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# THE ARABIC AND LATIN SCIENCE OF COMPOUND MEDICAMENTS

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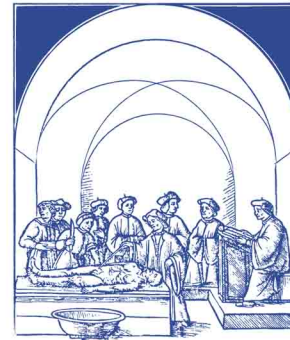
A NEW READING OF BOOK TEN OF THE «PRACTICA PANTEGNI»

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The medical encyclopaedia composed by the Arabic physician al-Majūsī, the “Royal Book” (*al-Kitāb al-Malakī*), includes in its practical section an entire book devoted to the science of compound medicaments. Rather than merely collecting lists of antidotes, it opens with a substantial introduction that innovates on earlier discussions of the reasons and methods for composing and administering such remedies. Al-Majūsī defends the position of rationalist phy-

cians concerning the necessity of using compound antidotes, and elaborates, among other points, on their usefulness as anaesthetics or in facilitating the ingestion of unpleasant substances. In the contest between disease and nature, he explains, compound antidotes are an indispensable weapon for the physician. Notably, the Latin version by Constantine the African, preserved in a single Toledo manuscript, goes beyond mere

translation of al-Majūsī’s doctrines. It transforms them into an even more philosophically informed discussion, substantiating the claims of the rationalist physicians by explaining how medicaments exert their virtue. At the same time, Constantine enriched the *Kitāb* by embedding fragments of earlier Latin learning, thereby creating an original and unprecedented account of the science of composita that has until now remained largely inaccessible. By presenting a selection of passages, this talk will highlight the main features of this hitherto neglected text together with its Latin adaptation.



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PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA