

No. 196

AL-MANSURI (A TREATISE ON MEDICINE), ABU BAKR MUHAMMAED BEN ZAKKARIYYA AL-RAZI (RASIS), WITH SEVERAL OTHER MEDICAL TEXTS BY HUNAIN IBN ISHAK, MAIMONIDES, AND OTHERS, IN JUDEO-ARABIC, MANUSCRIPT ON PAPER [YEMEN: 13TH CENTURY]

20,000—30,000 USD

Description

182 leaves (9 13/16 x 7 1/4 in.; 249 x 184 mm). Together with an envelope of fragments of 10 further leaves, lacking many leaves, gatherings originally of 10 leaves, 27 long lines, written in a Yemenite semi-square hand, headings throughout in square script decorated with red penwork, a few marginal notes, some stains, minor worming, many pages worn and defective with holes professionally repaired, all leaves guarded and most leaves lined with gauze, bound in red cloth.

PROVENANCE

David Solomon Sassoon (1880 - 1942), his MS.573

LITERATURE AND REFERENCES

David Solomon Sassoon, *Ohel Dawid, Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London, 1932, I, pp. 505 - 8 and pl. 25*

CATALOGUE NOTE

This is a remarkable anthology of medical texts, written in Judaeo-Arabic and derived from ancient as well as recent writers and from Jewish, Arabic and Christian sources. The arts of medicine as they survive from ancient Greece have a complicated history of textual transmission across cultures and languages, and no context more graphically illustrates this than the present anthology. Here in Hebrew script are works in the Arabic language of the medicine of Hippocrates and Galen, cited by name. Here are the commentaries of Christian Arabs, written for Jews. Here are Rasis and Avicenna, almost the only Arabic names known to every doctor of medieval Europe. Here too is an almost contemporary manuscript of Maimonides, written in his capacity as court physician, of a work written for Saladin himself. For other similar multicultural medical anthologies, see Steinschneider, *Die Arabische Literatur der Juden*, 1902, pp. 213 - 21. "One reason for this devotion of Jews to medicine was that the study of medical science was looked upon as a sort of religious duty" (*Jewish Chronicle*, 19 November 1926, p. 17). Yet despite the importance of medicine in medieval Jewish learning, medical manuscripts are of extreme rarity. Furthermore, this manuscript is one of the earliest if not the absolute earliest extant Yemenite manuscript written on paper.

The principal text is the *Al Mansuri* of Abu Bakr Muhammaed ben Zakkariyya al-Razi, the most important Arabic medical encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages, divided into ten books with chapters on physiology, nutrition, disease, fevers, surgery, and so forth. In Europe the author was known as Rasis, and the book circulated as the *Liber Almansoris* in the Latin translation of Gerard of Cremonia. The text here opens in Book I, "Wa-gharuhuma wa-yatafarrqani ...", and continues with Books II (p. 13), III (p. 32), IV (p. 71), V (p. 98), VI (p. 119), VII (p. 129; lacking Book IX) and X (p. 173), ending on p. 220. It is then followed by the same author's *Antidotarium* (p. 220), preceded by medical prescriptions by a Jewish writer who quotes the Bible. Other texts in the volume include a short medical treatise by Ali ibn Rabba al-Tabari, the ninth-century Jewish medical writer of Iraq who converted to Islam and was court physician to the caliphs 833 - 61 (pp. 253 - 6 here; cf. H. Friedenwald, *Jews and Medicine*,

1967, p. 173); a medical work in 36 chapters probably by Albuasir, with extensive quotations from Ibn-Sina (Avicenna, 980 - 1037), the most influential of Arab physicians and philosophers (pp. 237 - 63 here); a medical work by Ali ibn Muhammed ibn Yusaf al-Madani, with quotations from Galen (pp. 263 - 75 here); a commentary on Galen by Hunain ibn Ishak (d. 873), Christian Arab (pp. 275 - 82 here); other short works (pp. 282 - 324); the Letter of Maimonides (1135 - 1204) to Saladin, Sultan of Egypt, with his commentary on the medical views of Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen, Al-Farabi and al-Razi (pp. 324 - 50 here, with many variants from the text as printed in *Kerem Chemed*, III, pp. 9 - 31, and *Diveret Moshe*, 1886, pp. 18 - 40); the Letter of Maimonides on the treatment of piles (pp. 351 - 6 here); and, finally, a medical treatise on bleeding (pp. 357 - 64 here).