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Arabic Medical-Magical Manuscripts: A Living Tradition

Petra M. Sijpesteijn

Sometime in the eleventh century a man in Egypt wrote to a close associate with news about different people in his environment.* Towards the end of his letter he adds: 'I further let you know that lately I have been dogged by illness (*marad*). Whenever some breeze touches me (*in akhadanī hawā'*), my voice, as you know it, cuts out (*inqaṭa'a ṣawṭī*) and I cannot talk. I do not know what to do, and I wonder whether someone has perpetrated an evil act against me (*tarāda'a insān 'alayya*) and given me something to drink that prevents me from speaking. So I ask God for a happy outcome and a good ending, may He be willing.'¹ We do not know who wrote this letter or for whom it was destined. We do not know the outcome of the sender's voice box problems, and whether he found out what was causing them. What we do know is that he suspected foul play by some anonymous 'person' (*insān*), who had used some kind of potion to injure and undermine him.

While scholars of the past, relying mostly on written sources, are unable to examine human practice in real time, let alone question historical actors about their behaviour, ancient written sources contain traces of daily practice that can nevertheless be revealing. Via this thousand-year-old letter we witness an unidentified individual somewhere in medieval Egypt speculating about malign forces impacting his life and wondering what to do about it. Besides praying to God for a good ending, which he mentions in his letter, the sender, considering his suspicion of a potion interfering with his ability to speak freely, probably also consulted a healer. And just as our letter-writer connects disease with evil-doing in his account, healing practices combined religion and medi-

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1 Werner Diem, *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), 1, no. 20, provenance in Egypt unknown.

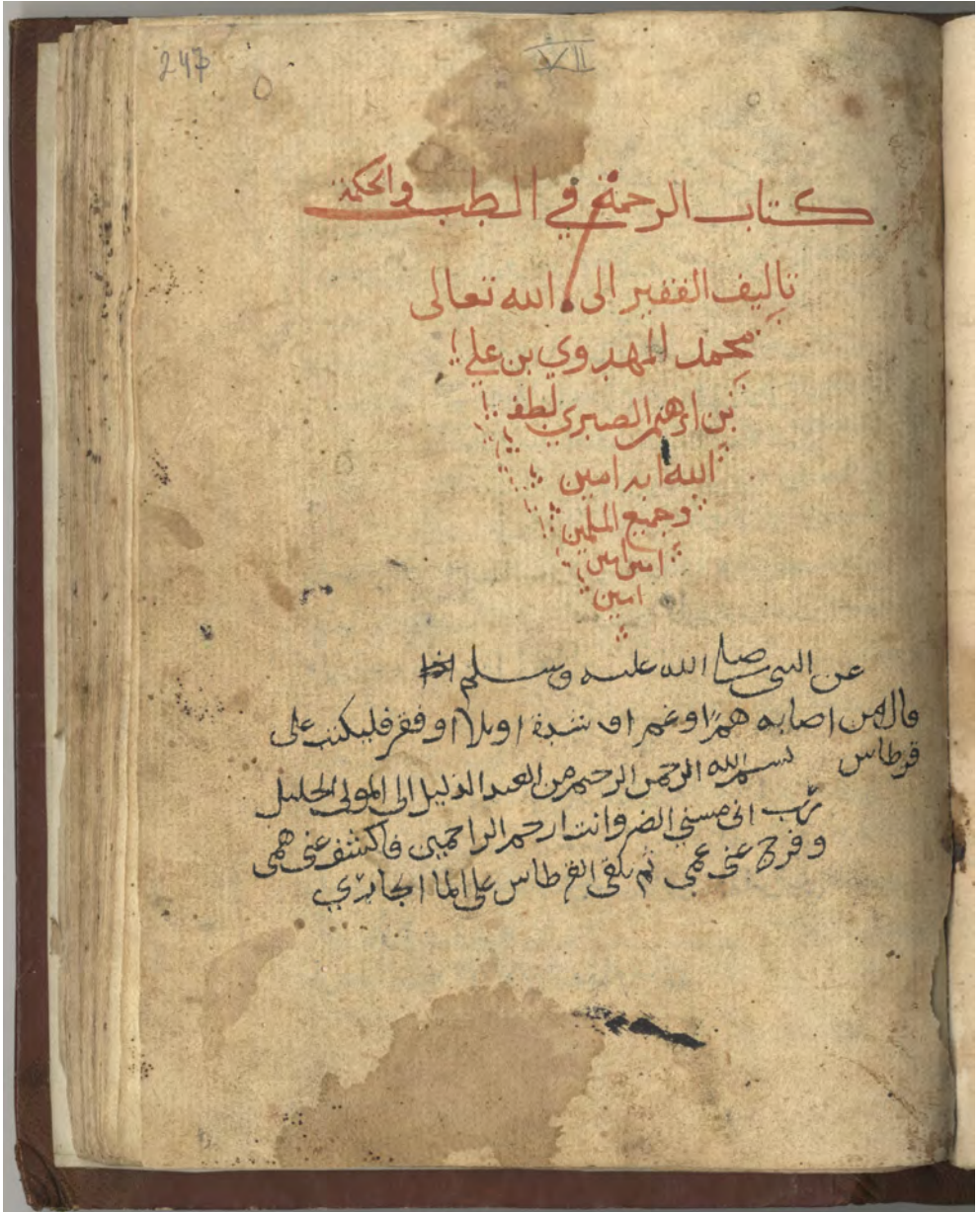


FIGURE 3.1 OR 1250 f. 243^a Title page of al-Šanawbarī's *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* with instruction for how to prepare and deal with an amulet against worry and stress © Leiden University Library

cal recipes in combatting the perceived natural and unnatural causes that lay behind illness. Driven by the needs and concerns of their patients, as well as the experience and insights they acquired over the course of their careers, healers adapted, elaborated on, and further developed their repertoire of treatments and interventions—the traces of which can be found in the notes and case-books healers kept and used in their practice.

I start with this example not only because it provides a bridge between ‘books’ and practice, but because the concerns of the poor man who lost his voice and the treatment he was seeking also shaped the book that forms the subject of this contribution, the fifteenth-century medical treatise the *Book of mercy concerned with medicine and wisdom*, Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma, (*Raḥma*).

First of all, the *Raḥma* served a clientele similar to our letter-writer, seeking relief, protection and explanation through a mix of religious and medical or pharmaceutical applications. Indeed, the text underwent changes as a result of usage and patient/user demand, reflecting a similar intertwining of religious and pharmaceutical or medical knowledge, including magical practices. That written texts in the manuscript age were in a dynamic relationship with the practices of their transmission and use, and that texts were not closed, but flexible and malleable, is now widely understood.² These insights are especially applicable to so-called utilitarian texts, such as medical, pharmaceutical and legal handbooks, which were used by their owners in daily practice. A good example of this process whereby a composite text is at some point attributed to one author is discussed in this volume by Jean-Charles Coulon.³ Coulon shows that the magical corpus attributed to al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) obtained foundational status amongst scholars in the Muslim world and those outside, in fact developed over a long period. In this chapter, I will use the manuscript and textual tradition of the *Raḥma* to examine how production, use and reception interacted to shape texts in the Arabic medico-magical tradition. The starting point is to examine how the text’s social embeddedness—that is, its use in daily clinical practice—affected its manuscript form and literary presentation. The discussion will not engage with the question of what the mixing of religious and medical thinking in this text tells us about the development of medical

2 Jan Just Witkam, “Establishing the Stemma: Fact or Fiction?” *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 3 (1988): 88–101; Travis Zadeh, “Of Mummies, Poets and Water Nymphs: Tracing the Codicological Limits of Ibn Khurradādhbih’s Geography,” in *Occasional Papers of the School of Abbasid Studies* IV, ed. Monique Bernhards (Exeter: Short Run Press, 2013), 8–75.

3 Jean-Charles Coulon, “Amulets and Talismans in the Earliest Works of the *Corpus Bunianum*,” in this volume.

knowledge, ideas of piety or legal and theological debates about the use of magic in the Islamic world. Rather, the *Raḥma* in its different manifestations will be used to examine how this text interacted with social practice, and, by means of the light it casts on notions of social threat, bodily illness and personal harm, what it says about the shape and course of inter-personal conflicts at this time.

1 Multiple Texts or One?

The *Raḥma* was a very popular work that circulated widely in the later medieval Arabic-speaking world. The text combines traditions of the Prophet Muhammad related to medical matters, classical humoral theory and the experience of practising doctors about the workings of the human body, the physiological effects of various foodstuffs, and actions necessary to maintain bodily health, and the treatment of ailments and diseases. Produced in the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century, the *Raḥma* quickly found an audience and its popularity can be deduced from the large number of manuscripts and printed editions that were—and are still up to today—in circulation, especially in the western part of the Islamic world, Egypt and North Africa. It is also evidenced by its having been incorporated into other texts, not so much in the form of commentaries or abridgements, but through a process of stepwise transformations.

The *Raḥma* is transmitted in several related but rather different versions, and there is some confusion in the scholarly literature about both its authorship and origin. In the first place the work has at least two supposed authors. Furthermore, a composite version circulated with a title echoing that of the *Raḥma*, which is clearly heavily based on it, but which has its own author. What is the relationship between these texts?

The *Raḥma* is mainly associated with two writers. A large number of manuscripts in collections throughout the world list the text under the name of the Yemeni doctor and scholar Muḥammad al-Mahdawī b. ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 815/1412).⁴ The other name under which it appears, not just in

4 There exists disagreement about the author's name, some giving his first name as Muḥammad Mahdawī, others as Mahdī. Cf. Ibn al-Jazarī, *Kitāb Ghāyat al-nihāya fī ṭabaqāt al-qurrāʾ*, eds. Gotthelf Bergsträsser and Otto Pretzl (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1932–1935), 2, 315. Some manuscripts add Jamāl al-Dīn to his name: Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften der königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1893), 5, 564, no. 6305; Yūsuf Zaydān, *Fihris makḥḥūṭāt jāmiʿat al-Iskandariyya* (Cairo: Maʿhad al-Makḥḥūṭāt al-

manuscript collections, but in a large number of printed versions, is that of the prolific Egyptian polymath Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). Some scholars insist that all texts with the *Raḥma* title were written by al-Ṣanawbarī, dismissing those instances that cite al-Suyūṭī's authorship as false attributions.⁵ Others

‘Arabiyya, 1995), 1, 325; Princeton inv. No. 918 as listed in Rudolf Mach and Eric L. Ormsby, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts (New Series) in the Princeton University Library* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 213. His *nisba* is spelled and vocalised in various ways: al-Ṣanawbarī in Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1932–1949), G11 189; S11 252 which is followed by many modern authors such as Manfred Ullmann, *Die Medizin in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 188 and in manuscript catalogues like Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden*. Vol. 2. *Manuscripts OR. 1001-OR. 2000 Registered in Leiden University Library in the Period between 1665 and 1871* (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2007), 92; Savage-Smith, *A New Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford. Volume 1: Medicine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 734, no. 217; al-Ṣubunrī in Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 2, 315–316, which is followed by Khayr al-Dīn Zirīklī, *Al-A‘lām: Qāmūs tarājīm li-ashhar al-rijāl wa-l-nisā’ min al-‘Arab wa-l-musta‘ribīn wa-l-mustashriqīn* (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1979), 7, 313, who adds in a footnote that all other interpretations of the name are based on misreadings; Ḥājji Khalīfa (d. 1068/1657), *Kashf al-ẓunūn ‘an asāmī al-kutub wa-l-funūn*, cited by Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, 5, 564; several manuscripts in UK collections as listed in www.fihrist.org.uk/catalog; al-Ṣunburī, possibly indicating a relationship to the Indian town of Ṣunpur for which see also, below the *nisba* al-Hindī which is sometimes added to his name in Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, 5, 564, no. 6305; Wetzstein 1719.6 in Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss*, 5, 565, no. 6306.3; Emily Savage-Smith, *A New Catalogue*, 734, no. 217; al-Ṣubayrī/al-Ṣabīrī in Yūsuf Zaydān, *Fihris makḥṭūṭāt*, 1, 325; al-Ḍibrī in Hans Daiber, “Neue Handschriftenfunde aus dem Jemen und aus der Südosttürkei. Die Erstversion des Tashil al-manafī’ fi al-tibb wa-al-hikma,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft Supplement 111/1* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977), 662; al-Ṣuburī in Leiden manuscript OR 1250 f. 243^a; al-Azraqī, *Tashīl al-manāfi’ fi al-ṭibb wa-l-hikma* (Cairo: Maktabat wa-maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1367/1948), 2; al-Azraqī, *Tashīl al-manāfi’ fi al-ṭibb wa-l-hikma* (Istanbul: Maktabat Ishīq, 1976), 2; al-Azraqī, *Tashīl al-manāfi’ fi al-ṭibb wa-l-hikma* (Delhi: Maktabat Ishā‘at al-Islām, ca. 1985), 2. Sometimes additional elements are added to the name. See for example the following additions: Mahdī al-Ṣayrafi al-Yamanī in BNF Arabe 7027 f. 1^a; Mahdī b. ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Yamanī in MSA 29 f. 1^a; Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Shāmī al-Mutaṭabbib in Princeton inv. No 918 as mentioned in Mach and Ormsby, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, 213. Al-Hindī is added in several manuscripts (see references in Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 734).

- 5 E.g. Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, S11 252; Ullmann, *Medizin*, 188; Irmeli Perho, *The Prophet's Medicine. A Creation of the Muslim Traditionalist Scholars* (Helsinki: Societas Orientalis Fennica, 1995), 60 no. 212; Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 734, no. 217. In (on-line) catalogues the ‘false’ attribution to al-Suyūṭī is often mentioned even in relation to texts that contain a different recension than the one attributed to al-Ṣanawbarī (cf. “BNF Archives et Manuscripts 7281”, accessed June 30, 2020, archivesetmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc4383z/cdoe82; “Islamic Medical Manuscripts at the National Library of Manuscripts” accessed June 30, 2020, www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/prophetic_med5.html). See also the correction made to the authorship of the text translated by Florian Pharaon under the title *Livre de la miséricorde dans*

consider the two texts as distinct works bearing the same title.⁶ A small number of manuscripts have the same title, but are associated with yet other authors.⁷

For al-Šanawbarī the *Raḥma* is his only known work.⁸ His birth date is unrecorded, but he is said to have died a middle-aged man in 815/1412 in al-Mahjam in Yemen.⁹ He was reputed to be an excellent (*fāḍil*) Qurʾan reciter

l'art de guérir les maladies et de conserver la santé from al-Suyūṭī to al-Šanawbarī in on-line sources and catalogues (e.g. in Worldcat). In this case, the text used is indeed the shorter one devoid of magical elements that circulates under the name of al-Šanawbarī. It is unlikely, however, that those who corrected the name based their decision on a comparison of the texts. More probable is that they followed the example of Brockelmann in his opinion that all texts with this title were the same one authored by al-Šanawbarī.

6 Cf. al-Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 6, 313; Martin Schwartz “Qumran, Turfan, Arabic Magic, and Noah's Name,” in *Charmes et sortilèges. Magie et magiciens. Res Orientalis* 14 (2002): 231 no. 1. Mach and Ormsby write “The text printed under the name of al-Suyūṭī ... with identical title and khutbah, but divided into 195 babs, is an entirely different work” (Mach and Ormsby, *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, 213). Haddad names al-Sunawbary as author of *Raḥma* which he calls ‘an abridgment of Sunyuty's (sic) book with the same title’ (Farid Sami Haddad, “Arabic Medical Manuscripts in the Sami I. Haddad Memorial Library,” in *XXVII Congreso internacional de historia de la medicina* [Barcelona: Acadèmia de Ciències Mèdiques de Catalunya i Balears: 1981], 1, 257). See for the issue of *Raḥma* being an abridgement, further on in footnote 11.

7 See the two manuscripts with the title *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* and the author's name: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 858/1454) kept in Turkey in the Sulaymaniyya library (inv. 2116) and in Ankara University (inv. 10327) (cf. “The Islamisation of Anatolia; Biṣṭāmī, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, Approximately 1380–1454,” accessed July 10, 2020 arts.st-andrews.ac.uk/anatolia/data/documents/auth/lccn:nrg3001806). A *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* is listed in Ahlwardt with the authorship of al-Būnī (d. 622/1225) as a treatise on poisons (*Verzeichniss*, 5, 565–566; nos. 6306-1 and 6306-6). Similarly, the Wellcome Library is said to contain a work entitled *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* whose author is given in the catalogue of the library as Aristotle and al-Būnī (Nikolaj Serikoff, *Arabic Medical Manuscripts of the Wellcome Library: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Ḥaddād Collection* [Leiden: Brill, 2005], 259–260, cited by Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 734). Two manuscripts with the same title kept in the Center for Islamic Studies (CIS), Specialist Library in Sokoto, Nigeria and the Nigerian National Archives of Kaduna give as its author Muhammad Bello (d. 1253/1837) (John O. Hunwick and Rex Séan O’Fahey, *Arabic Literature of Africa. Volume 2 The Writings of Central Sudanic Africa* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], 114–149). A description of the contents and form of the Sokoto manuscript (with a third chapter on how to keep the body healthy another one on the natural attributes of foodstuffs and sections ending with ‘*mujarrab ṣaḥīḥ*,’ ‘tested and found effective’) suggests this is the same text that circulates under the name of al-Šanawbarī. Cf. Mukhtar Umar Bunza, “Arabic Medicinal Manuscripts of Pre-Colonial Northern Nigeria: A Descriptive List,” <https://themuslimtimes.info/2018/01/09/arabic-medicinal-manuscripts-of-pre-colonial-northern-nigeria-a-descriptive-list/> accessed 28/6/2021. In the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris the author of the partially preserved *Raḥma* in *majmūʿ* manuscript BNF 5718 is identified as ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Naṣr al-Širāzī (d. 476/1083).

8 Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, GII, 242; SII 252.

9 Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 2, 315 cited by al-Ziriklī, *A'lām*, 6, 313. Mahjam fell under the

and a skilful doctor.¹⁰ Al-Ṣanawbarī's *Rahma* is a typical example of a basic medical text, both in terms of its contents and organisation. It combines disquisitions on humoral theory with discussions of the medicinal properties of foodstuffs and other substances (*khawāṣṣ* or *mujarrabāt*), and gives instructions on how to produce and apply electuaries (*ma'ajīn*), ointments (*marāḥim*), laxatives (*mushilāt*), as well as physical and dietary treatments to heal wounds and other physical and psychological ailments. Al-Ṣanawbarī states in his introduction that he designed his text to be concise (*mukhtaṣar*), 'to facilitate its comprehension by students and its study and memorisation by those eager to do so' (*li-yusahhala tanāwulahu li-l-ṭālib wa-darsahu wa-ḥifzahu li-l-rāghib*).¹¹ While his text is often mentioned under 'prophetic medicine,' al-Ṣanawbarī classifies it as 'medical,'¹² and mentions only a small number of well-known prophetic hadiths. He does not provide *isnāds* and does not follow the organisation typical of works of *al-ṭibb al-nabawī*.¹³ He follows, in other words, a

administration of the town of Zabīd in south-western Yemen according to al-Ya'qūbī (al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-Buldān* [Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1957], 5, 229). In addition the *nisba* al-Muqrī is sometimes mentioned (e.g. Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 734). This name might refer to Muqrā also located in south-west Yemen (George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science* [Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing company, 1927–1948], 3.2, 1725). Another *nisba* associated with him is al-Hindī which might point to an Indian background (idem, 1725). Sarton does not give any references to primary sources where the *nisbas* might be found, but Savage-Smith lists some manuscripts where this *nisba* occurs (see above, footnote 4).

10 Ibn al-Jazarī, *Ghāyat al-nihāya*, 2, 315–316.

11 OR 1250 f. 243^b. *Mukhtaṣar* follows the meaning of *mabsūṭ* in this sense (Adam Gacek, *The Arabic Manuscript Tradition* [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 41). Understanding *mukhtaṣar* as abridgement in this context makes less sense as al-Ṣanawbarī does not mention a text that he summarised and it is difficult to find a suitable text that would have formed the base of the current text. Presenting the work as a means through which scholars can study a topic by themselves, without the aid of a master forms a major departure from medieval scientific writings characteristic of early modern scientific activity throughout the Islamic world (Matt Melvin-Koushki, "Is (Islamic) Occult Science Science?" *Theology and Science* 18 [2020]: 315).

12 *Wa-hādā kitāb mukhtaṣar waḍa'tuhu fī 'ilm al-ṭibb* (OR 1250 f. 243^b).

13 See for example the hadiths quoted about the benefits of black seed, aloe, garden cress and black myrobalan (spelled *الهليج الأسود* in OR 1250 f. 254^a instead of *الإهليج الأسود*). Cf. Vollers 758 f. 23^a) (OR 1250 f. 252^b–254^a) and cupping (*ḥijāma*) (OR 1250 f. 255^a). For the classification as prophetic medicine, cf. Mohammed Ghaly, "Prophetic Medicine," in *Muhammad in History, Thought and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*, eds. Coeli Fitzpatrick and Adam H. Walker (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2014), 2, 502–506; Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, 59–60; Peter Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith, *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 74; Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 734; Ghada Karmi, "Al-ṭibb al-nabawī. The Prophet's Medicine," in *Technology, Tradition and*

medical rather than a piety paradigm,¹⁴ even if still finding space for some mild literary pretension with an anecdote from the court of the Sasanian king Chosroes, transmitted by the general al-Aḥnaf b. Qays (d. 67/686),¹⁵ and a couple of lines of poetry.¹⁶ Mostly though al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* is intended as a practical and manageable medical handbook with recipes and treatments labelled as 'useful, true and tried' (*nāfi', ṣaḥīḥ, mujarrab*), presumably on the basis of his clinical experience as a practitioner.¹⁷ The text is accordingly divided into five chapters covering 'human nature and what wisdom God placed in it'; 'characteristics of foodstuffs and medicines and their benefits'; 'what benefits a healthy body'; 'the treatment of specific diseases in each body part'; and 'knowledge of nature and what God preserved concerning the treatment of diseases that spread throughout the body (*mutanaqqila fī al-badan*).¹⁸ The last two chapters follow the common organisation of moving through the body from head to toe.

The famous polymath and prolific Egyptian scholar Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (911/1505) is the supposed author of a text with the same title, *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*.¹⁹ Al-Suyūṭī wrote hundreds of works on a wide range of

Survival. Aspects of Material Culture and Survival in the Middle East and Central Asia, eds. Richard Tapper and Keith Mclachlan (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003), 32–39. Cf. 'stark von Propheten Medizin durchsetzt' (Johann Christoph Bürgel, *Ärztliches Leben und Denken im arabischen Mittelalter* [Leiden: Brill, 2016], 471). Ahmed Ragab showed that works of prophetic medicine follow a specific order of topics and contain a substantial number of hadiths, neither applies to the *Raḥma*. Cf. *Piety and Patienthood in Medieval Islam* (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2018), chapter 2.

- 14 See for this distinction Ahmed Ragab's excellent analysis of the genre of Prophetic medicine in which ideas of illness and health were intimately connected to understandings of pietistic and religious actions (*Piety*, introduction).
- 15 OR 1250 f. 257^b.
- 16 OR 1250 f. 257^a and 261^a.
- 17 Basing scientific truth on experimentalism and empirical findings has, however, also been identified as another (see above footnote 11) deviation from medieval scientific attitude characteristic of early modern works (Melvin-Koushki, "Science," 314–315).
- 18 I have used six manuscripts of this text (BSB Cod. Arab. 835; Leiden OR 1250; Paris BNF 7027; London Wellcome MS Arabic 444 all four undated; Bethesda, Maryland MS A 29, copied at the end of Rabī' 11 1226/1811; Leipzig Vollers 758 copied 1 Jumādā 1 1262/27 April 1846). For general references to the text I use OR 1250 while the others are used for the purpose of comparison only. I have not made an effort to retrieve all extant copies of the text nor did I establish a hierarchy or order between them. In this chapter I want to demonstrate a phenomenon characteristic of these kinds of texts, rather than produce an exhaustive study of the *Raḥma* manuscript tradition. OR 1250 is a fairly nice copy although some mistakes have crept into the text. See for example the spelling of الإهلج for الأهلج (OR 1250 f. 254^a). *Al-'adas* was left out by the scribe and was added later to the text (OR 1250 f. 248^a). A sentence is also dropped out on f. 261^a but not corrected.
- 19 I have used four printed editions: Ed. Aḥmad Sa'd 'Alī. Cairo: Maṭba'a Muṣṭafā al-Bābī

topics. Amongst these is also a well-known treatise on prophetic medicine entitled *al-Manhaj al-sawī wa-l-manhal al-rawī fī al-ṭibb al-nabawī* (*The correct method and refreshing source of the prophet's medicine*), which consists entirely of hadiths, without medical context or supporting information.²⁰ The *Raḥma* that circulates under al-Suyūṭī's name covers the same major topics as al-Ṣanawbarī's—successively, human nature, the characteristics and effects of food stuffs and medicines, and the treatment of injuries, diseases and other conditions. The text of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* appears in its entirety, albeit divided over different chapters and following a different order. Al-Suyūṭī's text is, however, more extensive, containing 195 chapters. The book contains much more elaborate information about the use of foodstuffs for medicinal applications and offers many additional recipes and treatments for ailments, including, most notably, amulets and magical compounds, which are entirely lacking in al-Ṣanawbarī's text. A discussion of the treatment of pregnancy and its possible complications is added as well. At the end of the book instructions on how to make amulets and the other magical materials needed for social and economic interventions are included.²¹

Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Azraqī's (d. 890/1485) work, *Tashīl al-manāfi' fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* (*Facilitation of benefits in medicine and wisdom*), refers in its title to the *Raḥma* and explains in the introduction that this is al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* in particular.²² Al-Azraqī calls it the most systematic work, as it mentions each disease or ailment with its characteristics and cause, but also points out that due to al-Ṣanawbarī's attempts to be concise some informa-

al-Ḥalabī, 1357/1938 (From now on referred to as *Raḥma*, Cairo 1357/1938); Cairo: 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad, 1345/1927 (From now on referred to as *Raḥma*, Cairo, 1345/1927); Cairo: Maktabat Jumhūriyyat Miṣr al-'Arabiyya s.d. (From now on referred to as *Raḥma*, Cairo, Maktabat Jumhūriyyat Miṣr); Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya 'Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, s.d. (From now on referred to as *Raḥma*, Cairo, Dār Ihyā'). The Cairo 1357/1938 edition I use for general referencing, the others make an occasional appearance for comparative purposes. No information on the manuscripts that the printed editions are based on is given in the books.

20 Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, GII 147; SII 182; Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, 61. Cf. Éric Geoffroy, "al-Suyūṭī" *EtI*.

21 Pregnancy: *Raḥma* Cairo 1357/1938, 193–202; materials, amulets that help with the hunt on animals on land and fish, etc.: *Raḥma* Cairo 1357/1938, 243–288.

22 I used three printed editions of this text: Delhi: Maktabat Ishā'at al-Islām, ca. 1985 (From now on referred to as *Tashīl*, Delhi); Cairo: Maktabat wa-maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1367/1948 (referred to from now on as *Tashīl*, Cairo); Istanbul: Maktabat İshiq, 1396/1976 (referred to from now on as *Tashīl*, Istanbul). No information on the manuscript that the printed editions are based on is given in the books. Cf. Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, SII 170. For the reference to *Raḥma*, see *Tashīl*, Istanbul, 2; *Tashīl*, Cairo, 2. Al-Azraqī calls al-*Raḥma*'s author al-Ṣubūrī.

tion is missing.²³ As his other main source al-Azraqī mentions *Kitāb Shifā' al-ajsām* (*Book on the curing of bodies*) by his teacher Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ghayth al-Kamrānī (d. 857/1453),²⁴ Al-Azraqī adds that he used a host of other books to help him to round out the information provided by the two aforementioned works, including, for example, al-Razī's (d. 313/925) *Bur' al-sā'a* (*One-hour recovery*), Ibn al-Jawzī's (d. 597/1200) *Luqaṭ al-manāfi' fi al-ṭibb* (*Selections of benefits of medicine*), and works by physicians such as al-Mārdīnī (d. 690/1292) and al-Suwaydī (d. 690/1292).²⁵ Like al-Ṣanawbarī, al-Azraqī was a Yemeni practising doctor.²⁶ The *Tashīl* is divided into five chapters, which exactly follow those of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*.²⁷ The chapters contain, however, much additional information both on topics that the *Raḥma* covers and adding supplementary subjects, especially concerning sexual relations, aphrodisiacs and pregnancy. A section on the evil eye and instructions on amulets are combined with medical treatments and dietary recommendations.

In subsequent centuries other authors made use of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*. Rāshid b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Hāshim al-Qurashī put the *Raḥma* to verse and provided a commentary with the title *Zād al-faqīr* (*Provisions for the poor person*),²⁸ an abridgement of which was produced by the author Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Mullā al-Aḥsā'ī (d. 1270/1853) with the title *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-raḥma fi al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*.²⁹

Of the two ways in which the *Raḥma* has generally been seen—either as one text authored by al-Ṣanawbarī but misattributed in certain instances to al-Ṣuyūṭī, or as two 'entirely different' texts—neither opinion is correct. The result is some confusing discussions in the literature.³⁰ An examination of the two

23 *Tashīl*, Istanbul, 3; *Tashīl*, Cairo, 3.

24 Besides al-Kamrānī (Bürgel, *Ärztliches Leben*, 471; Brockelmann, *Geschichte*), his name is given as al-Kirmānī (Brockelmann, *Geschichte*) and al-Karamānī (last two are also both used in Savage-Smith, *New Catalogue*, 738, no. 218).

25 *Tashīl*, Istanbul, 3; *Tashīl*, Cairo, 3.

26 Perho, *Prophet's Medicine*, 59–60.

27 *Tashīl*, Istanbul, 3; *Tashīl*, Cairo, 3.

28 Brockelmann, *Geschichte*, sII 252.

29 A manuscript of this work is kept in the King Saud Library in Saudi Arabia. Cf. *Talkhīṣ kitāb al-Raḥma fi al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*. Accessed on July 14, 2020 almoqtabas.com/ar/manuscripts/view/26491188932509769. This title nor the author make an appearance in Brockelmann, *Geschichte*.

30 See for example: "al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 1412) in his still popular *Book on Mercy on Medicine and Wisdom* devoted only a very short paragraph to the four humours and a slightly longer one to the four corresponding temperaments, with but one brief mention of Hippocrates and none of Galen. The remainder of the sizeable book is devoted to quotations of hadiths, instructions for the use of substances such as honey, and magical and talismanic

texts makes clear that the two *Raḥmas* are obviously and intimately related, but different texts. (Ps.) Al-Suyūṭī quotes al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* word for word, but supplements it by providing additional medical information and, most strikingly, providing a magical dimension. Similarly, al-Ṣanawbarī's text was used to produce subsequent texts, such as al-Azraqī's *Tashīl* and al-Iḥsā'ī's *Talkhīṣ*. The next section zeroes in on the relationship between the two *Raḥmas* that have traditionally been considered one and the same text, examining how these versions of the *Raḥma* are interconnected and what this tells us about the circulation and use of these texts.

2 Reworking and Interdependency

The introduction of the *Raḥma*, in which the 'author' explains the purpose of his book (to provide a concise text that will allow students to learn and memorise it), is exactly the same in both versions of the text. In the version ascribed to al-Suyūṭī a couple of lines are added to the very beginning, which give the name of the author and state that he 'composed this book from the words of Abū al-Ṭayyib, from the words of experts (*kalām al-shuyūkh*), may God the Almighty have mercy on them, and all kinds of (other) books (*kutub shattā*).'³¹ Abū al-Ṭayyib is presumably a miswriting for the famous scholar Abū al-Faraj 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ṭayyib (d. 435/1043), who worked as a doctor in Bīmāristān al-ʿAḍudī in Baghdad and produced numerous commentaries in the field of philosophy, theology and medicine.³²

Both versions of the *Raḥma* start with the same two chapters, on human nature and on the essences whereby they follow the same sub-sections on 'the humours, temperaments, the benefits of food' and 'foodstuffs, medicines, laxatives' respectively. Al-Ṣanawbarī's third chapter, on how to maintain a healthy body, is listed as chapter four in al-Suyūṭī's text after a chapter on the 'treatment of emaciation in the body.' The last two chapters of al-Ṣanawbarī's on 'afflictions of specific parts of the body' and on 'general diseases' are in al-Suyūṭī divided

procedures" (Pormann and Savage-Smith, *Islamic Medicine*, 74). This discussion does not concern al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* but deals with al-Suyūṭī's text although several references to Galen (Jalīnūs) can be found in al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* as well. It is repeated in subsequent studies like Hormoz Ebrahimnejad, "Medicine in Islam and Islamic medicine," in *A Global History of Medicine*, ed. Mark Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 85.

31 *Raḥma*, Cairo 1357/1938, 2; *Raḥma*, Cairo: Dār Iḥyā, 2; *Raḥma*, Cairo: Maktabat Jumhuriyyat Miṣr, 2; *Raḥma*, Cairo 1345/1927, 2; BNF 7281, f. 2^b.

32 Cleophea Ferrari, "Ibn al-Ṭayyib," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 528–531.

into many smaller chapters, named after the body parts where ailments occur or the problems that affect the different limbs, organs and other parts of the body.

Al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* contains many more chapters (195) than al-Ṣanawbarī's (5). It is also more elaborate, offering additional recipes, treatments and measures for every ailment, disease or wound for which the *Raḥma* provides relief, such as, for example, his detailed treatments for ear pain and baldness.³³ It also contains supplementary information and applications using foodstuffs and substances such as kohl.³⁴ Additional items of food are mentioned as well in al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma*.³⁵ Moreover, al-Suyūṭī deals with topics that are not found in al-Ṣanawbarī. Al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* contains, for example, an extensive section on pregnancy—ways to know whether a woman is pregnant, how to treat infertility, methods to make a foetus fall asleep, treat it while asleep or wake it up, ways to drive out a foetus or to keep it in its mother's belly, and how to handle stress during childbirth—and on the relationship between husband and wife, which are entirely absent from al-Ṣanawbarī's text.³⁶ Similarly, the section in al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* on 'how to turn married or divorced women into virgins again,' that is to say how to tighten their vagina, is missing from al-Ṣanawbarī.³⁷

Another important addition are the instructions on how to produce amulets to deal with medical problems. These are interspersed with the pharmacological, dietary, behavioural and other medical treatments. The amulets that are discussed contain Qur'anic verses and names of God, but also magical squares, 'Brillenbuchstaben' (or sigils, drawings consisting of circles connected

33 The section on earache is larger in al-Suyūṭī (Cairo 1357/1938, 36–37) than in al-Ṣanawbarī (OR 1250 f. 263^b). More treatments against baldness are mentioned in al-Suyūṭī (Cairo 1357/1938, 79–80) than in al-Ṣanawbarī (OR 1250 f. 262^b).

34 Kohl in al-Ṣanawbarī (OR 1250 f. 261^a) and al-Suyūṭī (Cairo 1357/1938, 50–51).

35 E.g. information on the walnut (*jawz*) is missing in al-Ṣanawbarī's text (OR 1250 f. 261^a), but is included in al-Suyūṭī's version (Cairo 1357/1938, 9). Al-Azraqī has yet additional foods such as lemon (*utruj*) which do not appear in al-Ṣanawbarī nor in al-Suyūṭī (*Tashīl*, Delhi, 20).

36 Pregnancy: Cairo 1357/1938, 193–202; relation husband and wife: Cairo 1357/1938, 216–217. Al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* does contain a section on weak sexual intercourse (OR 1250 f. 270^a).

37 Cairo 1357/1938, 176; Paris BNF Arabe 7281, chapter 135, ff. 151^{a–b}. 'She will be again like she was as a virgin' (*fa-innamā tarjī'u kamā kānat bikran*) it says in Paris BNF Arabe 7281 f. 151^a. Cf. Sara Verskin, *Barren Women. Religion and Medicine in the Medieval Middle East* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 171, who quotes another printed edition of al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* which treats the topic in chapter 136 no. 484. (I would like to thank Shireen Hamza for pointing me to this reference). For the practice of tightening the vagina to ensure female orgasm and thereby fertilization, see Pernilla Myrne, *Female Sexuality in the Early Medieval Islamic World* (London etc.: I.B. Tauris, 2020), 34–39, esp. 36 and 39; 50.

with lines), and Solomon's seals which show a direct connection to the magical corpus ascribed to al-Būnī.³⁸ Similarly, al-Suyūṭī often ascribes the cause of ailments and diseases to the negative influence of demons, black magic or the evil eye, whereas al-Ṣanawbarī's text limits such analysis to the occasional explanation that a specific affliction, such as excessive anger, is caused by Satan.³⁹ A section at the end of al-Suyūṭī's text contains instructions on what amulets and other magical methods can be applied to deal with problems that someone might face in daily life. There is, for example, a description of a method that can be used to prove a theft and to know who has done the stealing.⁴⁰ A way to find out whether someone has drunk alcohol is also available.⁴¹ The book offers methods to deal with bad memory and a lack of understanding.⁴² There are instructions on how to be successful during a hunt for birds and fish, and ways to avoid the bites of insects and snakes or to ward off wild boars and locusts.⁴³ This final section contains a description of 'an amazing amulet that protects against any jinn or demon' and ways to protect against *al-tābi'a*, the female demon who accompanies women.⁴⁴

Another element that is added to the end of al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* are instructions on how to produce certain substances that are used in magical recipes, such as red and black ink, yellow and black kohl, verdigris, soap and ammonia, but also on how to extract gold and other minerals.⁴⁵

Al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*, on the other hand, ends with 'four basic qualities' (*hādhihi al-arba' al-ṣifāt al-uṣūliyya*), derived from this and other medical books, which are useful against diseases caused by the four humours.⁴⁶ This part is missing from al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma*. Another element that seems to have been lost in the transition to al-Suyūṭī's version are the details of internal references. Whereas al-Ṣanawbarī offers precise pointers to additional discussions ('which we will mention in the second chapter on medicaments'),⁴⁷ the references in al-Suyūṭī are more general ('which we will discuss').⁴⁸ Apart from these minor omissions, al-Ṣanawbarī's text is present in its entirety in

38 Sabine Dorpsmüller, *Religiöse Magie im „Buch der probaten Mittel“: Analyse, kritische Edition, und Übersetzung des Kitāb al-Muğarrabāt von Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf as-Sanūsī (gest. um 895/1490)* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2005), 37–38.

39 See below the discussion on the treatment of worry and anxiety.

40 Cairo 1357/1938, 220.

41 Cairo 1357/1938, 283.

42 Cairo 1357/1938, 271.

43 Cairo 1357/1938, 212–216; 254.

44 Cairo 1357/1938, 243–248; 233.

45 Cairo 1357/1938, 257–288.

46 OR 1250 f. 278^a–278^b; Vollers 758 f. 70^a–72.

47 *Wa-nadhkuruhu fī al-bāb al-thānī fī al-adwīya in shā'a allāh* (OR 1250 f. 247^a).

48 *Wa-sanadhkuruhu in shā'a allāh* (Cairo 1357/1938, 6).

al-Suyūṭī's *Rahma*. Certain sections are, however, moved to a different location in the text—for example, the discussion on cupping (*ḥijāma*), which occurs in al-Ṣanawbarī at the end of the section on laxatives, but appears much later in al-Suyūṭī, after the discussion of afflictions of coughing.⁴⁹ In al-Suyūṭī's *Rahma* the discussion on the application of kohl is included in the section on eye diseases, while al-Ṣanawbarī lists it under the different foodstuffs.⁵⁰ The names of some substances systematically differ between the two texts. Where al-Ṣanawbarī mentions garden cress seeds as *ḥabb al-rashād* (Lt. *Lepidium sativum*) for example, al-Suyūṭī has Indian cress (Lt. *nasturtium indicum*) or *al-thuffā*.⁵¹

The *Rahma* transmitted on the authority of al-Suyūṭī used al-Ṣanawbarī as a base text, adding supplementary pharmacological, medical and magical information. This was an active rewriting process whereby the sections of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Rahma* were ordered differently and the text's character turned from a basic medical text into one characterised by magical theories and magic in an Islamic context.⁵² Whether the well-known scholar al-Suyūṭī should be credited with this re-orientation remains difficult to decide.⁵³ The famous and extremely prolific scholar al-Suyūṭī who produced plenty of works in the field of prophetic medicine and magic was in any case a likely candidate. The fact that the two authors' names are rather similar might have contributed to the confusion. Besides their nisbas, their first names—in some manuscripts al-Ṣanawbarī's is given as Jamāl al-Dīn which is very similar to al-Suyūṭī's first name, Jalāl al-Dīn—show close similarity. The addition of amulets and

49 OR 1250 f. 254^b–255^b; Cairo 1357/1938, 128–129.

50 OR 1250 f. 261^a; Cairo 1357/1938, 50–51.

51 *ḥabb al-rashād*: OR 1250 f. 252^b; Vollers 758 f. 20^a; BNF 7027 f. 7^a; Welcome MS Arabic 444 f. 3^b (top); Bethesda, Maryland: National Library of Medicine MS A 29 f. 6^b; *al-thuffā*: Cairo 1357/1938, 13; Cairo: Dār Iḥyā', 12; Cairo: Maktabat Jumhūriyyat Miṣr, 15; Cairo 1345/1927, 12; BNF 7281 f. 9^b (but the word is written شَقَاء with one dot over the *qāf* as is common in Maghribī script) *ḥabb al-rashād* appears in the instructions, however, in BNF 7281 f. 10a. Similarly, black and yellow myrobalan are called *al-ihlilaj al-aswad* and *al-ihlilaj al-asfar* in al-Ṣanawbarī's text (OR 1250 f. 254^a where the word is written الهليلج الأصفر and الهليلج الأسود), but *al-ihlilaj al-Kābulī* in al-Suyūṭī's version (Cairo 1357/1938, 15).

52 For this move from *ṭibb* (medicine) to *ḥikma* (occult sciences), see also Dorpsmüller, *Religiöse Magie*, 37–38. Matthew Melvin-Koushki described how occultism became an integral and highly valued element of scientific activity throughout the Islamic world flourishing especially from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards (see his articles: "In Defence of Geomancy: Šaraf al-Dīn Yazdī Rebutts Ibn Ḥaldūn's Critique of the Occult Sciences," *Arabica* 64 [2017]: 357; "Science," 311). Cf. Fazlur Rahman, *Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition: Change and Identity* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) and Karmi, *Al-Tibb al-Nabawi* on the development of prophetic medicine texts.

53 It might be helpful to pursue whether some of the additions in al-Suyūṭī's *Rahma* can be traced to other works by this author.

magical rituals to the *Raḥma*, fits the context of Mamluk Cairo which from the late eighth/fourteenth century witnessed a ‘renaissance of occultism.’⁵⁴ A textual connection might be pointed at as well. Al-Suyūṭī was clearly well aware of erotic and medical manuals that contain elaborate discussions on subjects related to sexuality, including vaginal tightening, which he made use of in some of his other works.⁵⁵ Conversely, other reworkings of the *Raḥma* are similarly characterised by the addition of topics related to sexuality, making it possible that such elaborations were added by some other author disguising as al-Suyūṭī.⁵⁶

As stated above, the manuscripts containing al-Suyūṭī’s version of *Raḥma* give the author’s name in the introduction. There are at least as many versions of al-Ṣanawbarī’s as al-Suyūṭī’s *Raḥma* extant in manuscript collections around the world.⁵⁷ The magical version of the *Raḥma* with al-Suyūṭī’s authorship is definitely the more popular one in the Arabic-speaking world today considering the large number of cheap and simple versions of the text that circulate in printed form.⁵⁸ The process whereby texts are attributed to well-known authors is of course well-known and is discussed in this volume by Jean-Charles Coulon in the framework of his analysis of the corpus of texts ascribed to the thirteenth-century scholar al-Būnī.

3 An Expanding Repository of Knowledge

This first process of active alteration of the *Raḥma* was the rewriting undertaken by (Ps.) al-Suyūṭī as just discussed. The second process or reworking, however, comes from the users of each recension. Manuscripts of al-Ṣanawbarī’s and al-Suyūṭī’s *Raḥma* and the printed editions that are based on them show minor differences in the wording and composition, with additional ingre-

54 Melvin-Koushki, “Defence,” 357, 369; Melvin-Koushki, “Science,” 311–312. The flourishing of occultism in Mamluk Cairo lead to increased activity and valorisation of disciplines like alchemy and letterism which are both well represented in (ps) al-Suyūṭī’s *Raḥma* (Cf. Melvin-Koushki, “Science,” 313; 314).

55 Pernilla Myrme, ‘Women and Men in al-Suyūṭī’s Guides to Sex and Marriage,’ *Mamlūk Studies Review* 21 (2018): 47–67.

56 As discussed above, al-Azraqī’s reworking of the *Raḥma* is also characterised by the addition of the treatment of topics related to sexuality.

57 Hence perhaps Brockelmann’s insistence on giving preference to al-Ṣanawbarī as the author of this text.

58 The Leiden University Library has five printed editions of al-Suyūṭī’s *Raḥma* but none of al-Ṣanawbarī’s. In general less of the latter text in print are mentioned in library catalogues.

dients for recipes and medicines or alternative treatments left out. This lack of uniformity in the textual practice is a characteristic of what has been called the ‘fluid tradition’ of utilitarian texts.⁵⁹ The changes that resulted from this second process of transformation were never as invasive as those that resulted from a thorough-going recension by an author who had a specific goal in mind. Readers, copyists and users, however, constantly engaged in an active and interventionist way with these texts when they applied them to new practical uses. They added insights and comments on the effectiveness of certain products and recipes and included additional treatments and products in the margins of the text and to the beginning and end of the work. Some of these annotations might have been taken from works that bore the same title, but were in fact different textual recensions. That is to say, textual elements from al-Suyūṭī’s *Raḥma* seem to have infiltrated al-Ṣanawbarī’s on several occasions, showing textual exchanges across the *Raḥma* corpus. These comments could be incorporated into the body of the text by subsequent copyists and scribes, making for a multitude of textual variations in two nevertheless clearly distinguishable documented *Raḥma* traditions.⁶⁰ This process of adjusting a manuscript for or by the users that employ it can also be observed in the contributions to this volume by Yasmin al-Saleh and Gideon Bohak.⁶¹ Al-Saleh shows how a magical scroll was decorated with military symbols for the Mamluk soldier who ordered its production. The magical texts preserved in the Geniza of the Cairene Ben Ezra synagogue show an interplay of Hebrew and Arabic scripts representing multiple magical traditions and examples in a composite protective text aiming to ‘cover all bases.’ Traditions and practices were easily borrowed across linguistic and cultural boundaries and simply added to existing texts to reinforce the protective power.

59 Paolo Trovato, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lachmann’s Method. A Non-Standard Handbook of Genealogical Textual Criticism in the Age of Post-Structuralism, Cladistics, and Copy-Text* (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it, 2014), 155–160, cited by Lucia Raggetti, *ʿIsā ibn ʿAlī’s Book on the Useful Properties of Animal Parts. Edition, Translation and Study of a Fluid Tradition* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), xxvi.

60 Due to collation processes, whereby different manuscripts of the same text were compared, when copying the text such additions could similarly be ignored—as they would occur in only one version of the manuscript. Depending on the purpose of the copy made and who did so, whether for practical use by a practitioner, doctor or a professional copyist, the decision would be made to include or ignore additions of this kind to the text.

61 Yasmine al-Saleh, “A Talismanic Scroll: Language, Illumination, and Diagrams,” in this volume.; Gideon Bohak, “Specimens of Judaeo-Arabic and Arabic Magical Texts from the Cairo Genizah,” in this volume.

Leiden manuscript OR 1250 of the Leiden Oriental Manuscript Collection contains several works of (prophetic) medicine.⁶² The last text included is the *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma*, the title of which appears together with the name of the author al-Ṣanawbarī (al-Ṣuburī) written in red ink on folio 243^a (fig. 3.1).⁶³ Below it an instruction for the production of an amulet to counter stress and anxiety is added in black ink. It says: ‘On the authority of the prophet, may God bless and grant him salvation. He said: whoever is afflicted by anxiety, grief, stress, misfortune or poverty, let him write on a piece of paper “In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. From the humble slave to the sublime master, Lord, injury has befallen me and you are the most merciful, so take away from me my worry and remove from me my stress.” Then throw the paper in running water.’⁶⁴ These words giving instructions about the wording of the amulet and what to do with it have clearly been added by a later reader of the text. The hand of this note differs from that of the main text but shows similarities to some marginal notes that appear throughout the text, for example on folios 260^b, 268^a and b, 269 a and b, and 270^a. All these additional writings might be written by the same person who also appended some further commentary at the end of the book (see below). The note on the title page offering instructions on how to make an amulet is a wonderful example of the dynamic aspect of a text like the *Raḥma*.⁶⁵

As we have seen, al-Ṣanawbarī’s *Raḥma* does not contain instructions on amulets and talismans, but the reworked *Raḥma* by al-Suyūṭī does. In fact al-Ṣanawbarī’s text offers an alternative non-talismanic but obviously related treatment to deal with ‘excessive anger (*ghayṣ*) and fury (*ghaḍab*),’ closely connected to the worries and stress the amulet promises to ameliorate (fig. 3.2). Because, al-Ṣanawbarī writes, such great anger is caused by Satan who

62 Witkam, *Inventory*, 2, 92.

63 *Kitāb al-raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma ta’līf al-faqīr ilā allāh ta’ālā Muḥammad al-Mahdawī ibn ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ṣuburī laṭṭafa allāh bihi āmin wa-jamī’ al-muslimīn āmin āmin āmin* (OR 1250 f. 243^a). An *alif* is written erroneously between *allāh* and *bihi* (I should like to thank Geert Jan van Gelder for suggesting this reading).

64 عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال من أصابه هم أو شدة أو بلاء أو فقر فيكتب على قرطاس بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم من العبد الذليل الى المولى الجليل رب إني مسني الضر وأنت أرحم الراحمين واكشف عني همي وفرج عني غمي ثم تلقي القرطاس على الماء الجاري.

65 Deborah Schlein examined the function of paratextual notes in manuscripts of one particular medical text and its commentaries to examine its use and reception (*Medicine Without Borders: Ṭibb and the Asbāb Tradition in Mughal and Colonial India* [PhD diss., Princeton University, 2019]). I would like to thank Shireen Hamza for making me aware of this work. I was not able to access the unpublished dissertation for the purpose of this publication.).

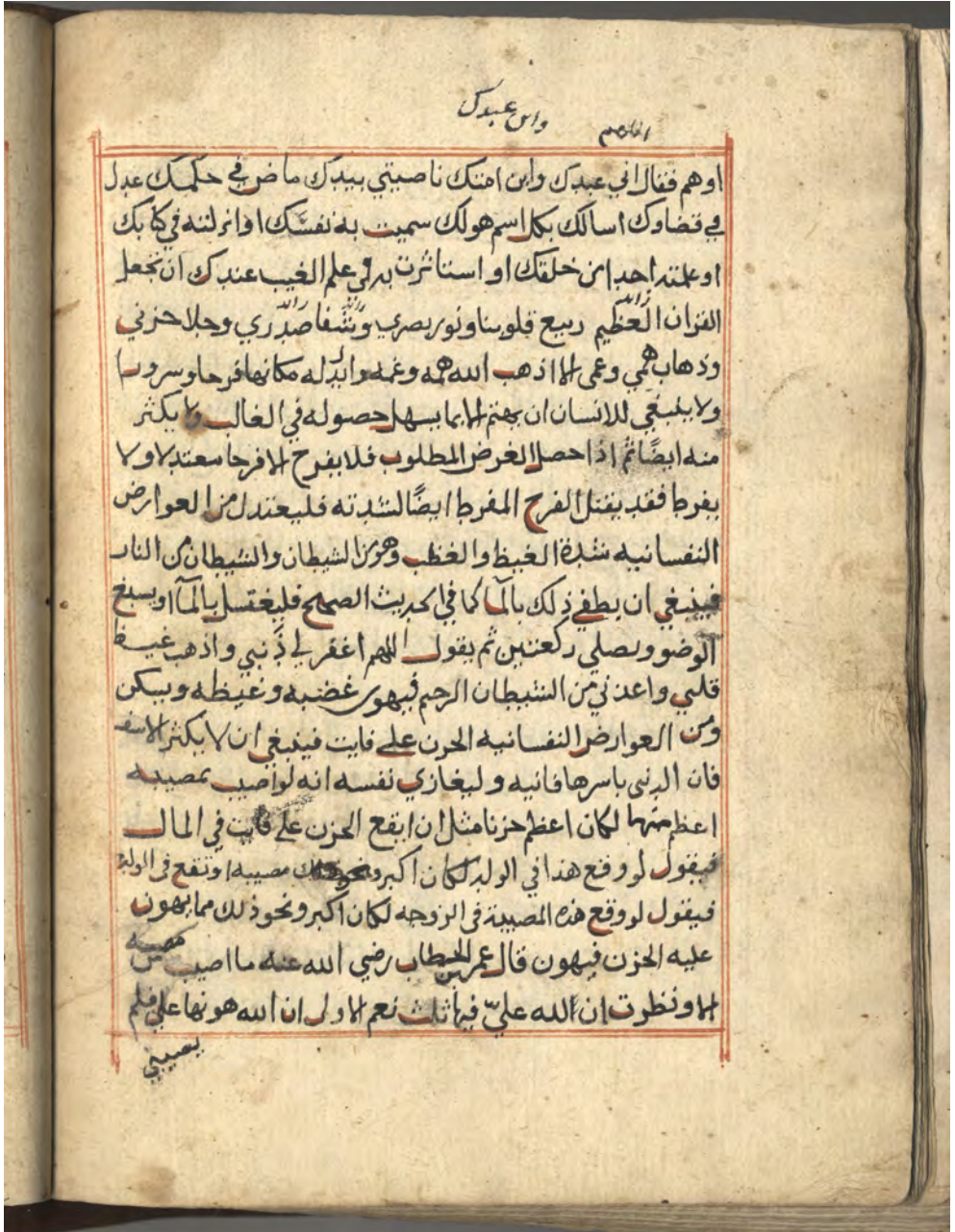


FIGURE 3.2 OR 1250 f. 260^b Instruction from al-Šanawbarī's *Kitāb al-Raḥma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* on the prayer and washings to perform to handle excessive anger © Leiden University Library

originates in fire, the most appropriate substance with which to extinguish (*yafʿaʿu*) the power that causes this psychological disturbance is water. Al-Ṣanawbarī quotes a hadith that recommends the following actions in this situation: ‘Wash yourself in water, perform the ablution (*wuḍūʿ*) and pray two *rakʿas*. Then say: “God, forgive me my sins and remove the anger from my heart and protect me from Satan, o Merciful!” This will make the anger and fury disappear.’⁶⁶ This passage is maintained in al-Suyūṭī’s reworked *Raḥma*.⁶⁷ The purpose of the amulet described on the title page of the Leiden manuscript and the prayer and actions recommended in the main part of the text are the same: asking God to interfere and remove the power that afflicts the person issuing the prayer/amulet. The means by which it is done, an amulet and prayer respectively, is, however, crucially different and this difference is directly connected to the premise of the corresponding work.

Texts such as the *Raḥma* were used by practising healers or (prospective) patients. Manuscripts and printed versions of al-Ṣanawbarī’s and al-Suyūṭī’s text display visual markers that facilitate the text’s navigation for quick reference. Different sections are easily recognisable in the manuscripts and printed editions through the use of rubrics, supra-linear strokes, bold, elongated or large letter shapes, decorations, the repetition of the topic in the margin or punctuation marks, such as brackets.⁶⁸ The manuscripts of the *Raḥma* show the typical traces of collation with corrections and additions added in the margins based on comparisons with other versions of the same text and using the well-known system of signs to indicate this. These manuscripts, however, also display another kind of comment. While applying the treatments prescribed in *Raḥma*, readers and users of the work added their own observations, additional information or alternative methods, which could include magical recipes and talismanic devices such as the one added to the title page of al-Ṣanawbarī’s *Raḥma* manuscript preserved at Leiden. After all, these kind of simple medical texts aimed at practical applications were closely linked to magical practice. Other manuscripts of this text also show signs of such usage. Sometimes the addition is small and concerns simply an additional ingredient to be supplemented to a recipe or an explanation or alternative description

66 OR 1250 f. 260^b. At the top of this page a more elaborate version of the prayer is quoted but without the reference to washing with water to extinguish the anger’s heat.

67 Cairo 1357/1938, 25.

68 In manuscripts rubrication (e.g. OR 1250; BNF 7027), supra-linear strokes (e.g. Vollers 758; BSB Cod. arab. 835), decorative chapter divisions (e.g. BNF 7281) or elongated letter shapes (e.g. BNF 7027) are used to find the title in the text or the title of a section is written in the margin (e.g. BNF 7027 f. 21^b; Vollers 758 folios 64^b and 68^a). In printed versions use is made of chapter headings, bold and larger writing and brackets.



FIGURE 3.3 Bethesda, Maryland: National Library of Medicine MS A 29 f. 6^a. Page from al-Shanawbari's *Kitāb al-Rahma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma* showing the many additions made by readers and users
 COURTESY OF THE U.S. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

of an affliction.⁶⁹ In other cases it concerns more substantial interventions. A striking manuscript of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* is preserved in the United States' National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.⁷⁰ Between its 20 folios a number of extra pages have been placed with notes in Arabic and Persian offering additional recipes and treatments for the ailments discussed in the text.⁷¹ The margins of the pages of the *Raḥma* are, moreover, covered in notes and additions (fig. 3.3). Some of these additions concern magical treatments of the afflictions listed in the text, although the al-Būnī-inspired drawings so common in al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* are absent. As was common, supplementary notes triggered by the contents of the book were added at the end. On folios 20^a and b the Bethesda manuscript of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* contains an elaborate magical square and talismanic phrases and designs. Similarly, the last pages of the Leiden manuscript contain citations and poems related to psychological conditions, which are not known from versions of al-Ṣanawbarī's or al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma*.⁷²

As such manuscripts were subsequently copied, the collation notes and other corrections, as well as the additional recipes that appeared in the margins, could be incorporated in the main text, adding to the length of the text.⁷³ This phenomenon can be illustrated with a copy of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* that was produced in 1262/1846. It is currently kept in the University Library of Leipzig under inventory number Vollers 758. In its discussion of yellow and black myrobalan the Leipzig manuscript lists several additional prophetic hadiths related to this product and a more extensive discussion in the main text of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*, which are lacking from other manuscripts.⁷⁴ Similarly, the Leipzig manuscript contains additional applications of and information about garlic (*thūm*) integrated into the main text.⁷⁵ These interpolations

69 E.g. BNF 7027 f. 7^a; f. 11^a; f. 13^a.

70 National Library of Medicine MS A 29.

71 Between folios 12 and 13, between folios 13 and 14, where a small sheet with notes in Persian on therapy for stomach ache is added, between folios 16 and 17 with two therapeutic notes on melancholia and ulcers and between folios 18 and 19 with notes on poisonous insect and scorpion bites. Cf. www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/arabic/prophetic_med5.html.

72 OR 1250 f. 249^a: *ليس الفتى من ضاق بالصبر صدره ولكنه من ضاق عن صدره الصبر* which is quoted in Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār's *Tadhkirat al-awliyā'. Tarjamat ithnayn wa-tis'in waliyan min awliyā' allāh ṣāliḥin*, ed. 'Aṣim Ibrāhīm al-Kayyālī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shādhili Darqāwī (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyya, 2010), 468. The editor adds a note that the poet of this line is not known. *فان صافا صديقك من تعادى ويفرح حين ترشقك السهام فذلك هو العدو بغير حرام فان صافا صديقك من تعادى ويفرح حين ترشقك السهام فذلك هو العدو بغير حرام* is a saying attributed to the lawyer al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820).

73 See above, no. 57.

74 Vollers 758 f. 23^a–23^b vs OR 1250 f. 254^a.

75 Vollers 758 f. 18^a vs OR 1250 f. 251^a.

of elements that are lacking from other manuscript versions once started off as marginal notes left by readers and users of the text.

Indeed, although two distinct textual recensions of the *Raḥma* exist, one following the text ascribed to al-Ṣanawbarī, the other to al-Suyūṭī, many variations occur within each recension. Nevertheless, some patterns are discernible that point to threads in the transmission history. A short display of this in relation to the section on legumes and grains illustrates this well. Both al-Ṣanawbarī and al-Suyūṭī's versions generally include a discussion of the characteristics and application of cotton seeds in the second chapter on the essence of substances. Some striking differences nevertheless occur. Al-Suyūṭī's version speaks of cotton seeds (*ḥabb al-quṭn*), while al-Ṣanawbarī's text has simply *quṭn*. One manuscript of al-Ṣanawbarī lacks the discussion entirely.⁷⁶ Several others have a presentation on 'sour cheese' (*aqiṭ*) instead.⁷⁷ As for the discussion on the working of cotton seeds, al-Suyūṭī's text as well as some of al-Ṣanawbarī's mentions that boiling the cotton seeds in 'milk and butter' gives them a 'moist hot' (*ḥārr raṭb*) character, which loosens up the chest, veins, limbs and joints.⁷⁸ The manuscript kept in Leiden of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* stipulates that the boiling should be done in 'milk and sugar' in order to have this effect.⁷⁹ Several other versions of the text assign the same characteristics of cotton seeds boiled in milk and butter/sugar to 'sour cheese' (*aqiṭ*).⁸⁰ Amongst the foodstuffs following the section on cotton, another striking difference occurs. In al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* a discussion on almonds is directly followed by the treatment of sesame seeds. Al-Suyūṭī's versions do not mention sesame seeds, but do list walnuts (although one of the versions I looked at did not have it), which are absent from al-Ṣanawbarī's text.⁸¹ This chapter only made use of a handful of manuscripts to point out the dynamic aspect of utilitarian texts. Only a more systematic and extensive comparison of the different versions will

76 BNF 7027 f. 4^a–4^b moves from French beans (*al-lūbiyā'*) directly to broad beans (*al-bāqilā'*) while other versions of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* include a discussion on cotton or sour cheese in between these two legumes.

77 Vollers 758 f. 12^a.

78 *Fa-idhā taṭbukhū bi-l-laban wa-l-samn šāra ḥārran raṭban yulayyinu al-ṣadr wa-l-ʿurūq wa-l-a'ḍā' wa-l-mafāṣil* (al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*: BSB Cod. arab. 835 f. 59^a; Cairo 1357/1938, 9; Cairo 1345/1927, 8; Cairo: Dār Iḥyā', 8; Cairo: Maktabat Jumhūriyyat Miṣr, 10). BNF 7281 contains the *Raḥma* by al-Suyūṭī which discusses the working of cotton seeds boiled with milk and butter on f. 7^a.

79 OR 1250 f. 249^a.

80 'Sour cheese is moist and hot. It loosens the chest, veins, limbs and joints.' (*al-aqiṭ ḥārr raṭb yulayyinu al-ṣadr wa-l-ʿurūq wa-l-a'ḍā' wa-l-mafāṣil*): Vollers 758 f. 12^a; London Welcome MS Arabic 444 all three undated; Bethesda, Maryland MS A 29.

81 Cairo: Dār al-Jumhūriyya, 10 does not list walnuts (*al-jawz*).

allow us to trace the dynamics in the textual traditions more precisely. Suffice it to observe here the great diversity of texts in circulation, which was a direct result of their practical and applicable nature. This does not mean obviously that the texts were not also subject to the general effects of the copyist trade.

4 Conclusion

Kitāb al-rahma fī al-ṭibb wa-l-ḥikma circulates in two distinct but closely related recensions. The manuscripts and printed editions that are based on the handwritten works also show minor variations within each recension. What do these textual versions tell about the social embeddedness of protective and healing practices?

In the early fifteenth century the Yemeni doctor and religious scholar al-Ṣanawbarī composed a concise, practical medical guide combining classical humorology, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, pharmacological and dietary analyses of food and other essences, and medical experience. Shortly after that the text was reworked, seemingly by the famous Egyptian polymath al-Suyūṭī to include more prophetic hadiths and magical treatments, using amulets for medical conditions but also covering socio-economic concerns. Information on the fabrication of certain substances, especially those needed in the production of talismans and other magical as well as alchemical rituals, was added.

The text of the *Rahma* shows the emphasis on its practical applications. Many of the recipes and other treatments are closed off by the remark that 'it was tried and found to be effective (*mujarrab*)'. This emphasis on the experimental context of the work connects to the manuscript tradition of the text. Many of the manuscripts of the *Rahma* show traces of users and readers adding their own observations to the information offered. In this sense the *Rahma* fits in with other kinds of utilitarian texts, especially those in the realm of legal, pharmacological, medical and magical handbooks. Subsequent copies of such texts could incorporate marginal notes, as well as remarks added to the end or beginning of the work, into the main text, producing a fluid textual tradition that nevertheless allows for an identification of different text recensions.

This chapter does not aim to present an exhaustive study of the text of the *Rahma*. Rather, its textual and manuscript tradition as presented in a handful of manuscripts was used to show that these kinds of utilitarian texts were never complete or 'closed'. Active reworkings, but especially the additions in the form of paratext in the margins, beginning and at the end of the texts, which sometimes made their way into the recensions in subsequent copies, show that they were socially embedded. It was the living and dynamic environment in which

these texts circulated that continuously shaped and reshaped them. This phenomenon has already been observed in Arabic pharmaceutical and medical treatises.⁸² Three examples of interventions in the *Raḥma*'s text throughout its lifetime show that this did not happen only as a result of the addition of supplementary insights from *ṭibb* (medicine), but also in response to the demand for and interest in *ḥikma* (occult sciences) in combatting and dealing with concerns of health. (Ps.) al-Suyūṭī's reworking of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma*, the instruction of how to take away one's worries with a magical ritual that was added to the title page of al-Ṣanawbarī's *Raḥma* preserved at Leiden, and the popularity of al-Suyūṭī's *Raḥma* recension in the print age, all point to the influence that clients, patients, users and practitioners had on the text. Like the person expressing his concerns about his loss of voice in the eleventh-century letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter, people in need of medical help to heal and protection against physical ailments turned to multiple traditions and treatments. In his search for a solution to the problem with his voice, the letter-writer would be driven to demand comparable treatment involving *ṭibb* and *ḥikma*. It is very exciting to be able to trace the social operation of protective and healing practices in the past via the traces in manuscripts and other textual sources as examined in this chapter.

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82 See notably the work of Sabine Dorpsmüller, Lucia Raggetti and Deborah Schlein.

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