

Appendix 2: Attribution Of The Dissertation To Al-Imamal-Rida' (A)

The opinions about the attribution are divided into two sides, those who argue in favor of the attribution to Al-Imamal-Rida' and those who doubt it¹. Therefore, its attribution to the Imam is not a certainty. This text cannot be considered as a reliable tradition (Sunna) and be acted upon due to the last opinion. Nonetheless, this dissertation arouses a growing interest among physicians in favor of traditional and Islamic medicine.

Arguments in Favor of the Attribution

Historical evidences

- Al Tusi and Shar Ashoub are the first ones to mention it, but they criticize the validity of the Sanad (the chain of narrators of the risala). Indeed, they judge Hasan ibn Jumhur as an unreliable transmitter (dhaeef).
- Manuscripts exist, dating back to the seventh and eighth centuries, in addition to translations.
- Al Najashi considers one of the two narrators, Al Nawfili, as a true transmitter.

Fame

- Al Majlisi judged the dissertation as a well-known work. He quotes it in full in his masterpiece Bihar al Anwar under the title of Tibb Al-Rida'. He does criticize many parts of it for the attribution of some sentences to the Imam.
- Abd al Sa'id al Zayni wrote:
"Despite all of this, we see no reason to doubt that it was authored by the Imam if we apply the criterion generally applied to derive legislative verdicts (ahkam) or those to be familiar with the principles of the

creed (usul), because there are conditions which are not required here. Otherwise, doubt would encompass the attribution of authorship to a large number of books due to the lack of a method that would assure us of such an attribution's reliability. Yet the fame that verifiers consider as the means towards confirmation can by itself prove to us the accuracy of attributing this dissertation to the Imam (a).

It is proven for us that al-Najjashi meant this same gold dissertation when he was quoting al Nawfali saying that he narrated one text from Al-Rida' (a). The knot would surely be untied. What supports this assumption about al Najjashi is that some scholars have said that Allama al-Askari's library in Samarra (Iraq) contains a copy of a manuscript dealing with the medical knowledge of Imam al-Rida' (a), narrated by Abu Muhammad al Hasan ibn Muhammad al Nawfali, provided there is no other copy by al Nawfali in which he quotes the Imam (a) other than this dissertation. Otherwise we would be confused and we would not be able to reasonably understand why al Najjashi did not provide sufficient details about the books that he attributed to their respective authors or narrators, or at least their titles!"²

– The style of the dissertation is different from that of famous Islamic physicians and resembles more that of the Quranic discourse and the style of Nahj al Balagha's sermons.

Arguments Against the Attribution

The narrator and the transmitter's chain (Sanad)

The chain of most of the manuscripts is considered by the specialist of hadith as 'mursal' (unreliable). Therefore, the main narrator's trustworthiness is doubted by Tusi, Shar Ashoub, Ibn Khadha'iri, and Al Hilli, as well as with regards to the transmitter chain.

If the chain is considered reliable (musnad), one of the two first cited narrators of the dissertation (Muhammad ibn Jumhur ra Ammi) is judged as an unreliable transmitter (see above).

– Famous physicians like Rhazes (Abu Bakr Razi died 925) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina died 1037) did not mention this dissertation.

– Nishapur does not withstand historical scrutiny as being the place of Ma'mun's gathering; the city of Marv does.

The Content of the Dissertation (matn)

– The comparison between the text of the treatise with other medical works of the same time does not contain any distinguishing features which could have aroused the praise of Al-Ma'mun.

– It was impossible for Ibn Bakhtishu to have been present in Al-Ma'mun's majlis because they were not on good terms.

- Neither scholars nor hadith specialists have ever mentioned this work before the eleventh century (That is, before Al Majlisi mentioned it).
- The dissertation mentions food that does not match the Islamic criterion of halal like the Andromac triac, mentioned in the part pertaining to wet cupping (hijama).
- The words of the Imam in his answers to Al-Ma'mun's request are inconsistent with the kind of knowledge the Imam holds. In his answer, he speaks about experiences and knowledge of predecessors whereas the Imam possesses divinely inspired knowledge. Furthermore, the dissertation is not a personal answer to Al-Ma'mun because according to the principles of the humor theory, the medicine to be prescribed for a specific illness differs from one temperament to another.
- The literary style and the vocabulary used in the dissertation are not in accordance with the other medical writings of the Imams. There is use of much Greek and Persian vocabulary.

1. Complete references of the names cited here are to be found in the biography.

2. Cited in Tibb Al-Ridha' (Medicine of Al-Ridha'), "MulTaqa al 'Asrayn" series, Issue number 2, p. 130, Baghdad

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