The Dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīd

ARABIC TEXT, ENGLISH TRANSLATION, STUDY AND GLOSSARIES

BY

OLIVER KAHN

BRILL

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O. Kahl
INTRODUCTION

“Pharmacy then is the knowledge of chosen simple drugs in regard to their species, varieties and forms, as well as the mixture of compound drugs on the basis of written prescriptions or in accordance with what a trustworthy and skilful man may have contrived”

The Muslim polymath Abū ḫ-Rūḥān al-Bīrūnī in the preface to his Kitāb as-Ṣaidana fi ẗ-ṭibb (completed mid 11th century CE)

1. Towards a History of Arabic Pharmacology

If we were to compare Arabic pharmacology to a building, we would be looking at a very elaborate and complex architectural structure, made by using materials and styles from different parts of the world and joining them together in an ingenious though somewhat idiosyncratic fashion. Studying such a structure is necessarily both challenging and rewarding—the challenge arising from its compositional diversity, the reward resulting from its conceptual harmony. The conditions for the rise of Arabic pharmacology are varied. First and foremost there is the Arabic reception of foreign scientific traditions in the course of a translation movement which took place between the middle of the 2nd/8th and the end of the 4th/10th centuries in Baghdad, and which acquainted the Arabs with the medico-philosophical theories as well as the medico-pharmacological practices notably of the Greeks and Indians, either through direct translations from Greek and Sanskrit or through Syriac and Pahlavi intermediates; the translation movement also played a major rôle in the formation of a professional language, that is in developing Arabic into a language of scientific and philosophical discourse. Then there are the commercial and to some

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1 The system of transliteration used in this book is that of the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft.
2 See Meyerhof Vorwort 10,9ff. (Arabic text).
3 Here and in the following the term “Arab(ic)” is used to denote the language only, bearing no reference to race or religion.
4 Dates separated by a slash refer to the Islamic and Christian calendars respectively.
INTRODUCTION

extent cultural relations with at least the southern regions of China, which brought the Arabs in contact with certain aspects of Chinese herbal medicine. And lastly there is the enormous geographical extension of the Abbasid empire, stretching from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean and from the Caucasus down to the Horn of Africa, which facilitated trade and made possible the acquisition and relatively safe transport of medicinal drugs from all corners of the then known world. The earliest pharmacological works in Arabic of which we possess more or less complete textual witnesses appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, around the middle of the 3rd/9th century, and in their high degree of literary organization and deliberate use of technical jargon they already bear the markings of a scientific genre. Due to a lack of authentic Arabic source material for the formative period we can only employ common sense and draw the general conclusion that the old Arab scholars sliced and spliced preceding pharmacological traditions with remarkable swiftness, great skill, and a fair measure of intuition. The particular scientific form which Arabic pharmacology had assumed in the course of the 3rd/9th century was to become the basic pattern for almost all later literary activities in the field, and it is in precisely this form that we find Arabic pharmacology also lying at the crossroads of other, related scientific genres—medicine with its semiphilosophical base of humoral pathology; botany both theoretical and applied; mineralogy; zoology; alchemy insofar as its chemical principles may be concerned; and occasionally even astrology as a means to iatromathematical ends.

It follows from all this that an adequate understanding of the structural features of Arabic pharmacology requires an extremely broad approach, whilst its expressional features can only be studied through a magnifying glass. For certain periods in the history of Arabic pharmacology, that is with regard to specific pharmacological texts in historical settings which are reasonably well known, this task can today be tackled with a good chance of success, though still a relatively large amount of effort. Yet a general history of Arabic pharmacology above and beyond a merely chronological or descriptive

Footnote 5: Applied botany in this context means pharmacognosy. The Arabs considered the writings which deal with simple drugs (adwiyā mufrada) as belonging to a different branch of pharmaceutical literature than the writings which deal with compound drugs (adwiyā murakkaba), and we are going along with this classification; cf. also Ullmann Medizin 257 and 295.
plane—an ‘inner’ history of the subject that proceeds to interpret its heterogeneous origins, diverging and converging lines of development, classic manifestations, and eventual stagnation at the very point of congruency with other scientific structures in late mediaeval Arab society—such a thing must remain in the realm of the future. There are several reasons which call for restraint. Arabic pharmacological texts inevitably cover vast, and partly still uncharted territories. We already mentioned the different scientific disciplines which intersect with mediaeval Arabic pharmacology, and which must be understood well enough to inform its study on the level of natural principles; but there is also a delicate range of source languages which need to be considered in order to arrive at justifiable historical interpretations of the subject, and which include, apart from the obvious Arabic, at least Greek, Syriac and Persian, and ideally also Sanskrit and Chinese. Rare exceptions granted, the individual scholar of modern day more often than not finds himself stretched beyond the limits of his expertise when trying to adequately deal with the diverse material under his hands, and wishes for institutional conditions and intellectual attitudes more favourable to interdisciplinary collaboration—as matters stand, the historian of Arabic pharmacology better get used to single-tracking. Another problem is the lack of calibrated theoretical tools with which to work the material, and the absence of generally acknowledged methodological approaches even among historians, let alone representatives of ‘exact’ science—this means that already the most basic questions, like how the achievements of earlier scientific traditions ought to be measured, remain subject to dissent. Then there is in our contemporary world an ever widening gap between the natural and the social sciences which renders next to impossible any attempts at re-establishing a mutually comprehensible terminology,

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*Here we should contemplate Martin Levey’s *Early Arabic Pharmacology*, which is the only explicit (though hardly serious) attempt so far at presenting a general survey of the subject. Let it be said at the outset that I am a great admirer of Levey’s scholarly achievements, just as I readily admit that his linguistic theories left their mark on my own approach to Arabic pharmacology. But the book in question, even by the modest standards of positivistic historiography, can only be described as a disaster. It appeared in 1973, more than three years after Levey’s death, and features a short ‘Preface’ apparently written by Levey himself. The rest of the book, however, looks as if it were printed straight off a card-case, it is badly organized, incoherent, uncritical, full of mistakes and misconceptions, and in all its prematurity certainly not the kind of stuff Levey would have approved for publication had he been alive.*
and which is also responsible for the fact that no pharmacodynamic investigations are being carried out with regard to historical bodies of medicinal drugs—we have no idea whether these drugs actually did what they were supposed to do, and therefore even the most circumspect translations of relevant historical texts can be accused of being hypothetical. Next we have to accept that many important pharmacological works in the Arabic language simply did not make it across time, and then acknowledge that many other, equally important works have not yet been resurrected from the archives and turned into publications—without a broad and solid basis, however, no historical study, not even the most humble one, will rise much above the level of speculation. Finally there is an obstacle of a purely philological but no less crucial nature, namely the nonexistence of a historico-critical Arabic reference dictionary except for the two letters kāf and lām, which in our case is aggravated by a dearth of reliable medico-pharmacological glossaries derived from the sources—many a linguistic commodity the classicist and even the sinologist take for granted is a pie in the sky to the arabist, who constantly has to recur to indigenous lexicology which, in turn, poses hermeneutic problems similar to those he is trying to solve. Bearing all this in mind, it is also clear that readers of my book who may hope for high-flying theoretical expositions will be disappointed, as there is no meaning to theories which are based on insufficient data.

In conclusion of this preliminary section and before embarking on a more detailed investigation into Ibn at-Tilmīd’s dispensatory in subsequent sections, I will now try to put down a rough template and briefly delineate the historical position and scientific significance of

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7 For example the key dispensatories of the 3rd/9th century physicians Yūhannā ibn Sarābiyūn, Hunain ibn Ishāq, and ‘Abdūs ibn Zaid, or that of the 4th/10th century Andalusian Ḥāmid ibn Samaǧūn, see Ullmann Medizin 103, 299f., and 302 with GaŠ 3/242, 255, 264, and 317.
8 For example Muḥammad ibn Zakāryā ar-Rāzī’s (d. 313/925 or 323/935) al-Aqrābādīn al-kabīr, see Ullmann Medizin 303 and GaŠ 3/283; Sahān ibn Ḫūṭān ibn Kāsān’s (d. 380/990) al-Aqrābādīn, see GaŠ 3/310; the revised and abridged edition of the large version of Sābūr ibn Sahl’s (d. 255/869) dispensatory as prepared during the first half of the 5th/11th century by the physicians of the Ḫādūr hospital in Baghdad s.t. Muḥtaṣar min Agrābādīn Sābūr fī taʿlīf al-adwiya, see Kahl Sābūr 1 18 and 22; or Nāṣīḥbādīn as-Samarrqandī’s (d. 619/1222) second and major dispensatory entitled al-Qarābādīn al-ṭartīb al-ilāfī, see Ullmann Medizin 308. To this selection can be added almost all of those manuscripts which belong to the muḥarrabāt or “empirical (drugs)” category of pharmacological literature, see Ullmann Medizin 311ff.
that text in the general framework of mediaeval Arabic pharmacology. It is not known when exactly Ibn at-Tilmīḍ wrote his dispensatory, but biographical accounts point to the fourth decade of the 6th/12th century as the presumable time of compilation. The dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ thus already stands near the end of a relatively long chain of inventive pharmacological development in the Arab world, and insofar as clinical pharmacology is concerned undoubtedly marks the apogee of this genre of scientific literature.9 According to the Arabic historiographical tradition, it was Ibn at-Tilmīḍ’s dispensatory which soon after its appearance became the pharmacological standard work in the hospitals and apotheces of Baghdad if not the Arab East—replacing, after almost 300 years, the hitherto indispensable dispensatory of Sābūr ibn Sahl (d. 255/869);10 it turned out to be the most renowned and widely circulated of all his writings,11 and for at least the following 200 years, possibly longer, it was considered in medical circles to be the final say on the matter.12 The dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ, as is recorded in subtitles to some of its manuscripts, was “compiled from a number of (other) dispensatories” (muntaza‘ min ‘iddat aqrābāḏīnāt).13 Here we have to think in the first place of those sources, strictly pharmacological or not, which Ibn at-Tilmīḍ explicitly quotes along the way,14 bearing in mind that he is far from being consistent in this department and quite capable of copying a written source verbatim without even hinting at it—in particular, he

9 The equally celebrated dispensatory which Badraddīn al-Qalānīṣī wrote a few years later in 590/1194 represents a very different breed of pharmacological writing—it is much more comprehensive than the dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ, and contains a lot of practical explanations and theoretical excursions which Ibn at-Tilmīḍ dismisses completely; but it is also quite wordy and homiletic in style, and in that respect clearly addressed to the generalist rather than the specialist: Ibn at-Tilmīḍ gave an analytical handbook to the pharmacist, al-Qalānīṣī a synthetical textbook to the physician. For an edition of al-Qalānīṣī’s dispensatory see Qalānīṣī Aqrābāḏīn, for a (mediocre) study of it see Fellmann Qalānīṣī.

10 See Kahl Sābūr1 21 note 69.


12 See Ibn Ḥallikān Wafayāt 6/75 and Abū l-Fidā Muḥtaṣar 3/57. Apparently there also once existed a version of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ’s dispensatory in 13 (instead of 20) chapters, see Ullmann Medizin 306; it is this shorter version which Ibn Abī Uṣaibī’a ‘Uyūn 1/276 refers to as “hospital epitome” (mūjaz bimāristānī), and which Yāqūt Iršād 7/245 calls the “small” (ṣaḡīr) as opposed to the “large” (kabīr) dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ.

13 Compare section 3.a. (manuscripts BD, then A).

14 For a discussion of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ’s sources and the problems entailed by source criticism in Arabic pharmacy see section 3.c.
owes much more to the dispensatory of the aforementioned Sābūr ibn Sahl than the few quotations would suggest, and completely adopts the latter’s principles of formal arrangement. The value of Ibn at-Tilmīḏ’s dispensatory can of course neither be judged by his nonchalant manner of citation nor be diminished by his habit to hang on to materials and structures he was familiar with and deemed useful. The mind of a mediaeval scholar cannot be measured against our own ideas of scientific progress, and not be grasped by modern concepts of originality or innovation—science in the Middle Ages is essentially conservative and speculative, and deeply embedded in a received system of physical and spiritual truths which is considered in itself stable and worthy of preservation. With this picture in the background, Ibn at-Tilmīḏ’s decision to reject whole clusters of obsolete ‘traditional’ prescriptions is a most remarkable achievement, and compared to earlier works on the subject his dispensatory can therefore be said to have stretched the rational or else scientiﬁc elements in mediaeval Arabic pharmacology to the very limits of a system of preconceived universal truths. It is by a combination of brevity and clarity, expertise and experience, and not least by an undogmatic pragmatism rare in those days that the dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḏ is distinguished from most other manifestations of mediaeval Arabic pharmacology—in these respects, it had few precursors indeed, and has never been succeeded.

In this context we also have to remember the updated synopsis of Sābūr’s large dispensatory which for a good century had been the vade-mecum of the pharmacists in the ‘Aḍūdī hospital in Bāghdād when Ibn at-Tilmīḏ was put in charge of that same institution, cf. note 8 above.

Among the prescriptions Ibn at-Tilmīḏ eliminated we ﬁnd inter alia the Greek mithridatium and sūṯrā ‘panaceas’, the Syrian šīlā ‘panacea’, the Indo-Persian qaṭṭa/āraǧān and zāmīhrān as well as the Indian ḥ/kalkalānaṛ group of remedies, and also the bulk of the ‘classic’ Greek hierata, see e.g. Kahl Sābūr² nos. 16, 34, 48–49, 51, 54–55, 57, 67–71, and 73 (Arabic text) or Ibn Sīnā Qānīn 3/315, 317, 318ff., 322ff., 334ff., 335ff., and 341–347; these time-honoured but often woolly and complicated drugs were semifictional accessories which owed their survival through the centuries and across different cultures to magical or ritual rather than practical observations, and some of them were probably in no circumstances ever actually prepared and/or used.
INTRODUCTION

2. Ibn at-Tilmīd

a. Life

Muwaffaqalmulk Amīnaddaula Abū l-Ḥasan Hībatallāh ibn Ṣā‘id ibn Hībatallāh ibn Ibrāhim ibn ‘Alī ibn at-Tilmīd was, for all we know, born in Baghdad around the year 466/1074, into a Christian Arab family of the Nestorian persuasion. We do not know, of course, whether it was sung to him at his cradle but we can safely say that he turned out to be one of the most celebrated and influential physicians of his century, and a littérateur and poet of some repute, too. There is little doubt that his general interest in medicine, and presumably an early inclination towards this profession, were fostered by his maternal grandfather Mu‘tamadalmulk Abū l-Farāḥ Yahyā ibn at-Tilmīd, a distinguished scholar and physician, and by his father Abū l-‘Alā’ Ṣā‘id who also had made himself a name as a medical practitioner; but it was his teacher Abū l-Ḥasan Sa‘id ibn Hībatallāh (d. 495/1102), physician to the Abbasid palace, who had the greatest impact on the shape and direction of Ibn at-Tilmīd’s career, and who at the time was already well-known as the author of a number of important medical books. Apart from receiving a thorough medical training, the young and unusually gifted Ibn at-Tilmīd was also instructed in other branches of learning, such as Christian and Muslim theology, theosophy, logic, poetry, music, and calligraphy. He thus not only deepened his knowledge of the Syriac language but gradually acquired a most profound understanding of Arabic, too, the language of his literary productions to come.

Then his years of travel began and he made long journeys in Persia, about which we know virtually nothing. We only hear that he was once


18 See Ullmann Medizin 160ff.
called out to treat the ‘Supreme Sultan’ of the Great Seljuks, Sanğar ibn Malikšâh, who resided in the city of Marw in Khurasan, and who had assumed this title in 511/1118—if this is anything to go by, Ibn at-Tilmıd would have still been in Persia in his mid-forties. However that may be, he eventually returned to Iraq and settled in his home town Baghdad, now being proficient in Persian as well. Upon his return he learned that his maternal grandfather and mentor of his youth had long since died. He took his place (qâma maqâmahû), and with it he took that part of his grandfather’s name under which he then became known: Ibn at-Tilmıd.

What follows is a success story as good as it gets. In a large house bordering on the Nizâmiya college he set up a medical practice. This is where he lived, and where the majority of consultations took place. It was not unusual for him to provide severe or important cases with free board and lodging, and his clientèle in those days included impoverished scholars just as well as ‘foreign kings’ complete with entourage. He had also started to give lectures on medicine, and we hear that the number of his regular students reached 50 before long. These lectures were always attended by two grammarians, whom Ibn at-Tilmıd paid to listen very carefully; when a student, asked to read out a passage in a medical text, made a lot of grammatical mistakes or mispronounced words, the master would get one of the grammarians to read it out again correctly, and then charge the student a small fee on behalf of the grammarian. It may be remarked here in passing that Ibn at-Tilmıd seems to have advocated, quite against the current opinion, the theory of infectious and contagious diseases. His reputation as a physician and teacher spread, and so it is no surprise that a few years later he was appointed head physician (sâ‘ûr) of the

19 See Baihaqī Tatimma 144f.
20 According to Yâqût Iršâd 7/243, Ibn at-Tilmıd also knew Greek; this is of course not impossible, but it is an isolated claim.
21 Founded in 457/1065 on the bank of the Tigris in the eastern part of Baghdad by the Seljuk vizier Nizâmal múluk and opened in 459/1067, the so-called Nizâmiya college was a celebrated institution of learning which flourished for at least three centuries, possibly longer. On the Nizâmiya college and its location see Le Strange Baghdad 297–300 with map 8 no. 32; further Pedersen/Makdisi “Madrasa” 1126.
22 His poem in which a fly “leaves a wound to rot” exemplifies this, see specimen 3 below; it also underlies his saying that certain diseases come “out of the blue” (min ṭarîq as-samâna), see Ibn Abî Usâïbî a’Yûûn 1/267.
23 On this loan word from Syriac see Payne Smith Thesaurus 2/2688 with Margoliouth Supplement 237, and then Lane Lexicon 4/1364.
famous ‘Aḍudū hospital, a post for life. Besides his medical career, Ibn at-Tilmīḍ also appears to have played an important rôle in the social life and administrative organization of the Christian community in Baghdad, who elected him as their leader (raʾs) and gave him the office of presbyter (qissīs).

Less blessed, though, was the relationship he had with his son, Raḍḍaddaula Abū Naṣr, who seems to have been a rather difficult, maladjusted and somewhat deranged individual, causing his father a lot of grief and despair which he occasionally expressed in the form of bitter poetic complaints; there is also a letter of admonition, considered a classic example of successful prose writing, which Ibn at-Tilmīḍ had composed in very polished and elaborate Arabic, engaging even Plato, urging his son to turn away from his pranks, to learn something, to stop talking nonsense and wasting his time, and to do something useful with his life.

Apart from suchlike domestic worries, which may now and then have cast a shadow over his life, Ibn at-Tilmīḍ did just fine. His practice brought him wealth, his headship at the hospital brought him fame, and his ecclesiastical offices brought him honour and, more importantly,

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24 Founded in 368/979 at the bend of the Tigris in the western part of Baghdad by the Buyid prince ‘Aḍuddaula and opened shortly before his death in 372/983, the so-called ‘Aḍudū hospital was the best institution of its kind in the whole of Baghdad for more than 250 years; a combination of natural and political catastrophes around the middle of the 7th/13th century led to its decline, and when the Arab traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa visited Baghdad in 730/1330 he found of the hospital’s former buildings no more than traces of walls. On the ‘Aḍudū hospital and its location see Le Strange Baghdad 103ff. with map 8 no. 39; further Dunlop “Būhāristān” 1223f.

25 al-fāḍil murrat al-wird huwat as-sādar war-raḍḍā’īl huwat al-wird murrat as-sādar “Virtues are bitter to arrive at (but) sweet to return from, and vices are sweet to arrive at (but) bitter to return from”, see e.g. Yāqūt Iršād 7/246. A slightly different, somewhat less archaic version of this (pseudo-)Platonic gnōmologium can be found here and there in Arabic wisdom literature, see Gutas Gnomologia 140f. no. 54; the Greek original, if there ever was one, seems to be lost.

26 This unfortunate relationship between father and son naturally aroused the curiosity of the Arab biographers, and it is indeed difficult to read the character of Raḍḍaddaula Abū Naṣr. On the whole, he is portrayed as a downright fool—one who believed that there is a huge drill in the southern hemisphere wherefrom smoke arises and spirits descend, one who intended to build a wooden cart with big wheels to carry visitors home to Damascus fast and easy on the grounds that the journey goes ‘downhill’, one who in the presence of guests lathered his whole face, save the eyes, with soap, one who, in short, was not at all into anything his father would have considered worthwhile; see e.g. Ibn Abī Usāibī’a ‘Uyān 1/263f. On the other hand, there are reports which describe him as a very diligent medical practitioner “who could see the diseases as though they were behind glass” (yarā l-amrād ka-annahā min warā’ zuḡāq); see e.g. Ibn Ḥallikān Wafayāt 6/77.
political influence. Despite all this success, or possibly just because of it, he remained a modest and down-to-earth person, kept treating the poor free of charge, and apparently even went so far as to take an oath not to accept any ‘gifts’ except from a caliph or sultan. It was only a matter of time until the palace, too, took notice. Ibn at-Tilmīḏ was in his early sixties when the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtafī (reg. 530/1136–555/1160) entrusted him with the supervision (rīāsa) of medicine in Baghdad and the surrounding districts, which basically meant the promotion of some kind of licensing authority. It would appear that this took the form of an examination (imtiḥān), however informal, whereby groups of medical practitioners were summoned under the chairmanship of Ibn at-Tilmīḏ who talked to them one by one in the presence of the others; standard questions included “Who were your teachers in medicine?” and “Which medical books have you read?”, implying that the emphasis was laid rather on theory than practice; old and experienced practitioners without such references, however, were allowed to continue to practise medicine under the conditions not to put a patient knowingly at risk (!), not to perform venesections, and not to prescribe strong purgative drugs.

It must have been round about this time that Ibn at-Tilmīḏ’s annual salary (marsūm) began to exceed 20,000 gold coins (dīnār)—the claim that he used to spend all this money on itinerant scholars and other lost souls is no doubt a well-intended exaggeration, but it does reflect his reputation of being a very generous and charitable man. He also owned a large landed estate (ḍai’a or iqṭa’), and the caliph himself once declared all of Ibn at-Tilmīḏ’s property inviolable. Ibn at-Tilmīḏ had by now, if not earlier, firmly established himself in Baghdad—not only as a physician and church representative, but also as an associate of the ruling classes and member of various literary and scientific circles. We may consider this a reflection of his political instincts as much as his wide-ranging intellectual interests. He particularly loved music and poetry, and liked to surround himself with musicians, poets, and men of letters; but among those who frequently visited his house we also find philosophers, astrologers, architects, and engineers. Ibn

27 It is said that he once refused to accept 4,000 gold coins (dīnār), four saddles covered with ornate embroidery (tuḥāṭ attābī [on the latter term and its origin see Dozy Supplément 2/93]), four white slaves, and four horses which had been sent to him as a gift from a grateful wealthy patient, see Ibn Abī Uṣaibī’a ʿUyūn 1/260f.

28 See Baihaqī Tatimma 145.
at-Tilmīḍ was a prolific poet himself, and also on occasion liked to exchange stanzas with poetically disposed patients or politicians, notably to accompany a gift. Besides, he conducted over many years a lively artistic correspondence (tarassul), namely with high-ranking government officials (kuttāb).

The culmination of his career, though, was being appointed court physician, in which capacity he served the aforesaid caliph al-Muqtafī for more than two decades, and then the latter’s son and successor al-Mustanṣīd (reg. 555/1160–566/1170), up until his own death. To honour this appointment, Ibn at-Tilmīḍ moved to another house in the eastern part of Baghdad, on the street which led from the perfume market along the northern precinct wall of the caliphal palaces, past the so-called willow-tree gate, down to the bank of the Tigris.29 His early days as a court physician were spoiled to a certain measure by a feud between him and the Jew Auḥādazzamān Abū l-Barakāt, a former fellow student who had pursued a double career as a philosopher and physician, recently converted to Islam, and a long-standing ambition to get his foot in the door to the palace. The two men had never liked each other, but so far managed to stay out of each other’s way—this was now impossible.30 Apparently in the end Abū l-Barakāt fell victim to his own cunning, a petty and silly intrigue backfired on him, he was lucky to get away with his life, and died in exile a few years later. Ibn at-Tilmīḍ must have served the Abbasid caliphs well, for they in turn honoured, trusted, and protected the old man. So we hear that Ibn at-Tilmīḍ, who came to see the caliph once a week, was allowed to sit down in the latter’s presence—a most remarkable token of reverence.31

Ibn at-Tilmīḍ died in Baghdad on 28 Rabī’ I 560/12 February 1165,32 at the age of 94 lunar (91 solar) years, in full possession of his mental

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29 For the approximate location of this house cf. Le Strange Baghdad map 8 nos. 8 and 26.
30 The feud between Ibn at-Tilmīḍ and Abū l-Barakāt was notorious, as the following poem by their contemporary, the astronomer-poet al-Badī’ al-Asṭurlābī, shows:

Abū l-Hasan, the physician,
And Abū l-Barakāt, his mime,
Stand in total opposition:
One’s humbly amidst the Pleiades found,
The other’s proudly on the ground!

For the poem see e.g. Ibn Halīlīkān Wafayāt 6/75.
31 See Ibn al-Qifṭī Ḥukamāʾ 341.
32 See e.g. Yaḥūqūṯ Irṣād 7/245 and Ibn Abī Uṣaibāʼa ʿUyūn 1/264; cf., however, Ibn al-Qifṭī Ḥukamāʾ 342 and (after him) Barhebraeus Duwal 209: “Ṣafar 560 /mid December
faculties. He was buried in a courtyard nearby the old Nestorian church and great monastery in the Christian quarter of Baghdad, and we hear that there was nobody from the two sides of Baghdad who did not come to the church and attend the funeral procession.

Ibn at-Tilmīd left to his son and only heir a considerable fortune, both liquid assets and real estate, and a large library of inestimable worth. When the son, who had become a Muslim in his old age, choked to death in a corridor of his house, all his property was seized, and the books were taken on twelve camels to the house of al-Mağd Ibn aṣ-Ṣāhib, a high-ranking eunuch of the palace. A few years later the library resurfaces in the possession of the Abbasid caliph an-Nāṣir (reg. 575/1180–622/1225) who, in a fit of gratitude, passed it on to his ageing court physician Sa‘īd ibn Abī l-Ḥāir al-Masīhī, one of Ibn at-Tilmīd’s pupils as it were.

Unfortunately, we possess only one unmediated eyewitness account on Ibn at-Tilmīd, that of his much younger contemporary ‘Imādaddīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī, the famous stylist and historian, who was born in Persia in 519/1125 and died in Syria in 597/1201. ‘Imādaddīn lived in Baghdad at least until the year 551/1156, possibly longer, and met Ibn at-Tilmīd on several occasions, towards the end of the latter’s life. ‘Imādaddīn’s account is short, and written in a scholarly and mannered style, as is his wont. Here is an abridged translation focusing on those passages that contain a personal judgement: “Ibn at-Tilmīd […] was the world’s destination for the science of medicine. He was the Hippocrates of his epoch and the Galen of his time. He set his seal on this science, for nobody in the past had taken it thus far […] When I saw him he was an old man with an elegant and pleasing appearance, a friendly, witty, refined and charming character, quite cheerful, high-minded, full of bright ideas, a man with an acute mind and a good judgement […] He understood many sciences […] His company was better than moulded gold and strung pearls. And looking at him made one wonder why a man of his understanding, intellect and knowledge


33 See Cheikho Šuʿār ‘315; for a fine description of this site see Le Strange Baghdad 208 with map 5 no. 56.

34 See Iṣfahānī Ḥarīda (after Cheikho Mağānī 4/305).

refused Islam”. And all we can add to this is the laconic statement of an even younger contemporary of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ, that of the lute player Sa’daddīn Ibn Abī s-Sahl al-Baḡdādī, who was still alive in 620/1223. As a young man, he had met Ibn at-Tilmīḍ, and this is what he remembered: “He was a venerable old man of medium build, with a full beard, an engaging person, and a great raconteur”.

Ibn at-Tilmīḍ may have had only one rather awkward son but he had no lack of gifted and able students, some of whom went on to become famous physicians themselves. We already mentioned Sa’dīd ibn Abī l-Ḥair al-Maṣḥī (d. after 589/1193) who for his part served the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad, or Abū l-Faraḡ Ibn Tūmā (d. 620/1223) whose rank in the palace equalled that of a vizier. Others left Baghdad for Damascus after their teacher’s death, no doubt attracted by the Nūrī hospital which had recently been established there, and by the rising star of the Ayyubid dynasty: Muḥaadādibaddīn (Ibn) an-Naqqāš (d. 574/1178), Muwaffaqaḍādīn Ibn al-Muṭrān (d. 587/1191), Raḍaḍādīn ar-Raḥbī (d. 631/1233, aged 97!)—they were among the founding fathers of the new medical schools which began to flourish in Syria and then Egypt in the 7th/13th century. Thus, to give but one example, there is a straight line leading from the two last-named physicians, through Muḥaadādibaddīn ad-Daḥwār (d. 628/1230), to Ibn an-Nafīs (d. 687/1288), the man who discovered the pulmonary circuit some 300 years before Servetus and Colombo.

b. Works

As for Ibn at-Tilmīḍ’s works, which are almost exclusively dedicated to medicine and pharmacy, we possess manuscripts and/or bibliographical records of the following:


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36 See Ishafānī Ḥarīda (after Cheikho Maḥānī 4/303f.).
37 See Ibn Abī Uṣaibī a ‘Uyun 1/262f.
38 Compare Savage-Smith “Medicine” 930–933.
39 See section 3.a.
Hospital Drugs” (preserved), see Iskandar Catalogue 129f. = Ullmann Medizin 306f.; Maqāla fi ʾl-Faṣād “A Treatise on Phlebotomy” (preserved), see Gal. 1/642, Iskandar Catalogue 130f., Ullmann Medizin 163f., Hamarneh Catalogue 140;40 al-Kunnāš “The (Medical) Handbook” (lost?), see e.g. Yāqūt Irṣād 7/245, Ibn Abī Uṣāibīʾaʿ Uyūn 1/276, Ibn Ḥallikān Wafayāt 6/75.41

2. Nonindependent writings:42 a) Commentaries on: Galen’s (d. 199 CE) Ḥilāt al-būr ʾΘεραπευτική Μέθοδος; the medical aphorisms attributed to the prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) (aḥādīṯ nabawīya taṣṭamīl ʾalā masāʾ il ṭībīḍa); Ḥūnain ibn ʾIshāq’s (d. 260/873 or 264/877) al-Masāʾ il fī ṭ-ṭībb; Ibn Ṣināʾ’s (d. 428/1037) al-Qānūn fī ṭ-ṭībb;43 b) Summaries of or selections from: Galen’s Abdūl al-adwiya; the medical aphorisms attributed to the prophet Muḥammad (d. 11/632) (aḥādīṯ nabawīya taṣṭamīl ʾalā masāʾ il ṭībīḍa); Ibn ʿAlī’s (d. 264/877) al-Masāʾil fī ṭ-ṭībb; Ibn Sīnāʾ’s (d. 428/1037) al-Qānūn fī ṭ-ṭībb;44 c) Notes on or glosses to: Abū Sahl al-Masīḥīʾ’s (d. 401/1010) al-Miʿā fī ʾṣ-ṣīnāʾa at-ṭībbīḍa; Ibn ʿAlī’s (d. 493/1100) Minhāġ al-bayān.

Apparently there once also existed a large volume of collected letters (dīwān rasāʾil),45 as well as a small volume of collected poetry (dīwān šīʿr).

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40 According to G. Suppl. 1/891 this treatise is published: “gedr[uckt] Lucknow 1308(1890)”?).
41 ʿAlūṭ Taʾrīḥ 492 attributes to Ibn at-Tilmīd another (independent) writing s.t. an-Nahī al-wādīh “The Obvious Method” (medicine?), and so does Ziriklī A lām b 8/72 s.t. Maqāla fī Usūl at-taṣārīʿ in-dā al-maṣīḥīyīn “A Treatise on the Sources of Legislation among the Christians”—where this information comes from, though, is not clear in either case; cf. further Cheikh Ṣuʿārāʾ 318: risāla [. . .] fī ithbāt ʾaqaʿ id ad-dīn al-maṣīḥī (was in Diyarbekir in 1895).
42 Unless otherwise noted none of these writings seem to be preserved; for records of their previous existence see e.g. Yāqūt Irṣād 7/244f. and Ibn Abī Uṣāibīʾaʿ Uyūn 1/276.
44 According to Ebied Bibliography 107 this ‘selection’ is published: “Beirut 1912” (?).
45 It is likely that the book called at-Tauqīʾāt wal-murāṣalāt “Sketches and Correspondence”, which is mentioned Bağdādī Hadīya 2/505, refers to this collection; cf. Ibn Abī Uṣāibīʾaʿ Uyūn 1/276: kitāb yaṣṭamīl ʾalā tauqīʾāt wa-murāṣalāt.
Finally, to give the reader an idea of the nature of Ibn at-Tilmīd's poetry, I have translated below a few specimens of it, arranged under the headings of ethics, metaphysics, love, satire, humour, and enigmas—though the boundaries between these different 'genres' are, of course, not always clear cut. However, the selected specimens are fairly representative of Ibn at-Tilmīd's favourite topics of poetic contemplation. There is, to be sure, no 'medical' poetry as such, but images and similes of medicine now and then reveal the poet's profession.46

Ethics

Modesty is like a moon
Whose disk has risen to the sky,
Yet on the surface of the water
It still illuminates the eye.
Without it, aiming high and yonder,
To glory people would aspire
Like smoke that fleetingly arises
From a lowly burning fire.

Knowledge benefits a wise man,
But is no good for a prat—
Daylight, which helps humans see,
Dims the eyesight of the bat.

46 It may be worth noting that the old Arab biographers considered Ibn at-Tilmīd's poetry inferior to his prose writing, see e.g. Yāqūt ʿIrshād 7/243; unfortunately, hardly anything of the latter has come down to us. They also observed that he seemed to have been more at ease with the composition of short poems, normally consisting of two or three verses, rather than longer poems (qaṣāʾīd), of which we possess a very small number of examples (elegies and panegyrics), see e.g. Cheikho ʿUraḍ 319–334. All the translated specimens are taken from Ibn Abī Uṣābiʿi ʿUyūn 1/268–273; parallel transmissions are found here and there in the Arabic sources referred to in note 17 above.
INTRODUCTION

Never scorn an enemy
For his friendliness,
Even if he's little strong
And almost powerless—
So it is the tiny fly
That leaves a wound to rot,
Thus completing what the lion's
Mighty hand could not.

Metaphysics

The soul exists behind a curtain,
Unable to make out for certain
Events in past infinity—
Or else it surely could have solved
Each problem, though it be involved,
In fact, causality.

A vital spark in an old man's soul
Is a death in disguise—
Can't you see a lamplight flashes
Just before it dies?

Love

When the darkness of the night fell
Long in my embrace she lay;
Then I woke and found her jewels
Cold before the break of day;
And I warmed them with my breath,
INTRODUCTION

Lest to chase her sleep away,
Anxious not to melt the lace—
So I held the day at bay.

Love has wasted me away,
I can’t take it any more!
Your refusal eats me up—
A victim of the day before!
All I care to see is you,
Not the gaily dancing motes
On the sun’s remotest shore.

Satire

 قالوا فلان قد وزر، فقدت كلا لا وزر
والله لو حكمت فيه، جعلته بريء البقر

So-and-so is now vizier?
Never! Not this nerd!
By God, if it were up to me,
I’d make him cattleherd!

(on the appointment of ad-Darkazīnī\textsuperscript{47} to the post of vizier)

\textsuperscript{47} There are several viziers of the Great Seljuks in the 6th/12th century who were known under the name of ad-Darkazīnī. The most ‘distinguished’ of those was Qiwāmaddīn Zainālmulk ʿImādaddaula Abū l-Qāsim Nāṣīr ibn ʿAlī ad-Darkazīnī al-Ansābāḏī, whose first appointment to the post of vizier fell in the year 518/1124 while his fourth and final appointment in 527/1133 also marked the year of his execution. Abū l-Qāsim ad-Darkazīnī, the son of a peasant from the village of Ansābāḏ near the town of Darkazīn in the Hamadan province of western central Iran, was stigmatized by many of his contemporaries for his plebeian background; more importantly, though, he was infamous for his ruthlessness, intriguing, financial exactions, and general mismanagement of affairs, incurring along the way a great deal of both fear and enmity. On him and some other members of his clan see Bosworth “Dargazīnī” 33; for the exact location of Darkazīn see Aḏkāʾī “Darjazīn” 55f. with Le Strange \textit{Lands} map 5 s.n. Darguzīn.
His eye’s revolving in its socket!
He should sow seed or topple a throne,
Look long enough at the Pleiades
And spin them in the Great Bear’s pocket!
(on a person with a goggle)

You slurped away a lot of eggs
To make your penis stronger?
There are no eggs that can replace
What’s in your own no longer!

I broke my life in these two glasses,
And this is how my lifetime passes:
One glass is filled with writing-ink,
The other one with wine to drink—
The former makes my wisdom stay,
The latter puts my grief away.

One glass of wine to cool the chest,
A second one to help digest,
A third one, then, just to unwind,
Another one will shift your mind!
Enigmas

It is forceful but not vile,
Forever changes domicile,
Cries and laughs the very while,
Weeps and makes all people smile.

(the cloud)

It springs from bodies but a body it’s not,
It moves at times or stays on the spot,
It comes into being and passes away,
Its hour of birth bears the seed of decay,
It doesn’t go out when the lights are gone
But is otherwhile seen by everyone.

(the shadow)

3. The Dispensatory

a. Arabic Manuscripts

The edition of the Arabic text containing the dispensatory of Ibn at-Tilmīḍ is based on the following manuscripts:

(A) London British Library Or. 8293/1, fols. 2a–128b. 11 lines per page of large vocalized calligraphic Nashī. Title (fol. 2a) Iqrābāḏīn [sic] Madīnāt as-Salām Baǧdāḏ\(^\text{48}\) and (fol. 2b) Kitāb Qarābāḏīn, subtitle (fol. 2a)

\(^{48}\) A dispensatory entitled Aqrābāḏīn Madīnāt as-Salām or Aqrābāḏīn Baǧdāḏī figures among the writings attributed to Ibn at-Tilmīḍ’s teacher Saʿīd ibn Hibatallāh (d. 495/1102) in Gal. Suppl. 1/888 and then Ullmann Medizin 306; this information, however, which seems to be based on a couple of manuscript witnesses, is not confirmed by Ibn Abī Uṣaibī’s Uyūn 1/254f. or, for that matter, by any other indigenous bio-bibliographical source.