therefore plausible to assume that a number of *Abū Šubbāk* watermarks found in Yemeni manuscripts without Arabic countermarks originate from Italian manufacture. For instance, MS ARA 7 features the crescent with a human profile watermark on its initial *folios* and a main text-block written on Oriental paper. MS ARA 9 displays a similar configuration: a text-block on heavy, yellowish oriental paper, a countermark <FIV> on the first guard leaf, a fleur-de-lis watermark in a crowned circle on f. 173, and the *Abū Šubbāk* watermark on the final guard leaf.

Another noteworthy countermark, not yet found in the Arabic manuscripts held at L’Orientale, appearing in Arabic characters in the late 19th century, is *Ali-kurna* (عليقورنة), which, despite its Arabic script, does not appear to originate from Ottoman production.. Rather, it is linked to the Tuscan paper mills of Betti and Palazzuolo. The name *Alikurna* likely derives from the ports of Livorno or the Ligurian coast, suggesting a point of export rather than production. As in the case of *Abū Šubbāk*, the countermark *Alikurna* came to denote not only the mill or merchant but also a recognizable type of Italian paper that was widely exported to

the Ottoman Empire and various regions of Africa. Over time, the name itself acquired a broader connotation, serving as a mark of quality and regional association in the trans-Mediterranean paper trade (Kropf 2018).

According to a recipe for Yemeni paper production attributed to the Rasulid ruler al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf al-Ġassānī, Yemen was producing a “local paper” (*al-waraq al-baladī*) as early as the 13th century using fig tree bark as the primary raw material (Gacek 2002). The oldest locally produced Yemeni paper is usually described as having a chaotic texture and lacking a discernible weave (Fig. 5). However, in the absence of laboratory-based fibre analysis to confirm the presence of fig bark, it remains impossible to definitively identify local paper production in extant codices based solely on such textural characteristics.

Nevertheless, a basic descriptive and statistical classification between Oriental and European papers can be made. Approximately one-third of the manuscripts examined in this catalog appear to be written on Oriental paper, typically lacking watermarks and, in some cases, devoid of ruling. Among these, two manuscripts bear watermarks that are still under investigation, featuring a crescent with a human profile inside a shield accompanied by the Arabic countermark *Beyāz Abū Šubbak İstambūlī* indicating Istanbul production.

Two manuscripts are particularly noteworthy in this regard: MS ARA 15 and MS ARA 139. In MS ARA 15, the *Abū Šubbak* watermark appears on two initial bifolios. Additional watermarks—such as “Tre lune” and a crown surmounted by a star and crescent—are present on the initial and final guard leaves. The main text block, however, is written on unwatermarked Oriental paper likely produced in Istanbul. This combination of materials reflects the diverse origins of paper circulating in Yemen during the Ottoman period and underscores the complexity of tracing manuscript provenance based solely on paper type.

Manuscripts often contain papers of diverse origins, a phenomenon attributable to several factors: the later addition of quires on Oriental paper (a frequent occurrence), the rebinding of texts by different owners, economic considerations by the copyist, or conservation interventions involving inserted leaves or guard pages, as exemplified by MS ARA 15 and other codices.

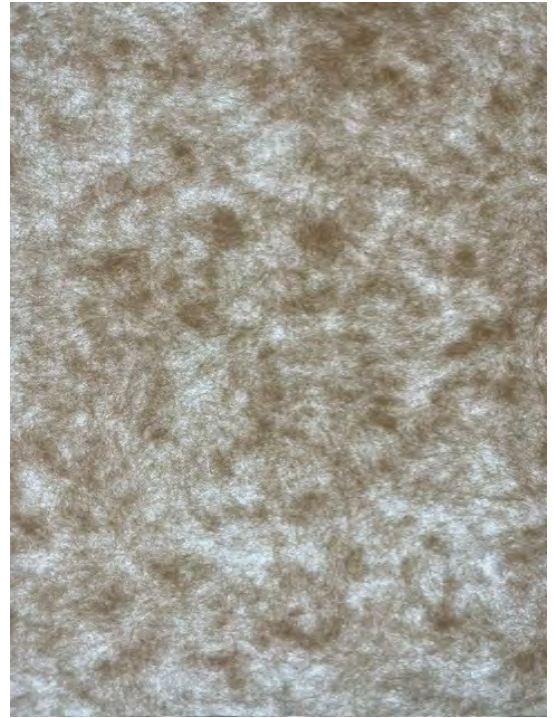


Fig. 5. Yemen “local paper” (*al-waraq al-baladī*)

A representative case is MS ARA 72, which consists of 166 folios and contains two distinct texts. The second comprises only two or three leaves and lacks both a colophon and any indication of authorship or date. The first text, however, is dated 5 Šābān 1028/30 March 1619 (f. 163v), a period during which Italian-made paper had already become predominant in manuscript production. At least six different watermarks appear in the manuscript where identifiable: Latin crosses inscribed in drops or alone, six-pointed stars topped by crescents, crowns, rampant animals, and, notably, a six-petaled flower with two leaves and a countermark <ALAROSA>, not found in watermark catalogs. The final guard leaf bears a blind-stamped mark <BATH>, likely a later addition and the only embossed stamp in the manuscript. The “Bath” stamp corresponds to a high-quality English paper brand used in Italy as letter paper, absent from documents before 1840 and known to have been used in 1864 and 1867 by the Papal State for 2 baj stamp paper acquired from various producers, including the English “Bath”.

The Italian “Tre lune” watermark is prominently featured in at least half of the manuscripts examined, either appearing on its own or accompanied by various countermarks, which are not always fully legible. These marks occur throughout the manuscript quires or are limited to specific sections, including initial and final guard leaves. For example, MS ARA 5 features the letters <M S F>, while elsewhere, as in MSS ARA 10, 72 and 244, occur a three-petaled flower with indistinct initials <V + ?>, possibly referring to the Mori Vittorio paper mills of Venice. In MS ARA 12, the “Tre lune” watermark is paired with a three-petaled flower bearing the initials “S S” in the final quinion, and in MS ARA 13, beginning at f. 170, it appears alongside a Latin cross and the initials of Andrea Galvani. Where identifiable, these watermarks consistently point to Venetian paper mills as their origin.

The paper used in manuscript MS ARA 246 is of Italian origin as well, and features distinctive watermarks, including a spread-winged eagle, and on some sheets, a rampant lion within a shield surmounted by a crown. Of particular interest is the watermark bearing the name “Isidoro Mori of Ceneda”, which offers insight into the history of Venetian papermaking. In 1772, Isidoro de Mori (dates unknown) leased part of the historic Rizzardi Paper Mill in Ceneda (a district of Vittorio Veneto), originally founded in 1640. Although the lease was initially set for three years, de Mori retained control of the mill until the end of the 18th century, navigating a series of financial and ownership complications, particularly those related to unpaid debts inherited by the Rizzardi family. Archival records indicate that the paper produced in Ceneda between 1818 and 1840 always bore the watermark “I.M.”, i.e., Isidoro Mori, suggesting that all the paper mills in the Ceneda district were under his man-

agement. The last chapter of the Rizzardi Paper Mill's history began with its purchase by Andrea Galvani, a prominent papermaker from Pordenone, before 1838. The Galvani family retained ownership until 1895 (Heritage Italy, Fedrigoni 1966).

Another watermark frequently found in Yemeni manuscripts depicts a crown surmounted by a star and crescent—an example of which is found in MS ARA 8, where it appears either in isolation or accompanied on certain folios by a possible initial, perhaps an “M”, situated in the center of the crown. This type of watermark is typical of manuscripts produced in the territories of the Ottoman Empire during the 16th–18th centuries.

An unusual watermark appears in the first quires of a Yemeni medical manuscript dated to the early 11th/17th century: it consists of a disembodied hand with an extremely elongated thumb. In subsequent quires, the common crown topped by a star and crescent is found. The origin of the hand watermark remains unidentified, as it does not currently correspond to any known examples in watermark catalogues. The hand watermark appears to have been widespread in the papermaking tradition of Vercelli during the 15th and 16th centuries, occurring in both four- and five-fingered forms, typically accompanied by a cross or a floral motif. None of the examples recorded in Briquet, however, closely matches the specimen found in our manuscript (Leonardi 2011).

The paper found in the manuscripts examined, dating broadly from the 10th/16th to the 14th/20th century, reveals a predominant use of Italian paper, either verifiably or presumptively of Veneto origin. This predominance reflects Yemen's strategic position within a network of trade routes that originated in Italian ports such as Trieste, Genoa and, later, Livorno, and extended toward North Africa and Egypt, from where goods continued on to Sudan, Ethiopia, and both East and West Africa. However, this was not the only commercial route linking Yemen to broader paper markets. A secondary route, emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, brought industrially produced English paper—bearing identifiable watermarks and the names of Indian distributors—into Yemen via British-controlled ports such as Bombay and Aden. To date, however, no manuscripts on such paper have been identified in the present corpus.

A small but compelling detail invites further inquiry into this transregional circulation. One manuscript in the collection, MS ARA 8, dated 1130/1717-18 (f. 86v), is written on European paper bearing a watermark of a three-pointed crown surmounted by a star and crescent, an iconography frequently associated with Ottoman-era papers. A second watermark appears in the manuscript's second quaternion: a crown supported by an element with the letter “M” at its centre, though this mark remains unclassified in existing watermark repertories. Adding a further layer of interest, the manuscript contains six ownership inscriptions and, intriguingly, several annotations in Gujarati



Fig. 6. MS ARA 8
Lower doublure

on the Lower doublure—still pending translation—which may hint at a fascinating transregional trajectory involving Indo-Yemeni exchanges (Fig. 6).

A particularly peculiar manuscript present in the catalog is MS ARA 143, which seems to have used paper of a very different provenance. This complete Yemeni medical treatise, dated in the colophon to the early 1830s, is written in a precise calligraphic style and displays a highly uniform scribal style. What sets the manuscript apart, however, is its use of paper: the sheets vary in tone but are predominantly shades of blue, many of them glazed—a treatment rare among the other specimens surveyed. Strikingly,

all the folios bear watermarks with countermarks in Cyrillic characters, frequently dated from 1826 to 1835. Although not all are fully legible, several have been clearly identified. One depicts a column with a tripartite base topped by a Greek cross, alongside the countermark ТФСУ (Т F S U), dated 1827. Another features an oval medallion enclosing a figure—possibly a bear—within a heraldic shield, bearing the countermark КΠΓ (K P G). A third example includes the countermark ТБФХ 1835. Г. (Т B F Kh 1835 G.), where Г. is an abbreviation for Goda (“year” in Russian).

These paper marks suggest Russian imperial manufacture and point to an unexpected trajectory in the sourcing of materials for Yemeni manuscripts in the early 19th century. The presence of such paper raises intriguing questions about trade and diplomatic channels, and the role of Russian-made paper in the broader networks of manuscript production in the Islamic world.

Paper produced in Russia was exported to Iran already during the Qajar dynasty (1794–1925), especially the blue paper, locally preferred and widely used in Persian chancery practices since the early 19th century. The presence of the medallion with the coat of arms featuring a bear suggest a more precise provenance: the emblem likely originates from the Russian city seems to belong to the Russian city of Yaroslavl’, on the Volga riverbank. The motif—a bear walking while holding a halberd on a shield with mantling on both sides—was the emblem of the Bol’shaja Jaroslavskaja Manufaktura, a prominent textile factory that later diversified into paper production (Klepikov, Simmons 1963; Yastrebova 2018).

Founded in 1722 by the local merchant Ivan Zatrpeznov, the establishment was converted into a paper mill in 1731. In 1764, the mill was purchased by Savva Yakovlev, one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs of 18th-century Russia, who significantly expanded its operations. He continued its production and trade until his death. The activity was continued by his heirs, producing paper that reached markets across the Russian Empire and beyond. Its products—especially the blue-glazed writing paper favored in diplomatic and literary contexts—were likely among those exported to regions such as Iran and, as evidenced by MS ARA 143, Yemen.

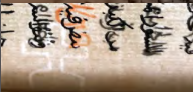
The watermarks found in manuscript MS ARA 143 do not correspond exactly to the known marks of the Yaroslavl' paper mill, which have been documented in Persian *farmān* (فرمان) from the early 19th century and recently analyzed by various scholars. Blue papers produced in the Volga region—specifically around Yaroslavl' and the Kostroma and Teren'ga provinces—have been identified through their characteristic watermarks. The manuscript preserved in L'Orientale's Library, approximately dating back to the circa 1830s, falls slightly later than the documented period. Throughout its production history, the mill employed a series of watermarks featuring variations of the Yaroslavl' coat of arms combined with different letter groups and combinations.

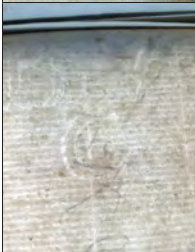
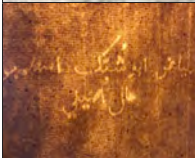
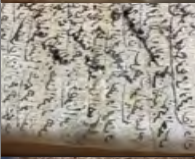
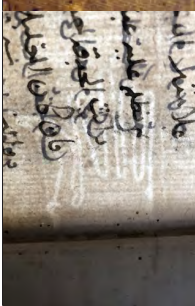
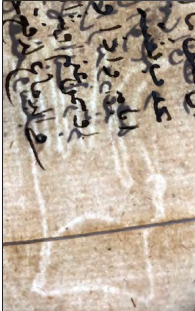
Many of the watermarks and countermarks in MS ARA 143 remain unreadable or unidentified, as the letter combinations do not appear in known repertoires. It is plausible to hypothesize that two of the initial letters forming the countermark groups, namely T+B (T+V), might refer to Teren'giskaya Fabrika (Teren'ga Factory), though very little concrete information exists about Russian watermarks in general and the important Russian watermark catalogs remain largely inaccessible and not widely circulated internationally.

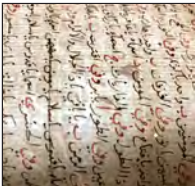
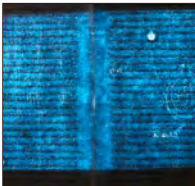
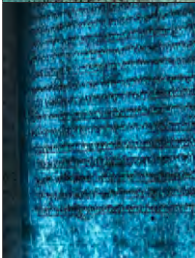
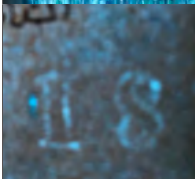
Several dates appear in the watermarks—1826, 1827, and 1835—indicating the years of paper manufacture. The use of such date marks aligns with an edict issued by Empress Catherine II on October 18, 1778, which ordered paper mill owners to apply a special watermark with the year of manufacture on all paper produced, to facilitate quality control. Nevertheless, this decree was inconsistently applied, and consequently a considerable number of watermarks lack the production year.

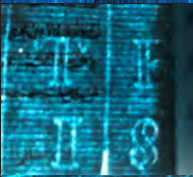
This brief overview highlights the significant value of the Yemeni manuscript heritage held in the collections of L'Orientale and underscores the necessity for further in-depth researches. Such investigations will offer more precise insights into the origins and production of these materials, ultimately contributing to a clearer statistical and cultural understanding of Yemen's manuscript traditions.

6. Table of Watermarks

	MS ARA 2, f. 94, Watermark		MS ARA 12, f. 84, Watermark Three- petalled flower with countermark S S
	MS ARA 5, Countermark F M		MS ARA 12, f. I, Watermark Tre lune
	MS ARA 5, Countermark M		MS ARA 13, f. 72, Watermark Lily, Star and Crescent
	MS ARA 5, Countermark S		MS ARA 13, f. 174, Watermark Latin cross
	MS ARA 7 f. V, Watermark half- moon with a human profile inside a three- pointed shield		MS ARA 13, f. 175, Watermark Tre lune (maybe) with C B A
	MS ARA 8, f. 7, watermark Crown, Star, Crescent		MS ARA 13, f. 175, Watermark Tre lune with B
			MS ARA 14, f. 282, Unreadable Watermark Part One

	MS ARA 14, f. F, Unreadable Watermark Part two		MS ARA 19, ff. 52, 59, Watermark Crown, Star, Crescent
	MS ARA 14, f. 285 Unreadable Watermark with B V		MS ARA 19, ff. 52, 59, Watermark Crown
	MS ARA 15, f. a-b, g-h, Countermark Abū Šubbak		MS ARA 21, f. 5, Watermark Star
	MS ARA 15, f. a-b, g-h, Watermark half- moon with a human profile inside a three- pointed shield		MS ARA 21, Watermark Greek cross on crescent
	MS ARA 19, ff. 2, 8, Watermark Hand		MS ARA 34, Countermark A G, Andrea Galvani Pordenone
	MS ARA 19, ff. 12- 13, Watermark Hand		MS ARA 34, Watermark Tre lune
			MS ARA 72, f. 23, Latin cross in a teardrop

	MS ARA 72, f. 93, Watermark crown, star and crescent		MS ARA 143, ff. 208-209, Russian watermark Coat of arms with a bear, Countermark F K P G
	MS ARA 72, f. 114, Watermark Heart in a circle ¹		MS ARA 143, Russian countermark K I
	MS ARA 72, f. 121, Watermark Latin cross in medallion, with two griffins and crown		MS ARA 143, Russian dated countermark 1826
	MS ARA 72, f. 152, Watermark Three- petalled flower with V		MS ARA 143, Russian dated countermark 18(...)
	MS ARA 72, f. II, Dry stamp Bath		MS ARA 143, Russian watermark and countermark TFSU, Column, 1827
	MS ARA 72, ff. 117-118, Six- petalled flower with ALAROSA		MS ARA 143, Russian watermark Coat of arms (2)

	MS ARA 143, Russian watermark Coat of arms		MS ARA 143, Unreadable watermark Bow and arrow
	MS ARA 143, Russian watermark F X +(183)5.G		MS ARA 246, Watermark Eagle with spread wings, Isidoro Mori Ceneda
	MS ARA 143, Russian watermark Figure in a medallion		MS ARA 246, Watermark Rampant lion in a shield
	MS ARA 143, Russian watermark Part one, T B +18(35.G.)		
	MS ARA 143, Russian watermark Part two, F X +(18)35.G		
	MS ARA 143, Unreadable watermark Bow and arrow		

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PART 2
Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts

Arabic Manuscripts
*on **Medicine***

MS ARA 5

(inv. SA 104924)

[*al-Risāla al-mušfiya li-l-amrād al-muškila*]
by Fayḍī Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. 1151/1738)

Undated (13th/19th or 19th/20th century) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Epistle on hypochondria

The *al-Risāla al-mušfiya li-l-amrād al-muškila* by Fayḍī Muṣṭafā Efendī (d. 1151/1738) is an epistle on hypochondria (*al-marāqīyya*) with nine chapters on its causes, symptoms, and various treatments.

The manuscript copy lacks a title page identifying the work and its author; however, this information is provided in the introduction (ff. 1v-2r). The introduction is followed by a table of contents (ff. 2v-3r). The author, renowned linguist, theologian and physician, explains exhaustively the distinction between hypochondria caused by bile and that resulting from other causes.

ff.: 1v-54v; I, II. Dimensions: 155 × 110 mm; written area: 70 × 118 mm; 13 lines per page. Quaternions. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; diagonal catchwords in black ink; rubrication and headings in red ink. Rare marginal notes in black and red ink. Condition: Good. Binding: Modern cardboard binding with a leather spine; restored in 2007. Paper: Western paper with watermark *Tre lune* and countermark M, S, F.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 108; pencil, no. 357. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
والحمد لله رب العالمين

فاتحة الرسالة

اما بعد يقول احد العلماء المتبحرين ومجد الفضلا
المدققين. الاستاذ الفاضل والحكيم الكامل
راس الحكماء ريس الاطباء نراط وقته وزمانه
وجالينوس عصره واوانه. فيحي مصطفي افندي
ابن الباعث علي تاليف هذه الرسالة المصححة
النصاب. والنسخة الحكيمة الانتساب. هي
ان علة المراقبة الغيبا لسودايد قد كثر وقوعها
في الناس الصغار والكبار. وغالب الناس ابتلا
بها. وقد اغفلت اطبا العرب والعجم الفرق
والتمييز ما بين هذين المرضين في كتبها. اي

منه

لانها ثورت السدة خصوصاً اذا كانت علي
 الشع. فاما الحركات المعتدلة فهي نافعة
 خصوصاً اذا كانت قبل مباشرة الطعام
 واما بقية تربي الست الفروية لاصحاب
 هذا المرض كالهول المحيط. والاستفراغ
 والاحتباس والحركات النفسانية. فابقينا
 شرح تديريهم للطبيب الحاذق الفطن ابي
 منير ادهم هنا كونه غير ضروري
 وفي هذا القدر كفايه
 لمن وقفه الله لادلة

علاج هذا

المرض

بسم

ملك كياي كصايع

محملي

ISTITUTO UNIVERSITARIO ORIENTALE
NAPOLI

N. Inventario 104924
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI ASIATICI



MS ARA 9

(inv. SA 104938)

Kitāb al-Muġnī fī tadbīr al-amrād wa-maʿrifat al-ʿilal wa-l-aʿrād
by Abū al-Ḥasan Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 495/1101)

Undated (13th/18th century?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Treatise with systematic classification of diseases

The *Kitāb al-Muġnī fī tadbīr al-amrād wa-maʿrifat al-ʿilal wa-l-aʿrād* is a medical treatise that provides classification, symptomatology, and treatment of diseases. The work was written by Abū al-Ḥasan Saʿīd b. Hibat Allāh b. al-Ḥasan (d. 495/1101), the personal physician of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadī (reg. reg. 467/1075-487/1094), to whom the work is dedicated. The work is arranged by illness.

A comprehensive index of all the diseases mentioned precedes the actual work (ff. 3v-6v). Each illness is arranged in a table that contains information about the illness (*marād*), its cause (*sabab*), its symptoms (*ʿarād*), and the regimen (*tadbīr*) recommended for its cure. Some cures also include a prescription (*ṣifa*). This manuscript copy contains 201 tables. They are all numbered, and within them, the terms disease, cause, symptoms, and cure are always written in red.

ff. I, 1r-173r, II (ff. I and II added during an earlier restoration). Dimensions: 243 × 162 mm; written surface: 173 × 110 mm. Lines per page: 17. Quinions. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black, diagonal catchwords in black ink, headings in red ink, 201 numbered panels in red ink, containing names, causes, and symptoms of diseases. Rare marginal corrections in Arabic in black ink. Additional Materials: Two envelopes containing numbered loose leaflets and fragments from the covers. Binding: Half leather binding with restored spine and corners, green paper covers, and central (restored) ties. The original stitching was lost during the restoration. Paper: Oriental yellowish paper; European watermarked endpapers: countermark “F I V” (f. I), lily within a circle surmounted by a crown (f. 173), half-moon with a human profile inside a three-pointed shield with a double border (f. II).

Annotations: f. 1r: Name of a donor, location, and date: Lūṭf Ḥamza, Sanaa, December 1931. Various dated ownership notes, including one with the name of Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl (f. 7r). At the end of the manuscript, there are some astronomical calculations dated (Ramaḍān 1131/July 1719). A recipe is dated 1293 (?)/1876 (f. II v).

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 353 in pencil, with an indication of the manuscript title. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

MS ARA 9, f. 7r: Title page of the *Kitāb al-Muḡnī* with various ownership notes

شديده وفي يده نثار دخاني كان الجامع لخلل البخار وحفف الممتلا وسد
 النفس وسقي من الماء الخوليا والوقت الموافق له قبل النوم وبعد استعمال
 شئ من الطعام فان اشرف المنتان في استعماله اضعف القوي
 وصفه اللون واقتب الحواس واجرت العيشه والفالج والعطب

المرض	السبب	العرض
المرض	زيادة الخلط الدموي	يستند على الورم الحار
الحادثه في المشي	او عليه الخلط البلغمي	بالتمدد والجمع والمزج والطلب
الجاء والبارده	والسوداوي	ويستند على الورم البلق بالظهور
		وعبر الوجع وساق الجليد
		ويستند على الخلط المشوي او
		بالظلاله وعدم الحس وكونه اللز

علاج الورم الحار في الجنس في المنتد يكون بقصه الماسليق من الجانب
 الذي فيه العضو الوارم وان كانا جميعا وارمين فاجعل الفصد
 او لمن اليسرى ثم افصده في اليوم الثاني من البد المني واخرج من الدم
 بحسب ما تقضيه الحاجه وساعد عليه القوه واطل الموضع بالطلب
 وما عنب الثعلب وما حلى العالم وصندل وما ورد وبود المراج شرب
 الشعير وبعده السكخين ومره بانتفاض الزمان المر واسفه ما نثر
 بقله واللعب بالسكخين وجلاب فاذا انحل الورم وسكن الجافعه
 لمزور

فإن نتج سعال عولج باللبن والريد وحسوا البيض **وعلاج** من اكل
 بصل العنصل يشرب اللبن الذي قبل القى فيه الحماة المحماة وشرب شقوف
 الطين وصفر البيض وعالجهم كالعلاج المشحوجين **وعلاج** من اكل البلاء
 القى بالسم والريد والشبرج دفعات فلا لغت المعده سقى ما الشعير
 بدهن اللوز وما برز نقله بشراب اللينوف يشكخين وما التفاح وما الرمان
 المر الى يدهن اللوز واللعب بالحلاب والغذالم اسفند باج **وعلاج**
 المريض بعلاج المرشمين وهذا العلاج بعالج من سقى الحنيد باشر
وعلاج من سقى المنج القى وشرب طينخ التن واشتغف الله العظيم
 من الرباده والمقضان وهو حسبي وده التوفيق وعليه التكلان
 ثم الكتاب بحمد الله تعالى ومنه وحسن توفيقه
 وصلى الله على رسوله سيدنا محمد واله وصحبه
 وسلم تسليما كثيرا طيبا
 مباركا فيه

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 NAPOLI
 N. inventario 104938
 DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI ASIATICI

Ms ARA 12

(inv. SA 104968)

[*Kitāb Šarḥ al-Qānūnğah fī al-ṭibb*]

by al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Astarābādī (d. 813/1410-11)]

Undated (13th/18th century?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Medical commentary

The *Kitāb Šarḥ al-Qānūnğah [fī al-ṭibb]* by the Persian physician al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Astarābādī (d. 813/1410-11) is a commentary translated into Arabic on Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Ğaghmīnī al-Ḥwārizmī (d. 745/1344)’s *al-Qānūnğah*, which is itself based on Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037)’s canonical medical text, *al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb*.

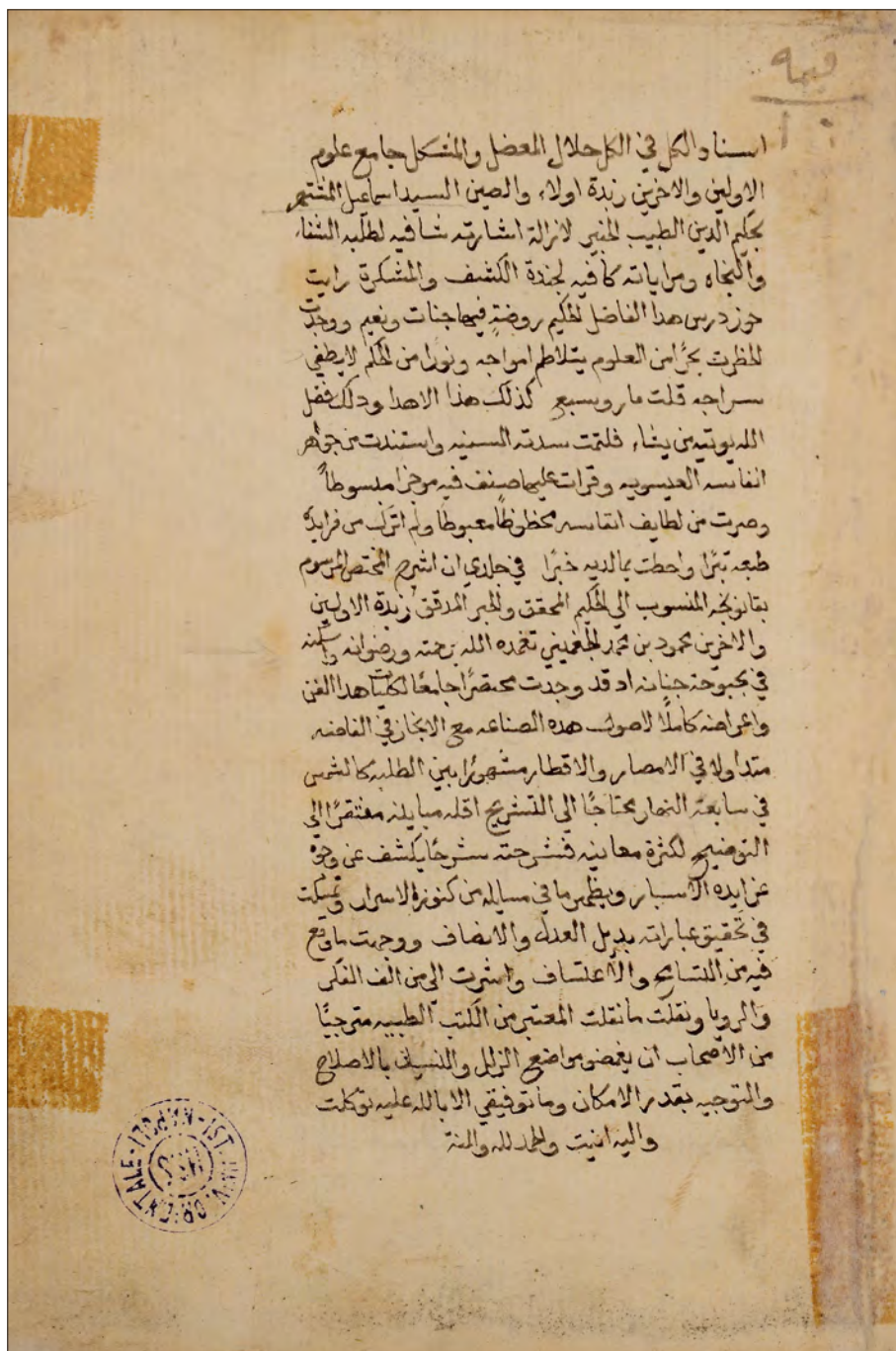
This manuscript copy lacks both a title page and the opening portion of the introduction. The commentary is organized into ten treatises (titled *maqālas*), each subdivided into concise chapters, with headings consistently marked in red. Its systematic structure likely accounts for the inclusion of a diagram, a *šağarat al-amrād* (tree of diseases), executed in red and black ink on f. 46v. While functioning as a commentary on an earlier commentary, the work also serves as a medical compendium, enriched with marginal notes and annotations throughout. Two medical recipes are appended at the conclusion of the text (f. 133r).

ff. I, 1r-133r, without title page. The original complete manuscript likely comprised 138 folios (as noted on folio 133r). Dual foliation in Arabic and Western numerals. Dimensions: 200 × 145 mm. Written surface: 150 × 65 mm; 25 lines per page. Quinions. Script: minute *nashī*. Ink: Black; rubrication in red ink; diagonal catchwords in black ink. Glosses in Arabic in black and red ink. Binding: Half-leather binding with an envelope flap. Marbled paper with wave patterns, known as Spanish marbling, in green, yellow, and red on the covers and flap. Paper: European paper watermarked with *Tre lune*; in the first quinion (ff. 12, 13, 16, 17), watermark crown surmounted by a six-pointed star and crescent; in the final quinions, countermark three-petalled flower with <S S>.

Annotations: Note on the front pastedown signed *al-ṭabīb* 1230/1814-15. The manuscript was ruled using a *mistara*, while the copyist simultaneously traced full-page vertical dry point lines corresponding to the main text to delimit the space reserved for commentary.

Traces of ancient repairs on the leaves and a new restoration in 2004.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 152, and no. 370 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.





MS ARA 12 f. 133r: Colophon containing various ownership inscriptions and prayers



MS ARA 12: Title of the work written on the fore-edge of the manuscript



MS ARA 13 (1-2)

(inv. SA 104997)

This Yemeni composite manuscript comprises two treatises, each addressing general bodily diseases as well as ailments affecting specific organs and parts of the body.

MS ARA 13 (1) ff. 1r-136v

Kitāb Šifā' al-ağsām wa-l-qulūb fīmā yaḥtāğahu al-ṭabīb fī al-maṭbūb mim mā aḡrā bihi al-naḡ' allām al-ḡuyūb
by al-Kamarānī (d. 857/1453)

Dated: 999/1590-91 | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Treatise on general diseases and diseases of specific organs

The first work preserved in the manuscript, titled *Kitāb Šifā' al-ağsām wa-l-qulūb fīmā yaḥtāğahu al-ṭabīb fī al-maṭbūb mim mā aḡrā bihi al-naḡ' allām al-ḡuyūb* (ff. 1v-136v), is a treatise on diseases affecting individual body parts and general diseases, along with their related treatments. The author, Ġamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ġayṭ al-Kamarānī al-Qurašī (d. 857/1453), addresses both localized and systemic illnesses, integrating therapeutic practices from his personal experience and earlier authorities. These include not only Islamic scholars (*mašā'ih*) but also figures from classical antiquity such as Hippocrates, Galen, and Aristotle, demonstrating the syncretic nature of Arabic medical knowledge.

The manuscript copy features multiple scripts. The final folios of the first treatise are bound out of order, although the text itself was copied by a single scribe.

MS ARA 13 (2) ff. 137r-192v

Kitāb al-Muwaṣṣil li-l-aḡrād fī mudāwāt al-amrād fī al-ṭibb
by 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Mušarri' (fl. before 1094/1682-83)

Dated: 1115/1703 | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Treatise on diseases and their causes

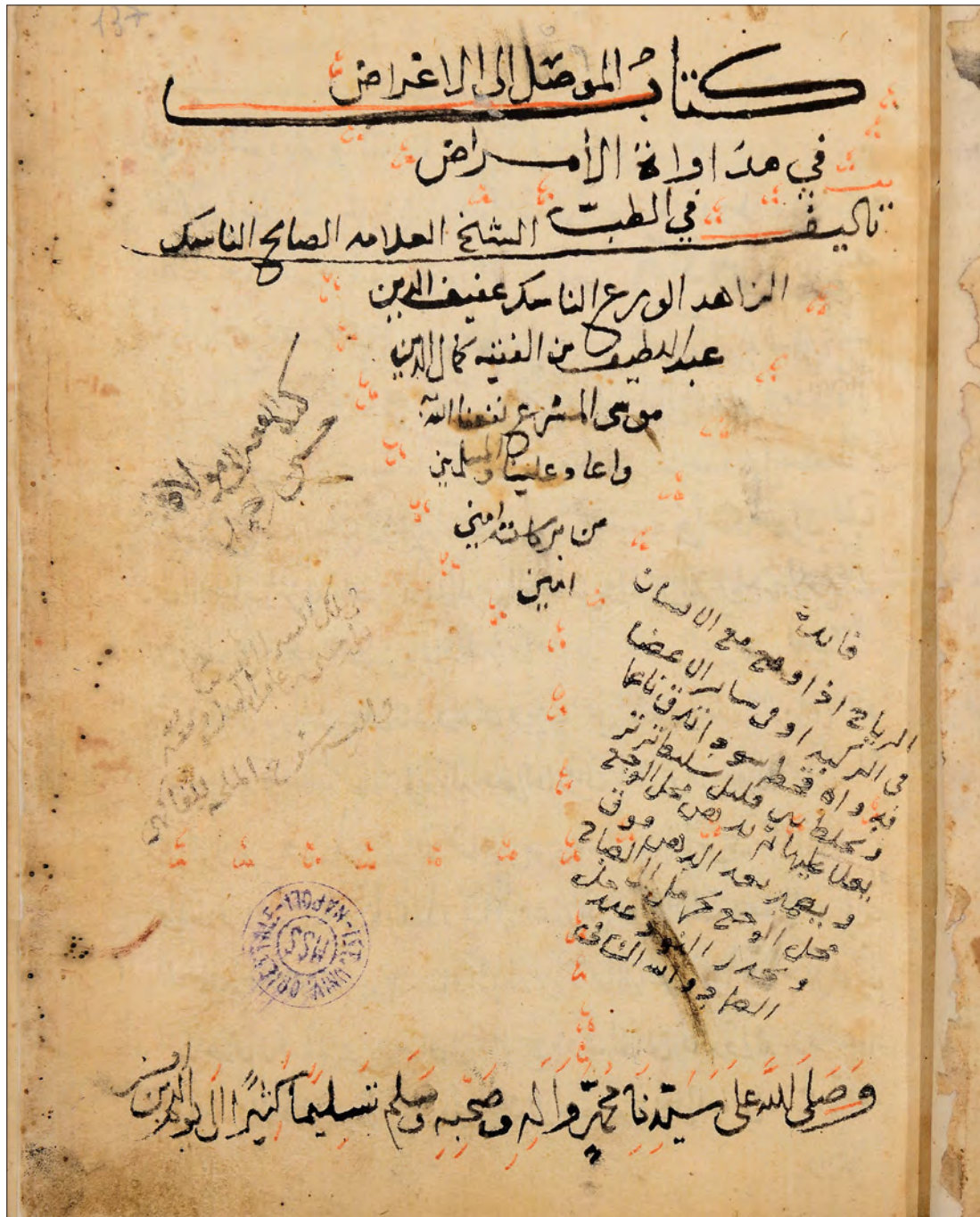
The second work, titled *Kitāb al-Muwaṣṣil li-l-aḡrād fī mudāwāt al-amrād fī al-ṭibb* and written by 'Abd al-Laṭīf b. Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā al-Mušarri' (fl. before 1094/1682-83) (ff. 137r-192v), is a treatise on various diseases divided by organ with their respective causes and treatments.

Unlike the first work featured in the manuscript, the second treatise was transcribed by several different hands. Section titles, as well as the names of certain diseases and treatments, are written in a larger script for emphasis. The margins

contain numerous annotations commenting on the application and efficacy of specific treatments. The manuscript copy also includes prayers and blessing formulas inscribed at both the beginning and the end of the text.

ff.: I, 1v–136v, 137r–192v; two guard sheets added during the 2004 restoration. Incorrect quire arrangement during the restoration, with ff. 137, 135, and 136 misplaced in sequence. Dimensions: 225 × 155 mm; written area: 260 × 100 mm; 20 to 25 lines per page. Dual foliation in Arabic and Western numerals. Quinions. Script: Two texts by different hands in *nashī*. Ink: Black and red; horizontal catchwords in black ink, in red ink on ff. 187v and 188v; rubrication in red ink. Glosses in Arabic in black ink. Binding: Half-leather binding with a flap; brown leather spine; covers and flap in gray-green cardboard. Paper: Oriental yellowish paper and European paper with different watermarks in the two texts: a crown surmounted by stars and a crescent moon on ff. 59 after; *Tre lune* and a Latin cross from f. 170 onward. Annotations: A repair strip on f. 89r containing a two-line text correction, likely coeval. A 3×3 magic square with the Seal of Solomon on f. 20v., three Seals of Solomon and an alphabetical square on f. 76v.

Label on the front, pasted down: Collezione Sarnelli di Medicina Indigena. Il “*Libro della guarigione dei corpi e de cuori*” di *Ġamāl ad-Dīn al-Kamarānī*. (*Copia del 1590*). Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 144, 145; in pencil, no. 359, 360. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 13 (2), f. 137r: Title page of the second work in the manuscript:
Kitāb al-Muwaṣṣil li-l-āḡrād, including the author, a medical remedy (fā'ida), and notes

ويطبخ حتى لا يبقى من الماء الا العشر اوقية
 ويصفى حتى يذهب ويؤخذ من هذا الماء اربعة اجزاء من السليط
 جزء واحد ويطبخ حتى يذهب الماء ويزفع الدهن وتكون صفة
 وموضع اخراؤخذ من شجرة الاعضان والورق والزهري وضع
 ويغلى بالماء ويطبخ حتى يذهب ارباعه وما قارب ذلك ويطبخ
 ثلثه سليطا حتى يذهب الماء ويستعمل هذا **صفة دهن الحار**
 ان يخذ من قاورق الاش الطري الغضر طلان شريح رطل
 لاذن نصف اوقية ينقع ليلة ثم يطبخ بئان كينه حتى يذهب
 وينقى الدهن **صفة دهن اللادن** ان يؤخذ اوقية لاذن
 مشقوقة وسبع في رطل من دهن الاش يوما وليلة ثم يغلى حتى
 يتحلل اللادن ثم يرفع **صفة دهن الشذاب** يؤخذ زيت
 اربعة انطال ونصف ووزن الشذاب الطري ربع اواق
 رطل ونصف يطبخ بئان كينه في قدر نظيفة حتى يذهب
 على الدهن ويبرد ويصفى ويستعمل **من المعتمد في الطب**
واما هن الفرع فقدم في ادوية الجنون **هن الغنيطا**
 هو لعوب الهندي صفتها ان يذوق القسط حرسا قدر نصف
 اوقية ويطبخ في مكيحي ينقص النصف ثم يبرأ ويصفى ويحلل
 على الماء الصافي مثله سليطا ويطبخ ثانيا حتى يذهب الماء
 وينقى السليط **صفة الشترج** **هن الماوت** وطرية من
 مجموعان المؤلف من الله تعالى ان يذوق حرسا في هاون حشمت ثم
 يذوق عليه ما جاز ويغضره انتهى باب من الكتاب



MS ARA 14

(inv. SA 104998)

Luqaṭ al-manāfiʿ fī ʿilm al-ṭibb
by Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200)Undated (13th/18th century) | Copied by Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd al-Samaʿānī (?)
Yemeni manuscript | Prophetic medicin | Handbook on general medicine

The *Luqaṭ al-manāfiʿ fī ʿilm al-ṭibb* by Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1200) is a medical handbook on Prophetic medicine (*ṭibb al-nabawī*). It addresses various physical diseases and their corresponding treatments. The original work is divided into 70 chapters. In MS ARA 14, chapter 68 is incomplete, while chapters 69 and the beginning of chapter 30 are missing.

The text is preceded by several folios (ff. a-g) written by various hands—presumably former owners of the manuscript—containing therapeutic advice for specific ailments (such as smallpox and burning sensations in the bladder), instructions for preparing medicinal drinks, verses, dosage guidelines, medical recipes, magical-healing prescriptions, and religious annotations. The final folios (ff. 279v-285r) of the manuscript contain several pious ejaculations and religious invocations along with notes that are partially erased and partially illegible.

ff. a-g, 1r-280r, blank leaves: 281-286. Dimensions: 215 x 160 mm. Written surface: 155 x 95 mm, 19 lines. Previous foliation in Arabic numerals in black ink, located in the upper left corner of the recto pages. Script: *nashīʿ*. Ink: Black; rubrication and table of contents in red ink. Few marginal glosses in Arabic in black ink; diagonal catchwords in black ink. Binding: Brown leather binding with a flap, decorated with a double frame and a central almond-shaped medallion, palmettes, and floral motifs, surmounted by two small almonds with the same motif. The same motif appears on the cartouche, which is topped by two drop-shaped elements on the flap spine and the flap itself. The outer spine has been restored. Paper: European watermarked paper, featuring a barely discernible watermark with a crown on a tabula, possibly accompanied by an initial, set within a geometric figure (perhaps a rhombus), and decorated.

Five ownership notes dated 1139/1727, 1142/1730, 1288/1871 on f. 1r, one of which is enclosed in a circle with a six-petalled star. On the lower edge, the title of the manuscript: *Luqaṭ al-manāfiʿ*. Next to the title, there is a dedication to Dr. Sarnelli.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 132, and no. 365 in pencil, with an indication of the volume title: *Luqaṭ al-manāfiʿ* Ibn al-Ġawzī. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 14, f. 1r: Title page of the *Luqaṭ al-manāfiʿ*,
 with numerous dated ownership notes and a dedication to Dr. Sarnelli in red ink

الجيدة بمنزلة قوة البصر موجودة النفس وفتح البول وغير ذلك فله يفتقر بذلك
واعلم هؤلاء المريض قال جالينوس كان مرضي يبلغ من أمرهم ان شكت
عنهم الامراض بغيره بلا استفراغ ولا تحليل فدخلوا الحمام ووضوا وانا
ثابت القول على هلاكهم والاطباء يسخرون في ان كرت عليهم الامراض فقتلتهم
واذا كان في عضون الاحضا ورم او وجع فغالب الورم وسكن الوجع خاف
عقبه كرب وعطش وقلق فذلك ردي فان هاج خفقان فهو قاتل
ذكر علامات يستدل بهام كلام المريض وسكوته اذا رايت
العليل تياذي به باسماء الموق فذلك ردي لانه يدل على انه في الدماغ
اخلاطاً محترقة سوداوية وان الدماغ نفسه قد ناله الاحتراق والحلة
وسرعة الكلام من الرجل الحكيم في الامراض الحادة دليل ردي لانه يدل
على الخروج عن الطبع وكذلك لسكوت من الرجل الكثير الكلام ردي اذا مرض
الانسان المصنوع الذي لا يكاد يرضى كان مرضه مخوفاً والله اعلم بالصفا

هذا الكتاب لقط المنافع في علم الطب حماد الله
على عبده الذليل المذنب المذنب المذنب المذنب المذنب
فنسئل الله حسن الخاتمة محمد واهله بيته وصحبه
صلوات الله على محمد وآل محمد صلواته وبركاته
عليه وعلى آله بافضل البركات مادامت الدنيا
والآخرة اللهم صل على محمد وعلى آل





MS ARA 15

(inv. SA 104999)

Tadkirat ūlī al-albāb wa-l-ġāmi‘ li-l-‘aġab al-‘uġāb
by Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1509)

Undated (13th/18th century?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Handbook on general medicine

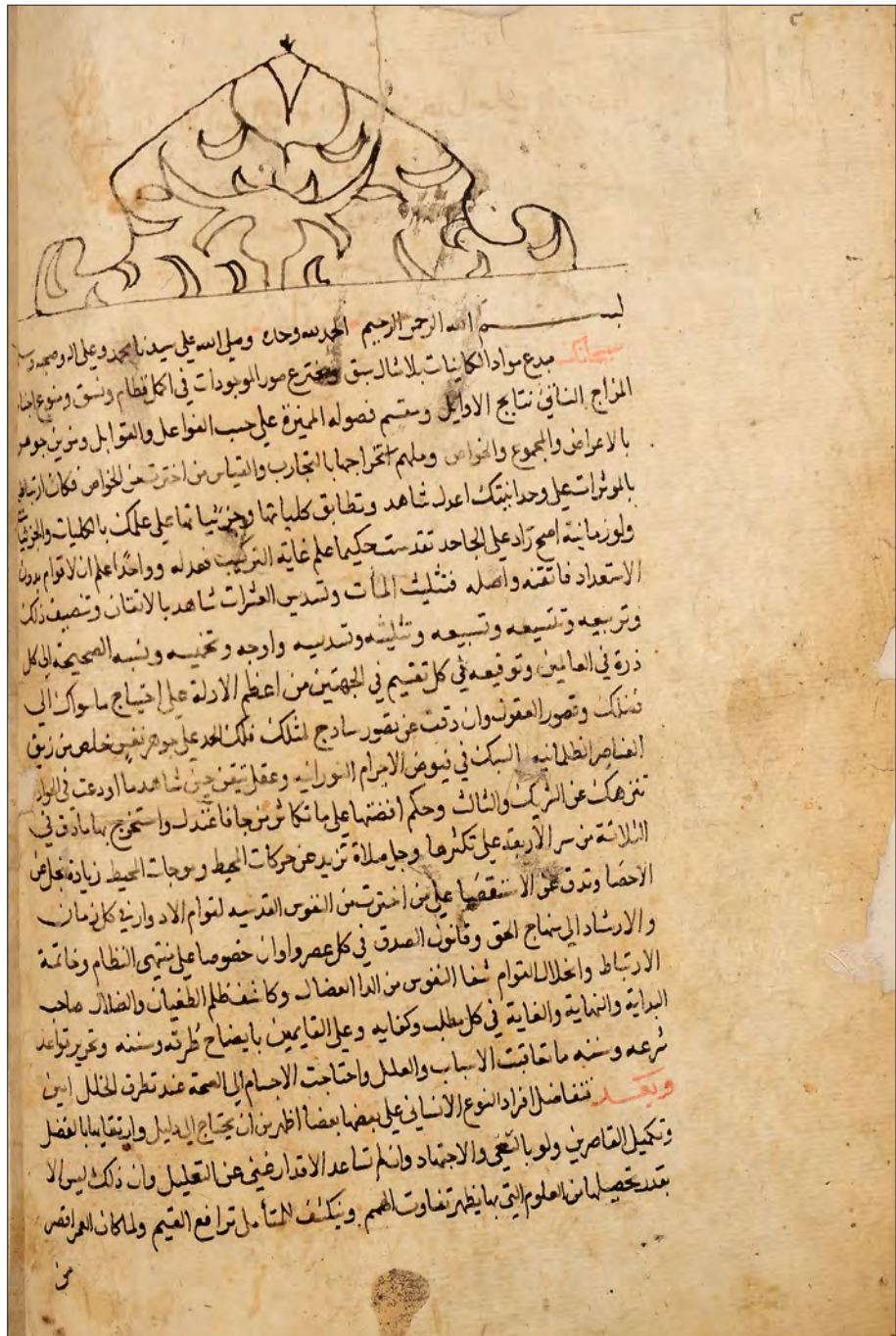
The *Tadkirat ūlī al-albāb wa-l-ġāmi‘ li-l-‘aġab al-‘uġāb*, authored by the renowned Ottoman Egyptian physician, pharmacist, and scholar Dāwūd al-Anṭākī (d. 1008/1509) is a well-known handbook of general medicine.

The manuscript preserves only two of the three parts of the original work and is therefore incomplete. Besides, several pages are missing from both the introduction and various chapters of the two parts preserved in this codex. Additionally, portions of the text have been deliberately erased. In the outer margins, groups of single letters—rendered in red and/or black—indicate the sources of the information presented in the main text. The margins also contain numerous annotations that reflect active engagement by the copyist and subsequent owners, who supplemented al-Anṭākī’s work with key terms, additional information, and further explanatory details.

ff. a-d, 1r-314v (mutilated, with the text on ff. 313v-314v erased with black ink), e-h. Leaves a, b, g, and h were added later in an Arabic context. Dimensions: 285 × 200 mm. Written surface: 220 × 145 mm. 27 lines. Sporadic pagination in Arabic numerals in black ink, located in the upper corner of the verso pages. Foliation with other non-European numerals in black ink on the recto pages (*ghubar*?). Folios a–b and g–h appear to be later additions, likely produced within the Arab cultural context. Alphabetical numbering of quires. Sequences of signs—possibly letters or numbers—written in black ink appear in the upper margin of the recto folio. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; headings and rubrication in red ink. Marginal glosses in Arabic in black and violet ink, diagonal catchwords in black ink. *Sarlawh* on f. 1v in black ink. Binding: Stiff half-leather binding with a flap, spine and corners in brown leather, and covers in dark gray cardboard. Floral interlace cartouche on the flap spine. On the front board, the title in Arabic: *Tadkirat Dā’ūd al-Anṭākī*. Paper: Bifolios a-b and g-h: brownish Oriental paper, watermarked with a crescent moon with a human profile inscribed within a shield with a double border and three points, along with a countermark in two lines: <بياض ابو شيبك اسطنبولي> *Beyāḍ Abū Šubbāk Iṣṭambūlī* and <علي اصيلي> *‘ālī aṣīlī*. Initial ff. c-d and final ff. e-f: European paper with a watermark featuring *Tre lune* and a crown surmounted by a star and a crescent. Main text block on dark Oriental paper.

Annotations dated, on the recto of ff. c, 1208/1793, and d, 1203/1789. On ff. 14r, 88r, and 98r, groups of letters—possibly from the Arabic alphabet or another script—appear, which may represent abbreviations of sources.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 147, and no. 356 in pencil. Below the ex-libris Sarnelli, a pencil note reads: “12/2/31, from Dr. Sukkarī”. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 19 (1-2)

(Inv. SA 105002)

A multi-text manuscript containing two distinct medical treatises on diseases and their respective treatments, transcribed by two different scribes and subsequently bound together.

MS ARA 19 (1) ff. 1r-22v

Untitled work by unknown author

Undated | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Treatises on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases

Incomplete, acephalous, and apodous unidentified medical treatise focused on the diagnosis and treatment of common diseases, including those affecting the respiratory and digestive systems, as well as hygiene guidance.

MS ARA 19 (2) ff. 23r-69v

*[al-Risāla al-Šihābiyya fī al-ṣinā'a al-ṭibbiyya
by Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Māridinī (10th/16th century)]*

Completed on 18 Ġumāda al-awwal 1130/19 April 1718 | Copyist unknown

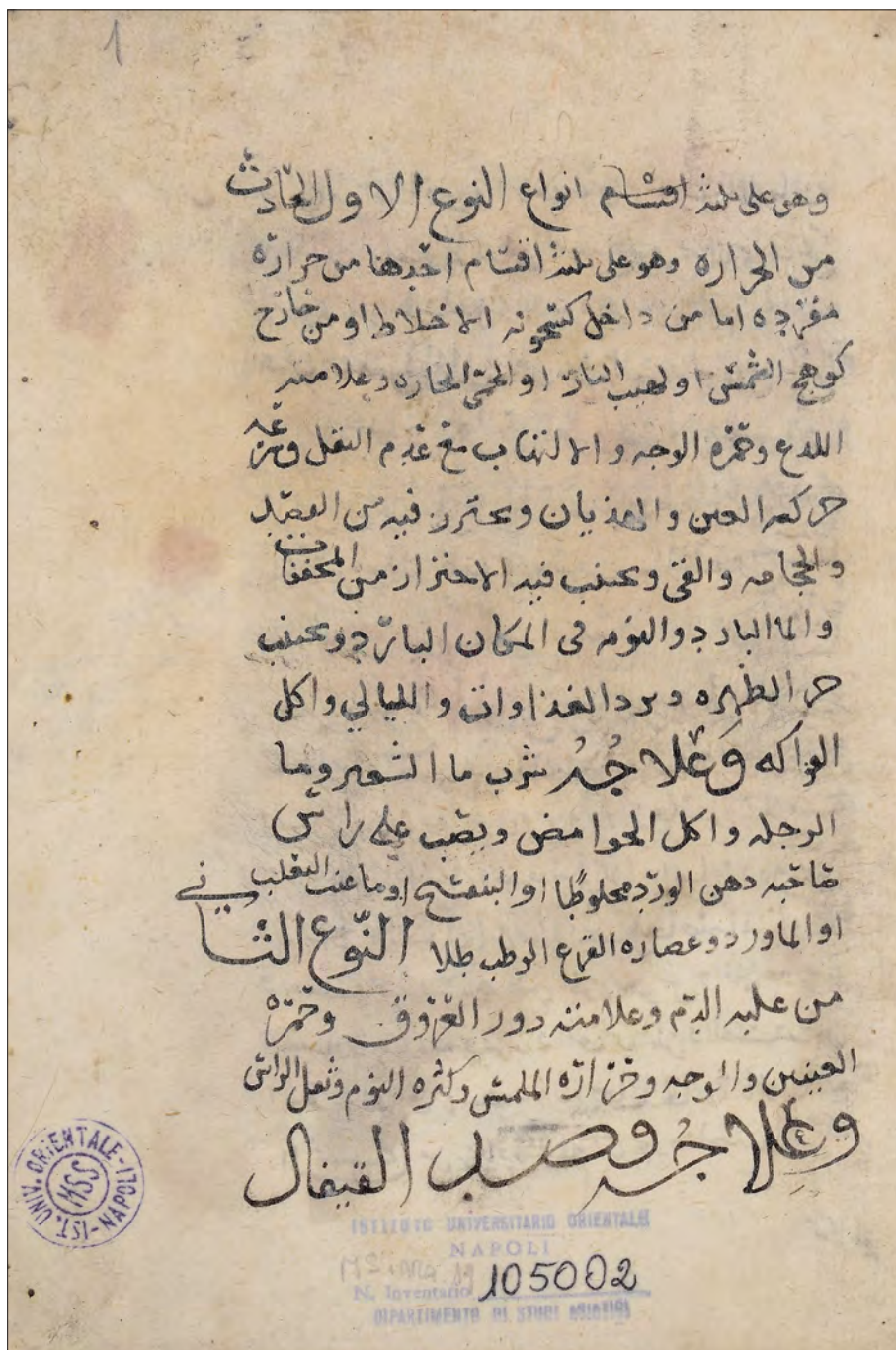
Yemeni manuscript | Treatises on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases

Despite the absence of a title page, the manuscript preserves *al-Risāla al-Šihābiyya fī al-ṣinā'a al-ṭibbiyya* by Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Māridinī (10th/16th century), a therapeutic manual originally composed in eighty chapters.

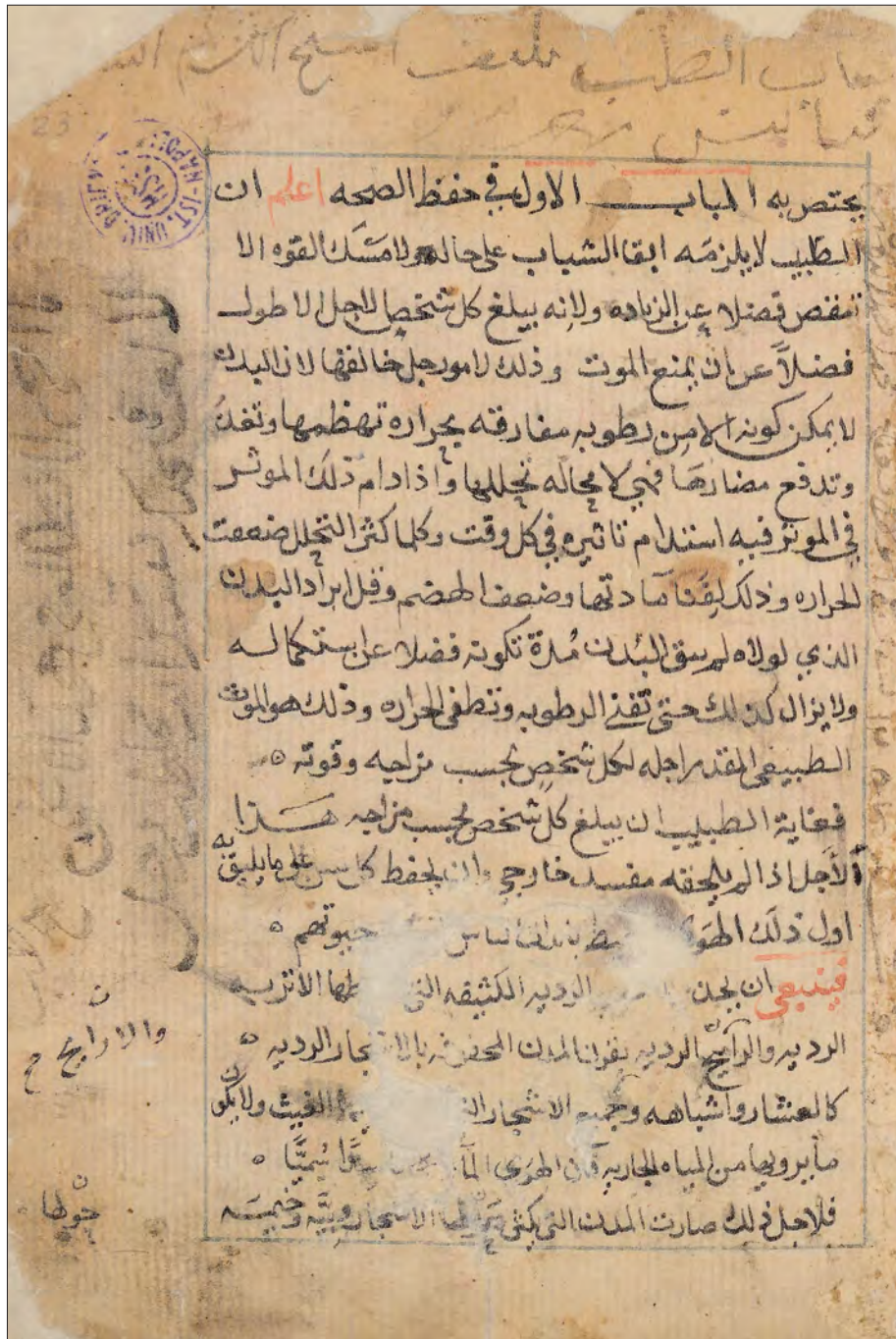
The manuscript copy is acephalous and lacks chapters 3 to 15 and chapter 79. The margins contain numerous notes in various hands, including comments on the efficacy of different recipes, as well as additions and supplementary formulations. At the end of the manuscript, there are some verses, formulas on the beneficial use of certain substances, and notes of ownership (ff. 68v-69v). A significant number of words are illegible. The name of the copyist has been erased and is illegible (f. 69r). An ownership note at the end of the book is dated (122?/180?) (f. 69r).

ff. 1r-69v; European foliation. Dimensions: 210 × 155 mm. Written surface: 140 × 95 mm; irregular lines per page (ff. 1r-22v). Written surface: 160 × 90 mm; 19 lines per page (ff. 23r-69r); text framed in red or green (ff. 23r-34v). Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; rubrication and headings in red and green ink (ff. 23r-69r). Diagonal catchwords in black ink. Marginal glosses in various hands (ff. 23r-69r). Binding: Coeval but not original binding in red-brown leather, pasted over cardboard; painted decorations on the covers, with blind-tooled triple frame; corner pieces and central

mandorla, adorned with black and gold floral motifs. Fore-edge flap with black cartouche and blind tooling. The spine is not original and was integrated during restoration. Doublure decorated with floral motifs in green and yellow. Paper: Western paper with watermarks: hand (ff. 1r-22v); lune, crown-six-point star-crescent (ff. 23r-69r). Condition: Evidence of moisture exposure and discoloration. Both the paper and binding have undergone recent restoration.



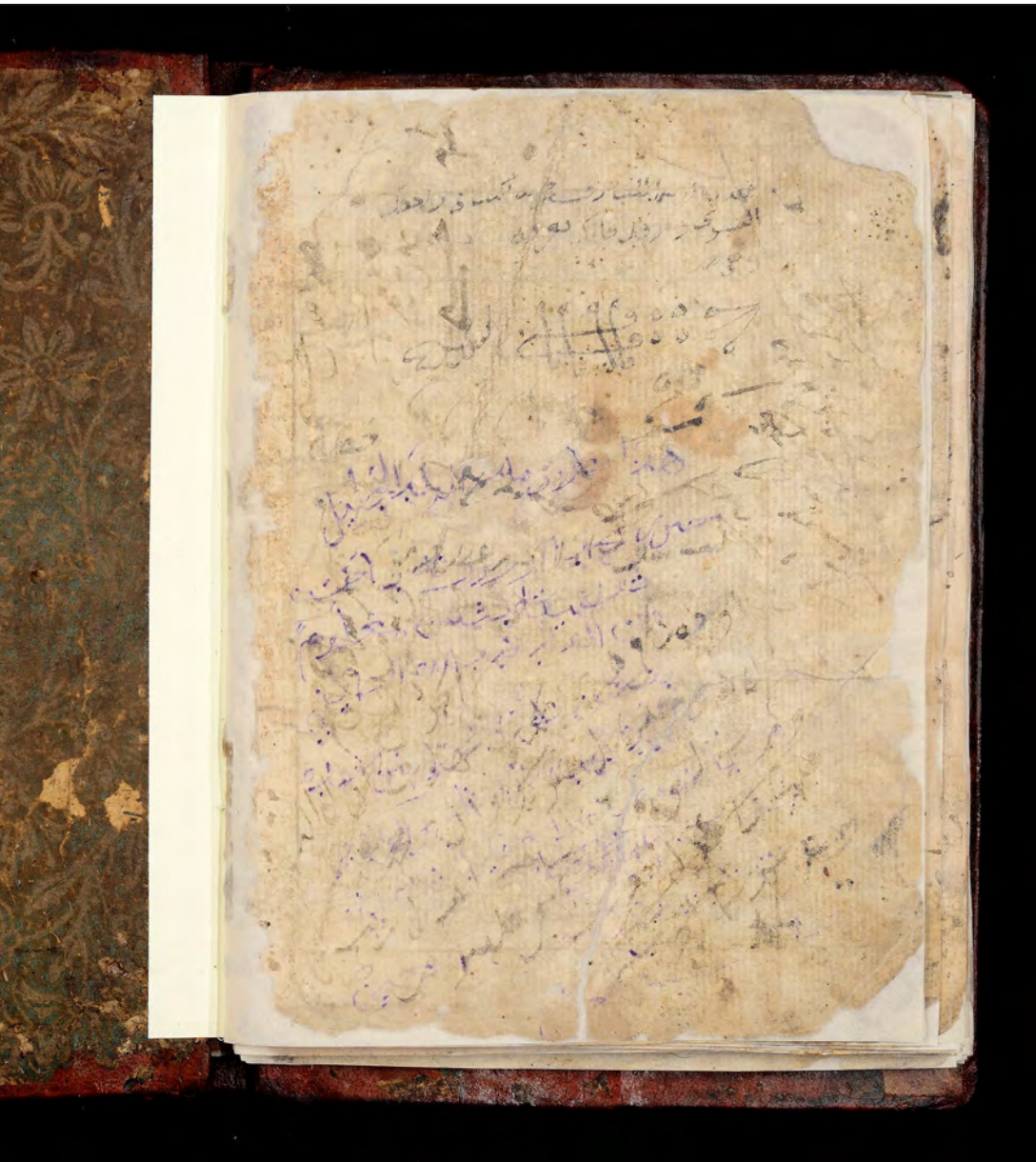
MS ARA 19 (1), f. 1r: Beginning (acephalous) of the first work





MS ARA 19 (2), f. 69r: Colophon of the second work, with various ownership notes and prayers





MS ARA 19, f. 69v, with erased magical formulas; back cover/doublure with floral motifs

MS ARA 20

(inv. SA 105006)

Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man ‘ağaza ‘an al-ta’līf

by Abū al-Qāsim al-Zahrāwī (known as Abulcasis, d. 400/1009)

Undated (13th/18th century?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Encyclopaedia on medicine and surgery

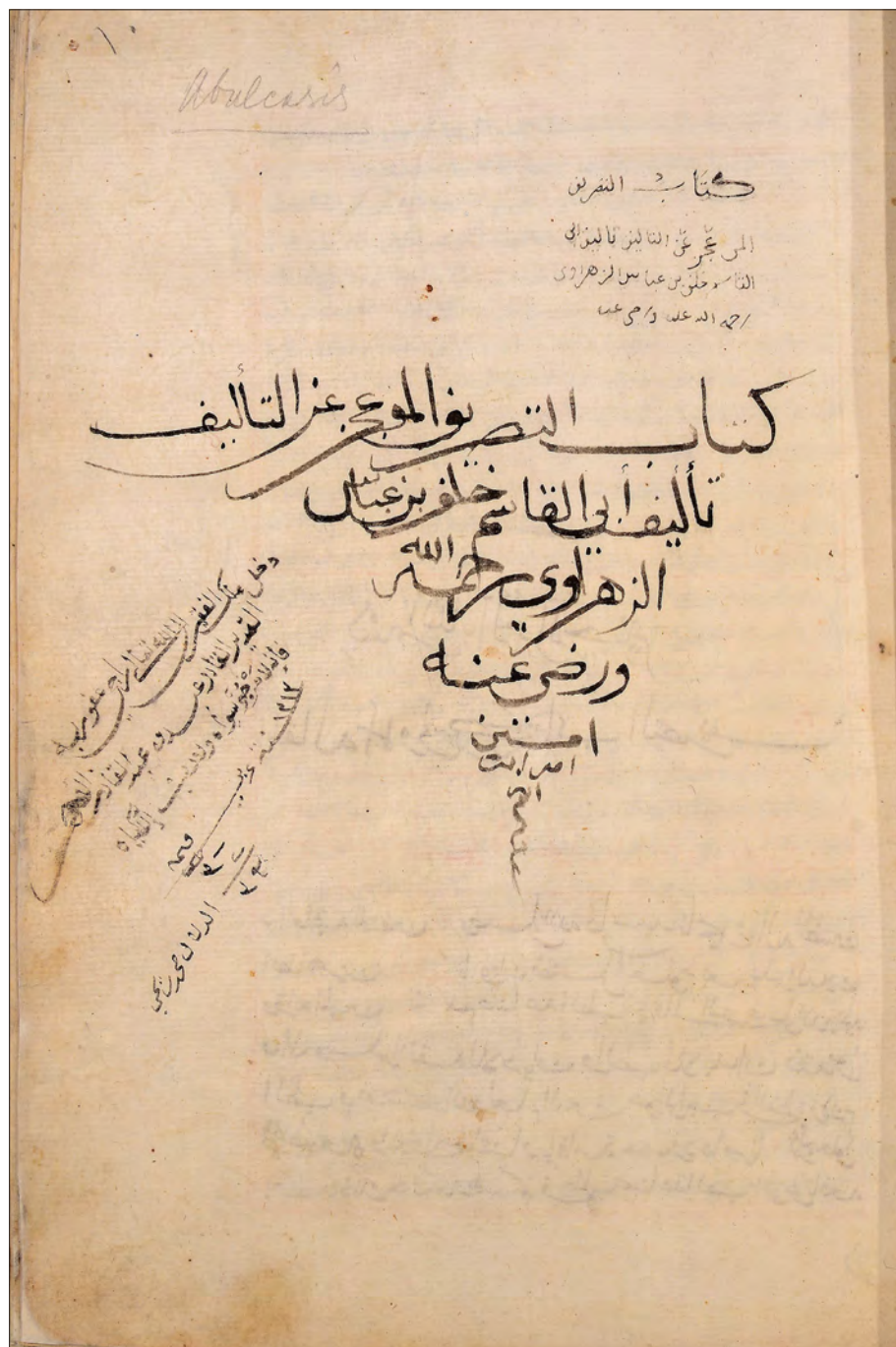
The Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man ‘ağaza ‘an al-ta’līf by the surgeon, chemist and physician Abū al-Qāsim Ḥalaf b. ‘Abbās al-Zahrāwī (known as Abulcasis, d. 400/1009) is regarded as one of the most renowned Andalusian medical encyclopaedias, encompassing both medicine and surgery. In addition to surgical practices, it includes extensive information on pharmacy, dietetics, hygiene, prophylaxis, and cosmetics. Structured into thirty *maqālāt* (treatises), it also provides detailed descriptions of over 200 distinct surgical instruments.

This manuscript copy contains only the first volume of the work, as indicated on the front cover (*al-ğuz’ al-awwal min Kitāb al-taṣrīf fi al-ṭibb*), consisting of the first two treatises. The text is divided into three parts, all copied by the same hand: ff. 1r–5v table of contents, 10r–47v first *maqāla* (treatise), 48v–145v second *maqāla*. The introductory section includes a table of contents, accompanied by references to the sources consulted by the author in the compilation of his work. Individuals other than the copyist—presumably former owners of the manuscript—added a series of recipes and annotations regarding the efficacy of certain medicines on the folios between the table of contents and the beginning of the main text (ff. 6r–9v). The first treatise contains information on the elements and the mixtures (i.e. the various sorts of temperament), the compounding of drugs, and anatomy. The second treatise concerns the classification of diseases, symptoms, and related treatments. The following treatises on surgery are therefore completely missing.

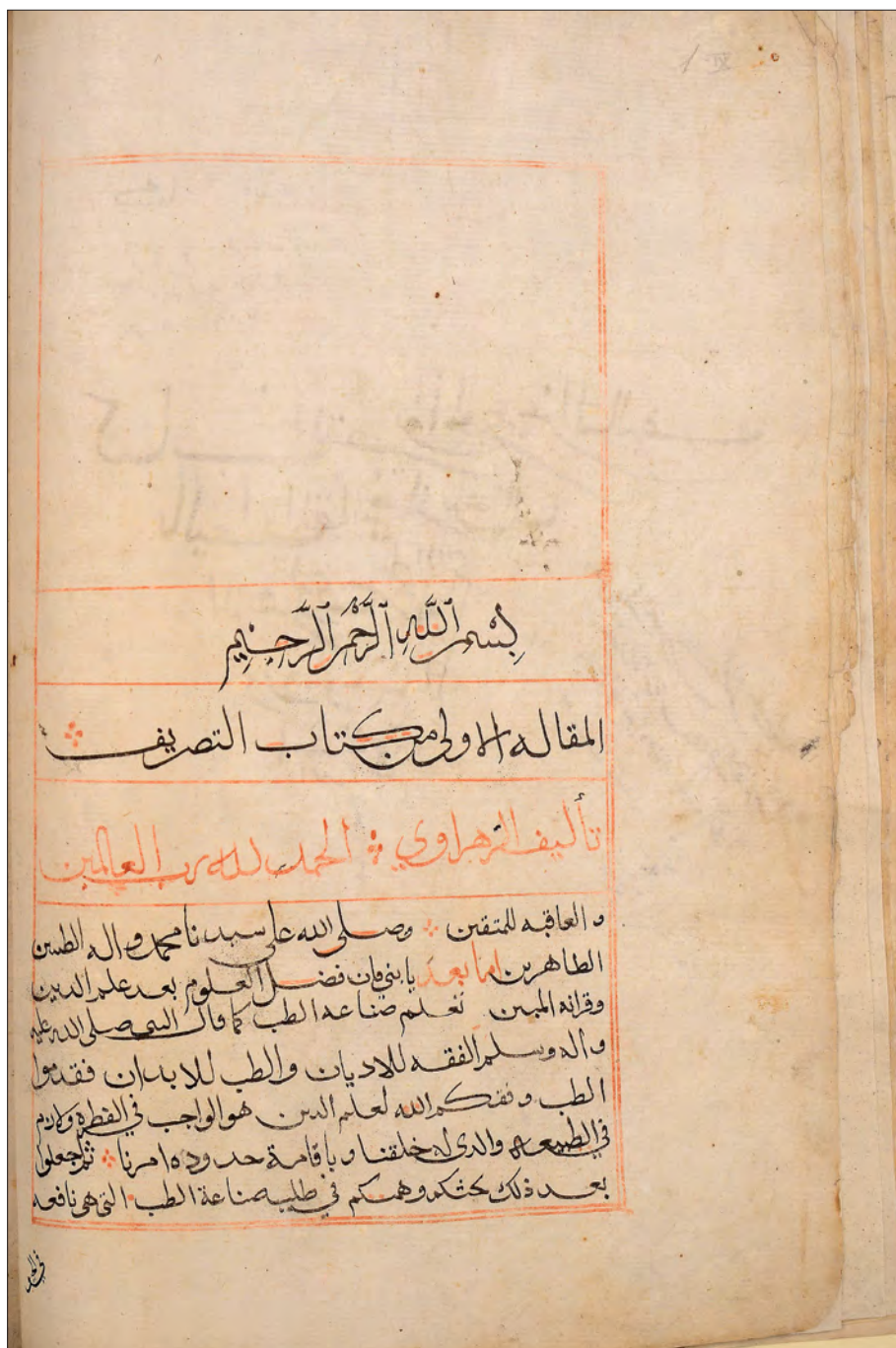
ff. I, 1r–145v, incomplete; ff. 6v, 7r, 8v, 9v, and 48v are left blank. Four fly leaves were added during the 2004 restoration. Double foliation: Western numerals on the upper outer corner of the versos, and Arabic Eastern numerals on the upper outer corner of the rectos (Arabic numbering is used here). Dimensions: 330 × 220 mm. Written surface: 255 × 145 mm. Lines per page: 31. Quaternions. Ink: Black. Text enclosed within a double red frame. Rubrication in red ink. On ff. 10r–47v, the outer margins display paragraph divisions numbered 1 to 239 in black ink; sporadic paragraph numbering also appears in the third section of the text. Sparse marginal notes in black ink, with a few in red. Diagonal catchwords in black ink. Most of the manuscript consists of folios written in faded, or possibly washed, ink, over which

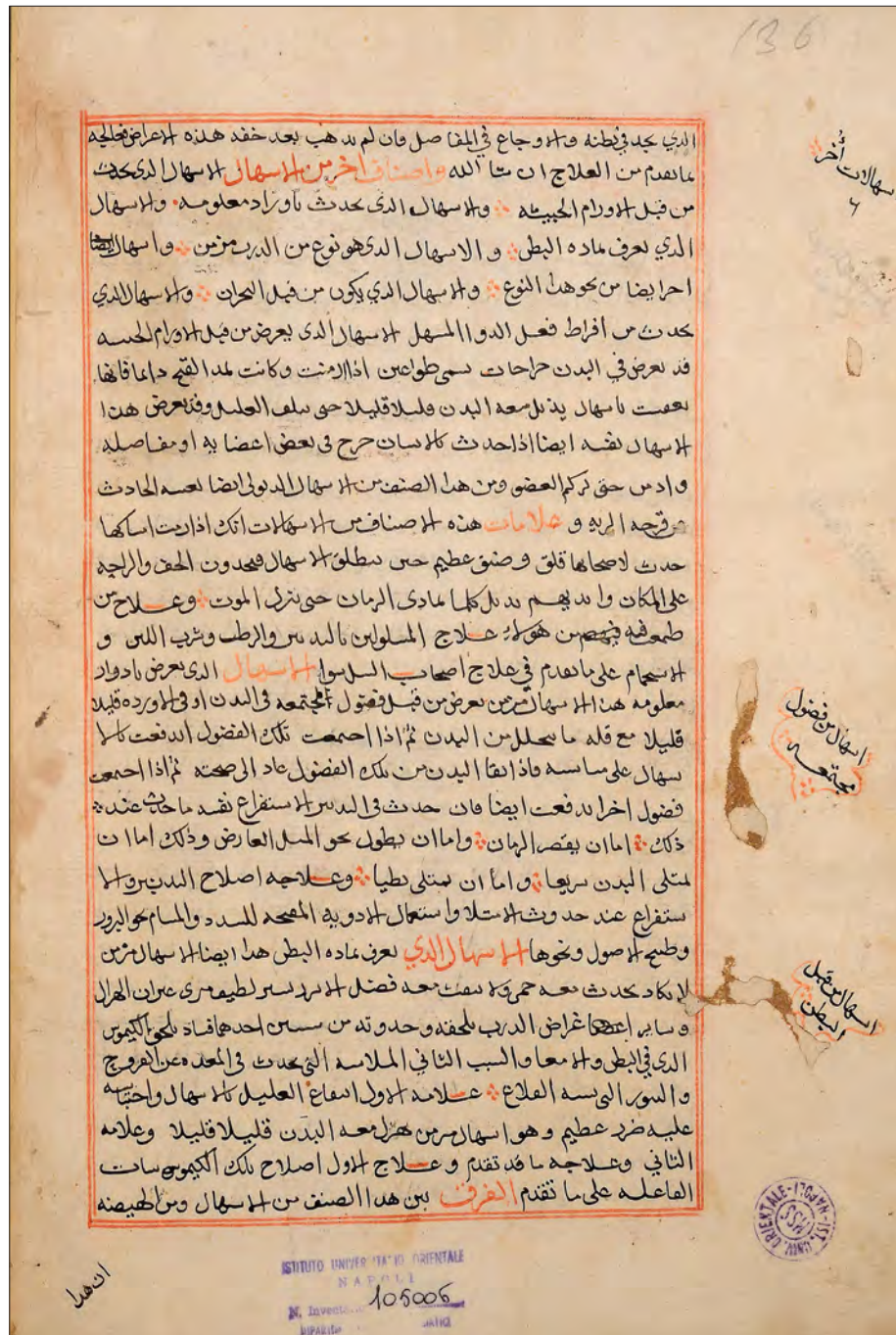
the text has been recopied in black ink. Script: *nashī*. Binding: Rebound during the 2004 restoration, preserving fragments of the original covers: beige cardboard decorated with green paper at the corners and a green central mandorla. Paper: European paper with a watermark approximately 15 cm in size, partially legible. A circular motif, surmounted above and below by two crescents, is intermittently visible. On f. 9, a *Tre lune* watermark is present. A possible countermark “F V” is detectable on fol. 8. A note dated f. 10r (1212/1797). Two ownership notes (dated 1207/1793 and 1313/1895-96) and seals on f. 1r.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 120; no. 349 in pencil. On the back cover, an inscription in Arabic, written in red pencil, records that Dr. Sarnelli acquired the manuscript during the month of Shawwal (1931? See Chapter 2 by Francesca Bellino). Provenance: Purchased by the Oriental University Institute from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 20, f. 10r: Title page of the *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf li-man ‘aḡāza ‘an al-ta’līf*, including the author’s name and a possession note

MS ARA 20, f. 10v: First *maqāla* of the *Kitāb al-Taṣrīf*



MS ARA 34

(inv. SA 105046)

[*Taṣḥīl al-manāfi‘ fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*
by Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Azraq (or al-Azraqī, d. ca. 889/1485)]

Copied by Ḥasan b. Ismā‘īl b. Ṣāliḥ b. Sa‘īd al-Mu‘aḍḍin al-Ḍawrānī | Completed on 1299/1881
Yemeni manuscript | Medical compendium

The *Taṣḥīl al-manāfi‘ fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* is a medical compendium intended to be both practical and accessible, drawing on *Kitāb al-Šifā’ li-l-aḡsām* by al-Kamarānī (d. 857/1453), the *Kitāb al-Raḥma* by al-Sunbārī (d. 815/1412), the *Kitāb Luḡaṭ al-manāfi‘* by Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 597/1201), along with other medical treatises from the later Islamic period.

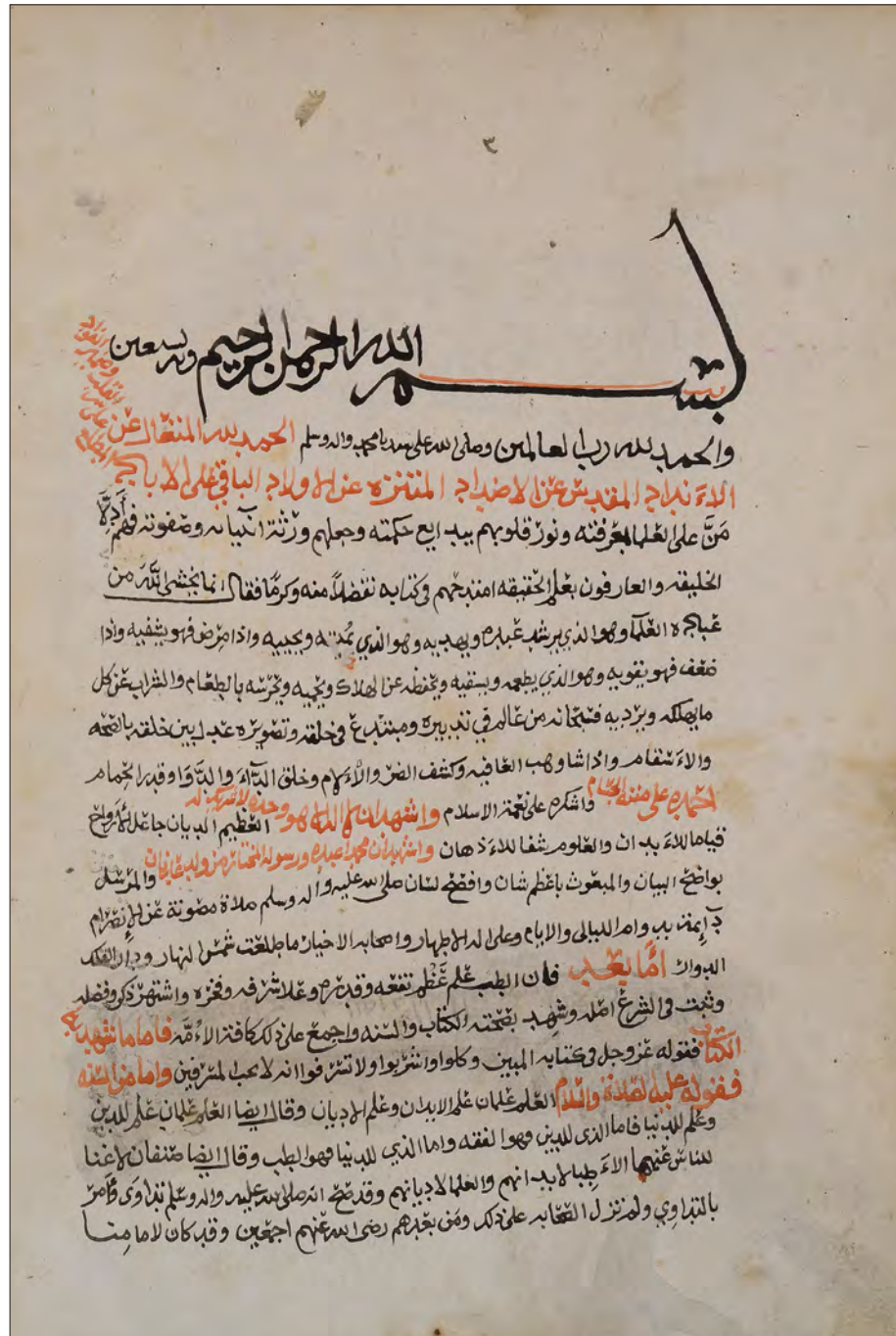
This manuscript copy underscores the didactic nature of the work through its visual presentation. The names of certain diseases are rendered in red ink, and variations in script size are employed to guide the reader’s attention. The pedagogical function is further reinforced by the formatting of chapter titles, some of which appear in bold and are enclosed within decorative borders to enhance their visibility and navigability.

ff. 1v-160r, ff. 160v-162v left blank. Dimensions: 330 × 230 mm. Written surface: 245 × 150 mm. Lines per page: 27-33. Quinions. Previous pagination in Arabic numerals in black ink, located at the top margin of the leaves up to f. 23r; thereafter, a more recent pagination in pencil. Paper: Heavy Italian watermarked paper, featuring a crescent moon with a human profile inscribed within a shield with a double border and three points, as well as a *Tre lune* watermark. Additionally, it bears the countermark AG and another countermark in two lines: Andrea Galvani Pordenone. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; headings and rubrication in red and black ink. Small marginal notes and corrections in Arabic in black and red ink. Horizontal catchwords in black ink, with some gaps. Binding: Half-leather binding with a flap; spine and flap spine in brown leather; front board in beige cardboard; back cover originally in brown leather, later restored in 2005 with black leather.

Ownership notes: On f. 1r, a note dated 8 Šawwāl 1349/February 1931 written by al-Sayyid Yahyā b. Yahyā al-Musawwarī (?). On the same leaf, a pencil signature of Tommaso Sarnelli with the date 5 Dec. 1931, followed by the name Hadrami (?).

Inside the manuscript, there is a card from “Istituto Universitario Orientale Napoli, Gabinetto di igiene tropicale e medicina indigena. Collezione Sarnelli di etnoiatria (Medicina indigena)”. The card contains, in pencil, the title and author of the work, along with the following information “Luogo e data del rinvenimento: Sanaa (Yemen) 1932. Provenienza: Cairo. Nome del raccoglitore: Sarnelli”.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 122, and no. 352 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 34, f. 1v: Beginning of the *Tasbeeh*, with red inscriptions and a prominently highlighted basmala

[illegible]

الاجابة من والاموات امنه من امين بعنا سيدك
الحاج الفاضل العارف المؤثر ببره الرجل العظيم
عز الاسلام والدين محمد بن عبد عمر غافله
انه ووفق الجميع الى رضا
محمد محمود ولد له عبد الله
و در وصله على اجدادك
سيدنا مولد له





MS ARA 34: Body of the manuscript showing the first folio, with ex libris on the back of the cover

MS ARA 49

(inv. SA 105079)

Kitāb al-Lum'a al-kāfiya fī al-adwiya al-šāfiya

by al-'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Rasūl al-Ġassānī (d. 778/1376)

Undated (8th/14th century?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Yemeni compendium of medicine and hygiene

The *Kitāb al-Lum'a al-kāfiya fī al-adwiya al-šāfiya* by al-'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Rasūl al-Ġassānī (d. 778/1376) is a comprehensive compendium on medicine and hygiene. It covers a wide array of subjects, including anatomy, physiology, semeiology, physiognomy, food and drink hygiene, pharmacology, and climate-related health issues. Although heavily worn, the manuscript copy is well written. It is undoubtedly Yemeni, as evidenced by textual references to the names of simples in their Yemeni variants. According to Sarnelli (1949: 81), the manuscript should be from the same period as the author al-'Abbās (d. 778/1376). The manuscript is incomplete at the end and therefore lacks the colophon, which presumably would have included the name of the copyist. The manuscript bears signs of damage from extensive use, with repairs and reconstructions of portions of the text carried out over the centuries, relying on other copies in circulation. The manuscript comes from the private library of the governor (*'āmil*) of Sanaa, al-Sayyid Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Qādir.

ff. 1r-68v, incomplete at the end. The Arabic foliation suggests the existence of pages numbered 1-260, which are currently missing. Dimensions: 250 × 175 mm. Written surface: 210 × 135 mm; 40-44 lines per page. The manuscript bears three distinct pagination systems: an original Arabic sequence, a Western (European) numbering, and a later Arabic renumbering. Previous foliation: ff. 261-327 in Arabic numerals, in black ink, at the bottom of the recto pages; later renumbered in Western numerals. Script: Small *nashī*. Ink: Black; headings and rubrication in red and black ink. Small marginal notes and corrections in Arabic, in black and brown ink. Horizontal and diagonal catchwords in black ink. Binding: Semi-rigid, folder-style binding in brown leather with internal boards in red Morocco, featuring pockets. Three pairs of ties, with the upper and lower ones missing. The binding and the text block of the manuscript are neither sewn nor physically attached to one another. The cover is decorated with rectangular frames containing interwoven geometric patterns and floral motifs. At the center, a medallion surmounted by two pendants with vegetal and floral designs. Paper: Brownish Oriental paper.

Traces of previous restorations on worn leaves, with additional restoration carried out in 2016. Notes: On f. 1r, a dedication dated Šawwāl 1350/1932 to Dr. Sarnelli.

Ex libris missing but listed as no. 361 in the sales record of Tommaso Sarnelli. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 49: Body of the manuscript containing the *Kitāb al-Lum'a al-Kāfiya*, separate and not bound with its leather cover.





MS ARA 49: Leather cover containing the manuscript

MS ARA 106 (1-2)

(inv. SA 108204)

The manuscript comprises two distinct medical treatises, transcribed by different scribes, which have been bound together to form a single compilation (mağmūʿat rasāʾil), as indicated by the inscription on the spine of the cover.

MS ARA 106 (1), ff. 1r-52v

Kitāb al-Masābiḥ al-saniyya fī ṭibb al-bariyya
by Šihāb al-Dīn al-Qalyūbī (d. 1069/1659)

Undated | Copyist unknown

Egyptian manuscript | Treatise on diseases, diet therapy

The first work included in the manuscript, the *Kitāb al-Masābiḥ al-saniyya fī ṭibb al-bariyya* by al-Qalyūbī (d. 1069/1659), is a treatise on diseases and diet therapy. It opens with a brief introduction to general pathologies and the foundational principles of disease (particularly the relationship between humours and substances), followed by ten chapters that describe ailments affecting various parts of the body and organs, from the head to the feet. The final chapter is devoted to culinary and medicinal herbs.

The copyist has noted the words for different illnesses, organs, and substances in the margins. Following the treatise, folios 51r-52r contain a collection of medical recipes and notes on the therapeutic properties and uses of certain substances and herbs discussed in the concluding chapter.

ff. 1r-52r. Written area: 125 × 80 mm, 25 lines per page. Quinions. Paper: European paper with *Tre Lune* watermark. Ink: Black; rubrication with the names of diseases in reddish-brown ink, possibly with gold? (see ff. 13, 14). F. 1r: ownership note, and owner's name deleted.

MS ARA 106 (2) ff. 53r-112v

Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma
by Ġamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Mahdawī Ibrāhīm al-Širī
[for al-Šanawbarī] al-Yamanī [al-Hindī] (d. 814/1412)

Undated | Copyist unknown

Egyptian manuscript | Treatise on the treatment of diseases

The second work contained in the manuscript, the *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* by Ġamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Mahdawī Ibrāhīm al-Šanawbarī al-Yamanī

al-Hindī (d. 814/1412), is a medical treatise focused on the treatment of diseases. It opens with a chapter on the science of natural phenomena, providing a foundational framework for the subsequent medical discussions. This is succeeded by a chapter addressing general illnesses, and subsequently by sections dealing with specific ailments affecting various parts of the body and internal organs, together with their corresponding treatments.

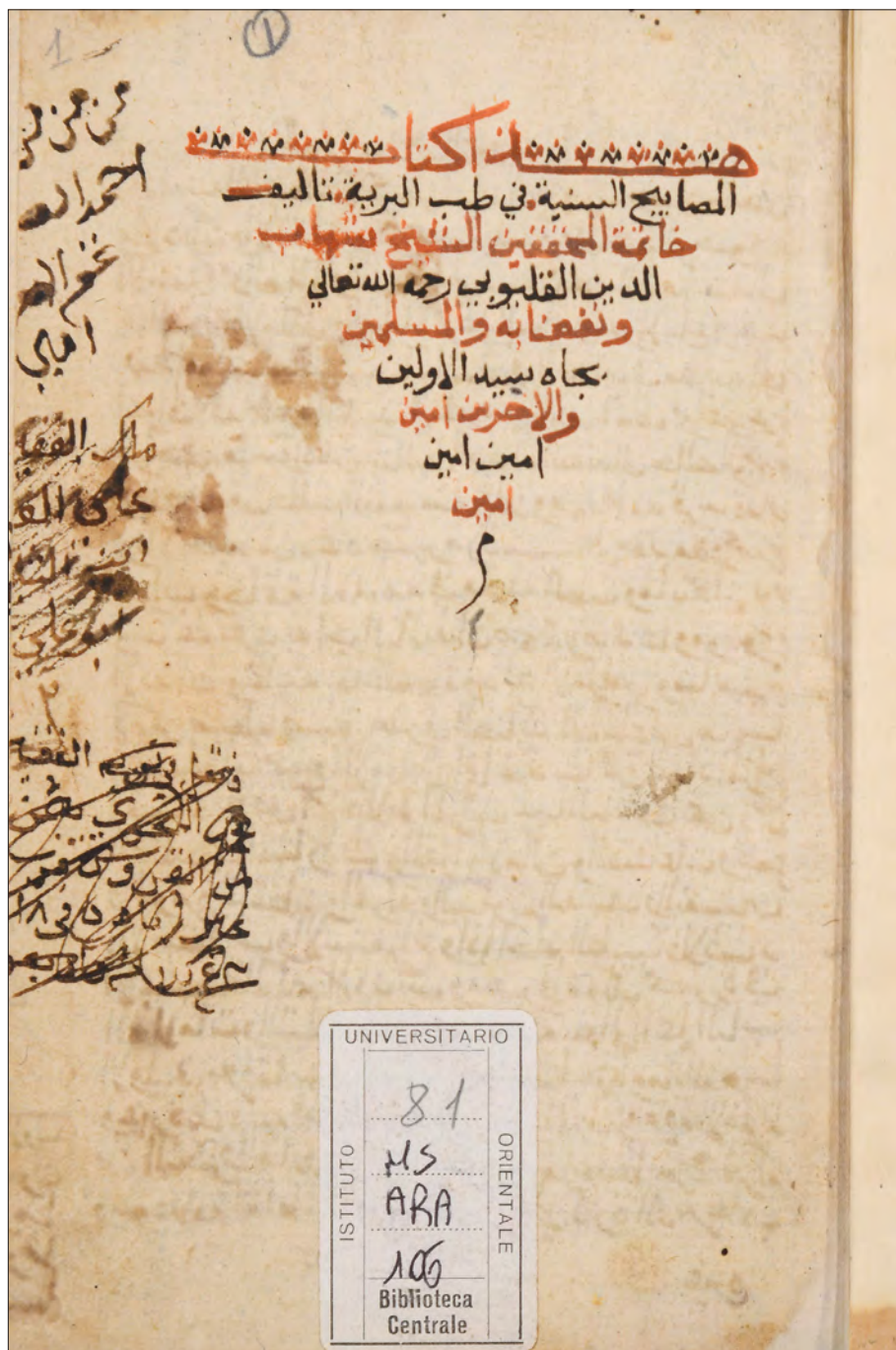
The text is executed in black ink, with marginal annotations in red identifying key terms related to chapters, diseases, and their treatments. Further marginal annotations were probably added by another hand.

ff. 53r-112v. Written area: 130 × 70 mm, 16-20 lines per page. Quinions. Paper: European paper with a crescent moon with a human profile in a shield featuring a double-bordered trefoil top.

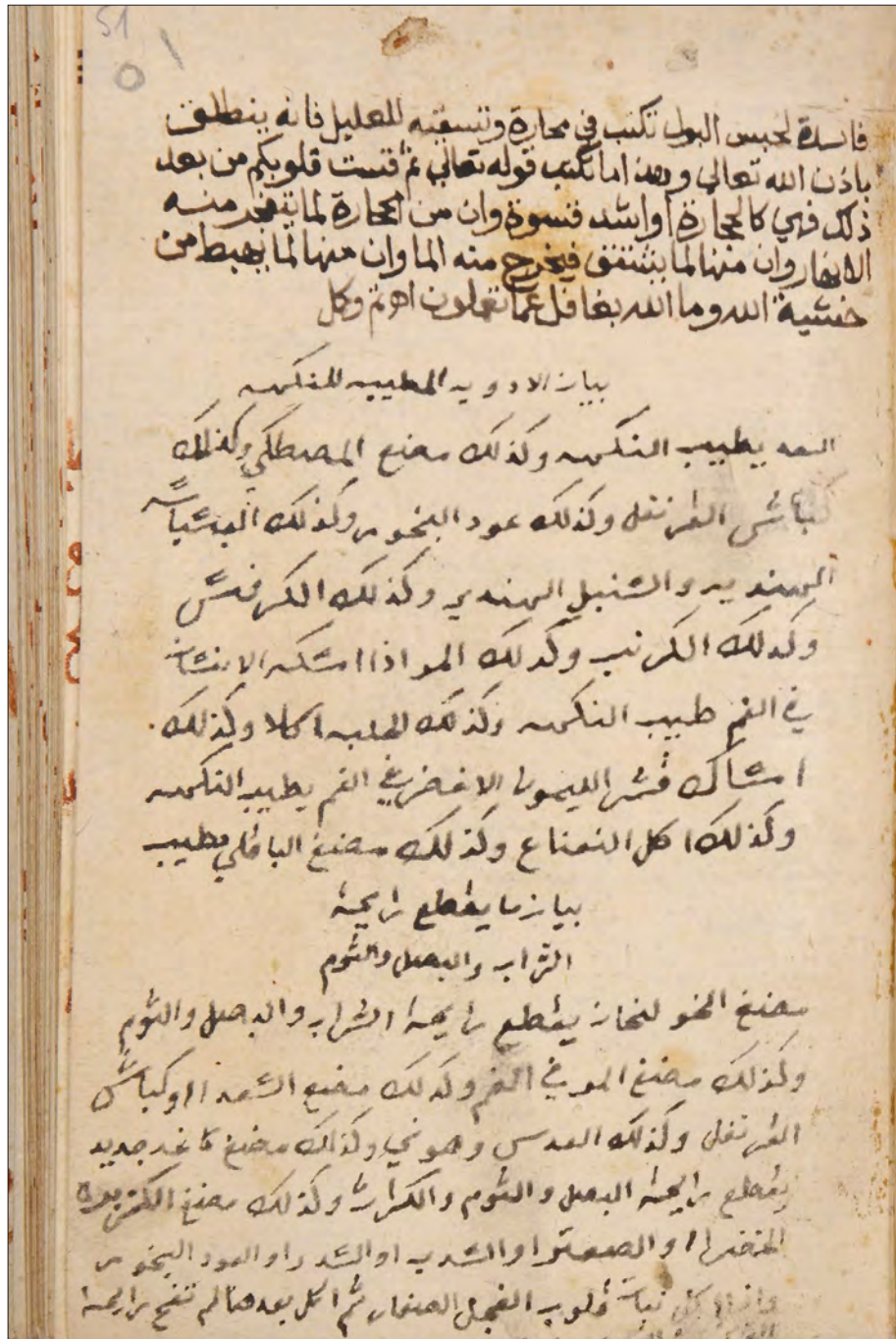
MS ARA 106 (1-2)

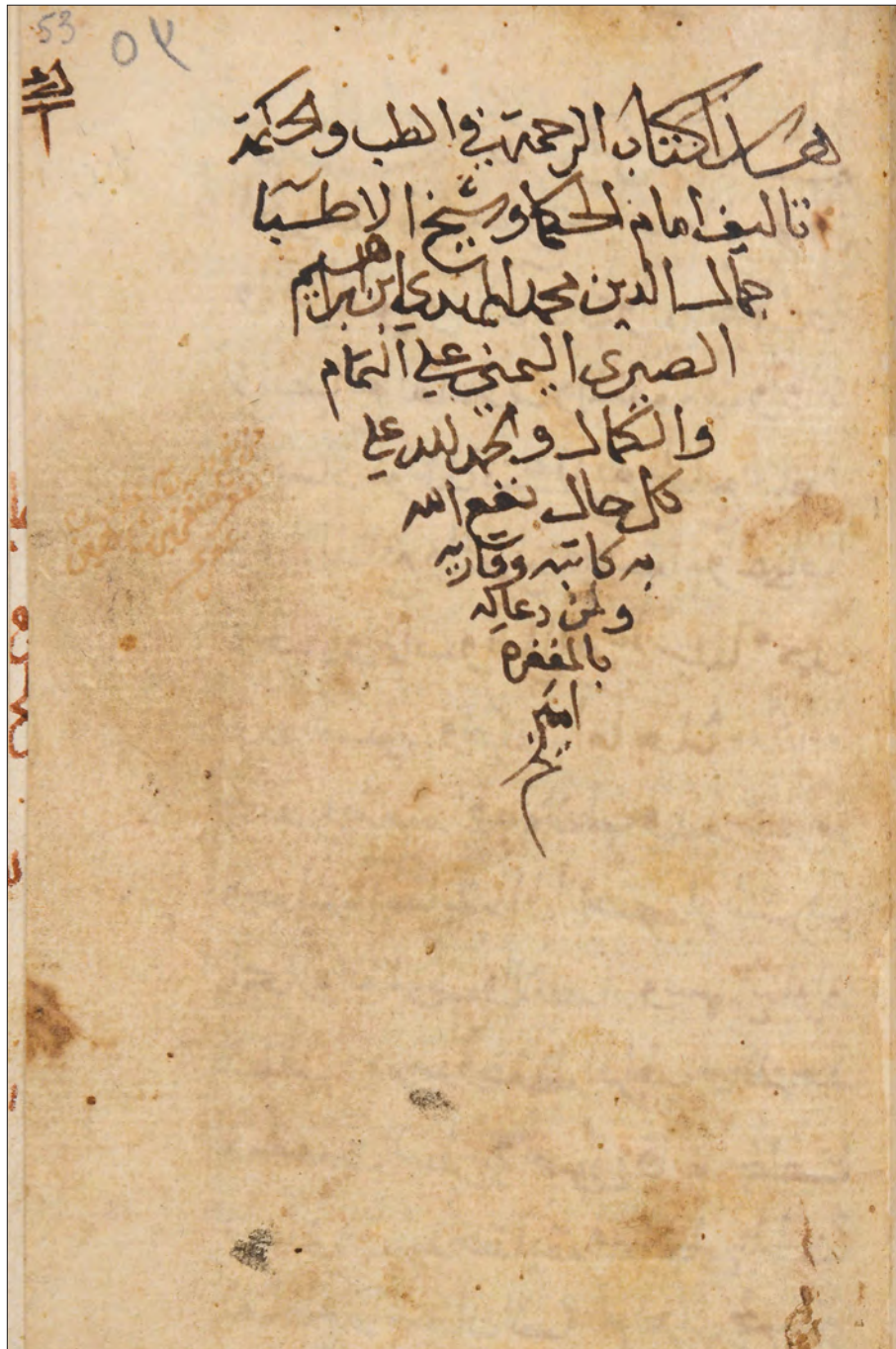
ff. I, 1r-113, f. 52v blank. ff. I and the flyleaves and pastedowns in marbled paper were added during an old restoration, probably in 1970. Dimensions: 165 × 105 mm. Quinions. Ink: Black. Marginal notes cut off due to trimming along the outer edge. Horizontal catchwords in black ink. Script: *nashī* by different hands. Binding: Recent half-leather binding (1970), spine and corners in brown leather; boards in brown cardboard. Spine decorated with four false raised bands and grapevine motifs. Arabic title *mağmū'a rasā'il* on the spine. Restored in 2006.

This manuscript is not part of the Sarnelli collection. Provenance: Purchased in Cairo in 1966.



MS ARA 106 (1), f. 1r: Title page of the *Kitāb al-Masābiḥ al-saniyya fī ṭibb al-bariyya*, with alternating black and red inscriptions and erased ownership notes

MS ARA 106 (1), f. 51r: Colophon of the *Kitāb al-Masābiḥ al-saniyya*, with medical recipes



MS ARA 106 (2), f. 53r: Title page of the second work, *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*, including the author's name

MS ARA 143

(inv. SA 108324)

Untitled work by unknown author

Copied by Muḥammad Yūsuf al-Dāwarānī | Completed on 1254/1838

Egyptian manuscript | Medical dictionary on diseases

This manuscript lacks a title page and is likely the second (?) volume of a unidentified work that presents diseases in alphabetical order. It offers a highly analytical approach, comparing information drawn from various sources, including ancient Greek and Arabic medical traditions. The text opens with a detailed discussion of headaches (*al-ṣaddāʾ*).

The manuscript features numerous underlines in red ink, with some keywords and titles also highlighted in red. In several instances, the scribe inserted supplementary text between the lines, indicating later additions or corrections made during the copying process. The margins contain comments in various hands, some of which are written in *nastaʿlīq* script. The copyist of the manuscript included a drawing depicting the digestive system on folio 149v.

ff. 1v-247r. Dimensions: 320 × 210 mm. Written surface: 250 × 130 mm, 29 lines. Ink: Black; rubrication and text underlining in red ink. Marginal notes in black and red ink. Horizontal catchwords in black ink. Script: *nashī*, with some notes in *nastaʿlīq* script. Binding: Brown leather binding, blind tooled with a double frame and a central almond-shaped medallion with floral motifs, topped by two floral rosettes. Paper: Blue-dyed, heavily sized paper of varying weight and shades, with *mistara* ruling marks. Compensation brackets on cards 168 and 169 on the lower margins, possibly to correct writing or a tear. Russian paper with different watermarks and countermarks, not always legible due to the stitching: oval medallion with a figure, possibly a coat of arms, countermark Cyrillic characters K P G. Bow and arrow within a square shield, with countermark M. Horse's head in an oval (?). Column with a tripartite base surmounted by a Greek cross, with countermark in Cyrillic characters T F S U 1827. Watermark T B F X 1835. G. Three seals on ff. 190r, 239v, 247r.

This manuscript does not form part of the Sarnelli collection and is likely to originate from Egypt. Restored in 2006. Provenance: Purchased in Cairo in 1966.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الصداغ وهو خراج من اجزاء طبيعة الحال غير طبيعية على ما عرفه جالينوس ومن تبعه كالرأسي
 وصاحب الكامل وابن سهل الميحي صاحب المانه وعرفه الشيخ مانه ادراك ما المنافع خراج هو صنف وهذا
 هو الصحيح في الاستكاري بما قطع منهم عضوا وخرج ولا يتألمون بذلك لعدم الادراك وقطع
 الخرج خطا لطبيعية وكذا من غلب عليه الفكرة في امرهم لا يتألم من التبدل لعدم الادراك وانما فية بالجنبة
 لا بالتبدل قديما في موجد دون وجع كاللحماء الشبع والوجع مراد في كل حال هو صرح به في الرابعة من
 العلل في الاعراض من جماع الاسكندرية في حيث قيل لا فرق بين ان يستعمل الالم والحزن الما وجعا وحدا
 ومقالة القرشي في شرح الكليات الذي يظهر في ان الالم انما فانه هو ادراك المنافع بانه فقرة كانت والوجع
 ادراك لحجب للسر فهو باختصاصه واما في حد فقه كثير من كلام المتقدمين والمتأخرين فلام
 اختلاف في مواضعها وهو عرض عام لهذا العلة اقيم مقام الجنس وهو من راجي مولى او فقه في
 كما ان الصداغ ايضا عرض عام لها سميت بترسمية للشيء باسمه لا بغيره في اعضاء الراس كالافاضل العارفة
 فطب الحققين في شرح الكليات ليس العين وكحوها في اعضاء الراس ولا كان الراس صلا بل لافاضل
 الجلد والحم والعضا الخارج والفقر والعضا، الصليب والعضا، الرقيق وجوه الدماغ والعضا، ان الحنة
 والشبكة والعظم الذي هو قاعدة الدماغ واما الاعصاب فيع كالفروع وظاهر ان المراد بها ههنا
 المذكورة معاد العظم وجوه الدماغ اذ يحسن لها والالم انما هو احساس ولعرض على هذا التعريف
 بان بعض الاوجاع الحادثة عن فقرة في الراس او شجرة او فقرة لا يستعمل صلا مع انه في اعضاء الراس و
 استصعب في التعريف فاد بعضهم قديما وهو يكل مع الحواس ليخرج الجمع الحادث منها وليس بالراجح
 وقال بعضهم المراد ان الصداغ المزمنة انما يوجد في اعضاء الراس فقط وهذا الجمل بالمقصود في جميع
 الالام الحادثة في الراس عسواء المزاج وقرق لا تفصل ليست مخصوصة باعضاء الراس بل تشمل يديها
 وبين جميع الاعضاء مع انه مما لا عين له في الكتاب في الاشكال ان السؤال ليس واد اطلاق
 كل وجع يحدث في اعضاء الراس اليه فقلنا هاهنا سواء كان من سوء مزاج او فقرة لا تفصل فقرة او شجرة
 او فقرة او غيرها فقلنا صلا مع كلام القوم يشهد بهذا ويكون الصداغ اما من سوء مزاج او
 مختلف وهما فيكون الاعضاء في حرمها مزاج متمكن ثم يمرض عليها مزاج مضاد للممكن حتى يكون
 مثلا او برص في الحكة صلا مزاج بالبناء في الالم المستوي وهو الذي استقر في حرم العضو صار

كالنراج

والكثرة ودقيق البلوط والنيونى وبنز البقلة والصفلة والسمان والجناد والاطاير والعدس
 القشر والورد والكاور وما يرد بالظفر ليرى الكثرة واوعية اليه فيكون لغيره هيجان بما ينفذ مثل
 الفانياد والطير لا ينفذ والثلث والجلان ما يابس وما ينال عليه مثل ورد الحارث وورد القلوب
 وغرير اللتان يحويها الحارث كثره الشهوة ان كانت مع قوة البدن وصحة المزاج واقتدار على الباه
 من غير استعجاب ضعف فليس مما يلج ان يستغل به به وكثرة لا تكسر من غير ضرورة المزاج وبذلك
 القوة كما صرح به الشيخ وسبب ذلك ان اليه عند كثره بنز الحارث العوزية ويرى بالبدن وبغير كثره
 الاعضاء وينبع ذلك ان من رتبة بل انما يلج ان يكسر اذا استغنى ^{ضعف} البدن بالعضد لا سعال
 لان استغنى بها اقل من راس استغنى بها المزاج اليه وانما ينفذ اليه ولغيره هيجان ومطالبة للمزاج
 وعلامته حارة اليه ولغيره عند الحرج وسرعة حرجه مع حرقته وصلو وسفوفه وان يجب سرعة
 البول لا يحرق البول من الرطوبة العوزية بسبب حارة اليه وعلاجه تنا وكذا شاة المبردة المبردة كما
 الفقع والبقلة الحماة والحار واللين واستعمال اللوز والدار والقلل اليه مع ما فيه يجلب من مثل قنطاريون
 وورد القشر والصفلة في الماء البارد وشراب الريحان في حارة اليه وبذلك ينفذ ما في كثره
 المهمة لان بصير ميثاق ضعف البدن وقلة الدم وفقر القوة وعلامته حارة اليه وقوة وبما
 وكثرة الشيخ كثره الرطوبة اليه في يافته وعلاجه الدوا الحار والقلل اليه مثل الثوبين وورد الشارب
 بنز الفتيك والصفونج وورد الشفاء والمزجوش والاعذية والاعذية القارية للرياح لا ترواها
 الاضائة في الشهوة وتذكر النفس كالصعتر والتدابير الفوتج والحارث الكوفي وحرقه وكالدجاج
 والصفونج والصفونج اما كثره في الشهوة فيجب ما يوجب اليه عند كثره من الدم والصفونج
 فيقوى الشهوة كما يعرف من الشفاء كثره في الدم من احاطة حارة صفراوية وساخنة يورثية فليست انما في
 بل في غير ذلك لتبدد المادة الموفية ويكسر الصفونج فلا ينفذ، فيمن شعوه الحماة وعلامته كثره في
 يورثية الشهوة لا ضوكة الحماة في الحارث وين يديه كثره تلك لا ضوكة الحماة المداغمة في كثره الحماة
 لا يجلب اليه ويمنه من الدم واليها وغيره ما في حارة اليه منها الى نوع ملكة الصفونج وبنز الريحان
 لتفريح تلك الملبور وحرقه ما يورث اليه وعلاجه الصفونج لا يوجب دواء سعال الحماة الصفونج
 المزاج يجلب الصفونج والحنثاثر والصفونج وشراب الصفونج والاستغناء في الماء البارد جدا لا يورث
 ويكسر اللزج ويصلب الاعضاء ويورثها على صنع المواد القاسية وانما كثره الصفونج لا يورث كثره الصفونج
 لا تالام عنم الاعضاء من خواص الصفونج الصفونج لتخيل المزاج بسبب عيادة الطبيعة واصطفاها بالدم
 المتأني وكما يشاهدنا صاحب السوداء المرافقة والتمكين لا يورث كثره الصفونج وعلامته حارة اليه
 وقدم تناول الصفونج المزاج الصفونج كاستدواي على ما ذكره في الصفونج وعلاجه ان كان الصفونج
 الحارة والوطيرة فمنه ينجح لان الحارة الصفونج بلطف ويجلب الصفونج اليه ببول من الرطوبة وبصير
 عند فارقته من الماء البارد عنها فليق اليه من الصفونج والحنثاثر والصفونج والحنثاثر مع رتب

الاستغناء
 موفين در آب

MS ARA 152

(inv. SA 108483)

Untitled work by anonymous

Copied by Muḥammad b. al-Šaykh Mūsā al-ʿĪbāwī (?) | Completed in ʿDū al-Qaʿda 1247/
April 1832.

Egyptian manuscript | Collection of medical and magical recipes

The manuscript lacks a title page. On the back cover, the scribe, identified as Muḥammad b. al-Šaykh Mūsā al-ʿĪbāwī (?), inscribed that the collation (*al-mağmūʿ*) was completed on ʿDū al-Qaʿda 1247/April 1832. It is a composite volume, primarily consisting of a collection of medical recipes and formulas. Additionally, certain folios feature magic squares and special letters (*Brillenbuchstaben*), which are stylized, often angular characters used in Islamic manuscripts for various purposes, including decorative elements or to convey esoteric meanings. The manuscript also provides information on the beneficial use of certain recipes and formulas for preparing specific beverages. It includes several poetic compositions in stanzaic form and dialect, as well as numerous magic squares, Solomon's seals, and magical signs and alphabets, all integrated seamlessly alongside recipes and prayers.

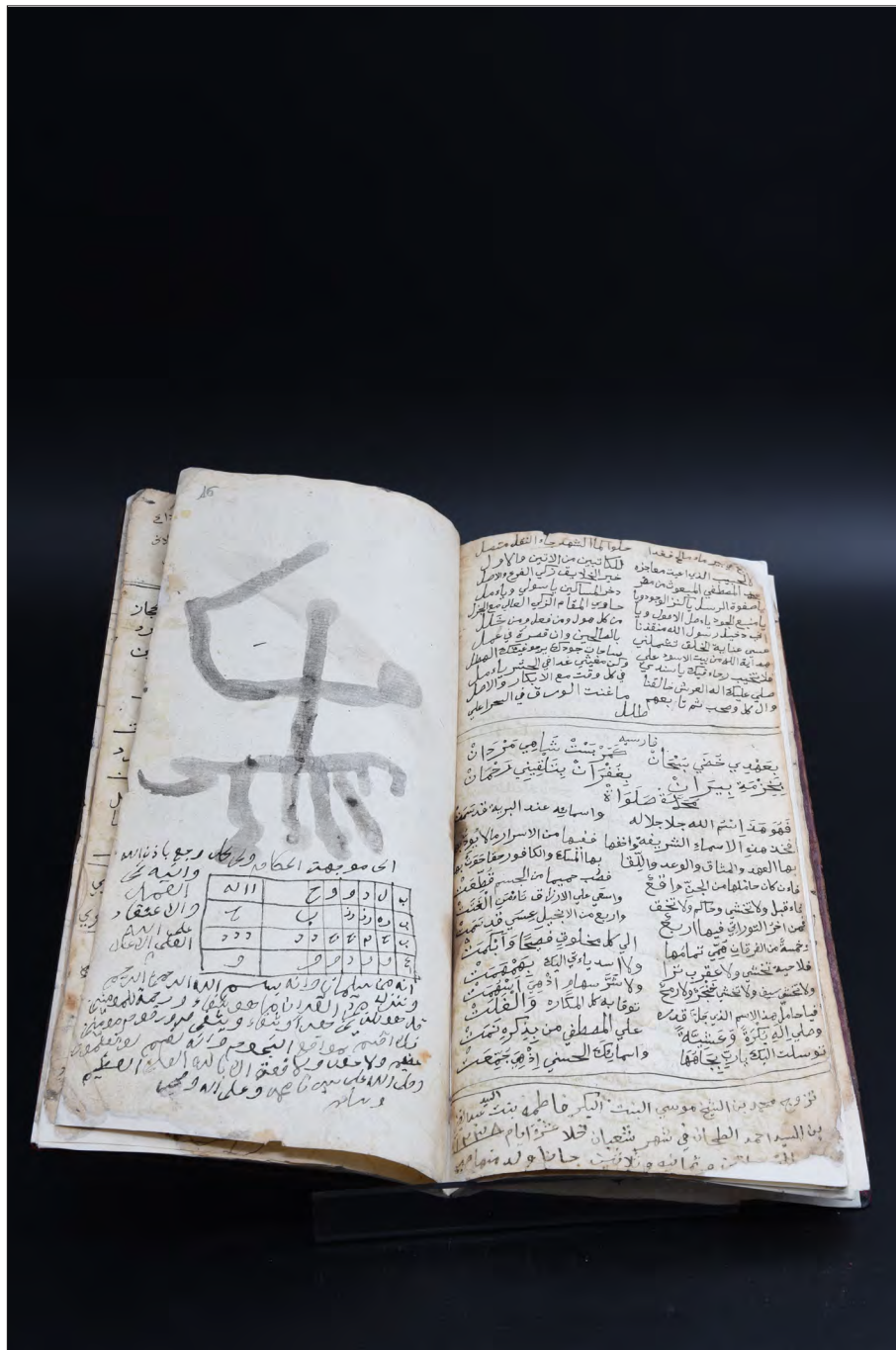
The manuscript alternates between various scripts—some vocalized, others not—and includes some sections in dialect (possibly Egyptian). On folio 15v, another date appears to be indicated: Šaʿban 1238/April 1823.

1r-25v + 3 loose leaves enclosed in envelope 26 (1-3). Dimensions: 400 × 145 mm. Written Surface: Full page. Basmala on f. 4v. Ink: Black. Script: Cursive *nashī* in different hands. Binding: Brown leather, blind-tooled with a double frame and a central almond-shaped medallion with arabesque motifs. Paper: Light brown European *Tre Lune* paper. Dated notes on the front cover: ʿDū al-Qaʿda 1247/1832 and Ramaḍān 1259/1843

Restored in 2018. Provenance: Purchased in Cairo in 1966.



MS ARA 152: Back of the cover and first folio, with numerous formulas and indications of the manuscript's contents



MS ARA 152, ff. 15v–16r: Recepies, prayers, verses of poetry, and magic squares



MS ARA 152: Binding of the manuscript, in oblong format

RARIARA XVIII A 3

(inv. SA 114558)

Kitāb al-Qānūn fī al-ṭibb

by Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037)

Romae, In Typographia Medicea, 1593

Printed book | Medical encyclopaedia

The *Qānūn fī al-ṭibb* is a monumental encyclopaedic manual of Galenic medicine, composed by the physician and philosopher Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), known in Europe by his Latinized name, Avicenna. The work is divided into five books, each devoted respectively to the general principles of medicine, Materia Medica, specific diseases, general pathology, and pharmacopoeia. For centuries, it represented a reference work in the learning and practice of medicine, both in the Islamic world and Europe, where its Latin translations circulated widely from the twelfth century onward.

This book is the first printed Arabic edition of the *Qānūn fī al-ṭibb*, published in 1593 by the Medici Oriental Press (Typographia Medicea) in Rome. Following the title page, the volume contains the *fihrist* (ff. 1v-34r); the first three books of the *Qānūn* (pp. 1-615); the fourth and the fifth book (pp. 1-268); and the *Kitāb al-Nağāt* (pp. 1-85), a philosophical work by Ibn Sīnā, divided into three sections on logic, natural philosophy and metaphysics.

This copy was acquired by Tommaso Sarnelli in Sanaa, where it had been part of the personal library of a local physician. It shows clear evidence of continual use, including reading and ownership notes in different hands dating from the 10th/17th to the -12th/18th century (ff. 1r, 2v, p. 902). The volume lacks three folios of the index, between ff. 1 and 2.

ff. I, 1r-34r, pp. 1-615, 1-268, 1-85. Foliation in Western numerals in pencil for the first 34 folios. Printed Arabic pagination is used for the remainder of the book. Dimensions: 300 × 200 mm. Written surface: 285 × 165 mm; 55 lines per page within a double-ruled frame. Binding: Brown leather binding with an envelope flap, recycled from a manuscript of Ottoman production. Fourfold blind-tooled frame, overlaid mandorla-shaped central medallion, flanking medallions and cornerpieces decorated with floral motifs on the boards. The spine and the fore-edge flap have been integrated with leather inserts to fit the current text block. Leather doublures. Printed paper was later applied over the original back leather doublure.

Annotations: Various notes, partly deleted. A note dated Šawwāl 1098/1687, on f. 12; another dated 1 Šafar 1104/21 October 1789, on f. 2v. A signed readership note dated 17 Ša'bān 1211/15 February 1798, on f. 268.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 41, and no. 375 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Oriental University Institute from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.





RARI ARA XVIII A 3: First page with title, author, and indication of the printing house



RARI ARA XVIII A 3: Front cover of the manuscript in leather, with a central medallion and engraved decorations

Arabic Manuscripts
on Pharmacopoeia

MS ARA 2

(inv. SA 104923)

Kitāb Mağma‘ al-ḥulāṣa fī al-ṭibb

by Fathī al-Muḥarriz (?)

Completed in 1114/1702 | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Compendium of pharmacopoeia

The *Kitāb Mağma‘ al-ḥulāṣa fī al-ṭibb* is a pharmacological compendium authored by the man of letters al-Sayyid Fathī al-Muḥarriz (the leatherworker ?) and completed in 1114/1702. It is structured into four *maqālas* (books) and twenty-five chapters (*bāb*) and meticulously documents its intellectual sources—figures such as Ibn Sīnā, Ibn al-Bayṭār, and al-Rāzī—underscoring the intertextual character of Arabic medical and pharmacopaedic literature. The manuscript includes a table of contents outlining the organization of the work. Notably, this text does not appear in any known manuscript catalogues and appears to be a *unicum*.

The scribe employed red ink for rubrics, the names of medicinal substances, and specific dosage quantities. Marginal annotations and supplementary notes—penned by a second hand distinct from the main copyist—are also present.

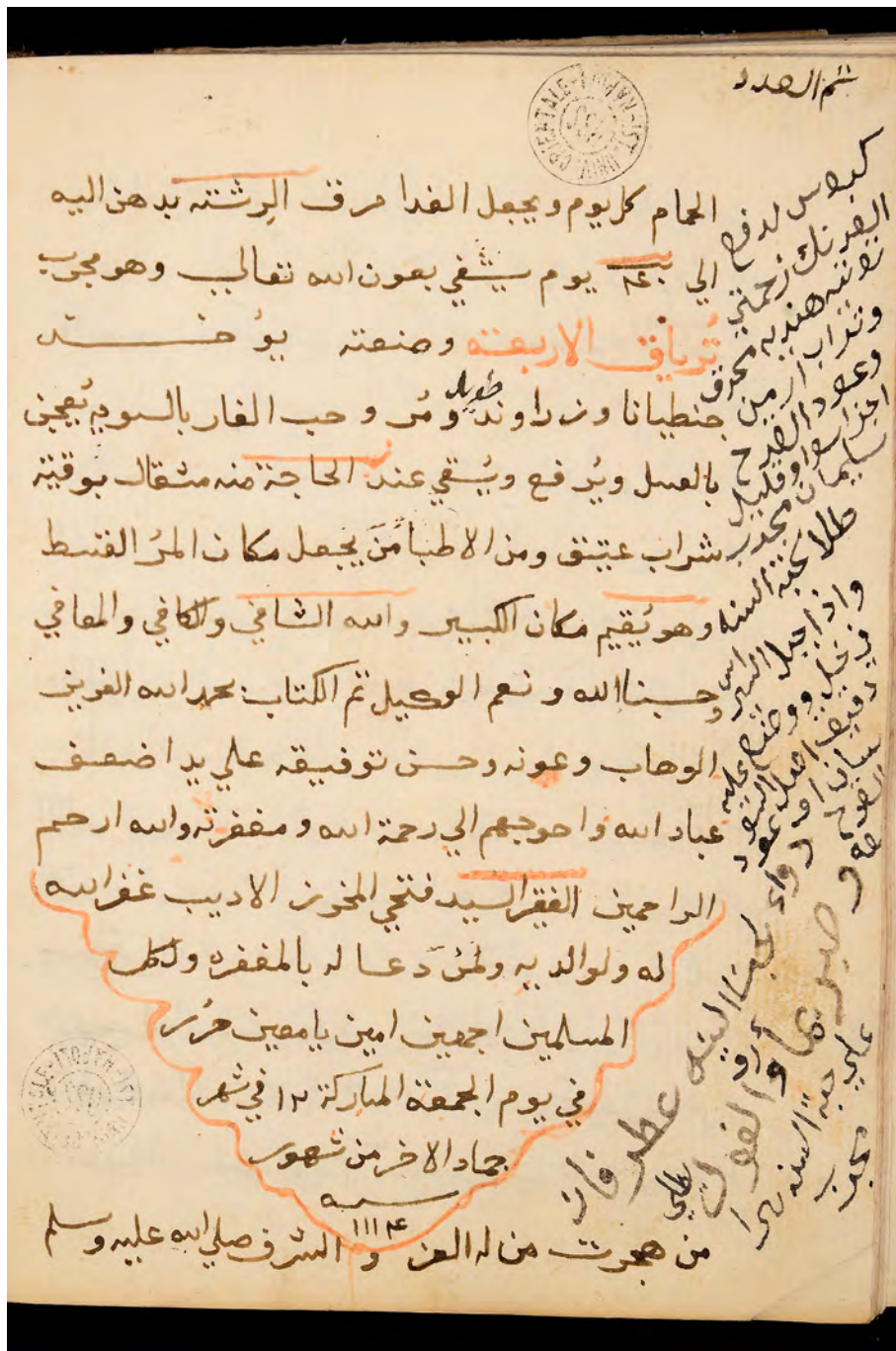
The final folios appended to the end of the manuscript, written by several later hands (ff. 125r–132v), comprise a variety of texts: a medical *risāla* (ff. 125r–126r), medicinal recipes (ff. 126r–130r), religious admonitions (ff. 130v–131r), and additional recipes (ff. 131r–132v). Decorative marginal figures—resembling snakes and flowers—embellish the manuscript above and below some of the prescriptions.

ff.: I, II, 1r–132v[/42v in Arabic foliation]; quire 116–125 missing (Arabic foliation) / between ff. 115–116 (Western foliation); f. 107 sewn after f. 135. Previous foliation in Arabic numerals in black ink. Dimensions: 210 × 150 mm; written area: 160 × 113 mm; 15 lines per page. Quinions. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; rubrication and headings in red ink. Horizontal catchwords in black ink; glosses in red and black ink. Small drawings in red ink on the outer margins (ff. 12v, 15v, 34v, 37v). Binding: Half leather binding with light brown rigid cardboard, spine and corners in dark brown leather; floral blind-tooled decoration on the spine. Paper: Oriental paper.

Ownership note on f. 62r, dated 1180/1766. Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 116; pencil, no. 369. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 2, f. 1r: Title page of *Kitāb Mağma' al-ḥulāṣa fī al-tibb*, filled with ownership inscriptions, formulas, and marginal annotations



MS ARA 2, f. 124v: Colophon of the *Kitāb Maḡma' al-ḥulāṣa fī al-ṭibb*, with date and ownership annotations

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13

في الثانية يمنع النزف والنفت والسج والسموم واستطلاق
 البطن **بليل هندی** بارد في الدرجة الاولى يابس في الثالثة
 يقوي المعدة والعين وينفع الدمعه **بلسان** حار يابس
 في الثانية ينفع النساء والصرع والدوار وغشاوة
 العين والربو وضيق النفس وهو مقاوم للسموم **بلج**
 وهو جوف الطلع ويسمى بالفارسيه **بيرجما** وهو بارد
 يابس يطلق البطن **بندق** حار في الثالثة رطب في الاولى
 يزيد في الباه وينفع النهوش **بنفسج** بارد في الثالثة
 رطب في الثانية يسكن الاورام الحارة والصداع من جوارشما
 وضاد او شمه ينف بالزكام **بنج** بارد يابس في اخر
 الثالثة محدد مسبب يقطع نزف الدم ويسكن الاجاع
 الزبانية بتخديره **بنجكشت** هو النقد ويقال ايضا
 قنطارون وهو حار في الاولى يابس في الثالثة محل ملطوف
 ينفع الصداع اليارده ضاد او ينفع سود الكبد والطحال مع
 السكينيين **بونيدان** حار يابس في الثالثة ينفع المفاصل

مظهر البني وهو
 نوب البني حار
 حب البني

مظهر البني وهو
 نوب البني حار
 حب البني



MS ARA 2, ff. 12v-13r: Two folios showing the relationship between the text, underlined passages, and marginal drawings

MS ARA 7

(inv. SA 104925)

[*Tuḥfat al-mu'minīn*]

by Muḥammad Mu'min al-Ḥusaynī *al-ṭabīb* al-Tanakābunī

Completed on 21 Ġumāda II 1163/1750 | Copied by Muṣṭafā Yūsuf Zāḥ Dars 'Āmm al-Širwānī
Yemeni manuscript | Treatise on pharmacology concerning simple and compound remedies

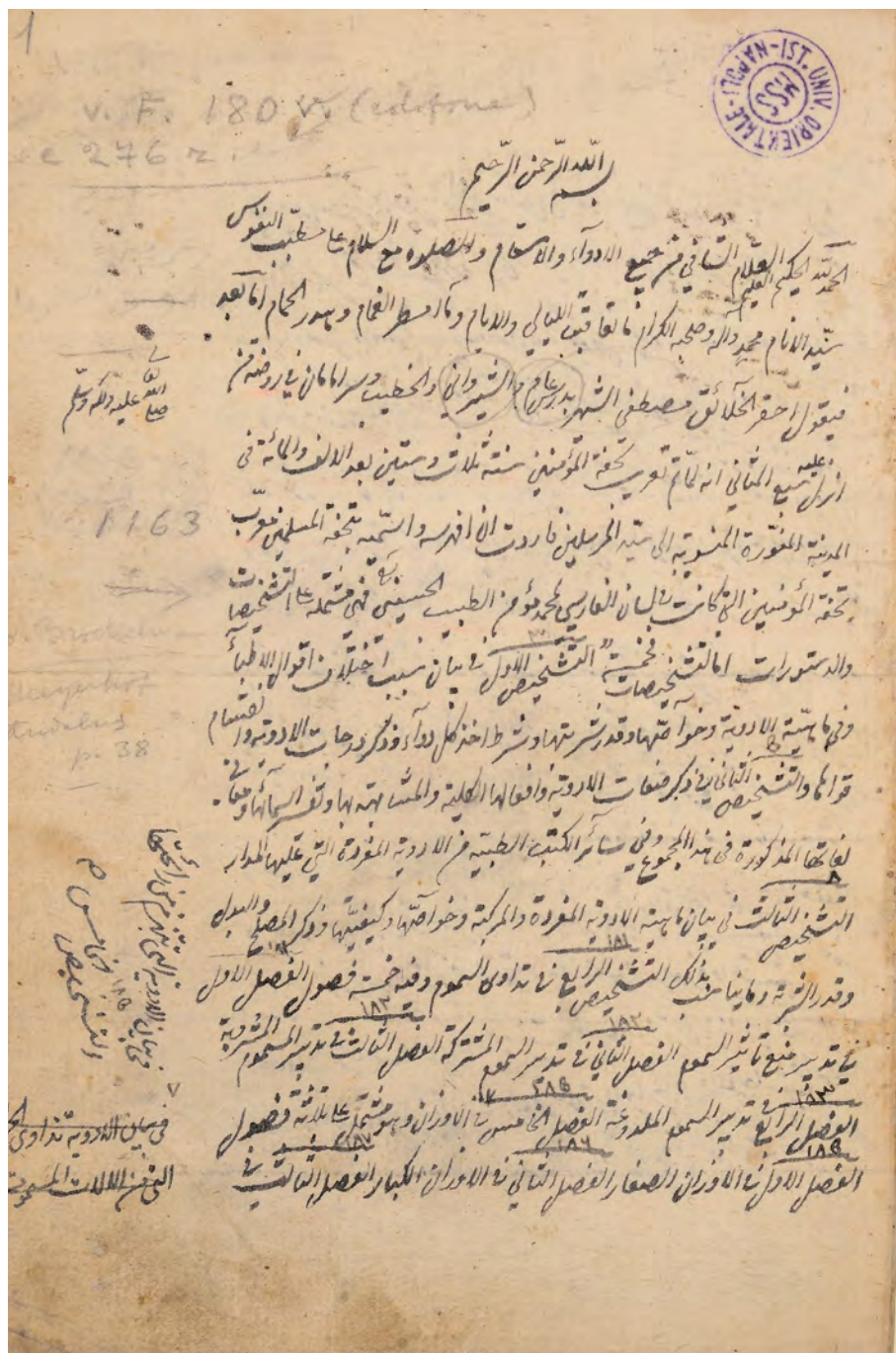
The *Tuḥfat al-mu'minīn* is a pharmacological treatise addressing both simple and compound remedies. It was originally composed in Persian by the physician (*al-ṭabīb*) al-Tanakābunī and dedicated to the Safavid ruler Shah Sulaymān (r. 1077-1105/1666-1694). The manuscript copy is an autograph Arabic translation by the Yemeni scholar Muṣṭafā Yūsuf Zāḥ Dars 'Āmm al-Širwānī, completed in Medina in 1163/1750. The translation includes two dates: the first part is dated 7 Šafar 1163/1748 (f. 180v) and includes contributions from the dervish Ḥikmat Allāh and Šaykh Ibrāhīm Fayḍ Allāh; the second part is dated 21 Ġumādā 1163/1749 (f. 277r).

The extant version is organized into five *tašḥīṣ* (diagnostic sections) and two *qism* (parts) devoted to *dustūrāt* (regulatory guidelines or prescriptions). The initial and final folios of the manuscript contain numerous notes, including names of medicinal substances, pharmaceutical recipes, medical annotations, therapeutic advice, and an alphabetically arranged list of drugs.

At the conclusion of the work, there is an additional list of the simple remedies discussed within the text (ff. 278r-279v), though this list appears to terminate in the manuscript's opening folios (ff. a–b). Several ownership dates are recorded at the beginning of the manuscript, including 1235/1819–20 and 1323/1905, alongside a number of formulas. Additional ownership inscriptions appear at the beginning of the main text, dated 1216/1801, 1263/1847, and 1293/1876.

ff. a-c, 1r-180v, 181v-277r, d-f; 4 leaflets sewn into ff. 10 bis, 48 bis, 131, 213; ff. 203-204 unbound; ff. 247-250 sewn backwards; missing folio between ff. 274-275 Dimensions: 215 × 152 mm (f. 1); written surface varies. Script: cursive *nashī* and *nasta'liq* (ff. 1r-2v). Ink: black; diagonal catchwords in black ink; catch titles, headings, and rule-borders in red ink. Marginal notes and corrections in Arabic in black ink; contemporary Arabic foliation in black ink; chapters in ff. 1r-180v numbered with alphabetical Arabic letters. Binding: half-leather binding, with covers and doublures decorated with floral motifs and arabesques block-pressed on cardboard. Paper: brownish Oriental paper (initial and final leaves in European paper with watermark; on f. V, a half-moon with a human profile inside a three-pointed shield and double border is recognizable). Traces of old restorations along the outer margins of the leaves with paper extensions.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli no. 146; pencil no. 364. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

MS ARA 7, f. 1r: Opening of the *Tuhfat al-mu'minin*

وتربط عليه فماد او يسقى ماء لعناب ودهن البنفسج وان لم تكن حارة في المجلس ان يدهن بدهن
 المحفوظ ومع الزعفران كما يشاء وان يطعم لحم البقر مع دهن اللوز المر والسكنجبين
 والحمل اذا نوره لخل او وضع على حرقته وتربط على الموضع وبهره الحيات عذوه وان اعطى
 وزن دانت مع فلفل فهو عجيب الاثر **ورم الكلف** صنف في الامراض من المواد الحارة
علاج قشر الخشخاش يدق ناعما ويور في الخل ووزنه يوزن قطونا مقدورا بدهن
 الورد لانه مصفا الهماد ايضا يصفده وان تطلا بعلاج الثاليل المذكور فيوغاية في النفع
 وان النجرب يبارجهم الكافور **امراض الاجفنة والريش** من جملتها ان يخرج ضعيفا فان كان
 فخارج منه زولا فنبه قلم مادة الغذاء **العلاج** في هذه العيون اطعام اللحم اللطيفة وتوى
 بها صفة بالادوية الموصلة المذكورة وان لم يكن منه زولا فنبه المواد الفلدة **وايضا** ان ينتشر
 ديشه بنفسه ويطل على طلع العمد او يعدم وذلك ليمس الغذاء والمان والاحتراق الخط **العلاج**
 بالمسيلات المذكورة والبعض قال ان يسهل بالفسر الاصفر وفيه نفع كثير وهو ان يعطى منه من
 ذائق الى اثنتين ودهن الفار والجوز والرفينون والشحم وما دغيد ان البرشا وشان الى العلق
 يصفد وبطبيع الطففة وورق السمسم فمسل كثير **وان كان** ريشه يكثر بمقار او ينفقته
 واصولها ثابتة باقية يدهن بدهن **المريسين** ودهن الكوسم مع قليل لادن **وان كان** الفذاب
 باجفنة يحل في دهن الجوز ويدهن به فان عجيب الاثر **القرع** هو ان يكثر الزغب في راسه
علاج ان يسقى ماء الشعير ويطاعا القرع ودهن البنفسج وماء الكزبرة والرام والبرشا وشان
 ونوى التمر المحرق **الحرب** انتفاخ جميع كرش راسه مع وجود اليبوسة والحكة يجدي بالسكنجبين **القل**
 ماء الدفل او ماء الشلب او الحلب ويدهن بدهن اللوز مع الفلفل ويطعم السمك يجدي بالسكنجبين **القل**
 فيسقى الفارسه شيش **علاج** غور الاعين واليبوسة والحكة باجفنة ويحكمهم بفقار ووجله
 وكثرة حركته **العلاج** ان يبخر بالطرطير ويسمى بالفارسية طورنوا وهو شغل الصبي **وايضا**
 وان يطلى بغير البسج والزراوند الطويل والزنبيب بجمل ويطبخ شحم كفتل يغسل واخذ قفا
 والطرفا وماء النعناع يغسل ايضا **وصفة** الحريق من ماء النعناع لا يعدل له في امره
 الاجفنة والريش **وايضا** ان يطلى بالزيت المقتول بالخل والريق وهو رافع للقل من جميع
 الحيوانات وكثير راي انه اجود الادوية الحربية ولا يعدل له **واما طريق صيد الطيور**
 ان الحنطة تبل برقيق وجفلة في السكر ان بالعرف او برقيقه وتجفف وتقطع للطيور فتشكر
 وتؤخذ باليد **وايضا** ان الدبق اذا فور بالفصل او القطر تنفوز ابليفا ثم يؤخذ منه يعود
 ويلصق على اعضاء الشجر وغيرها فتغزل الطيور على ما فتتكمها فتؤخذ باليد يعود بل المكان
 وارجلها بالماء لينحل فتؤخذ واسم اعلم ثم يجد انهم تعرب تحفة المومنين التي باللغة
 الفارسية في يوم الخميس الحادي والعشرين من شهر جمادى الثانية من شهر سنة ثلاث
 وستين بعد المائة وثالث على يد احمد الانام مصطفى الشهر يدرى عام والشر والى
 وسرا ما كان بروضة سيد ولد عدنان وصلى الله على سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم



MS ARA 7: Final folio of the manuscript with an index of terms, and the verso of the back cover

MS ARA 8 (1-2)

(inv. SA 104922)

The manuscript comprises two works copied by the same copyist: a Persian pharmacopoeia translated into Arabic, and a medical treatise detailing various forms of erysipelas, syphilis, and smallpox, along with associated therapeutic approaches. The two texts are written in the same hand and presented without interruption.

MS ARA 8 (1) ff. 1r-78v

Qarābādīn

by Muẓaffar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Šifāʿī al-Kāšānī (d. 963/1555-56)

Completed on 26 Ġumādā II 1130/1718 | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Persian pharmacological treatise into Arabic

The *Qarābādīn* is a well-known Persian pharmacopoeia that was translated into Arabic and attributed to Muẓaffar b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī al-Šifāʿī al-Kāšānī (d. 963/1555-56). According to the title page, the Greek term *al-aqrābādīn* is translated as “compound remedies” (*al-adwiya al-murakkaba*) (f. 1r).

As with other formularies (*aqrābādīnāt*), which provide recipes for the preparation of medicines, this manuscript catalogues a wide range of compound medicaments (*al-murakkabāt*). It includes prescriptions for powders, tablets, syrups, ointments, and other forms of treatment aimed at specific ailments. Notably, unlike other works bearing the same title, this version is organized in alphabetical order.

The title page contains four ownership notes, four of which are dated: 1130/1718, 1173/1760, 1314(?) / 1896, and 1336/1918. One of the notes indicates that the codex belonged to the al-Mansūriyya Library, which housed the collection of the Zaydī imam of Yemen, al-Manṣūr bi-llāh al-Ḥusayn b. al-Mutawakkil ‘alā Allāh (r. 1140/1728–1160/1747).

MS ARA 8 (2) ff. 78v-86v

Untitled work by unknown author

Yemeni manuscript | Treatise on specific diseases

The second part of the manuscript contains a treatise (*risāla*), without a title or author, that describes various forms of erysipelas (an inflammatory skin disease), syphilis, and smallpox, along with related therapies.

At the end of the text, it is stated that the manuscript was collated from a copy of the practitioner (*al-mutaṭabbib*) Muḥammad Muʾmin, on Raḡab, on behalf of

Muḥsin, son of the Zaydī Rasūlid Yemeni *imām* Muḥammad al-Muʾayyad II (reg. 1087/1676-1092/1681).

The manuscript concludes with several folios (ff. I and II) written in hands other than that of the main copyist. These folios contain various entries, including medicinal recipes, a *waṣīyya* (testament) attributed to Luqmān and dated *Rabīʿ* II 1319/1901 (f. 87r), notes concerning the *ḥaḍ* (obligatory acts) of Friday prayer (ff. 87v-88r), and additional recipes (f. 88r).

ff. 1r-86v, I-II, 1 flyleaf pasted down at f. 68 bis. Dimensions: 290 × 198 mm (f. 1); written surface: 205 × 115 mm. Quaternions. Script: *nashī*. Ink: black; horizontal; horizontal catchwords in black ink; catch titles in red and brown ink. Six ownership notes on f. 1r, four of them dated; rare marginal notes in Arabic in black ink. Binding: Full black leather binding with a flap, featuring a block-stamped central almond with pendants and floral ornaments in the corners and along the sides within a frame. Doublures in block-stamped paper with a repetitive grey-green floral pattern on a beige background. Paper: European paper with a watermark (a three-pointed crown surmounted by a star and a half-moon; in the second quaternion, the crown appears to be supported by an element with the letter “M” at its center, though it is difficult to discern) (ff. 13, 17). Annotations: Four dated ownership notes on f. 1r; two notes in Gujarati within the text and on the lower doublure.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli no. 130; pencil no. 350. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale by Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

MS ARA 8 (1), f. 1r: Title page of the *Qarābādīn*,
with the author's name, annotations, and ownership notes

سلخ حبة ماء الورد ويبرد وسعلت بفتة من حب الى حب الاخر ويقوم
 حطوان بالرفق واستخرج وعند الشاهية والجوع سنخيل الحذا اللطيف
 الدجج والجلان والجري بنوايل الحارزة الطيبة ويدر الما ينزب ما الحذا
 الورد وما الشان الثور وما السلوم من ايه كان يتكو الشان ونزل الرشح او
 يدر جوده وفي الليل ان كان محوج تبسمل يتكو اللوزي او خلاوة اللوز او تفاح
 المزي او السفرجل المزي الى بله اياهم ويحترق بعد اسقاه عشه اياهم من اكل
 الحوضات جوف الشافق وامر بارش وها محوز والغول والالبان وان كان يبرك
 طيحه الحج ترابش ويسفع بفتة يناسا الله على

الحج ترابش
 ويسفع بفتة
 يناسا الله
 على

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 الحمد لله العلي العظيم القدير الحكيم والصلوة والسلام على من علمه الحكمة وارشاه
 الكتاب الكرم وعلى له واصحابه القادرين الى الصراط المستقيم **وبعد** هذه
 وجبت في مقومته انواع الما الغارسي وحب الاقزح وحب الازرق المشهور
 عند العرب والغارسيه تشكر واستامه وطبق خذونه وعلا مائة داسا
 وملا حباته **اعلم** ان هذا المرض سبب السوء المحرق او المتعفن بطرق
 المعين في ظاهره العضو او في باطنه العضو من دقة الطبيعة بسبب الخلل في
 نوحب استتار الاخر السوء او قية عن الدم موزما وغير موزم معقور او
 متعرج وهذا المرض يمتد في البدن والعروق حراره وتقل وفوق قتل ظهوره
 وفي اكثر الاقسام يبرر الحبات والنفطان بالحرقه والنفطان العظم وعند
 الغرس سبب هذه الحرقه سبب تشكر ويقولون حب الاقزح ابي هاشم اظهر
 هذا المرض كان من بلاد الاقزح ويسمى حب الازرق لكن اكثر الازرقه من بلاد
 الخله وفي بلاد هو كثره ولهذا اطلقوا الازرق في اسميه ووجه سميته وتسميته
 وبغاطته والوانه مختلفة وفي اظهره احمر وتعدت واسطى حباته وان سبق
 يخرج منه ما الاصفر او الاصفر مع الحبة والبراقه فاسمها متعذنه ووسطه غنيق

وهو اسطه

وَجَدَ يَحْطَى الْمَاعُونِ الْخَنَازِرَ وَيَسُدُّ رَأْسَهُ وَبَيْتَهُ فِي الْفِرْنِ وَالسُّورِ الْمَسْمُوحِ
لِللَّهِ وَيَخْرُجُ عِذَا وَسَجَدَ وَبَيْتَهُ رَأْسَهَا إِنْ كَانَ صَارَتْ كَالْفَحْرِ مِنْهُ الْمَطْلُوبِ
وَالْإِبْدِيدِ الْعَمَلِ وَتَعْدَسُ حَتَّى وَبِلَا رَهْنِ الْوَرْدِ وَطَلَى عَلَى الْأَعْصَا الْعَوَالِ
وَيُحْدِثُ السَّبُوعَ مَتَى لَعَلُّهُمَا الْأَسْعَى هَذَا الْبَطْلَى أَنْ نَعْنَى الْحَرْبَ بِأَمَامَةِ اللَّهِ
فَقَالَ لِحَقِيقِ الْأَشْيَاءِ هَذِهِ الْوَسْطَانِ الْتَوَضُّعُ وَالْجَوْلُودُ الْعَالَمِي
وَعَمَمَا أَوَاتِ الظُّهُومِ الْفَسَاسَةِ وَعَمَمَ بَهْرُ طُورِ الْمَسْمُوحِ ١٢

[illegible][illegible][illegible]

فعلی فی الزمان و فعلی فی الزمان
و فعلی فی الزمان و فعلی فی الزمان

MS ARA 10

(Inv. SA 104952)

Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī al-mufradāt fī al-ṭibb
by al-Ġassānī (reg. 694/1294 and 696/1296)

Completed on 20 Rabī' I 1154/June 6, 1741 | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Pharmacopoeia

The manuscript contains the *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī al-mufradāt fī al-ṭibb* authored by al-Malik al-Ašraf Mumahhid al-Dīn 'Umar b. Yūsuf b. 'Umar b. 'Alī b. Rasūl al-Ġassānī, the third Rasulid ruler of Yemen, who reigned from 694/1294 to 696/1296. The copy is dated 1154/1741.

The pharmacological compendium is organized alphabetically and divided into two parts: the first section covers the range from *alif* to *ṣād*, while the second spans from *ḍād* to *yā'*. Within the text, each alphabetical entry is typically marked in black ink. The names of simple medicaments, along with certain source abbreviations, are highlighted in red. Marginal annotations occasionally draw on supplementary sources beyond those cited directly within the main text (which are often indicated by acronyms). Additional side notes include vernacular glosses and explanations of medicinal substances or plant names according to popular Yemeni terminology. On the opening folio (f.a recto), there is a donation inscription by Sayyid 'Abd Allāh al-Daylamī to Dr. Sarnelli, dated to the month of Šawwāl, though the year is not specified (possibly 1931). The initial folios contain marginalia in several hands, including medical recipes, devotional texts, information on gemstones and minerals, drug names with explanatory annotations, therapeutic uses of fruit juices, and other medical formulations. The final folios also feature numerous marginal notes in different scripts, comprising auspicious verses, ownership statements, and astrological content.

ff. a-i, 10r-170r, + two unnumbered flying leaves added during restoration in 2004. Double foliation in Eastern and Western Arabic numerals. Single Arabic letters appear at the top left of the recto folios. Dimensions: 320 × 220 mm. Written surface: 220 × 160 mm; 28-29 lines per page, within a double frame in red and yellowish ink. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; rubrication in red ink. Diagonal catchwords in black ink. Glosses in Arabic written in black ink. Binding: Brown leather with an envelope flap, blind-tooled with a four-petalled floral border and a central flower motif. The text is divided into two *ḡuz*, with two angular, non-mirrored *sarlawḥ* in red and black ink on ff. 10v and 90v, featuring geometric patterns in dark red, black, and yellow ink. Paper: Yellowish European paper, watermarked with *Tre lune*; a three-petalled flower with the initials V + ? on ff. i and 169 (same

watermark as in ARA 72). Notes: At the beginning of the manuscript (f. iv), there are several notes of ownership dated Ġumādā II 1226/March 1821, Šawwāl 1234/July 1829, and Šafar 1290/March 1873. An additional dated note (1234/1818) appears at the end (f. 168v).

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 125; no. 353 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 10, f. 10r: Title page of *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī al-mufradāt fī al-ṭibb*, with the title set within a lozenge-shaped decoration, ownership annotations, and erasures



MS ARA 10, f. 10v: Opening of the work with the *basmala* surmounted by a colored *sarlawh* and marginal notes



MS ARA 10, f. 86v: Colophon with date and note of the copyist

MS ARA 17

(inv. SA 105006)

[*Minhāğ al-bayān fīmā yasta'miluhu al-insān*]
by Abū 'Alī b. Yaḥyā b. 'Isā b. Ġazla (d. 493/1100)

Completed on Raḡab 3, 1044 December 23, 1634 | Copyist unknown
Yemeni manuscript | Treatise on simple and compound remedies

The *Minhāğ al-bayān fīmā yasta'miluhu al-insān* by Abū 'Alī b. Yaḥyā b. 'Isā ibn Ġazla (d. 493/1100) is a comprehensive treatise on pharmacology, addressing drugs, potions, and both simple and compound foods. Composed for the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadī bi-amr Allāh (r. 467/1075–487/1094), it includes an alphabetical listing of plants and medicinal substances.

The manuscript copy is acephalous. It contains a list of medicines arranged alphabetically and organized into chapters according to the initial letter. Numerous marginal notes appear throughout, some of which are enclosed within red, cloud-shaped outlines. At the end of the manuscript, several pious ejaculations (ff. 182r-183r), religious invocations, the names of the constellations of the zodiac, and medical recipes (f. 183v) are recorded.

ff. 1r-183v, acephalous. Dimensions : 205 x 145 mm. Written surface: 140 × 95 mm., 17 lines. Quaternions. Double foliation in Arabic and Western numerals. Alphabetical numbering of quires. Script: *nashī*. Ink: Black; rubrication in red ink, some with decorations. Marginal glosses in black ink. Some glosses are in a cloud shape in red ink (i.e. f. 175v). Diagonal catchwords in black ink. Binding: In poor condition; stiff cardboard binding with spine and edges in brown leather. On the front and back covers, a central geometrical-shaped medallion engraved into the cardboard. Title of the manuscript on the head of the text block. Paper: Heavy yellowish Oriental paper, with some European leaves watermarked with a crown surmounted by a six-pointed star and a crescent moon.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 123, and no. 367 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951

Arabic Manuscripts
on Agriculture

MS ARA 21

(inv. SA 105011)

Untitled work by anonymous

Undated (13th/14th-19th/20th centuries?) | Copyist unknown

Yemeni manuscript | Agricultural treatise

The manuscript copy is acephalous and apodous. It has rubrics in red and some lateral annotations. This unidentified agricultural treatise, whose title and author are unknown, examines the seasons based on the calculations of both farmers and astronomers. It addresses topics such as seasonal winds, sowing, grafting techniques, fertilization, irrigation, pruning, and related agricultural practices.

Among the sources, the *Kitāb al-Filāḥa al-Rūmiyya* by Qusṭun (i.e., Qusṭus), generally identified with Cassian the Elder, author of the *Geoponica*, is cited within the text. This work was translated into Arabic by Sirğīs b. Hilayya al-Rūmī. Other agricultural texts are also referenced, including the *Filāḥa al-nabāṭiyya* by Abū Bakr b. Waḥshiyya.

ff. I, 1r-59v; no title page. The manuscript is incomplete, lacking the beginning and the end, with missing leaves between ff. 7 and 8. Western foliation in pencil. Dimensions: 250 × 150 mm. Written surface: 150 × 85 mm; 17 lines per page. Mixed quiring. Script: *nashī*. Ink: black, with rubrication in red; catchwords in black ink. Binding: Half-leather binding, leather spine. Boards covered with light-brown block-printed paper decorated with floral motifs, pasted over cardboard. Paper: European paper watermarked with six-point star with rounded points. Traces of ancient repairs on binding.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 133, and no. 368 in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

فصل بسم الله هذا ما يخص منقسطون
 في الفلاحة الرومية **قال** بعدما قرر من
 ذكر السنة والبروج والكواكب والنازل
ان الفصول عند اهل الفلاحة غير النجميين
فالربيع عندهم وقت خروج الاوراق والازهار
 وهيجان الحيوان ويكون في الاقليم
 الرابع من نصف اذار وفي الثالث من نصف
 اشباط وفي الثاني من اوله وفي الخامس
 من اول نيسان وفي السادس من نصفه
والصيف عندهم زمن الحصاد ونحوه **والخريف**
 عكس الربيع **والشتا** عكس الصيف والاختلاف
 من اوايلها على النمط المذكور **ويلازم هذه**
الفصول رياح تنفع بها الزروع والحيوان
 وتنضر فمن الخامس وما يليه حد الشمال
 اكثر ما تكون في الصيف والخريف وتسمي
 بوطوس ومثلها الدبور في النفع ومهبها
 في الشتا وتسمي تكروس **واما** الصبا وهي



جبر بلاطقي وقلبي ونظرون تطبخ بعثه امثالها ما حي
 يبقى الربع يصفي ويرفع فان هذا الماء يطلع جميع
 الطبع وان كان العلي اترك ان اجود انتهى
 غيره اللبن الحامض يطلع جميع الطبع
 الشمع اذا عسر قلعه تحمي ثقتين مخرج د
 وتجعل واحده من فوق وواحد من تحت فانه
 يزول انتهى **فايده** اذا اتفق القرو زحل
 في منزله استقبل الشرق وخذ بيدك اليسرى
 قطعت **معاطيس** لا تزيد علي سبعة
 دراهم واجعلها في خرقه حمراء وربطها بخيط
 اخضر من جملها كان وجهها غريز الازهر في
 حاجة الاوقضية وابلغ من ذلك ان جعل معها
 من ريش العدهد **فايده** راس الثعلب اذا
 جعلته في البرج خربته ولم يبق فيه حمام ابد
 انتهى **فايده** الزرنج الاحمر اذا شربه الفرس
 فقتلها وكذلك سائر الدواب **فايده** راس الديب
 اذا جعلت في البرج لم يقربه السنور ولا شي

لعلح الطبع

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Arabic Manuscripts
*on **Magic***

MS ARA 72 (1-2)

(Inv. SA 108102)

MS ARA 72 (1)

Kaṣf al-asrār al-rabbāniyya fī ṣarḥ al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya

by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454)

Copied by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī | Completed on 5 Šaʿbān 1028/30 March 1619

Egyptian manuscript | Occult sciences; science of the letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*); magic squares (*awfāq*)

MS ARA 72 (2)

Untitled poem by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Egyptian manuscript | Religious poetry

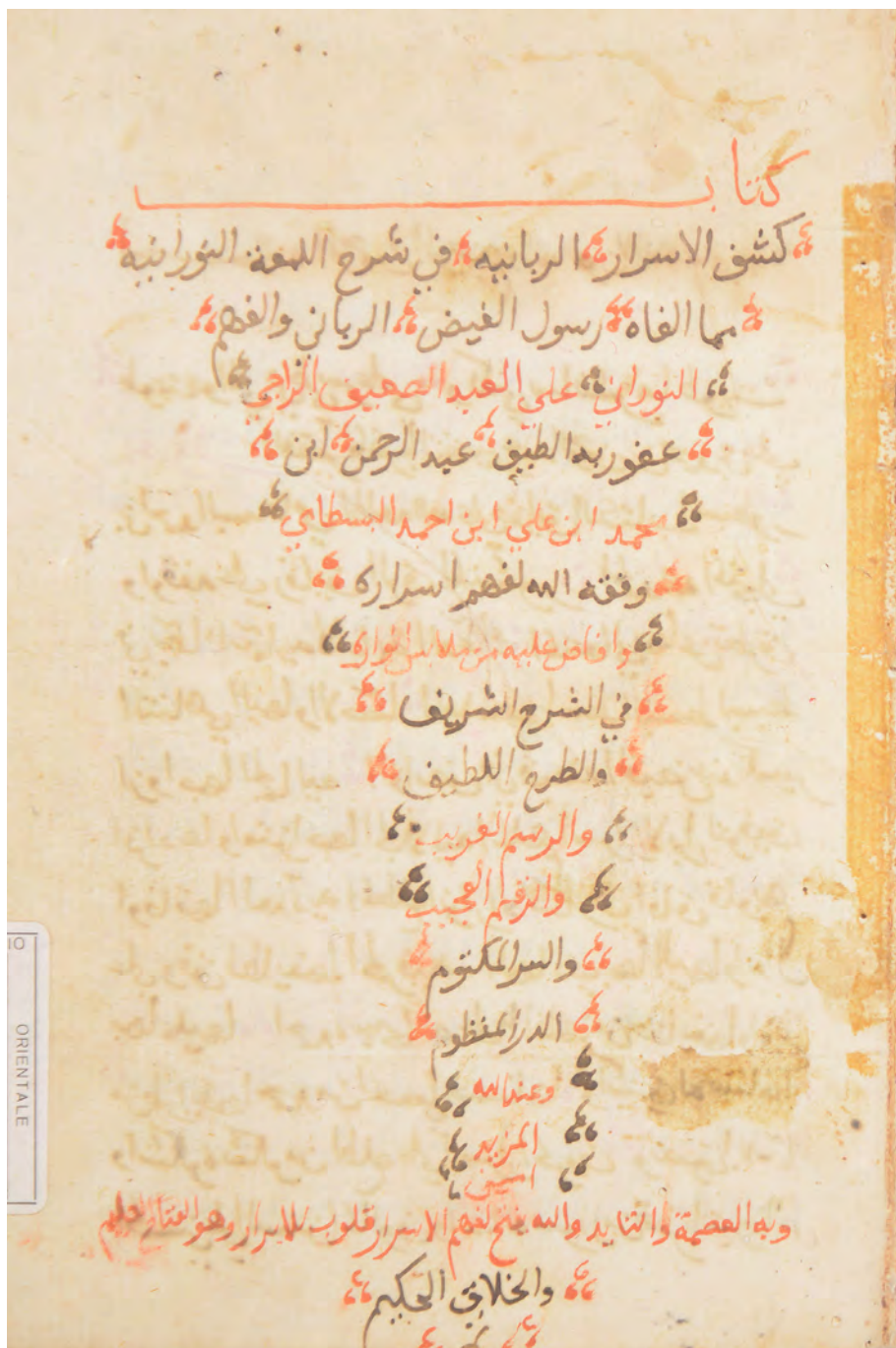
The main work contained in the manuscript, that is ARA 72 (1), is a commentary by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454) on the treatise by Abū al-ʿAbbās Aḥmad al-Būnī (d. 622/1225 or 630/1232–33) entitled *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya fī al-awrād al-rabbāniyya*. al-Biṣṭāmī studied al-Būnī’s *al-Lumʿa al-nūrāniyya* in Cairo with ʿIzz al-Dīn b. Ġamāʿa (d. 819/1416–1417) (Gardiner 2012:115–116; Gardiner 2017:22). By matching the records in the colophon of MS ARA 72 (1) with those of another manuscript witness of the same work present on the Internet, but not physically located (<https://www.scribd.com/document/548042444>; accessed 30.05.2025), we learn that al-Biṣṭāmī completed his commentary in Ġazīrat al-Ḥaḍraʿ, a locality near Alexandria, on 17 Šafar 822/15 March 1419.

ff. 1r-166v; black folios: 100v-104v, 114r-118v, 121r-123v, 149v-152v, 158r-159v, ff. I-II (the latter added during restoration). Dimensions: 195 × 150 mm. Written surface: 160 × 85 mm. Quinions. Previous foliation in Arabic numerals. A colophon dated 5 Šaʿbān 1028/30 March 1619 on f. 163v. Ink: Black ink with headings and rubrications in red ink (ff. 1r–163v); brown ink with gold powder (ff. 163v–165v). Diagonal catchwords in black ink, often trimmed during bookbinding. Marginal glosses in red ink. Binding: Half leather binding with red paper on the covers. Inner boards covered with white paper from an old restoration; traces of the original text’s joints to the marbled paper cover are still visible. Script: Cursive *nashī* (ff. 1r–163v); *nashī* (ff. 163v–165v). Paper: European laid paper with various watermarks, partially obscured due to tight sewing. From the third quire onward: f. 23: <cross within a drop-shaped circle>; f. 93 and following: <[crown?] surmounted by a six-pointed star and crescent>; f. 114: <heart within a circle surmounted by [...]>; ff. 117–118

and following: <six-petalled flower with two leaves> with countermark <ALARO-SA>; f. 121: <Latin cross within an oval surmounted by a crown, flanked by two rampant griffins>; flyleaf II with blind-stamped mark <BATH>.

Illustrations: The text is interspersed with figures, especially *awfāq*. Notable illustrations are found on the following folios: 14r, 15r-16r, 17v-18v, 20r-22r, 23r-24r, 25v-29v, 31r, 32r-v, 34r-v, 37r, 44v, 52v-63r, 64r-70r, 71r-72v, 74r-76v, 78r-83r, 84r, 85v-88v, 89v-96r, 105r-107v, 108v-111r, 112r-113r, 119r, 120r-v, 131r-v, 134v-135v, 136v, 138v-140r, 141r, 142r-145v, 147r-148r, 153r-154v, 156r, 160r-161v.

Purchased by the Instituto Universitario Orientale in Cairo in 1971.



MS ARA 72, f. 1r: Title page including the name of author

MS ARA 139 (1-18)

(Inv. SA 108315)

*Composite manuscript of Yemeni provenance***MS ARA 139 (1)** ff. 1v–16v, incomplete at the end*Untitled work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 139 (2) ff. 17r–32v, incomplete at the end*Kitāb al-amrāḍ wa-huwa in sa'ala-ka marīḍ 'an maraḍ la-hu fa-is'al-hu 'an ismi-hi wa-ism ummi-hi... by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (3) ff. 33v–40v, incomplete at the end*Untitled work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astral magic; science of letters (*ʿilm al-ḥurūf*); gematria (*ḥisāb al-ḡumal*)**MS ARA 139 (4)** ff. 41v–44r*Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb ḥisāb al-sā'il)*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (5) ff. 44v–45r*Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb 'azīma wa-'atf wa-ḡiha li-man yurīd yarā 'aḡab^{an})*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (6) ff. 46r–51v, acephalous and incomplete at the end*Untitled magical work by anonymous*

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (7) ff. 52r–71v

Untitled work by anonymous (Bāb fī ma‘rifā ??? al-nuḡūm li-l-riḡāl wa-l-nisā’)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astrology

MS ARA 139 (8) ff. 72r–95r

Untitled work by anonymous (Kitāb maṣhūr al-baraka fī al-adwiya min al-ṭibb ‘an al-Azraq wa-Abī ??? wa-ḡayri-him (sic) min al-ḥukamā’)

Copyist unknown | Completed in Ṣā‘bān 1343/February 1925

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (9) ff. 96v–107v

[al-Ṭarīqa al-wāḍiḥa ilā asrār al-Fātiḥa]

by anonymous (possibly Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mahdī, d. unknown)

Copyist unknown | Completed on 14 Rabī‘ al-Āḥar 1344/Sunday 1 November 1925

Yemeni manuscript | Qur’ānic exegesis (*tafsīr*); theurgy; prayers (*ad‘iya*)

MS ARA 139 (10) ff. 110r–117r

Kitāb al-ibṣār fī ma‘rifat al-nuḡūm fī-mā yattaḥiq min al-marīḍ min al-raḡul wa-l-mar’a min maraḍ wa-‘araḍ by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical astrological medicine

MS ARA 139 (11) ff. 117v–123v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous (Hādā al-kitāb yadullu li-l-ittnā ‘aṣar al-naḡm bi-anna li-kull naḡm qabīla)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Astrological Magic

MS ARA 139 (12) ff. 124r–131r

Kitāb al-fa‘l istaḥraḡa-hu min al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓim al-imām Ḡa‘far b. Muḥammad attributed to Ḡa‘far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Divination; bibliomancy (*fa‘l al-Qur’ān*)

MS ARA 139 (13) ff. 131v–132r

Notes by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 139 (14) ff. 132v–225v

Untitled work by anonymous (Faṣl fī ṭabāʾiʿ al-aḡḡdiya wa-l-aḡwiya wa-sāʾir al-mufradāt)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Medicine; pharmacopoeia; magic

MS ARA 139 (15) ff. 225v–230v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous (wa-li-nabdaʾ bi-kitāb āḡar maḡmūʿ min kutub al-ṭibb)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Medicine; magic

MS ARA 139 (16) ff. 233r–310v, incomplete at the end

Untitled work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Spiritual medicine; healing and exorcism spells against epilepsy and other evils; talismans; astrological magic

MS ARA 139 (17) f. 312r

Notes by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic; Talismanic figure

MS ARA 139 (18) ff. 312v–327v, incomplete at the end

Kitāb al-ṭibb min kitāb al-rūḡānī by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical medicine; spiritual medicine

Most of the works comprised in the codex are anonymous, untitled, incomplete, and undated, with rare exceptions (see above). Despite this, the collection of fragmentary texts denotes a certain coherence. The writings contained in it deal mainly with medical and magico-astrological themes. Often, these two themes are united in the texts, in which magico-astrological means are proposed both for the diagnosis and for the prevention and treatment of both physical and psychic ailments. Most of the works contained in the codex include several talismanic figures, seals, magic squares, and more (for a brief discussion of the subjects and images of some of the figures see Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale*). The presence of a text such as the fragment of a Qurʾānic bibliomancy work attributed to Ġaʿfar al-Šādiq (no. 12) within this collection should most likely be read within the framework of occult

practices for diagnostic purposes. Even a work such as no. 9, ostensibly focused on the analysis of a Qur'anic chapter (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥa*), falls properly within the rationale of the collection. It is in fact a text that discusses the beneficial properties (*manāfi'*)—including prophylactic and curative—of the Opening Sura, which also includes a protective talismanic figure with instructions for making it (f. 97v), and a Latin square of the name Allāh (f. 103r).

ff. I, 1v–327v, II, (ff. I+II added during an old restoration). Blank folios: ff. 33r, 41r, 46v, 95v–96r, 108–109, 231–232, 311. Dimensions: 243 x 180 mm. Variable written surfaces. A colophon dated *Ša'bān* 1343/February 1925 on f. 95r. A colophon dated 14 *Rabī' al-Āḥar* 1344/Sunday 1 November 1925 on f. 107v. Marginal glosses in Arabic, written in black ink. Quaternions, but mutilated in many leaves. Ink: black, with diagonal catchwords in black ink, rubrication in red or violet ink. Script: unvocalized, mostly without rule of *miṣṭara*. Texts in different hands, in *nashī*, cursive *nashī*, and *riq'ā* scripts (ff. 46r–51v et al.). Binding: brown leather with an envelope flap, decorated with corners and cartouches with floral motifs. Paper: brownish Oriental, watermarked with a crescent moon with a human profile inscribed within a shield with a double border and three points, and a countermark in two lines: < بياض ابو شباك اسطبولي > “Beyāḍ Abū Šubbāk Iṣṭambūlī” and < عالي اصيلي > “ālī ašīlī”. On f. 1r, an Arabic note in blue ink: “هذا الكتاب للسيد عبد الرحمن ???” (*Hādā al-kitāb ??? li-l-sayyid ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ???*). A note of donation in Italian on f. 1r: “Dono di Seif el Islam | Alī figlio dell’Imam | Sanaa 14/9/31- 9°” (“Gift of Sayf al-Islam ‘Alī, son of the Imam, Sanaa, 14/9/1931-9°”) written in pencil. The donor mentioned in this note was most likely ‘Alī b. Yahyā, a less-known son of the king of Yemen Yahyā Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Dīn (r. 1918-1948). On the same f. 1r a note of possession of the manuscript to Dr. Sarnelli, in Arabic, in black ink, dated 1350/1931.

Illustrations: The text is interspersed with figures, especially talismanic figures, seals, and *awfāq*. Notable illustrations are found on the following folios: 5r, 7r, 8r, 9v, 11r, 12r, 13r, 14r, 15r-v, 16v, 38r, 44v–45r, 51r, 67v–68v, 84r, 87v, 103r, 114v, 226v, 236r, 238r, 262r, 263v–264v, 267r–268v, 271r, 272v, 275v, 296v, 307v, 312r, 321v, 322v–323r, 326r, 327v. Some noteworthy figures from this MS are reproduced in Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L’Orientale*.

Ex libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 107 and no. 354, written in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.



MS ARA 139, f. 7r. Seals and instructions for summoning creatures from the unseen world



MS ARA 139, ff. 1v–2r.
First two text pages of the
manuscript with extensive
notes in the margins





MS ARA 139, leather cover



MS ARA 244 (1–9)

(inv. SA 110440)

*Composite manuscript of Yemeni provenance.***MS ARA 244 (1)** ff. 1r–15v*Kitāb al-mandal al-Sulaymānī li-riyāḥ al-ḡānn ‘alā al-iṭnā ‘aṣar al-burūḡ*
by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magical medicine; invocations; prayers of request (*ad‘wiya*)**MS ARA 244 (2)** ff. 16r–20v, acephalous and mutilated at the end*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Dietetics (medical properties of aliments)

MS ARA 244 (3) ff. 21r–25r, acephalous and mutilated at the end*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (4) ff. 25v–42v*Ḥirz al-aqsām* by Ḡa‘far b. Muḥammad [al-Ṣādiq] (d. 148/765) (ascribed)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; protective talisman (*ḥirz*); prayers of request (*ad‘wiya*)**MS ARA 244 (5)** ff. 43v–46r, acephalous*Untitled work* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (6) ff. 46v–50r*al-Hayākil al-sab‘a* by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; prayers of request (*ad‘wiya*)

MS ARA 244 (7) ff. 50r–51v

al-Hirz al-Ğa'farī by anonymous

(possibly ascribed to Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq, d. 148/765)

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; protective talisman (*ḥirz*); prayers of request (*ad'wiya*)

MS ARA 244 (8) f. 52r–v, acephalous and mutilated at the end

Fragment of a magical work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Magic

MS ARA 244 (9) ff. 53r–55v, acephalous and mutilated at the end

Untitled work by anonymous

Copyist unknown | Undated

Yemeni manuscript | Theurgy; prayers of request (*ad'wiya*)

All works comprised in the codex are incomplete and undated except for one (no. 6). Of some of them the title is provided (nos. 1, 4, 6, 7). All works are anonymous except one, most likely apocryphal, ascribed to Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (d. 148/765) (no. 4), and a second text that from its title seems like it could be ascribed, again as a pseudepigraph, to the same Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (no. 7). Despite this, the collection of fragmentary texts denotes a certain coherence. The writings contained in this codex deal with medicine, magic and religious prayers and invocations, especially for protective purposes. Some of the works contained in the codex include figures (magic squares, Solomonic seals, etc.) and lines of occult and cipher alphabets (or, perhaps, pseudo alphabets). For a brief discussion of the subjects and images of some of the figures, see Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L'Orientale*. Both in terms of content and codicological characteristics, this manuscript bears similarities to the other Yemenite medical-magical codex in the Sarnelli Collection (MS ARA 139). Included in this manuscript are texts and prayers ascribed to Abū Ṭālib b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (d. 619) (f. 2r), 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) (f. 2r–v), and Ğa'far b. Muḥammad al-Šādiq (d. 148/765) (nos. 4, 7), and repeated invocations of 'Alī's name (f. 10r–v). This, coupled with the Yemeni provenance, suggests the hypothesis that the codex was produced in a Shi'ite context.

ff. I, II, 1r–55v, III (flyleaves I and III added during restoration). Blank folios: f. 43r. Title on the spine. f. IIr: some texts intentionally erased and abraded. f. IIv: two notes with recipes for pharmaceutical preparations based on natural substances. Few marginal glosses in Arabic, written in black ink. Notes on both doublures in

black ink in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish. Ink: Black, headings and rubrication in black, red and yellow ink. Horizontal and diagonal catchwords. Script: Multi-text manuscript written by different hands in various styles of *nashī*, with headings in *tulū*, sometimes approaching *riqāʿ*. Binding: Brown half leather, with a secondary light brown leather spine featuring a paper label, partially readable < *Kitāb | al-iršād | qīl Ibn H... | Allāh | 44* >. Paper: ff. 1–13: brownish European paper with watermark; ff. 14–20: brownish Oriental paper; ff. 21 onwards: brownish European paper with watermark *Tre lune* and three-petalled flower with initials V and C/E?>, same watermark as ARA 72.

Illustrations: the manuscript contains several figures, especially *awfāq* (magic and Latin squares), “Spectacle letters” (Brillenbuchstaben), “the seven signs”, and Solomonic seals. A talismanic figure is also included (f. 45r). Some figures from this MS are reproduced in Chapter 5 *Arabic Manuscripts on Magic at L’Orientale*.

Ex Libris: Tommaso Sarnelli, no. 142 and no. 363, written in pencil. Provenance: Purchased by the Istituto Universitario Orientale from Tommaso Sarnelli on 24 August 1951.

سنة ١٠٩٦ هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني
 سنة ١٠٩٦ هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني
 سنة ١٠٩٦ هـ في شهر ربيع الثاني

Università degli Studi di Napoli
"L'Orientale"

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قرصا علی

MS ARA 244, f. 55v. The last text page of the manuscript featuring “Spectacle letters” (*Brillenbuchstaben*) in the first line, followed by an incantation against harmful magic (*siḥr*) consisting of various elements, including Qurʾānic quotations and a series of numbers (line 6)



MS ARA 244: Text block attached to a leather cover, with visible ex libris of Sarnelli



MS ARA 244: Spine of the manuscript with a label indicating a title that does not correspond to the actual content of the volume



IL TORCOLIERE • Officine Grafico-Editoriali d'Ateneo
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مستوفى الزمانى عند زوالها
وخرق جفونى
بعض المواقف مؤثرة
ما ينحدر
جرب
و ما جرد

[illegible][illegible]