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## SYMPOSIUM ON FAITH AND HISTORY IN THE ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHIC TRADITION<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

The eighteenth fall meeting of the Conference on Faith and History, which took place November 5–7, 1992 on the verdant campus of Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, took up aspects of the general theme “Christianity and the Clash of Cultures.” A provocative session called “Faith and History in the Islamic Historiographic Tradition,” organized by Professor James E. Lindsay of Westmont College, provided the first occasion in memory in which the results of primary research in Middle Eastern Islamic historiography were featured at a meeting of the Conference on Faith and History. Two of the papers presented at that session appear here in revised form.

Shawkat M. Toorawa is a doctoral candidate in history and, at the time of the Santa Barbara conference, lecturer in Arabic at the University of Pennsylvania where he studied with Roger Allen, George Makdisi and Edward Peters. He is preparing a dissertation on Ibn Abī Tāhir Fayfūr, a ninth-century Baghdad bookman. In his paper, Toorawa analyzed data culled from the biographical compilation of Ibn Abī Usaybī‘ah (1194–1270), the *‘Uyūn al-Arabī fi Tārikāt al-‘Alliā‘*, concerning non-Muslim physicians in thirteenth-century Iraq. My paper, published here under a slightly different title, explored the fascination with stories of declining empires in Western historiography and Ottoman Turkish mirrors for princes.

The occasional discomfort of scholars whose work appears removed from the pressing reality of events in which Christianity and cultures clash was perhaps more acutely felt during this session than others at the meeting. When Shawkat M. Toorawa drew attention to the irony of the conference’s theme, remarking at the beginning of his presentation “It is particularly difficult to write of interfaith tolerance when one is subject to reports of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and of Bosnian, read Muslim, concentration camps,” the sense of abstraction became unsettling.

<sup>1</sup>The transcription system for Arabic script followed is that of *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Illustrations reprinted from *Punch* (Fig. 1), and Bernard Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961; reprint 1965) (Figs. 2–4).

THE DHIMMĪ IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC  
SOCIETY: Non-Muslim Physicians of Iraq in  
Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah's *Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabakāt  
al-aṭibbā'*

By Shawkat M. Toorawa, University of Pennsylvania

It is particularly difficult to write of interfaith tolerance when is subject to reports of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and of Bosnian, read Muslim, concentration camps. On the other hand, perhaps it is a measure of our ability to escape to look back to a time and place when actions such as these would not be tolerated.

This brief investigation of the status of the non-Muslim physician in medieval Islamic society,<sup>1</sup> drawn from the thirteenth-century biographical dictionary *Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabakāt al-aṭibbā'* [The Sources of Information on the Classification of Physicians] of Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah,<sup>2</sup> will illustrate how absolutely central the non-Muslim physician was in Islamic society. This person was not a marginalized, minority participant in a repressive, majority regime but rather integral to Muslim society.

Even though much work remains to be done on the history and evolution of Islamic medicine—the editing and re-editing of manuscript materials, in particular—there is nonetheless a vast body of literature on the subject. See the following works for excellent discussions and bibliographical data: *Medieval Islamic Medicine: Ibn Kitāb's Treatise "On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt,"* tr. M. W. Dols, Arabic text ed. A. S. Gamal (Berkeley, 1984); S. K. Hamarneh, *Health Sciences in Early Islam: Collected Papers*, I-II, ed. M. K. Ancees (San Antonio, 1983-84); M. Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1978); R. Y. Eibied, *Bibliography of Medieval Arabic and Jewish Medicine and Allied Sciences* (London, 1971). For articles in one place on various aspects of Islamic medicine, see *Beiträge zur Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Medizin*, I-VII, ed. F. Sezgin et al. (Frankfurt, 1987-91). A number of M. Meyerhoff's articles are collected in *Studies in Medieval Arabic Medicine: Theory and Practice*, ed. P. Johnstone (London, 1984). The collected works of E. Wiedemann, most of which appeared in *Sitzungsberichte der physikalisch-medizinischen Societät, Erlangen*, have also been reprinted as *Collectanea: Aufsätze zur arabischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, I-II (Hildesheim and New York, 1970). For articles dealing with the medical profession in Islam, see F. Rosenthal, "The Physician in Medieval Muslim Society," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 52 (1978), 475-91, and F. R. Hau, "Die Bildung des Arztes im islamischen Mittelalter," *Clio Medica* 13 (1978): 95-123, 175-200, and 14 (1979), 7-25.

<sup>2</sup>Beirut, 1965. See also *Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabakāt al-aṭibbā'*, I-II, ed. A. Müller (Cairo-Königsberg, 1882-84).

Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah was a physician and bibliographer who belonged to a family of physicians.<sup>3</sup> He was born after 1194, studied under the principal teachers of his time, and practiced medicine in the Nūr Hospital in Damascus and in the Nāṣirī Hospital in Cairo.<sup>4</sup> He then entered the service of a prince of Sarkhad in Syria. He died there in 1270. Although in many parts it relies on the works of Ibn Juljul (d. 994), and in other parts is idiosyncratic, excluding, for instance, Ibn Naḥs (d. 1288), Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah's contemporary who became chief physician of Egypt, the *Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabakāt al-aṭibbā'* (hereafter, *Ṭabakāt*), is of "inestimable value for the history of Arabic science."<sup>5</sup>

The last six of the *Ṭabakāt*'s fifteen chapters catalog physicians from six regions: Iraq, the Arabian peninsula and Diyār Bakr, Persia, India; North Africa and Spain; Egypt; and Syria. This article shall concentrate on chapter 10: "The Classes of Physicians of Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula and Diyār Bakr." Many scholars and students of Muslim-non-Muslim relations focus on Egypt, but this article will focus on an area where the large immigrant Jewish community and the larger resident Christian (mainly Coptic) communities do not distort one's view of these relations.<sup>6</sup>

A reading of chapter 10 reveals that Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah is generous in his description of non-Muslim physicians and often laudatory and deferential. This holds true throughout his work. He accepts as a matter of course that differences exist between Muslims and non-Muslims but he makes few qualitative distinctions between them. This suggests that the rules so strictly enjoined by the

<sup>3</sup>The *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, (Leiden, 1954)—in progress (hereafter *EI*), s.v. "Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'a," IV, 693-94 and the references cited there. For a discussion of the sources and secondary works available for a study of non-Muslims in Islam and Islamic society see "Non-Muslim Participants in Islamic Society," chapter 11 of comprehensive work of R. S. Humphreys *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1991), 255-83.

<sup>4</sup>On hospitals, see "Bimaristān," in *IE* III, 1222-26; chapter 3 of *Ibn Junayr: Treatise to Saḥib Ad-Dīn on the Rest of the Art of Medicine*, ed. and tr. H. Fāhrndrich (Wiesbaden, 1983); M. Levey, "Medieval Muslim Hospitals: Administration and Procedures," in *Journal of the Albert Einstein Medical Center* 10 (1962): 120-27; A. Issa Bey (A. 'Asā), *Histoire des bimaristans (hospitiaux) à l'époque islamique* (Cairo, 1928; rev. Arabic ed., 1939), and note 40 below.

<sup>5</sup>*IE* IV, 693. Regrettably, the *Ṭabakāt* has yet to be translated into English, though extracts have been translated into French and German. For the French, see B. R. Sanguinetti, "Extraits de l'ouvrage arabe d'Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah, sur l'Histoire des Médecins, traduction française, accompagnée de notes," in *Journal asiatique*, Vème série, t. III (1854): 230-91, IV (1854): 177-213, V (1855): 410-69, VI (1855): 129-90, VII (1856): 175-96, and VIII (1856): 316-53. The French historian of Arab medicine, L. Leclerc, has used Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah extensively in his *Histoire de la médecine arabe: exposé complet des traditions du Grec*, I-II (Paris, 1876). For extracts in German, see H. Waly's thesis in *Drei Kapitel aus der Arztgeschichte des Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah* (Berlin, 1910). For an English translation of passages from one notice, see Toorawa "Selections from the Autograph Notes of 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baḥrādī (d. 1231)," in *Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. D. Reynolds et al. (forthcoming). For Ibn Juljul and Ibn Naḥs, see *IE* III, 755-56 and 897-98 respectively.

<sup>6</sup>But see tables, where the numbers of Muslim and non-Muslim physicians mentioned by Ibn Abī Uṣaybī'ah for Egypt and Syria are tabulated. Chapter 10, at 127 pages, is second in length only to the section on Syria, which runs 165 pages.

religious establishment, so legislatively supported by scripture, and quintessentially represented by Muhammad's exemplary precedent, were ignored.

### DHIMMAH LEGISLATION

Relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were governed by *dhimmi* legislation. After the explanation of the term *dhimmi*, a contrast of the actual activities of *dhimmi* physicians follows with both the normative regulations of Islamic law, the *shar'ah*, and popular attitudes sometimes reflected by *hadith*, the record of the Prophet Muhammad's words, deeds and tacit approvals.

A *dhimmi* is a beneficiary of the *dhimmi*, a term that is "used to designate the sort of indefinitely renewed contract through which the Muslim community accords hospitality and protection to members of other revealed religions, on condition of their acknowledging the domination of Islam."<sup>7</sup> Although the term non-Muslim may be regarded as a synonym for *dhimmi*, this is, in fact, not strictly correct because non-Muslim does not contain the implicit connotation of *ahl al-kitab*, literally "people of the Book," that is, the adherents of a revealed religion. The revealed religions are taken by Muslim legislators to mean Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians (Magians), Samaritans and Sabaeans. The authorized (legalized) treatment of *dhimmi*s by Muslims and by the Muslim administration is based on passages in the Kur'an, on *hadith*-reports—that is the words, deeds and tacit approvals and disapprovals of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632)—and on the actions of the succeeding leaders of the *ummah*, (the Muslim community) for the most part (at least early on), the companions and intimates of the Prophet.<sup>8</sup>

The key Kur'anic text reads:  
Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Day of Reckoning, and those who do not forbid what Allah and his Messenger have forbidden, and those who do not believe in the true faith, from among the people of the book, until they pay the *dizyah* . . . (Repentance, 9:29)

The *hadith* "until" makes it quite clear that once the condition of *dizyah*, or poll-tax is met, the need for fighting becomes unnecessary. This policy of tolerance, conditional upon payment of the *dizyah* is, in one scholar's view, "natural, and indeed the only possible policy . . . a flexible attitude in the absence of which no regime of the conquerors would have been endured."<sup>9</sup> This is the case because of the numerical inferiority of the conquering Arabs. On the other hand, because of the inter-community relations in Medina during the Prophet's time and because

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of various encounters with the Arab Jews of Medina, *hadith*-reports such as the following one find their way into the hands of legislators:

You will fight the Jews to such a point that if one of them hides behind a rock, the rock will say: Servant of God, here is a Jew behind me! Kill him!<sup>10</sup>

But inasmuch as Jews and Christians are legal equals vis-à-vis *dhimmi* legislation, a contradiction exists, a contradiction that found further elaboration in the contrasting views of the political administration, on the one hand, and the *jurisconsults*, on the other. Often, doctrinaires from among the *jurisconsults*, drawing on *hadith*-reports like the one above, developed and called for a program, "which, if not one of persecution, [was] at least vexatious and repressive."<sup>11</sup> The administration sometimes had to pay lip-service to the *jurisconsults* and the judges by acceding to their pleas for a systematic persecution. Punishment of one sort or another was inflicted for reasons of political expediency and the *jurisconsults* and judges were pacified.

Public outbursts of anger against *dhimmi*s by the Muslim masses were usually triggered and fueled by the appointment of these non-Muslims to positions of pre-eminence in the Islamic polity. In the fourth chapter of his study on non-Muslim subject peoples, Tritton discusses the evils perpetrated by the Muslim masses on the Christian community. He mentions, for example, the destruction of fifty-nine churches and a greater number of monasteries during one particular uprising in Cairo in 1321. Interestingly enough, during that uprising the Jewish population was unmolested,  
so if a Christian wanted to go out of his house, he borrowed a yellow turban from a Jew and wore it to be safe from the mob.<sup>12</sup>

The fourteenth-century theologian and *jurisconsult* Ibn Kayyim al-Dawziyyah (d. 1350), in his treatise on the *dhimmi*s,<sup>13</sup> insists that the high positions in the Muslim financial administration ought to be in the hands of the Muslims themselves, not in those of potentially untrustworthy Christians or Jews. This fear of embezzlement, financial overthrow, or malevolence, is not uncommon and echoes the Kur'an:

O you who believe! do not take confidants outside yourselves! Such people spare nothing to ruin you; they yearn for you to suffer; hatred has already shown itself in their mouths and what their breasts conceal is worse yet. (People of 'Imran, 3:118)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Fatah, *Le statut légal*, 10.

<sup>11</sup>ER II, 227.

<sup>12</sup>Tritton, *The Caliphs, 75*, and P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London and New York, 1986), 8 (I am indebted to Douglas Howard for this reference). But see M. Perlmann, "Notes on the Position of Jewish Physicians in Medieval Muslim Society," in *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972), for state-endorsed popular agitation against Jewish and Christian physicians.

<sup>13</sup>Ibn Kayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkām ahl al-dhimmi*, ed. S. al-Sali (Damascus, 1961).

<sup>14</sup>*Af'Imran*: "yā ayyuhā al-hadhina āmanā hā tarūkūhū bīhānān min dīmikum hā yā'hanākum khubālah; waddū mā 'anitum; qad badatī al-baghdā'u min awwālihim; wa mā tukhifū sudūnahum akbārū."

<sup>8</sup>On the "Covenant of 'Umar," which outlined the duties and obligations of the *dhimmi*s, see A. S. Tritton, *The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of 'Umar*, (London, 1970, reprint), 5-17. On *dhimmi* legislation, see especially A. R. I. Doi, *Non-Muslims under Sharīah (Islamic) Law* (Lahore, 1961); A. Fattal, *Le statut légal des non-musulmans en pays d'Islam* (Beirut, 1958); and N. Edelby, "Essai sur l'autonomie législative et juridictionnelle des Chrétiens d'orient sous la domination musulmane de 633 à 1517," unpublished thesis, (Rome, 1950).

<sup>9</sup>"Dhimmi," in ER, II, 227.

Jews, too, were subject to periodic oppression, justified partly by the history of the Prophet Muhammad's relationship with the Jews of Yathrib (Medina).<sup>15</sup> Persecution of Jews in Islamic lands never reached the level it did in medieval Christian Europe. Dagobert had in 633 ordered all who did not profess the law of Jesus Christ to leave Frankish lands. More dramatically, in 1182 Philippe-Auguste (re)issued an edict of expulsion: all Jews were to leave France, and all their possessions were to be confiscated. In 1306 a new edict was issued by Philippe IV, the Fair. With Charles VI's edict of September 17, 1394, Jews were banished from the kingdom of France forever, which order was not repealed until September 28, 1791, some four hundred years later. England and Spain were to follow the French example: in 1290, Edward I expelled all Jews from his lands; on August 2nd, 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella expelled an estimated 120 thousand to 200 thousand Jews from Spain. Columbus sailed the very next day, August 3rd, carrying some deported Jews to the North African coast on his way to the Indies. In 1478 the Inquisition tribunal was founded, originally to punish those converted Muslims and Jews who were insincere in their Christian beliefs; it would not be abolished until 1834.

This sort of thing, the medieval historian of Muslim-non-Muslim relations can report, seldom took place in Islamic lands; notable exceptions are under the Almoravids (1056–1147) and Almohads (1143–1269) of North-West Africa and Spain, and under the lunatic Fātimid caliph al-Hākim (d. 1021) in Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Resentment stemmed typically from the fact that non-Muslims held public office and, by extension, were able to exercise power over Muslims. Peaceful co-existence, however, seems to have been the norm. Even for the time of the Crusades, there are few recorded persecutions of the *dhimmīs*. The reason for this was apparently that the *dhimmīs* were not *farānīj*, Franks, or more to the point, that they were not foreigners, white, and of the Latin rite. The distinction is very important and attitudes toward the two types of Christian were apparent in the way each was treated. According to Frescobaldi, when the Muslims offered their prayers in the Holy Land, all the Frankish Christians were locked up (in a building called a *klān*). The *dhimmīs*, on the other hand, were not locked up but simply remained at home.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup>On the Prophet Muhammad's treatment of the Jews of Medina, see the following biographical studies: T. Andrae, *Mohammed, Sein Leben und sein Glaube* (Göttingen, 1932, rev. 1956), but to be used with extreme care; R. Blachère, *Le Problème de Mahomet: Essai de biographie critique du fondateur de l'Islam* (Paris, 1952); M. Hamidullah, *Le prophète de l'Islam, sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris, 1959); W. M. Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford, 1961); R. Rodinson, *Mahomet* (Paris, 1961, rev. 1968); M. H. Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, tr. I. R. Fardajf (Bloomington, IN, 1976); M. Lings, *Muhammad, His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London, 1983); and especially M. Cook, *Muhammad* (London, 1983). See also A. J. Wensinck, *Mohammed en de jaden te Medina* (Leiden, 1908) and B. Ahmad, *Muhammad and the Jews: A Re-examination* (New Delhi, 1979).

<sup>16</sup>On this caliph, see "al-Hākim Bi-Amr Allāh," in *EP* III, 76–82.

<sup>17</sup>Fattal, *Le statut légal*, 94, citing Frescobaldi, *Viaggio di . . . Fiorentino in Egitto e in Terra Sancta*, xxxviii (Rome, 1818).

Fattal writes that the doctrine of the legists, who asserted that public office was forbidden to *dhimmīs*, is in direct contradiction with the historical facts.<sup>18</sup> For example, Jufaynah, protégé of Sa'īd b. Waqqāsh, taught penmanship (*ḥīmah*) in Medina and another Christian, the poet Abū Zubayd, a friend of the third caliph 'Uthmān (d. 656), was in charge of alms (*ṣadaqā*) collection. Under the fourth caliph 'Alī (d. 661), the South Arabian city of Naḍīrān was under the governorship of a Christian. The high percentage of *dhimmīs* in administration, for example the predominance of Christian chancery secretaries (*kaṭīb*s) in Syria in the late tenth century, or the Nestorians in Iraq and the Copts in Egypt, is explained by the political expediency and common sense of their appointment. In the early stages of dominion, the populations that came under Islamic domination were primarily composed of non-Muslim subject peoples. Effective administration, therefore, was only possible with the assistance of non-Muslim administrators. And so, despite the restrictive regulations governing their legal rights,<sup>19</sup> and social conduct, such as cutting of the forelocks, the use of mules as riding beasts, or the prohibition against the use of Muslim patronymics (*kunyah*s), or the wearing of the *zunnār*<sup>20</sup> (a distinctive belt), non-Muslims formed an integral and indispensable part of Islamic society. But, from a legal viewpoint, certain forms of power had to be kept from the *dhimmī*, power arising out of control over land, property, Muslim slaves, Muslim women, inheritances and endowed trusts (*waqf*s). And to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims, especially with regard to what may perhaps be termed intimate contact, regulations concerning dress, appearance and comportment were constructed. But trade, commercial ventures, interaction, the sharing of quarters, and proximity inevitably dissolved many of the lines of distinction. Thus, as Cahen argued, "the close association of Muslims and non-Muslims in everyday life . . . provided the *raison d'être* of the restrictions."<sup>21</sup> But these regulations were not always enforced and at the same time the *dhimmīs* enjoyed greater prosperity and social freedom. They wore sumptuous clothes, rode elaborately bridled mounts, horses and mules both, and owned slaves of both genders.<sup>22</sup> The fifth caliph Mu'āwiyah even suggested that his Christian physician Ibn Uthāl be appointed collector of the poll-tax in Hims.<sup>23</sup>

This last reference brings us back full circle to the subject of physicians. It is manifestly clear from the sources that these were well-respected individuals, often very wealthy, and, as the above quotation also shows, occasionally holders of high public office. The ninth-century litterateur al-Djāhīz wrote that one of the reasons for the respect of the masses for the Christians is that they were secretaries

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>19</sup>See especially "La liberté individuelle," chapter 2 of Fattal, *Le statut légal*, 85–126.

<sup>20</sup>See Tritton, *The Caliphs*, 11–15.

<sup>21</sup>*EP* IV, 228.

<sup>22</sup>Fattal, *Le statut légal*, 104.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 244.

to kings and physicians to noblemen.<sup>24</sup> The late eleventh-/early twelfth-century polymath, al-Chazali wrote in his magisterial *The Revivification of the Religious Sciences* that the one physician in his district was a *dhimmi*.<sup>25</sup> The tenth-century geographer al-Mukaddasi, in his *The Descriptions of the Trims in the Science of the Climes*, mentioned that in Syria most of the administrators and physicians were Christian.<sup>26</sup> The wealth of some of these men is legendary: Amīn al-Dawlah Abū al-Hasan ibn Ghazāl, a Jewish or perhaps Samaritan physician to Malik Shāh, had in his possession a library of ten thousand volumes and was purported to have property worth three million dinars.<sup>27</sup>

Supported by the passages quoted earlier enjoining distrust of *dhimmi*s, the jurists made a case prohibiting a Muslim from using the services of a Christian or Jewish doctor or pharmacist on the grounds that "an unbeliever may provide medicine injurious to a [Muslim] patient's life."<sup>28</sup> This legislation will not sound unfamiliar to scholars of the relations between the Jewish and Christian communities of Europe. Even Mūsā ibn Maymūn (Maimonides), himself a physician, and, moreover, one who lived in Egypt under Islamic rule after having fled Christian persecution in Spain, counseled his Jewish community to beware of Christian physicians.

#### THE PHYSICIANS

Turning to Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah's *Tabaḥiṭi*, we find that the total number of physicians recorded by him in his chapter on Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, and Diyār Bakr (the northern part of the Peninsula), is 83. Of these, 32 are Christian (including Nestorians), 37 (possibly only 34) Muslim (excluding converts), 5 Sabean, 3 Jewish, one Magian and 5 of unknown denomination. These figures show clearly the high proportion—as recorded by Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah, admittedly—of non-Muslim physicians: viz. between 49 percent and 59 percent. For purposes of comparison, it is instructive to mention briefly the situations in Egypt and Syria. In the former, of 58 physicians, 25 are Christian (including Nestorians, one Chalcedonian, and one convert), 13 Muslim (excluding converts), 16 Jewish, and 4 of unknown denomination. Here, between 69 percent and 77 percent are non-Muslims. As adumbrated above, it is because of the significant Coptic and immigrant Jewish communities that Egypt has such a high number of *dhimmi* physicians. In Syria, matters are different. There, for a total number of 61 physicians, 39 are Muslim (excluding converts), 12 are Christian, 6 Jewish, and 4 of unknown denomination. Muslims are in an obvious majority at 64 percent. I should reiterate that these are not census figures but statistics based on Ibn Abī

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Usaybī'ah's biographical entries. Having said this, it should be borne in mind that with idiosyncratic exceptions such as Ibn Naṭīs (see above), this biographical dictionary is all but exhaustive in its compass.<sup>29</sup>

The cases of three *dhimmi* physicians of Iraq illustrate their roles in medieval Islamic society: Abū Ghālib ibn Ṣāfiyyah (d. after 1170), Ibn al-Tīmīdh (1073–1164), and Abū al-Barakāt al-Baladī (d. 1164/65).<sup>30</sup>

Abū Ghālib ibn Ṣāfiyyah was a Christian physician whose notoriety relies mainly on his involvement in an incident that was to cost him his life. He was chancery secretary (*katīb*) to the Caliph al-Mustandhid Biliāh<sup>31</sup> as well as court physician. The Caliph asked Ibn Ṣāfiyyah to write a letter to his vizier Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Baladī, to have two men killed, one of whom was a prominent Armenian. Ibn Ṣāfiyyah showed this letter to the two condemned men who asked him to lie to the caliph, telling him that the deed had been done. They later took revenge on the Caliph by murdering him in his bath. Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah implicates Ibn Ṣāfiyyah in the murder although other biographers speak of no such plot.<sup>32</sup> The Caliph's son and successor, al-Mustadī bi-Amrillāh (d. 1180), took revenge on Ibn Ṣāfiyyah by first ordering a deadly poison from him and then requiring him to take it. Much of Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah's notice is devoted to this anecdote and culminates in the moral that it does not behave the physician to meddle in the affairs of state.<sup>33</sup>

Nothing of Ibn Ṣāfiyyah's background is mentioned. What is significant about him is that he, typically, held high office, that he was an intimate of the caliph, and that he was a court physician, his Christianity notwithstanding. His involvement in the assassination of the caliph is frowned upon by Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah but there is no hint that this is attributable to his Christianity or, for that matter, to a consequent untrustworthiness.

Ibn al-Tīmīdh is described by all his biographers as the greatest physician of his age.<sup>34</sup> He was not only a Christian physician but a priest.<sup>35</sup> Imād al-Dīn, a man of tremendous learning and diplomacy, senior chancery secretary, de facto chief minister, and confidant to Salāh al-Dīn (Saladin), describes Ibn al-Tīmīdh in the following terms:

<sup>29</sup>For another biographical dictionary of physicians, cf. Ibn al-Kifī, *Ta'rikh al-hukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903).

<sup>30</sup>On Abū al-Barakāt, see especially E2 I, 111–13.

<sup>31</sup>The thirty-second 'Abbasid caliph (d. 566/1170). For a list of caliphs and reigns, see J. L. Bacharach, *A Middle East Studies Handbook* (Seattle, 1984), 18.

<sup>32</sup>Zeleger, *Historie*, 24.

<sup>33</sup>Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah, *Tabaḥiṭi*, 348–49.

<sup>34</sup>Ibn Abī Usaybī'ah, *Tabaḥiṭi*, 349.

<sup>35</sup>The physician was often called *hakīm*, which could mean a wise man or philosopher, and, as such, was regarded as a natural leader. Christians and, especially, Jews in the Islamic world shared this respect for the physician's book-learning. Consequently, Christian and Jewish doctors were invariably leaders of their communities" (Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 37). On Jewish physician-leaders, see Samuel Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society* (Berkeley, 1967–78), passim.

<sup>24</sup>Cited in Fatah, *Le statut legal*, 157.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 157.

<sup>27</sup>Thitton, *The Caliphs*, 93. The dinar is a coin of gold minting.

<sup>28</sup>S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages*, 3rd rev. ed. (New York, 1974), 70.

In the science of medicine, he was for the whole world the point to which they had recourse; he was the Hippocrates of the age; the Galen of the epoch; his talents carried the medical science to the acme of perfection, none of the ancient doctors having reached the height to which he attained. . . . His mind was quick, his body graceful, his sentiments exalted, his thoughts aspiring, his sagacity felicitous and his judgment solid. He was the elder of the Christians, their priest, their head and their chief.<sup>36</sup>

Ibn al-Fīrīmī studied under Saʿīd ibn Hibāt Allāh and his writings suggest the guidance of other great teachers, though none are specifically mentioned. He also traveled extensively through Persia and other foreign lands in order to gather knowledge of medicine and of Christianity. A teacher at the ʿAḍudī Hospital, he was also attached to the caliphal courts of al-Muḥtaf and al-Mustandjīd who honored him greatly; the former returned him lands confiscated from him by virtue of his *ʿilīmī* status and the latter insisted he be seated in his company out of respect for him.<sup>37</sup> So great a physician was he that people came from afar to consult him. An anecdote in the *Ṭabaḳāt* speaks of a prince who, when ill, called for Ibn al-Fīrīmī to visit him. Ibn al-Fīrīmī refused to budge from Baghdad, so the prince came to him, was cured and lavished presents on his physician. He was sent four slaves, four horses, four chests and four thousand dinars. Ibn al-Fīrīmī refused it all.<sup>38</sup> He did not want to leave Baghdad, the chronicles tell us, because he was in charge of the ʿAḍudī hospital and wished to remain available there:

his house was right next to the Nizāmīyah Academy so if a law student fell ill, he would have him brought over to him and he took care of him.<sup>39</sup>

Ibn al-Fīrīmī was named chief physician of Baghdad. This meant that he administered the examinations that enabled a physician to practice.<sup>40</sup> He was

<sup>36</sup>M. de Slane, *Ibn Khallikān's Biographical Dictionary*, I-IV (Paris, 1842-71), III, 596, a translation of Ibn Khallikān, *Mufaḥḥāt al-ʿujān wa anḥāʾi al-ʿarabīn*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, I-IV (Göttingen, 1835-50). Galen was often taught in mosques, and later in the *madrāsas*, or colleges of law, by physician-jurists: see G. Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh, 1981), 11, 78, 285; idem, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West with special reference to scholasticism* (Edinburgh, 1990), 248-56; and Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 26-31.

<sup>37</sup>Al-Muḥtaf was the thirty-first ʿAbbasid caliph (d. 1160). On al-Mustandjīd, see note 32 above.

<sup>38</sup>Despite reporting anecdotes such as these, de Slane believes that Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah malevolently omits certain other anecdotes that praise Ibn al-Fīrīmī: see II, 603, note 14. Nonetheless, the notice devoted to Ibn al-Fīrīmī is the longest in chapter 10. Another very long entry is devoted to the Christian Abū al-Ḳāsim Hibatalāh ibn al-Faḍl.

<sup>39</sup>Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah, *Ṭabaḳāt*, 349. Treatment was usually undertaken in the home of the patient or the home of the physician. "The Islamic hospital was a public, secular institution that more closely resembled a convalescent or nursing home than a modern hospital oriented toward interventive medicine. . . . For the Muslim majority, the hospitals attended primarily to the poor and incurable" (Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 31).

<sup>40</sup>Leclerc, *Histoire*, 26, stresses that this was not a sinecure but that it did, indeed, mean overseeing and controlling the profession. But Dols writes that "licensing of medical practitioners by the government or its appointees, with two notable but dubious exceptions, was not a regular practice," and that "there is no evidence to suggest that systematic examinations

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responsible for certifying any potential practicing physician, who was asked to name his teachers, failing which, the books he had read. In the home of his son—who became a Muslim and who was found strangled one day—were found Ibn al-Fīrīmī's books, so numerous that they required twelve transports to be cleared out. It should be mentioned here that one scholar believes that Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah malevolently omits certain praising stories about Ibn al-Fīrīmī in his notice.

Abū al-Barakāt, a Jew, was refused access to the school of Saʿīd ibn Hibāt Allāh because that master did not want to teach anyone who was Jewish.<sup>41</sup> Abū al-Barakāt, however, bribed the conclerge of the building in which Saʿīd conducted his classes, and was therefore able to sit in the hallway and listen to the lectures. At the end of a year, the teacher posed a question that none of the students could answer. Abū al-Barakāt stepped forward, sought permission to answer, and proceeded to do so, correctly. On the strength of this performance he was admitted to the class and subsequently became one of the best students.<sup>42</sup>

Abū al-Barakāt was a bright, but ambitious, man. His machinations against Amīn al-Dawlah (above), of whom he was jealous, were to do him little good. This animosity is captured in the following story, reported by Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah: One day, during a gathering of a number of the great scholars and leaders, including Amīn al-Dawlah ibn al-Fīrīmī, discussion turned to the subject of the Jews and Awḥad al-Zamān said "May God curse the Jews!" to which Amīn al-Dawlah replied, "True! And the children of Jews too!" Awḥad al-Zamān went speechless, realizing that he was meant by this, and said no more.<sup>43</sup>

Abū al-Barakāt is said to have converted to Islam because of the insults he suffered and because he saw his Judaism as an impediment to advancement. Some have the story as follows: after curing a Seljuk of an illness, he was very generously rewarded and so returned to Baghdad in great pomp and ceremony. But he was scoffed at and insulted. Hurt, he realized that it was because he was Jewish. Realizing that this was an obstacle to his success, he converted.<sup>44</sup> There is an interesting aside to this conversion: Abū al-Barakāt realized that his daughters

were given at the end of the course of study or that diplomas were granted. . . . The only evidence of institutional control was a kind of approbation (Ar. *illaq*) granted by the director of the ʿAḍudī Hospital in Baghdad (founded in A.D. 978-79), but the significance of this innovation is difficult to judge" (*Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 32). He does not explain why the exceptions, which include Ibn al-Fīrīmī's examinations, are dubious. It was apparently only in the Crusader Kingdom that certification of physicians was enforced. On this, see J. Prawer, *Crusader Institutions* (Oxford, 1981), 53; G. Karmi, "State Control of the Physicians in the Middle Ages: An Islamic Model," in *The Town and State Physician in Europe from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*, ed. A. W. Russell (Wolfenbüttel, 1984), 63-84; and A. F. Woodings, "The Medical Resources and Practice of the Crusader States in Syria and Palestine 1096-1193," in *Medical History* 25 (1971): 269.

<sup>41</sup>Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah, *Ṭabaḳāt*, 374. On medical education in general, see G. Leiser, "Medical Education in Islamic Lands from the Seventh to the Fourteenth Century," in *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 38 (1983): 48-75.

<sup>42</sup>Ibn Abī Usaybīʿah, *Ṭabaḳāt*, 374.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 376.

<sup>44</sup>For Leclerc, *Histoire*, 44, "Le motif de cette apostasie fut un amour-propre froissé."

would not follow in his steps and so obtained a caliphal decree permitting them to inherit from him even though they had not converted to Islam and were therefore ineligible to inherit. He lived long, Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah goes on to tell us, but his age showed in his blindness, his leprous skin, his deafness and in his incurable pains.

**CONCLUSION**

The large number of Christians and Jews in administrative and professional positions is not difficult to explain but remains surprising nonetheless. The large Jewish population in Egypt may be explained by the massive emigration there from the Maghrib, Spain and Sicily after expulsion. In Syria, where the numbers are biased in the other direction, the explanation for the numerical inferiority of Jews and Christians may lie in nominal conversion to Islam in order to avoid paying the *dizyah*. But everywhere, *dhimmis* were as much part of the Islamic community as were the Muslims. Despite the laws and the prohibitions that existed, Christians and Jews held government posts, enjoyed the confidence of caliphs, viziers and townfolk, and were consulted for medical care. They owned land, dealt commercially with Muslims, were shoemakers and policemen, and ministered to the health of the Muslim population; this last in spite of the so-called Muslim fear of being "at the mercy" of non-Muslim physicians, surgeons, and druggists, and in spite of "discriminatory legislation prohibiting Muslims from seeking the services of non-Muslim doctors and pharmacists."<sup>45</sup> The medical profession in particular transcended religious boundaries: witness the number of non-Muslims physicians attached to Saladin alone.

A physician's worth was determined by the extent of his knowledge and the quality of his practice. Had there been an organized prejudice against, or institutional unease about, non-Muslims, it would most certainly have affected the medical profession. In truth, the law was one thing and reality quite another. Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, if he does not make it clear by praising the non-Muslims he does mention, lends argument to their accepted status and their incorporation into the fabric of Islamic society by simply mentioning so many of them.

<sup>45</sup>Cottein, *Jews and Arabs*, 70.

TABLE 1 Iraq, Diyār Bakr, and the Arabian Peninsula

Total no. of Physicians	Christians (including Nestorians)	Muslims (excluding converts <sup>46</sup> )	Sabeans	Jews	Magians	Unknown
83	32	37*	5	3	1	5

\*Possibly only 34.

TABLE 2 Egypt

Total no. of Physicians	Christians (including Nestorians)	Muslims (excluding converts <sup>46</sup> )	Sabeans	Jews	Magians	Unknown
58	25*	13	—	16	—	4

\*Of the 25 Christians, 1 is a Malaki (Chalcedonian) and 1 a convert.

TABLE 3 Syria

Total no. of Physicians	Christians (including Nestorians)	Muslims (excluding converts <sup>46</sup> )	Sabeans	Jews	Magians	Unknown
61	12*	39	—	6	—	4

\*Of the 12 Christians, 2 are Samaritans, 1 a Jacobite, and 1 a convert.

<sup>46</sup>On conversion to Islam, see R. W. Bulliet, *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), and Dennett, *Conversion*.