
Fabrizio Speziale, Giorgio Giurini. *Il trattato aureo sulla medicina attribuito all'Imām 'Alī al-Riḍā*. Preface by Andrew Newman, with original text

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- 1 This is the first translation in a European language of the *al-Risāla al-dahabiyya fī uṣūl al-ṭibb wa-furū'ihī*, better known as *Ṭibb al-Riḍā*, which has been ascribed to the eighth imam 'Alī al-Riḍā (d. 818). The treatise, remarkably edited by Speziale and Giurini, fits into the rich tradition of so-called "Prophetic medicine", i.e., collections of medical wisdom attributed to the Prophet Muhammad and, later, to the imams.
- 2 Traditions date the book back to the time when the eighth imam was in Nishapur, in the presence of Caliph al-Ma'mun, who was discussing medical questions with his Christian and Hindu physicians. Although the *Risāla al-dahabiyya* is essentially a text about medicine, it can also be seen as a "mirror for princes" because of its deep concern with just government and kingship. For example, this disquisition starts with the constitution of the human body, stating outright that the body and the reign are regulated in like manner with the king/heart at the vertex. Every organ is at the king's disposal, such that the ears can take in only the sounds inspired by the ruler; the hands are two assistants who act under the king's order; and so forth.
- 3 The core of the present book is the translation of the *Risāla al-dahabiyya* (with the original text included), but there is also a long, exhaustive analysis of crucial issues in

the history of Muslim medical traditions, among them: the similarities and differences between the *Risāla al-dahabiyya* and other texts of “Prophetic medicine” (p. 11-20); the medical knowledge attributed to the eighth imam in other Shi’i sources (p. 20-25); traditions about the writing of the *Risāla al-dahabiyya* (p. 26-34), a very important section on the treatise’s authorship. Although eminent scholars such as al-Majlisī (d. 1699) attributed the paternity to the eighth imam, other important scholars, such as al-Tūṣī (d. 1067) placed the treatise in the list of works by Muhammad ibn Jumhūr, one of the imam’s companions, thus implying that it was not actually written by al-Riḍā.

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