

REMEDIES FOR THE HEAD OF THE MAMLUK CHANCERY: DATING AN ARABIC MEDICAL TREATISE

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The present study addresses the circumstances in which a little-known Arabic medical treatise, written for travellers and titled *al-Isfār ‘an ḥikam al-asfār*, was compiled. I first examine the three manuscripts of the treatise known today. Based on the data gathered from the manuscripts, I identify the author and the patron of the work: Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Antābī (or al-‘Ayntābī) al-Amšāṭī and Kamāl ad-Dīn Abū al-Ma‘ālī Muḥammad al-Bārīzī. Even though some of the sources for the author’s life have yet to be analysed, the biographical accounts for the patron make it possible to establish a timeframe for the compilation of the treatise, securing its date around the year 850/1446–7.

1 The treatise and its manuscripts

The genre of health guides written for travellers can be traced back to the 4th century BC, to the works of Dieuches and Diocles of Carystus, from which only fragments survive today. These were used by Oribasius (d. 403),¹ whose discussion was copied by Paul of Aegina (d. ca. 690). According to Arab authors, Rufus of Ephesus (d. ca. 110) wrote a regimen for travellers, which is now lost. The Arabic medical tradition also features some specimens of such health guides. These are either treatises solely dedicated to this topic, such as Qusṭā ibn Lūqā’s *Risāla fī tadbīr safar al-ḥaġġ*,² or chapters in encyclopaedias, such as the works of aṭ-Ṭabarī, ar-Rāzī, or Ibn Sīnā.³

Another example of this genre is the hitherto unedited treatise *al-Isfār ‘an ḥikam al-asfār*. The incipit and the preface proper are rendered in rhymed prose (*sağ‘*) with *-ār* ending. The regimen is arranged into an introduction, eight core chapters, and an epilogue in two parts. While the introduction details the reasons for its compilation,

¹ Single dates are given according to AD, while in the case of double dates, the first is given according to AH, while the second according to AD.

² For its critical edition, English translation, and commentary, see Bos 1992.

³ For a more detailed discussion, see Horden 2005: 190–195; Bos 1992: 5–6.

the core chapters deal with the following issues: general concerns of travelling, travelling in hot weather, burning winds, travelling during winter, preservation of limbs, preservation of complexion, waters, and travelling on the sea. The epilogue is on simple and compound remedies that one might need during one's travels. It seems that at least three manuscripts of the treatise survive today: one in Cairo,⁴ one in Mosul (the only MS noted in Brockelmann 2012: II, 93), and one in Tarīm (Yemen).⁵

1.1 MS *Dār al-Kutub mağāmī* 210/16 (henceforth: Cairo MS)

The manuscript and its contents are described briefly in the catalogues of the Khedivial Library and the Egyptian National Library. The former catalogue's entry lists all 16 treatises of the collection, from which seven are dated, and one is an autograph. Their dates range from 607 to 882 (1210–1477/8) (*Fihrist al-kutub*: VII/1, 258–261; al-Halwajī 2011: I, 154).

The 16th treatise (ff.254v–269v) bears the title *al-Isfār 'an ḥikam al-asfār* (f.255r, with the word *ḥikam* vocalised). No name of author, scribe, copyist, owner, or date of copying is recorded in the manuscript; the only, though anonym, reference to them can be found in the colophon (f.269v, 'may God grant forgiveness to its scribe, its owner, its author, and who read to them').⁶ To the right of the colophon's text is the stamp of the Khedivial Library, and to the left is a note on the volume's number of pages.

1.2 MS *Madrasat Yaḥyā Bāšā* 175/9 (henceforth: Mosul MS)

Al-Ġalabī's catalogue of the manuscripts in Mosul does not describe the collection in detail, but only lists the contained treatises, 11 in total (al-Ġalabī 1927: 237). The same author has published an article on two of these treatises. In the catalogue, he attributes the 7th and 8th treatises to Šams ad-Dīn al-Qūšūnī, but he corrects this in his article: in fact, al-Qūšūnī's son wrote the 8th treatise. He also quotes the biography of the son, written under the title of the 8th treatise (al-Ġalabī 1930a). In another article written a month later, he demonstrates that there are two additional biographies included in the collection, written in the same style and by the same hand: one for the author of the 9th treatise, and one for that of the 11th treatise (al-Ġalabī 1930b).

The 9th treatise (ff. 1r–9r) bears the title *Kitāb al-isfār 'an ḥukm al-asfār* (f.1r, vocalised). The name of the author is given immediately after the title: *aš-šayḥ al-*

⁴ I am indebted to the Embassy of Hungary in Cairo, the Office of the Hungarian Cultural Counsellor in Cairo, and the Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies for their help with acquiring a digital copy of this manuscript.

⁵ I was supplied with digitalised microfilm copies of the Mosul and Tarīm manuscripts, made by the Ma'had al-Maḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya (Institute of Arabic Manuscripts), Cairo.

⁶ *Ġaḥara Allāh li-kātibihī wa-li-ṣāḥibihī wa-li-muṣannifihī wa-li-man qara'a lahum.*

imām al-‘allāma Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Antābī, known as al-Amšāṭī. The name of the copyist is given in the colophon (f. 9r): Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Q.l.t.y al-Azharī. The date of copying is recorded in the colophon: 16 Rabī‘ I 976 (8 September 1568). The text generally follows the Cairo manuscript, only some parts of the preface differ, and a short biography of the author was added between the title and the actual text of the treatise. I shall return to this biography below in detail.

1.3 MS *Maktabat al-Aḥqāf maǧmū‘ Āl Yaḥyā* 123 (henceforth: *Tarīm MS*)

The manuscript is described in the catalogue of the Yemeni manuscripts of the *Maktabat al-Aḥqāf*, as well as the other ten treatises of the collection.⁷ The treatise (ff. 100r–110r) bears the title *Iršādāt li-man arāda as-safar* (underlined thrice), and *Kitāb al-isfār ‘an ḥ.k.m al-asfār* (f. 100r, not vocalised except the *hamzas*) written below the underlining. The name of the author is given immediately after the title: *al-‘allāma* Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Antābī, known as al-Amšāṭī. The name of the copyist and the date of copying are recorded in the colophon (f. 110r): Abū ṣ-Ṣalāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī, 17 Ġumādā I 1083 (10 September 1672). The text follows the Cairo manuscript in general, but the preface seems to be a slightly modified version of that of the Mosul manuscript.

2 The author: Muẓaffar ad-Dīn al-Amšāṭī

As noted above, the Cairo manuscript does not contain the name of the author, whereas the Mosul and *Tarīm* manuscripts mention it as (*aš-ṣayḥ al-imām*) *al-‘allāma* Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Antābī, known as al-Amšāṭī.

Since the Mosul manuscript is supplemented by a short biography of the author (f. 1r), it is worth transcribing it here. The text below follows the original orthography; the ends of the lines are marked with vertical slashes (/), and an interlinear insertion is marked with parenthesis.

كِتَابُ الْإِسْفَارِ عَنْ حُكْمِ الْأَسْفَارِ | لِلشَّيْخِ الْإِمَامِ الْعَلَّامَةِ مُظَفَّرِ الدِّينِ مَحْمُودٍ | الْعَنْتَابِيِّ
الْمَعْرُوفِ بِالْأَمْشَاطِيِّ⁸ | تَعَمَّدَهُ اللَّهُ تَعِينَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ |

مولفه محمود بن احمد بن حسن بن اسمعيل بن يعقوب بن اسمعيل الشيخ مظفر الدين بن الامام
شهاب الدين الامشاطي | العنتابي الحنفى القاهري اخو قاضى القضاء بمصر محمد الامشاطي
الحنفى ولد فى حدود سنة اثني عشر | وثمانماية وكان فقيها طبيبا فاضلا مفتنا فى جميع العلوم

⁷ Al-‘Aydārūs 2009: II, 1601–1605 (nos 3842–3853, no. 3852 being the treatise discussed here). I would like to thank Kinga Dévényi and Anne Regourd for having called my attention to this catalogue.

⁸ The two dots of the *yā* are on top of the letter’s shape as indicated, but above each other.

درس واقتي وحدث والف شرحا | على النقاية في الفقه وشرحا على الموجر (في الطب) لابن النفيس حسنا جامعا حافلا في مجلدين كبيرين وشرحا | على اللحمه في الطب ايضا لابن امين الدوله وكتب عدّه رسائل في الطب منها تأسيس الاثقان | والمثانه في علل الكلى والمثانه ومنها القول السديد في اختيار الاما والعبيد | ومنها رساله في ما يحتاج اليه المسافر كتبها لابن البارزى وكان صالحا خيرا حسن الاعتقاد | ذكر انه راي وهو دون البلوغ رجلا يمشى في الغمام لا بشك في ذلك وكان على طرقة حسنة | وعمر واسن فنزل عن وظائفه واقبل على الله تعالى وعمل عدة من الخيرات والآثار الي | توفي سنة اثنتين وتعمم بالقاهره رحمه الله تعالى نقلت ذلك من الضو وغيره

From this short biography, we can gather that Muẓaffar ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-ʿAntābī al-Amšāṭī was the brother of the chief judge (*qāḍī l-quḍāt*) of Egypt. Born in early 812/1409, he was primarily a jurist (*faqīh*) and a physician, though also learned in some other sciences. He wrote three commentaries and numerous medical treatises. He was known to be a devout and virtuous man, a firm believer. An anecdote recorded from his childhood says that he once saw a man walking in the clouds. He grew old and resigned from his positions, turning to God and performing good deeds until he died in 902/1496–7 in Cairo. According to al-Ġalabī, the name of the person copying this biography is not recorded, although the script is different from those of the other treatises in the collection (al-Ġalabī 1930a: 165). The anonymous scribe acknowledges among his sources *ad-Ḍawʿ* of as-Saḥāwī, a late Mamluk historian who died in 902/1497.

Turning to as-Saḥāwī's *ad-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ*, it is clear that the above-quoted biographical passage in the Mosul manuscript is a summary of as-Saḥāwī's account. The original biography provides many interesting details about the life of al-Amšāṭī (as-Saḥāwī, *ad-Ḍawʿ* X, 128–129). One of them is the origin of his name: his maternal grandfather was a comb trader (*amšāṭī*), and so the family was named after him.⁹ As-Saḥāwī enumerates various sciences in which al-Amšāṭī was educated (memorising the Qurʾān, *fiqh*, medicine, grammar, and time-keeping), listing his teachers as well as the books from which he learnt, and mentions some detailed and intriguing episodes of his life. Al-Amšāṭī travelled to Damascus many times, went on pilgrimage more than once, and visited at-Ṭāʾif in the company of al-Biqāʾī (d. 885/1480), a religious scholar.¹⁰ He also waged *ghihād*, devoted his attention to various activities (such as swimming, archery and bookbinding), and also healed patients. Besides, he took up teaching *fiqh* and medicine, the latter subject in the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque and the Maṣūriyya Madrasa in the funerary complex of Sultan Qalāwūn. Later in his life, he abandoned all his positions except for practising medicine. While as-Saḥāwī lists three commentaries by al-Amšāṭī, he only names his *Kurrāsa yaḥtāğ ilayhā fī s-safar*, with no mention of the two other medical treatises by the same author. Then, among some details on his character, we read that as-Saḥāwī and al-Amšāṭī were close friends, the latter visiting the former weekly for dictating his new works. The

⁹ That is, the family's *nisba* al-Amšāṭī derives from *muṣṭ* (pl. *amšāṭ*) meaning 'comb'.

¹⁰ For more on his life, see Saleh 2010.

anecdote about the man walking in the clouds was told by al-Amšāṭī directly to as-Saḥāwī. For al-Amšāṭī's birth, the author provides an alternative date, 810/1407. The account ends by mentioning that in 899/1493–4 al-Amšāṭī was staying in his home because he was unable to move.

According to Brockelmann (2012: II, 93) and az-Ziriklī (2005: VII, 163), our second source for the life of al-Amšāṭī is the Yemeni jurist aš-Šawkānī's (d. 1250/1834) *al-Badr at-ṭālī*. His account for al-Amšāṭī's life is an abridgement of as-Saḥāwī's biography with two addenda. Aš-Šawkānī explains the anecdote by writing that al-Amšāṭī probably saw a man-shaped cloud, and gives his place and date of death: Cairo, Rabī' I 902 (November–December 1496) (aš-Šawkānī, *al-Badr* II, 292–293). These details strongly suggest that there were, in fact, other sources for the life of al-Amšāṭī.¹¹ This means that further research may hope to find those additional sources and compile a more accurate and comprehensive bibliographical study of the author of the medical treatise. Nonetheless, it is clear that the author of this treatise was a highly regarded scholar working in 15th-century Cairo.

3 The patron: Abū l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad al-Ġuhanī al-Bārizī aš-Šāfi'ī

Another point to investigate is the person to whom the treatise *al-Isfār* 'an ḥikam al-aṣfār was dedicated, which may shed further light on the date of the work itself.

In accordance with *ḥusn al-ibtidā'*, the author praises God for commanding to travel, and for 'making medicine hold secrets' (*wa-ḡa'ala fī ṭ-ṭibb min al-asrār*) that preserve health and cure harms. The preface proper after *wa-ba'du* describes preparing oneself with humbleness and restraint for visiting ritual sites while anticipating God's forgiveness at the end of times. Here the book's patron is eulogised as the *imām* whose qualities are praised, followed by his titles and name: *al-muqīrr* ('the excellent'), *al-ašraf* ('the noblest'), *al-karīm* ('the beneficent'), *al-'ālī* ('the sublime'), *al-amāmī* ('the foremost'), *al-'ālamī* ('the renowned'), *al-'allāmī* ('the insightful'), *al-kamālī* ('the perfect', also short for Kamāl ad-Dīn), Abū al-Ma'ālī Muḥammad al-Ġuhanī al-Bārizī aš-Šāfi'ī, *nāẓir dawāwīn al-inšā' aš-šarīfa bi-d-diyār al-Miṣriyya wa-sā'ir al-mamālik al-Islāmiyya* ('the superintendent of the noble chancery of Egypt and the rest of the Muslim countries'). Following this, the author elaborates on his motives for writing this treatise for its patron, writes the title of the treatise, and, after expressing his hopes that his work will be appreciated, gives the table of contents. The *-ār* ending of the *sağ'* is changed only twice for the sake of including the patron's praise and titles.

¹¹ I would like to thank Peter Nagy for bringing it to my attention that Behrens-Abouseif 2018: 118 mentions al-Amšāṭī, referencing as-Saḥāwī's *Raf' al-asr* besides his *aḍ-Ḍaw'*. She also refers to Kamāl ad-Dīn al-Bārizī and his father in the same work.

The last title mentioned in the treatise – ‘the superintendent of the noble chancery of Egypt...’ – means that the patron was a high-ranking official in the Mamluk Sultanate. Since the *Ṣubḥ al-a‘šā fī šinā‘at al-inšā’* by al-Qalqašandī (d. 821/1418) is considered “the culmination of the secretarial manuals and encyclopaedias of the Mamlūk period” (Bosworth 1997: 510), it is a fundamental source to look for ‘the superintendent of the noble chancery’. In the introductory section, al-Qalqašandī writes about the office of *šāḥib ad-dīwān* – i.e. *dīwān al-inšā’* – (‘head of the chancery’) at length (al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ* I, 101–129). However, when writing about the *kātib as-sirr* (‘secretary’), al-Qalqašandī records that besides the *kātib as-sirr*’s numerous tasks, the *kuttāb ad-dast* (‘scribes of the pedestal’, the higher-ranking scribes) and *kuttāb ad-darġ* (‘secretarial scribes’) are all under the supervision of his *dīwān*. This indicates that the *kātib as-sirr* is the same person as the *šāḥib ad-dīwān*, that is, the head of the chancery. As al-Qalqašandī explains, some of these titles were used synonymously: in his time, the superintendent is called *šāḥib dīwān al-inšā’* in Egypt. But if one wants to address the officeholder in a more exalted way, one may call him *šāḥib dawāwīn al-inšā’* (by using the plural) or *nāzir dawāwīn al-inšā’* (since *nāzir* is higher than *šāḥib*). Elaborating it even further, the expression *bi-d-diyār al-Miṣriyya* and *bi-l-mamālik al-Islāmiyya* may also be added (al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ* I, 103). In short, the patron of the treatise bore the title *kātib as-sirr*, and the author used the most exalted designation for dedicating the work.

One of the *nisbas* of the patron was al-Bārizī, indicating that he belonged to a well-known family of officeholders in the Mamluk state. They lived in Ḥamā for many generations, occupying the judgeship for around 120 years with only one interruption (Hirschler 2008: 106–108).¹² It was Nāṣir ad-Dīn Muḥammad (769–823/1368–1420) who, after various events, ended up in Cairo with ties to no other than Sultan al-Mu‘ayyad Ṣayḥ (r. 815–824/1412–1421), becoming his *kātib as-sirr*, in addition to holding some other positions (Martel-Thoumian 1991: 250–251; Hirschler 2008: 108–107). Nāṣir ad-Dīn Muḥammad had two sons: Šihāb ad-Dīn Aḥmad (d. 822/1419), whose funeral was attended by Sultan al-Mu‘ayyad Ṣayḥ,¹³ and Kamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad, who followed his father as *kātib as-sirr*, and to whom the treatise *al-Isfār ‘an ḥikam al-aṣfār* was dedicated. One of their sisters, Muġul, married the future sultan aṣ-Ṣāḥib Ġaḥmaḡ (r. 842–854/1438–1453) (Martel-Thoumian 1991: 255).

The second son, Kamāl ad-Dīn Abū al-Ma‘ālī Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir ad-Dīn, was born on 11 Dū l-Ḥiġġa 796 (7 October 1394) in Ḥamā.¹⁴ He grew up under the wings

¹² For a comprehensive discussion of the family, see Martel-Thoumian 1991: 248–266.

¹³ Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *an-Nujūm* XIV, 159; Martel-Thoumian 1991: 254; Hirschler 2008: 108.

¹⁴ As recorded by Ibn Taġrī Birdī (*an-Nuġūm* XIV, 13), listing ‘Uṭmān twice in the genealogy, as opposed to all other sources listing him only once; Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 10; al-Maqrīzī, *Durar* III, 247; as-Saḥāwī, *ad-Ḍaw’* VIII, 236; as-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm*, 168. The

of his father, memorizing the Qur'ān. Travelling around the Middle East, he first went to Cairo in 809 (1406/7), then returned to Syria and lived in Ḥamā, Aleppo, and Damascus, following the positions of his father. Meanwhile, Kamāl ad-Dīn pursued his studies in the fields of law, grammar, literature, and rhetoric.¹⁵ In 815/ 1412, they moved to Cairo, where Nāṣir ad-Dīn first became *muwaqqi'* ('signer'), after which he held the position of *kātib as-sirr* from 3 Šawwāl 815 (6 January 1413).¹⁶ Due to Kamāl ad-Dīn's skills in free prose, poetry, letter writing, and composition, he became his father's deputy.

After his father died, Kamāl ad-Dīn paid 40,000 dinars to Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Šayḥ to become the new *kātib as-sirr*.¹⁷ However, only 17 days after the death of the sultan,¹⁸ he left this position and was appointed *nāzir al-ğayš* ('superintendent of the army') by the *amīr* Ṭaṭar, who was to become Sultan az-Zāhir Ṭaṭar briefly for three months.¹⁹ Kamāl ad-Dīn lost his position after the death of az-Zāhir Ṭaṭar, and, in between holding offices, he returned to his studies. Later, when Barsbāy (r. 825–840/1422–1438) was enthroned as sultan, he re-employed Kamāl ad-Dīn as *kātib as-sirr* of Damascus,²⁰ while he also served as the *qāḍī l-quḍāt* of the Shāfi'ī School of law there.

After the *kātib as-sirr* of Cairo was discharged, Barsbāy summoned Kamāl ad-Dīn to Cairo as *kātib as-sirr* on 20 Rabī' II 836 (14 December 1432). However, he lost his office again on 7 Rağab 839 (26 January 1436).²¹ About a year later,²² he returned to Damascus as *qāḍī l-quḍāt* and *ḥaṭīb* ('preacher') of the Umayyad mosque. Then, after Ğaqmaq secured the throne for himself, his brother-in-law, Kamāl ad-Dīn, was summoned back to Cairo as *kātib as-sirr* once again on 17 Rabī' II 842 (7 September 1438)²³ and remained in this position until his death on 26 Šafar

last two sources include Šams ad-Dīn Ibrāhīm in the genealogy and also associate the family with one of the companions of the Prophet.

¹⁵ For a detailed list of the works he studied and his teachers, see Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *an-Nuğūm* XIV, 13–14; as-Saḥāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw'* VIII, 237.

¹⁶ For an account of his life and career, see Martel-Thoumian 1991: 250–251, 262.

¹⁷ On 25 Šawwāl 823 (2 November 1420). Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 11: 25 Šawwāl 823; Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *an-Nuğūm* XIV, 15: 25 Šawwāl 823; as-Saḥāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw'* VIII, 237: Šawwāl 823.

¹⁸ On 26 Muḥarram 824 (31 January 1421). Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 11: 26 Muḥarram 824; Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *an-Nuğūm* XIV, 15: Muḥarram 824; as-Saḥāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw'* VIII, 237: Muḥarram 824.

¹⁹ Between 29 Ša'bān 824 (29 August 1421) and 4 Dū l-Ḥiğğa 824 (30 November 1421).

²⁰ On 7 Rağab 831 (22 April 1428).

²¹ Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 13; *an-Nuğūm* XIV, 15–16.

²² On 1 Rağab 840 (9 January 1437).

²³ Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 13: Rabī' II 842; Ibn Tağrī Birdī, *an-Nuğūm* XIV, 16: 17 Rabī' II 842; as-Saḥāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw'* VIII, 238: "*ft awwal salṭanat az-Zāhir*".

856 (18 March 1452).²⁴ The biographers also record that Kamāl ad-Dīn performed the *ḥaġġ* in 850 (1447).²⁵ According to contemporary sources, he was widely admired and often portrayed as the embodiment of the ideal *kātib*.²⁶

4 Dating the treatise

Since the treatise *al-Isfār ‘an ḥikam al-asfār* was dedicated to Kamāl ad-Dīn as *kātib as-sirr*, it must have been compiled during one of periods when he held that position. As demonstrated above, he was *kātib as-sirr* of the Mamluk Sultanate three times: first, between 823/1420 and 824/1421; second, between 836/1432 and 839/1436; and third, between 842/1438 and 856/1452. The first two periods were brief. Considering the fact that the author al-Amšāṭī was born in 810 or 812 (1407 or 1409), the first period can certainly be rejected – and even the second one is unlikely – because of his age. This suggests that the treatise was likely written during Kamāl ad-Dīn’s third period in office, between 842/1438 and 856/1452. Notably, the most reasonable motive behind commissioning such a medical treatise for travellers is the preparation for the *ḥaġġ*, and the discussion of travelling for religious purposes in the preface corroborates this assumption. Since we know that Kamāl ad-Dīn performed the *ḥaġġ* on the apex of his career in 850/1447, all known evidence suggests that the treatise was compiled for that occasion.

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²⁴ Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 15: 16 Šafar 856; Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *an-Nuġūm* XIV, 13: 26 Šafar 856.

²⁵ Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *al-Manhal* XI, 14; *an-Nuġūm* XIV, 17; as-Saḥāwī, *aḍ-Ḍaw’* VIII, 239.

²⁶ For the list of his biographies and positions, see Martel-Thoumian 1991: 262, 264.

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