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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Book Announcements & Reviews

Siglas

CDA – Cristina D’Ancona

EC – Elisa Coda

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Manfred Ullmann, *Aufsätze zur arabischen Rezeption der griechischen Medizin und Naturwissenschaft*, ed. by Rüdiger Arnzen, De Gruyter, Boston - Berlin 2016 (Scientia Graeco-Arabica, 15), IX+ 461 pp.

Thanks to the competent and careful editorial work of R. Arnzen, a collection of 26 foundational essays by Manfred Ullmann is now available in one volume: the outcome of a painstaking research carried out since the 1970s and devoted to the history of medicine and the sciences.

The volume is arranged thematically by Arnzen in three sections (“Medizingeschichte”, “Alchemie und Magie”, “Gesteinskunde”) and is supplied with very useful indexes.

The opening paper is devoted to “Die arabische Überlieferung der hippokratischen Schrift *De Superfetatione*” (pp. 3-22), one of the writings of the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. After describing the direct and indirect Greek transmission of the text, Ullmann focuses on the unique witness (Istanbul, Aya Sofya 3632) of the 9th century Arabic version, that was published with an English translation by Mattock in 1968: an edition severely criticised by Ullmann. The analysis of the Arabic indirect transmission, that comprises the *Kitāb al-Hāwī* by al-Rāzī, the *Kitāb Ḥalq al-ḡanīn* by ‘Arīb ibn Sa‘īd and the *Kitāb taṣīl al-manāfi fi l-tibb wa-l-ḥikam* by al-Azraq, allows Ullmann to amend the text and verify the reliability of the manuscript mentioned above, resulting in a more precise dating of the manuscript and of the Arabic version itself.

“Zwei spätantike Kommentare zu der hippokratischen Schrift *De Morbis muliebribus*” (pp. 23-43) deals with the Hippocratic *περὶ γυναικείων* (sc. νόσων). The treatise is lost in the Greek original and, after an analysis of the Arabic sources, Ullmann comes to the conclusion that it was not translated into Arabic. Moreover, it seems that Galen did not even compose any commentary on this work. Three Arabic sources which mention a commentary by Galen about female disorders are taken into account: Moses Maimonides in his *Aphorisms*, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a in the entry devoted to Galen in his *Uyūn al-anbā’ fi ṭabaqāt al-atibbā’*, and a manuscript (Cambridge, Dd 12.1) that preserves some writings by ‘Alī ibn Riḍwān. Examination of Ibn Riḍwān’s annotations sheds new light not only on this commentary, but also on another one that was devoted to the same Hippocratic treatise by a certain Asclepius, issued from a Neoplatonic milieu.

“Galens Kommentar zu der Schrift *De Aere aquis locis*” (pp. 44-56) points out the significance of the discovery of the Arabic manuscript (Cairo, Egyptian National Library, *Ṭal’at* 550 *ṭibb*) preserving Galen’s commentary to the Hippocratic *De Aere aquis locis*, lost in the Greek original and known until then through a Hebrew version and a Latin one, and through fragments transmitted by Greek and Arabic sources. In addition to the codicological description, Ullmann offers new textual data resulting from the comparison between the Arabic text and the *excerpta*.

Four essays devoted to Rufus of Ephesus follow. Our knowledge of his work depends on the Arabic transmission, because of the near-total loss of the Greek originals. The authority of Galen had a devastating effect on the transmission of the works by physicians before him: their works were no longer copied. Indeed, only four treatises by Rufus are preserved in Greek and among the many Arabic translations of Rufus’ writings only the Arabic version of the *Περὶ ἰκτέρου* survives. As for the remaining works, we are left with fragments and lists of titles provided by Greek and Arabic bibliographical sources. “Neues zu den diätetischen Schriften des Rufus von Ephesos” (pp. 57-76) represents an attempt to reconstruct, thanks to the Greek and Arabic indirect traditions, the content and general layout of the topics of some thematically homogeneous treatises by Rufus, that are preserved in a fragmentary way: *Epistle on the respiratory failure in human beings* (*Maqāla fi an ya’riḍ li-l-riḡāl inqitā’ al-tanaffus* (the original title is unknown), *Περὶ παρθένων διαίτης*, *Περὶ οἶνου* and *Περὶ διαίτης πλεόντων*).

“Die Schrift des Rufus *De Infantium curatione* und das Problem der Autorenlemmata in den *Collectiones medicae* des Oreibasios” (pp. 77-106) examines another treatise which is known by indirect transmission. Available sources are the *Collectiones medicae* by Oribasios – to which Ullmann devotes some observations concerning the reliability of the “Autorenlemmata” and the problems of the *lemmata* that do not mention the author, the so-called *libri incerti* of the Bussemaker-Daremberg’s edition –, a treatise *On Hygiene and therapy of children* by Paul of Aegina, and some fragments contained in the *Kitāb al-Hāwī* by al-Rāzī and in the *Kitāb Tadbīr al-ḥabālā wa-l-aṭfāl* by al-Baladī. The two Arabic compilers had access to the 9th century Arabic version (today lost, as is the Greek original) of Rufus’ work. To illustrate the content of Rufus’ writing, Ullmann collects 19 fragments reconstructed from al-Rāzī and al-Baladī’s quotations, comparing, whenever

possible one with the other or with the *Collectiones medicae*. For each passage a German translation and an accurate comment are given.

In “Die Krankengeschichten des Rufus von Ephesos” (pp. 107-15) Ullmann focuses on the *Codex Huntingtonianus* 461. The manuscript contains a collection of medical works, among which *al-Amṭila wa-l-mu’ālağāt al-ğuz’iyya li-Rūfus wa-ğayrihi li-l-qudamā wa-l-muḥdaṭīn* is particularly significant. As the title suggests, the writing contains 21 clinical notes that are meant to illustrate examples and treatment methods elaborated by Rufus and other physicians, who were probably his colleagues or compilers who looked upon him as a model. Therefore, as stated by Ullmann, the collection can be entirely ascribed to Rufus. For linguistic and factual reasons, he concludes that the author could be an Arab and that the text stems from a Greek original. Moreover, he gathers solid evidence that the author of the collection is Rufus.

Concluding the series of essays devoted to Rufus there is “Die arabische Überlieferung der Schriften des Rufus von Ephesos” (pp. 116-79). The paper, first published in 1994, offers a systematic examination of the textual tradition of Rufus’ writings, summarising the results reached by Ullmann through a research carried out since the 1970s. After describing specific issues linked to the fragmentary way that Rufus’ works are preserved, Ullmann points out the significance of the Arabic sources as an essential instrument for the production of Daremberg-Ruelle’s edition *Œuvres de Rufus d’Éphèse* (1879), based on *excerpta* collected by Ibn al-Bayṭar in the *Kitāb al-Ğāmi’*, by Ibn al-Ğazzār in the *Kitāb Zād al-musāfir* and, above all, by al-Rāzī in his *Kitāb al-Hāwī*. Then he considers individually Rufus’ treatises, known to us through the work of Arabic translators and compilers.

“Die Schrift des Badīğūras über die Ersatzdrogen” (pp. 180-97) deals with a treatise concerning substitute drugs. The writing, composed originally in Greek, reached the East with the title *Kitāb fi Abdāl al-adwiyya al-mufrada wa-l-ašğār wa-l-šumūğ wa-l-ṭīn*. First Ullmann describes the content of the writing and tries to identify its author, “Badīğūras”, probably the adaptation of the Greek name Pythagoras through Persian. He then suggests improvements to Levey’s English translation of “Badīğūras’” treatise (published in 1971 and based exclusively on the manuscript Istanbul, Aya Sofya 4838), by investigating fragments and quotations that Ibn al-Bayṭar, al-Rāzī, al-Tamīmī and Ibn Sīnā insert in their works.

“Der Werwolf. Ein griechisches Sagenmotiv in arabischer Verkleidung” (pp. 198-209) examines the history of the legendary motif of the werewolf from Greek to Arabic, as a parameter for measuring the process of Hellenization that the Arab world underwent within the translation movement. The paper opens with a review of the Arabic sources which mention the *quṭrub*, that is mostly described as a little animal characterized by rapid movements, a kind of water flea. But, besides this interpretation, another meaning of the term is attested: by the word *al-quṭrub*, Ibn Sīnā, as confirmed by other witnesses, also defines a kind of melancholy, symptoms of which are close to the image of the werewolf. Similar interpretations of lycanthropy as a form of melancholy are recorded in Greek writings and studied by Ullmann in relation to Arabic sources. He then attempts to explain how the idea of transformation of a man into a wolf was transferred from Greek to Arabic literature, by means of lexicography and philology. Thus Ullmann arrives at tracing a history of the term, from its Greek origin to its entry in the Arab world and its assimilation into Islamic demonic figures.

In “Yūḥannā ibn Sarābiyūn. Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte seiner Werke” (pp. 210-32) Ullmann investigates the Arabic reception of *al-Kunnaš al-šağīr*, the most significant work besides *al-Kunnaš al-kabīr*, by the Syrian physician Yūḥannā ibn Sarābiyūn. Although the Syriac original is lost, some passages can be read thanks to the Eastern tradition. The treatise was translated into Arabic three times: by al-Ḥadīṭī in 318/930, then by al-Ḥasan ibn Bahlūl, and lastly by Abū Bišr Mattā ibn Yūnus. Fragments of the Arabic version are preserved through manuscripts; it is not possible to distinguish one version from the other. However, comparing these fragments with the Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona and with re-elaborated versions – mixed with materials from *al-Kunnaš al-kabīr* – that al-Rāzī inserts in his *Kitāb al-Hāwī*, Ullmann looks for more accurate information about the writing and its sources.

“Zum *Dispensatorium* des Sābūr ibn Sahl” (pp. 233-53) opens with a passage of the *GAS* by F. Sezgin concerning the so-called *Aqrābādīn* or *Dispensatorium* by Sābūr ibn Sahl. According to the colophon of one witness of the work (Teheran, *Sanā* 3258, 20) the text should be the Arabic version of a Syriac original, an evidence accepted by Sezgin. Starting from this, Ullmann investigates biographical and bibliographical sources mentioning this *Aqrābādīn*. In addition, he compares the manuscripts preserving the work with one another

and with later sources which employed it as a model, in order to underscore the existence of different versions of the same writing and, above all, to demonstrate that the *Aqrābādīn* was originally composed in Arabic, not translated from Syriac, as the colophon claims.

The brief essay “Ein Fragment des *Kitāb al-Malakī* von al-Mağūsī” (pp. 254-7) presents a severe criticism of the *Kitāb al-Malakī* as edited by Būlāq in 1294/1877. The comparison between the published text and the manuscript Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph 643 clearly shows the limits of this non-critical edition.

“Die *Tadkīra* des Ibn as-Suwaidī, eine wichtige Quelle zur Geschichte der griechisch-arabischen Medizin und Magie” (pp. 258-89) ends the section devoted to the history of medicine. The *Tadkīra* by al-Suwaydī is a monumental work – a collection originated from the stratification of more than 150 sources – that only the manuscript Tübingen, Universitätsbibliothek *Ma* VI 77 preserves in its second part, whereas the rest of the writing is lost. Indeed, the length of the original composition hampered its survival; thus it was read mostly in the form of summaries elaborated by the later epitomists aš-Šāʿrānī and al-Qawṣūnī. In this study, Ullmann investigates al-Suwaydī’s quotation style and treatment of sources, aiming to evaluate the reliability of the *Tadkīra* as a compilation of fragments concerning medicine, natural sciences, and magic.

The second section, entitled “Alchemie und Magie”, opens with a group of five essays, originally published as entries in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. The first one is “al-Kīmiyā” (pp. 293-306), the Arabic word that originated our ‘alchemy’. Starting from an etymological analysis, Ullmann reviews some definitions that Arabic authors introduced in order to determine the field covered by this science. He goes on to outline a history of alchemy from its Greek origin to its assimilation and subsequent developments in the Arab world, listing the main works of Arab alchemic literature. Arab alchemy – documented by a considerable amount of manuscripts only partially studied and published – is based either on translations of Greek treatises, or on Arabic writings composed as imitations of Greek models, or again on collections of quotations by Greek, Persian, Jewish and Arab authors. Furthermore, Ullmann points out that thanks to Latin translations of Arabic (not Greek) alchemic writings alchemy spread in the West. Finally Ullmann reports some features of the theoretical foundations of Arabic alchemy and sketches out the debate between alchemists and their main critics, who expressed doubt about the feasibility of the transmutation of metals into gold. This opening paper is followed by entries concerning some key terms of alchemy.

The entry “al-Iksīr” (pp. 307-9) explains the history of the Arabic word for “elixir”, from its original meaning of powder for medical purposes to its application in alchemy to define a substance – a compound of mineral, vegetable and animal elements – to be used for transmutation of base metals into precious ones.

The entries “al-Kibrīt” (pp. 310-3), the term corresponding to sulphur, and “al-Qily” (pp. 314-5), identified as potassium carbonate or sodium carbonate, record the main sources that mention the two terms in order to clarify their definition, origin and application, with special regard to alchemy.

Finally, the entry “al-Ḥāṣṣa” (pp. 316-7) explores the concept of “sympathetic quality”, namely that “unaccountable, esoteric forces in animate and inanimate Nature” (p. 316) that, if activated and put in a relation of sympathy or antipathy with one another, are able to affect reality, causing disease or recovery, good or ill fortune.

An essay entitled “Kleopatra in einer arabischen alchemistischen Disputation” (pp. 318-33) follows these introductory writings. A tradition ascribes to Cleopatra VII several pseudepigraphical medical, magical and alchemical treatises, among which a curious writing concerning alchemy stands out. The writing is actually the result of the fusion between two distinct, incompletely preserved works, the Κομαρίου φιλοσόφου διάλεξις πρὸς Κλεοπάτραν and the Διάλογος φιλοσόφων καὶ Κλεοπάτρας. The disputation between Cleopatra and some scholars about alchemical issues was known also to the Arabs, as confirmed by the comment by al-Ġildakī in his *Šarḥ Kitāb al-Šams al-akbar*. Moreover, a parallel version where Cleopatra is replaced by Mary circulated in the Arab world – as documented in the Chester Beatty 4025 manuscript – although it is not possible to state which one is older. After a brief summary of the disputation, Ullmann proceeds to demonstrate that the Greek and Arabic versions are independent from one another: therefore, the Arabic text did not originate from a translation of the equivalent Greek.

Among the most eminent people in the Arab world to whom writings of alchemical topics are ascribed there is the Omayyad prince Ḥālid ibn Yazīd, the grandson of the Caliph Muʿāwiya. With him deals the paper “Ḥālid ibn Yazīd und die Alchemie: Eine Legende” (pp. 334-70). If Ruska has already claimed the

pseudepigraphical nature of these alchemical writings – a thesis approved by Ullmann – this essay identifies, in the multitude of legendary features of his biography, historical evidence showing Ḥalīd’s interest in science. The sources, however, do not show any actual proof of Ḥalīd’s competence in alchemy; rather, as highlighted by Ullmann, the result is an unflattering portrait of the prince.

“Die arabische Überlieferung der *Kyranis* des Hermes Trismegistos” (pp. 371-6) bears a pattern already displayed in some previous essays. Ullmann reports briefly the content of the *Kyranis*, a writing consisting of four books that are part of the so-called “hermétisme populaire”; then he points out the importance of comparing the Greek and Arabic textual transmission. This was made possible only in 1954, after the discovery of the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, *arab. d.* 221. Since the *Kyranis* is the only case where a text of the *Corpus Hermeticum* is preserved both in Greek and Arabic, Ullmann aims to elucidate by this example to what extent Arab scholars were influenced by Greek Hermetic thought.

The final section concerns lithology. The first text to be considered is the *Book on Stones*, an Arabic treatise ascribed to Aristotle. In “Der literarische Hintergrund des Steinbuches des Aristoteles” (pp. 379-86), Ullmann recalls the intricate manuscript tradition and the large amount of quotations that feature in the Arabic scientific and pseudo-scientific literature. Then he examines the possible sources and establishes a “Überlieferungskette” (p. 386) between the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise and the anonymous *Kitāb al-Aḥḡār* – the source of the former –, which depends in turn on the ninth-century Arabic version of the Λιθογνώμων by Xenocrates, where the author of the *Kitāb al-Aḥḡār* also found fragments of a Περί λίθων by Sotakos.

This essay is followed by three writings on Xenocrates of Ephesus, published between 1972 and 1974. “Das Steinbuch des Xenokrates von Ephesos” (pp. 387-404) addresses first of all the problems concerning the biography of this author, who, according to Ullmann, should be identified with the physician Xenocrates of Aphrodisias, a thesis criticised by Ullmann. Since no Greek manuscript of the treatise is preserved, we owe the knowledge of its content to the indirect Greek and Arabic transmission. Hence, Ullmann offers a translation and a comment of eight Arabic *excerpta* which explicitly mention Xenocrates as the source.

“Neues zum Steinbuch des Xenokrates” (pp. 405-25) shows new findings that emerged from the manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library *arab. d.* 221. This manuscript contains, among a series of Hermetic treatises, a *Kitāb al-Aḥḡār wa-nuqūṣihā* ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus, but the attribution is doubtful. This writing, a compilation assembled in the ninth century, mentions Xenocrates seven times. A comparison of the *excerpta* of Xenocrates’ work contained in the manuscript with the fragments attested in other sources reveals the existence of different versions of the *Book on Stones* by Xenocrates, but also helps to define its character and content more precisely.

The last paper devoted to “Xenokrates” (pp. 426-9) summarizes the issues already discussed in the previous essays: the fragments quoted by the Greek, Latin and Arabic sources, as well as the importance of the indirect transmission – especially Arabic – for the preservation of the text; the identity of Xenocrates of Ephesus; the content of the treatise *On Stones*.

“Edelsteine als Antidota. Ein Kapitel aus dem Giftbuch des Ibn al-Mubārak” (pp. 430-45) closes the collection. Here Ullmann briefly recalls the concept of συμπάθεια φυσική – known in Arabic as *ḥāṣṣa* (pl. *ḥawāṣṣ*) –, the occult force that permeates nature and produces relations of sympathy and antipathy among the elements. One of the most interesting Arabic treatises concerning the subject is the *Kitāb al-Munqid min al-balaka fi daf‘ maḡārr al-samā‘im al-mublika* by Ibn al-Mubārak, a compilation of fragments extracted from Greek and Arabic sources, that are organised into three *maqālāt* and 135 chapters in total. In order to understand the character of the compilation and the degree of reliability of the quotations, Ullmann translates a long passage, the first part of the 26th chapter of the first *Maqāla*.

This rich collection has the great merit of bringing out both the fragmentary conditions in which most of medical and scientific treatises are preserved and the importance of the Arabic tradition for their preservation. Ullmann’s writings are famously a model; this collection is of great help, and Rüdiger Arnzen deserves the gratitude of all those interested in history of science.

MZ