

The Jewish Medical Book-shelf

It is highly likely that every medical book already identified or to be identified in the Genizah was in the possession of a Jew who was probably involved in the medical profession. Therefore, extensive work will enable us to reconstruct the book-shelf of the Jewish physicians and pharmacists in Muslim Egypt. In order to learn more on the subject a preliminary survey has been undertaken. The sorting process revealed 35 different books which have been identified. In terms of the authors' identities, we can say that of the titles of medical books that have already been identified, roughly one third were written by classical authorities such as Galen and Hippocrates. The absence of Dioscorides' book is strange and questionable – there is a good chance of finding it in one of the unidentified fragments, since it was a basic book for physicians as well as for pharmacists.

One third of the identified books were written by Muslim writers such as Avicenna, Rhazes and the rest were written by Jewish physicians such as Kuhin al-'Aṭṭār, and Maimonides. Some fragments are copied from well known works, for example, Ibn al-Bayṭar, the Andalusian physician who visited the eastern Mediterranean region and described its *materia medica* in his writings.

Fragments of few books written by Maimonides such as: Commentary on Hippocrates' Aphorisms (Hebrew), Abbreviation of 'Galen's On the faculties of foods' (Judeo-Arabic), Treatise on sexual intercourse (Judeo-Arabic) and *Kitab fi al-Sumum* (Arabic) were identified.

In terms of the content of the books: specializing medical books (such as fevers, eye diseases), regimen sanitatis, pharmacopeias glossaries of drug names and lexicons of *materia medica*. There are more than 1550 fragments which are clearly part of medical books in Arabic, Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic in the Genizah.

The medieval druggists, as well as the physicians, were required to be acquainted with the current handbooks of medicaments, such as the famous *Dustūr Bimāristānī*, (The Hospital Handbook) by the Jewish (Karaite) physician Ibn Abi 'l-Bayān (13th century) Though the book was short, the author claimed it contained all the medicaments commonly prescribed.

A much bigger book "*Minhāj al-Dukkān*" (The store guide – or - How to run the [apothecary's] shop) was written at 1259-60 by Abu 'l-Munā al-Kuhin al-'Aṭṭār. This book became even more popular and was printed in Egypt several times between 1870 and 1940, since it served, and is still serving, as a guide for the traditional drug sellers.

Other medical books which were commonly part of the libraries of Jewish people in general and Jewish physicians and pharmacists in particular are listed in book-lists - Genizah fragments that describe sales of libraries; one of which records the sale of medical library of a physician who had passed away.



An Early Fragment of Ibn Juzayh's Tabulated Manual "Taṣwīf al-Aḥdān" (The Almanac of Bodily Parts for the Treatment of People) - a therapeutic handbook, or tabulated manual, one of the first books published in such form.



Part of Maimonides' Treatise on Sexual Intercourse



List of medical books that were sold after the death of a doctor named Abu Sa'd



Unidentified medical book dealing with fevers