

BACKGROUND OF THE HISTORY OF MOSLEM LIBRARIES—*Continued*

RUTH STELLHORN MACKENSEN

In Egypt the heretical caliphs known as the Fāṭimids ruled from 909 to 1171 A.D. They were supporters of the Ismā'īlī variety of the Shī'ites, the largest and best-known heresy in Islām. The adherents of this sect anathematized the orthodox caliphs, whom they believed to have unjustly supplanted ʿAlī, fourth caliph and husband of Mohammed's daughter Fāṭima, whose posterity they hold are the only legitimate successors of the prophet. The Fāṭimids claim descent from one of the sons of this marriage. This is hardly the place for a discussion of the doctrines peculiar to this sect, the chief of which are that of the Imāmate as the spiritual as well as secular leadership of Islām and a mass of allegorical interpretations of the Koran with an esoteric flavor. They also possess their own body of tradition, distinct from that of the orthodox. Theologically, however, they are largely Muṭazilite and, like the doctors of that earlier heresy, though perhaps in a less thoroughgoing fashion, the Fāṭimids placed considerable emphasis on reason. Several caliphs of this dynasty were devoted to learning. From the beginning of their rule in Cairo they appear to have been in the habit of holding informal gatherings with men of learning for the discussion of religious and other matters. The *wazīr* of al-ʿAzīz, a converted Jew by the name of Yaḳūb ibn Killis, imitated the example of his master and drew to his court scholars, poets, and orators. His *salon* or *majlis* took on the aspects of an academy similar to those of al-Ma'mūn and Sābūr at Bagdad. He supported his proteges in comfort and some even in luxury, and permitted them the use of his library, perhaps largely built up of the writings of his numerous satellites. There is preserved a description of the weekly meetings of this *majlis* where poets recited their latest effusions in his honor, doctors debated the various topics in which they were learned, and the eloquent vied to produce the most artistic and impressive orations. Thereafter their patron rewarded them according to their several merits.²³

²³ Maḳrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, ed. Bulak (1270 A.H.), II, 5 f.; Ibn Khallikān, *op. cit.*, IV, 359 ff.; Arabic text (Cairo, 1312 A.H.), II, 334.

Under al-Ḥākim, the sixth Fāṭimid caliph, a strange man in whom were mixed a great love of learning and a mad fanaticism, the assemblies of his predecessors crystallized into an academy, which, like that of al-Ma'mūn, is variously called the "House of Wisdom" (*bait al-ḥikma*) or "Abode of Science" (*dar al-ʿilm*). This institution, founded in 395/1005, became at once the center of Ismāʿīlī propaganda and a school of science and literature. To its library the caliph transferred a large quantity of valuable books from the royal collections; it was open not only to the Fellows of the academy but also to the general public. Free writing materials were provided to all, and lodging, meals, and stipends to those who wished to remain a time for study. Like the earlier *Bait al-Ḥikma* in Bagdad, this academy encouraged the advancement of the sciences and the production of various forms of literature.²⁴

Limited as is this sketch of these academies, it will serve to show their striking resemblances to the ancient Greek Museum and the Library of the Ptolemies in Alexandria and to its daughter the Serapium. This can hardly be accidental. There is, first of all the exaltation of philosophy, science, and literature, not to the exclusion of religious matters, but certainly to an extent which contrasts markedly with the educational activities of the mosques and madrasas. There is also the royal patronage of scholars and men of letters, with provisions to house and maintain them in sufficient comfort and ease that they might devote themselves to study and creative work. In all these academies as in the Museum there was a lively interest in the exchange of thought through assemblies for discussion, lectures, debates, and other competitive performances. The library in each and every case was an integral part of the foundation. It was not a mere storehouse and reading-room, but a working library in every sense. Especially in that of al-Ma'mūn, the work of translating was of primary importance. To a lesser extent this may also have been carried on at Cairo. In any case every effort was made to render the books as accessible as possible. Books were kept in good repair, copies were multiplied, we read of a catalogue being prepared for the royal library of Cairo in the year 435/1043-44,²⁵ and, as we have seen, every convenience was of-

²⁴ Maḡrīzī, *op. cit.*, I, 408, 409, 445, 458 f.

²⁵ Ibn al-Kifṭī, *op. cit.*, p. 440. Whether this reference is to the library of the *dār al-ʿIlm* or to the private collection of the Fāṭimid caliphs is uncertain.

ferred to those who wished to copy manuscripts for their own possession. Not a few writers mention gathering material in these several libraries. For example, al-Nadīm, the author of that invaluable bibliographical work, the *Fihrist*,²⁶ refers so often to items which he consulted in the library of al-Ma'mūn that one scholar has supposed his work was the catalogue of that library—an opinion which for various reasons cannot be supported.

One other striking similarity to the Alexandrian library deserves mention. We have preserved for us the names of several outstanding men of letters who served at various times as librarians of Ptolemy's foundation, and we find that Moslem bibliophiles likewise chose men of unusual attainment as custodians of their libraries. In fact, much of the splendid activity of Arabic libraries is probably due to the quality of men who were pleased to act as librarians. It speaks highly for the generosity of the patrons as well as for the really important work carried on in these libraries that men of marked ability in various fields felt it worth their while to undertake the duties of custodian. The *Fihrist* mentions three librarians who served at one time in the first House of Wisdom in Bagdad.²⁷ All three were well-known authors and translators of Greek or Persian works. One of them, Sahl ibn Hārūn, is remembered for his political as well as his literary activities. We also know considerable about a man who headed the academy of Sābūr, al-Murṭada, a man of influence in Shī'ite circles, and the names of two librarians who were authors.²⁸ Both were correspondents of Abū 'Alā al-Ma'arri, to whom are addressed letters preserved in the charming and interesting collection of letters of the Syrian poet.²⁹ The judge 'Abd al-'Azīz, a member of a distinguished al-Nu'mān family, which furnished the Fāṭimid caliphs with a series of able jurists, was appointed head of the *dār al-ʿilm*, for which he collected a large library.³⁰ His grandfather, also a judge, and the confidant of the first four caliphs of this dynasty and a prolific writer on legal and theological matters, in his early days devoted himself to the

²⁶ Written in the fourth century A.H.

²⁷ Pp. 120, 125, 305; Ibn Khallikān, trans. De Slane, I, 509 f.

²⁸ *Letters of Abū'l-'Alā*, Letter XVI, and *Ṣaḡt al-Zand*, II, 100, 101, 112; also Letter XIX; Yāqūt, *Biog. Dict.*, VI, 358 ff.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*

³⁰ R. Gottheil, "A Distinguished Family of Fāṭimid Cadis in the Tenth Century," *J.A.O.S.*, 1907, pp. 235 f.

collection, preservation, and copying of books for the royal house.³¹ Al-Shabustī, author of *The Book of Monasteries* (d. 390/1000), served as librarian and reader for the caliph al-ʿAzīz.³² The *wazīr* Abū Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad (d. 435/1044) was the head either of the royal library or that of the *dār al-ʿilm*, the immediate supervision of which he intrusted to the deputy Kadi Abū ʿAbd Allāh and a stationer.³³ Technical aspects of the workings of these libraries, such as methods of shelving, classifying, and cataloguing books, were probably also derived ultimately from the practices of Greek libraries in Egypt.

If these resemblances to the Museum and its library at Alexandria are not accidental (and it certainly does not seem that they can be), how are they to be accounted for? We have no mention in any Arabic work of a conscious attempt to imitate the ancient Greek institution, but it is certain that Moslem scholars knew at least something about it. The *Fihrist*,³⁴ quoting the history of a certain Ishāk al-Rāhib, mentions that Ptolemy Philadelphus sought out books on science, collected 54,120 volumes, and placed them in the care of a man called Zamīrah, who Flügel suggests may be Demetrius (Phalereus).³⁵ Other writers, including Ibn al-Ḳifṭī, used this information. The very fact that Arabic historians felt the need of accounting for the disappearance of the ancient library shows that they were fully aware of its importance. Along with the numerous Greek works which were translated into Arabic, is it not more than likely that there was some record of this famous academy and library which did so much to preserve and propagate Greek learning in the East? The unidentified history of Ishāk al-Rāhib possibly was the source of more information than the scrap quoted in the *Fihrist*.

What could have been more natural than that those who were so devoted to Greek philosophy and science that they spared no pains or expense to collect and render the writings of the ancients accessible to

³¹ Asaf A. A. Fyzee, "Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān," *JRAS*, January, 1934, p. 9.

³² Ibn Khallikān, trans., De Slane, II, 262.

³³ Ibn al-Ḳifṭī, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

³⁴ Pp. 239 f. A modern Arabic writer, Jirji Zaidan, who defends the authenticity of the account given by Ibn al-Ḳifṭī and Abū'l-Faraj, supposes that it came from this history of Ishāk al-Rāhib. See his *Taʾrīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī* ("History of Islamic Civilization") (Cairo, 1904), III, 40-46; a résumé of this in English by Isya Joseph, "Bar Hebraeus and the Alexandrian Library," *AJSL*, XXVII, 335-38.

³⁵ See p. 240, in his edition of the *Fihrist*.

the Arabic-speaking world should have consciously sought to model their institutions on the older academy and library? We know that al-Ma'mūn continued by his generous patronage a school at Jundishāpūr, which from the time of its founder, the Sasanid Khusraw Anushirwan, was devoted to Greek studies. Likewise the pagan city Harran furnished Bagdad with a series of able Greek scholars who helped translate the works of the ancients into Arabic. Syrian Christians, who were long in communication with Egypt, were also intermediaries for the transmission of Greek learning. Through these channels may have come traditions of the Museum and Serapium. And in Cairo it is very probable that the Fātimids had access to memories and possibly to actual records of the school of nearby Alexandria. The parallels between it and the Abode of Science founded by al-Ḥākim are most striking. But it is also probable that through the Mu'tazilite contributions to Shī'ite theology and the use of translations made at Bagdad they also obtained traditions of the Museum. The use of the same name, House of Wisdom, or its alternative title, Abode of Science, which is almost synonymous, is evidence of some relationship between the academies of Bagdad and Cairo. Are not these names—House of Wisdom and Abode of Science—Arabic approximations to the Greek *μουσείον*, a place of the Muses, or place dedicated to the Muses? The mythological reference in the word "Muses" would have been repugnant to Moslem taste, even to such a lover of all things Greek as al-Ma'mūn, but he could well have used the idea which the Muses personified, and rendered it into Arabic as "Wisdom" or "Science." The use of these terms is worth more than passing attention, for they seem to have been used *only* of those academies and libraries which were devoted to profane learning, the three academies of al-Ma'mūn and Sābūr at Bagdad and of the Fātimids in Cairo. It is worthy of note that Ibn abī Uṣaibi'a speaks of a pre-Islamic school in Alexandria, probably of Christian foundation, as a *dār al-ilm*. There John Philoponus studied grammar, philosophy, and logic. Most significant is Ibn Ḥaukal's reference to Athens as the "Greek house of wisdom" (*dār ḥikmat al-yūnānīyīn*).³⁶ The library of Hārūn al-Rashīd, and

³⁶ Ibn abī Uṣaibi'a, *op. cit.*; Ibn Ḥaukal, *Via et regna: Descriptio ditionis Moslemicae*, ed. De Goeje as Vol. II of *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicum* (1873), p. 135, l. 14. The continuation of the Greek tradition in the "house of wisdom" is recognized by J. Pedersen, art. "Masdjid," *Encyc. of Islām*, III, 353.

sometimes that of al-Ma'mūn, are referred to as the "storehouse" or "treasury of wisdom"—a title, as we have seen, used of three private collections: that of Ja'far in Mosul, and those of Ibn al-Munajjim and Faṭḥ ibn Khāḳān at Bagdad. Ibn al-Munajjim, the son of a convert to Mu'tazilite Islām by the intercession of his caliph, was devoted to astronomy, medicine, and other Greek sciences, and was a patron of translators. The source of the name he chose for his library is apparent. He collected books for the library of Faṭḥ, who himself cannot have been a Mu'tazilite, for he was the intimate of the reactionary caliph, al-Mutawakkil, who suppressed Mu'tazilite doctrine and reinstated orthodoxy as the state religion. Faṭḥ ibn Khāḳān was, however, a man utterly devoted to learning and polite literature. Theological differences, if they were of more than formal importance to him, do not seem to have deterred him from friendship with Ibn al-Munajjim, although it may be that the latter had forsaken the faith of his father, for he, too, was in favor with al-Mutawakkil. However that may be, both of these bibliophiles were of the company of those whose orthodoxy did not interfere with their love of literature, music, Greek learning, and the convivial wine-cup. They would hardly have hesitated to use the name because of its Mu'tazilite associations. It may have been considered a more elegant or high-sounding appellation than the ordinary terms for "library." On the other hand, the references to the library of Faṭḥ as "treasury of wisdom" are quotations from Ibn al-Munajjim, who speaks in the first person of collecting a library for the royal favorite, and he may simply have slipped into the words he would have used in speaking of his own library. Of the religious leanings of al-Mawṣilī, all that can be said is that he was a lawyer of the Shāfi'ite school, hence he was probably an orthodox Moslem.³⁷ He was, however, a poet of sorts, a writer of *belles-lettres* and works on law. As he lived 240–323 A.H., his "treasury of science" comes between those of al-Ma'mūn and Sābūr, at a time when an interest in literature and Greek science was much alive. It is noteworthy that Yāḳūt speaks of him as learned in the "ancient sciences." Sābūr ibn Ardashīr probably had Shī'ite leanings, for he was a Persian and *wazīr* of an *Amīr* who at least nominally espoused Shī'ite doctrines, and the

³⁷ *Fihrist*, p. 149; Yāḳūt, *Biog. Diet.*, II. 419.

custodians of his academy seemed always to have been leaders of that schism, among them al-Murṭada.

The fact that these terms are used only of libraries and academies the founders and patrons of which had strong leanings toward secular learning and literature, and especially Greek studies, seems to point conclusively to a tradition of the Museum. Elsewhere libraries are referred to by the Persian term *kitābkhāna*, or its Arabic equivalent, *maktaba*, or as a "treasury of books" (*khizānat al-kutub*) or "house of books" (*bait* or *dār al-kutub*).

It would appear, therefore, whether or not Moslems are responsible for the destruction of the Alexandrian library, some of them were impressed by that for which it stood and took it as a model for their own houses and treasuries of wisdom. In turn these great Arabic libraries exercised a great influence on others in Moslem lands. The methods continued the same, but far more important is the tradition of libraries as living and working centers of learning and literature, and the practice of employing men of outstanding merit as librarians.

In the light of the foregoing, is not the earlier suggestion that the story of the destruction of the Alexandrian library arose as a protest against the closing of the *dār al-ilm* in Cairo at least plausible? The history of Moslem traditions contains innumerable instances of the invention of episodes and anecdotes, projected into the past, either as sanctions for later practice or as protests against supposed evils.

Greek learning and books came to the Arabs through several channels. There is no way of knowing how much they had heard or read of Greek libraries other than that at Alexandria, or whether this information spurred them on to form their own collections. Memories of the Syrian temple of the Muses established by Antiochus III at his capital, the library at Pergamum, and the imperial collection of Constantine and his successors may well have passed on to them. These libraries had been situated in the very localities from which early Moslem bibliophiles gathered many of their books on philosophy and the ancient sciences. There is a tradition to the effect that al-Ma'mūn sent a commission to Leo the Armenian to obtain the books he desired for his library.³⁸ It has even been said that he demanded the books

³⁸ *Fihrist*, p. 243; Hājji Khalīfa, III, 95.

as one of the terms of a treaty he concluded with the emperor. Certainly those who collected Greek manuscripts for the early Abbasid caliphs must have seen libraries. Following the account of the activities of al-Ma'mūn's envoys, the author of the *Fihrist* quotes a description of a marvelous palace which his informer saw three days' journey from Constantinople. In it was a large quantity of ancient books, some very dilapidated, others in good condition.³⁹

In the very heart of the Moslem Empire were two great centers of Greek learning which were of inestimable importance for the transmission of the ancient culture to the Arabs. From the time of Alexander the city of Harran had been under Greek influence. Its inhabitants never accepted Christianity, and it remained the last stronghold of paganism, a refuge for many who clung to Hellenistic traditions. Nor did the Harranians succumb to the preaching of Islām. Combined with Greek studies, Babylonian science, chiefly astronomy, lingered on at Harran and passed to the conquerors during the days of the first Abbasids, for that city long supplied Bagdad with a stream of able scholars. The best-known names are those of Thābit ibn Qurra (d. 901 A.D.) and his numerous relatives. A glance at the series of biographical sketches collected by Chwolson in his invaluable study of the Harranians gives one some idea of the activities of these versatile pagans who served the early caliphs of Bagdad.⁴⁰ Their translations of works on philosophy, ethics, politics, history, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy furnished Moslem libraries with some of their most precious possessions.

It may seem strange that paganism survived openly in the very heart of Islām. Arabic writers frequently refer to the people of Harran as Ṣābiāns (al-Ṣābi'a), and consequently scholars have attempted to distinguish between the pagan Ṣābiāns and the Mandaeans or true Ṣābiāns, who inhabit the marshes between Wasit and Basra. Chwolson believed that the clue to the confusion between these two apparently unconnected groups was to be found in a story in the *Fihrist*. This tells, on the authority of an almost contemporary Christian writer, how the inhabitants of Harran protected themselves from

³⁹ *Fihrist*, p. 243, quoted by Ibn Abī Uṣaibi'a, *op. cit.*, I, 186.

⁴⁰ *Die Sabier und der Sabismus* (St. Petersburg, 1856), Buch I, Kap. xii; see also Carra de Vaux, art. "Al-Ṣābi'a," *Ency. Islām*; Browne, *Literary History of Persia* (Cambridge, 1929), I, 302-6.

the persecutions of al-Ma'mūn by claiming to be Šābians, having been informed that such was the name of one of the sects tolerated by Mohammed as a "people of the book." This reference is to the Prophet's respect for religions possessing scriptures. Their ruse having succeeded, they appropriated a name to which they had no right and obtained the privilege of continuing in their old ways. More recently, Pedersen has contended that *Šābi'a* is not the special title of any single sect, but that it is a common name for the numerous and scattered gnostic sects. He regards *Šābi'a* as synonymous with *Ḥanīf*, a word used in the Koran for religiously minded men, and holds that *Ḥanīf* and *Šābi'a* stand in the same relation as "Hellenistic" and "gnostic" in our usage. If such is the case, the Harranians were within their rights when they used the name.⁴¹

It was mentioned earlier that Ibn Khaldūn attributed the famous command of 'Umar for the destruction of books to the time of the Persian conquest.⁴² According to this report, General Sa'd ibn abī Waḳḳāš inquired of the caliph as to the disposition of the many books found in that country. 'Umar sent the familiar answer, adding, "So throw them into the water or the fire." No place is specified, but the incident is often supposed to refer to the royal library of Chosroes at Ctesiphon. If the report of Ibn Khaldūn is founded on fact, it would rather imply that considerable quantities of books were found at several places. 'Umar's order may be apocryphal; we have seen how it was used to account for the disappearance of the Alexandrian library; but it was true to the temper of many of the early leaders of Islām, for whom the Koran contained all knowledge needful for man. Just as the religion of the Prophet superseded all others, so too his book rendered others unnecessary. It is certain that the Moslem conquerors found books in Persia, for the Persians had long been not only a literate people but also possessed an ancient culture. A fourth-century historian, al-Mas'ūdī, utilized the Arabic translation of a Persian book on science and history which had once belonged to the royal Persian library and had been taken as loot in the early wars of con-

⁴¹ *Fihrist*, pp. 320 f.; J. Pedersen, art. "The Šabians," *A Volume of Oriental Studies Presented to E. G. Browne* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 383 ff.

⁴² See the first instalment of this article in *AJSL*, LI, No. 2 (January, 1935), 117.

quest.⁴³ Many of the first scholars of Islām were Persians, and that people continued to contribute to Moslem learning and literature. In many ways the court at Bagdad was essentially a Persian court, for several of the caliphs had strong Persian sympathies and not a few *wazīrs* and other courtiers belonged to that nation.

The *Fihrist* speaks of the intellectual interests of the Sasanid rulers, typified by the activities of Ardashīr the son of Bābak, his son Sābūr, and Khusraw Anushirwan, who caused books on philosophy and the ancient sciences to be brought from India, China, and Byzantium.⁴⁴ Khusraw Anushirwan, whom Browne characterized as one of the greatest and best rulers of Persia, reigned from 531 to 578 A.D. His reception of seven neo-Platonist philosophers who had been expelled from their homes, and his insistence that they be assured of toleration and freedom from interference, is well known. Their future safety, after their return to their native land, was one of the terms of the treaty he concluded with the Byzantines. Browne emphasized the important and lasting influence of the visit of these Greek philosophers to the Persian court, believing that Persian mysticism, which passed over into Islām, was colored by their teachings.⁴⁵

Strictly Persian studies, especially of history and jurisprudence, were also cultivated, including the compilation of the annals which furnished the sources for Firdawsī's *Shāh-nāma*. Indian literature also received attention; the *Fables of Bidpai* and the game of chess were brought to Persia.⁴⁶ Several of the Sasanids exercised considerable religious tolerance. Syriac historians record that Khusraw Pārwez (ruled 590-628 A.D.) requested the Catholicos of the time to set down the articles of the Nestorian faith for him, and so a company of learned men was sent who drew up a confession of faith for the king.⁴⁷

The concern of Persian kings for the safekeeping of scientific books was evidently well known and was illustrated by the author of the *Fihrist* in an ancient story he quoted from Abū Ma'shar the astronomer. One Tahmūrath, being warned 231 years before the Deluge of

⁴³ *Kitāb al-Tanbih*, ed. De Goeje (Leyden, 1894), p. 106.

⁴⁴ *Fihrist*, p. 239.

⁴⁵ *Op. cit.*, I, 166 f.

⁴⁶ G. Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, I, 435 f.

⁴⁷ *Histories of Rabban Hormizd the Persian and Rabban Bar 'Idta*, ed. and trans. from Syriac by E. A. W. Budge (London, 1902), II. (trans), Part I, 210-12; Syriac text, pp. 141 f.

that oncoming catastrophe, sought the most durable materials on which to have these precious works transcribed. He finally decided on birch and other barks as the hardest, smoothest and least likely to mold and decay, such being the experience of the people of India and China, who favored this writing material. A commission was then appointed to find the most suitable place for the housing of the manuscripts. After a considerable survey of likely sites, the town of Jayy, a suburb of Isfahan, was chosen because of its elevation, the excellence and dryness of the soil, the pureness of the air, and the unlikelihood of earthquakes and other catastrophes. The building lasted for centuries, but the presence of the library was apparently unsuspected by Moslems until it was revealed by the collapse of a vault in the year 350 after the Hijra. The words of the *Fihrist* seem to imply that the books were hidden in chests in walled-up vaults. Abū Ma'shar says they were in ancient Persian writing, and one was found who could read them. Al-Bīrūnī, who gives a shortened form of the report, says that they could not be deciphered, but al-Nadīm held that the most trustworthy information is that they were in Greek and were translated subsequently. The manuscripts, or their bindings, which were finally abandoned, smelled foully, but after they were taken to Bagdad they finally dried out and were usable. Some, or possibly only one of them, were in the possession of Abū Sulaiman, a teacher of al-Nadīm, the author of the *Fihrist*. The latter says that the building which housed the books was reputed to have been comparable to the pyramids of Egypt. Ignoring the extravagant date of 231 before the Deluge, the story probably preserves the record of an ancient Persian library which was unearthed not many years before the writing of the *Fihrist*. Al-Nadīm's statement that the manuscripts were written in Greek implies a collection of books made during the Sasanid period. Even the report of Abū Ma'shar that they were in ancient Persian writing which some were able to read would indicate that they came from a time not long before the Moslem conquest.⁴⁸

The efforts of Khusraw Anushirwan in behalf of learning left their most lasting influence in the medical school at Jundīshāpūr, the foundation of which is often attributed to him. However, this institu-

⁴⁸ *Fihrist*, pp. 240 f.; briefer accounts are given by al-Bīrūnī, *Chronology of Ancient Nations*, ed. and trans. by E. Sachau (London, 1879), p. 28; and E. G. Browne, art. "An Account of the Rare Manuscript History of Isfahan Presented to the Royal Asiatic Society, May 19, 1827, by Sir John Malcom," *JRAS*, 1901, p. 417.

tion was probably in existence long before his day, and in time broadened its scope to become a university which lasted far into the days of the Abbasids. The town of Jundishāpūr was founded by Shāpūr I (241–71 A.D.), who settled it with Greek prisoners. It was a place of refuge for the Nestorians driven from Edessa in 489, and the neo-Platonists, expelled from Athens in 529, there found an asylum with the enlightened king. It became a notable intellectual center, where Greek, Jewish, Syrian, Hindu, Persian, and perhaps Chinese scholars met for discussion and mutual help. Scientific and philosophical writings were translated into Persian and, in Moslem times, into Arabic. The medical studies and research carried on at Jundishāpūr left a permanent influence on Arabic medicine. Several of the early Abbasids, particularly al-Manṣūr and al-Ma'mūn, were much interested in the school and its hospital and lent them their support. Two famous families of Christian physicians, the houses of Bakhtishūc (the eighth to eleventh centuries) and Māsawaih (Mesuē Major, d. 243/857), were long connected with this institution and as patrons and translators added greatly to the body of Moslem medical literature. Members of these families also came to Bagdad as teachers, translators, and practicing physicians. The synthesis of philosophical and scientific knowledge, resulting from the intercourse of scholars of diverse nationalities and cultures who gathered at Jundishāpūr, contributed greatly to the subsequent development of Moslem studies. Greek learning was the backbone, but it received many valuable and curious accretions from contact with the sciences of other people. From the standpoint of our interest in books, the continuation of translating during the early Abbasid period is of considerable significance, for from this center as well as from Harran emanated many of the books which found their way into the great libraries at Bagdad and other cities.⁴⁹

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

[To be continued]

⁴⁹ Information on the school of Jundishāpūr is exceedingly fragmentary; the following references are valuable: Sarton, *op. cit.*, I, 417, 419, 435 f.; art. "Djundishāpūr," *Ency. Islām*; Puschmann, *History of Medical Education* (Eng. trans.), pp. 172 f.; D. Campbell, *Arabian Medicine* (London, 1926), pp. 46–48; E. G. Browne, *Arabian Medicine* (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 8, 11, 19–24, 34, 54, 76, 114; Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Persia* (London, 1915), I, 40 f.; T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sassaniden aus der Arabischen Chronik des Tabari* (Leyden, 1879), pp. 40–42; *Fihrist*, pp. 239, 241 f.; Ibn al-Kifṭī, *op. cit.*, p. 98.