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The Book of *Shānāq* on Poisons and Theriacs

Takamasa Inaba

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第四号

Several years ago, Dr. Yoshiyasu Uno, a professor of social psychology at Keio University, brought back from Cairo a copy of the Arabic text “*Kitāb Shānāq fī al-sumūm wa al-tiryāq*”, based on “MS., ṭibb 60, Dār al-kutub al-miṣrīya”.

Presented here is a Japanese translation of the Arabic text, made at his request. This work on poisons and theriacs or antidotes has its origin in India. The work is entitled “The Book of *Shānāq*”; *Shānāq*, or *Chāṇakya*, was the prime minister of the Maurya Emperor Chandragupta, but the real author is unknown.

It appears that the text was introduced into the Islamic world during the reign of the Caliph al-Rashīd (786-809). It is known to have been translated into Persian from an Indian language by an Indian physician named Mankah, then into Arabic from Persian by Abū ḥātim for Yaḥyā b. khālīd b. barmak (d. 805), and again into Arabic by al-‘Abbās b. sa‘īd al-jawharī for the Caliph al-Ma‘mūn (813-833).

It is said that this work is one of the three most important works on poisons in Arabic, the others being by Jābir b. ḥayyān and Ibn waḥshīya.

This work can be roughly divided into seven parts by subject. These are as follows: (1) Admonitions to rulers. (2) The symptoms of poisoned foods, drinks, clothes, perfumes, ointments, and others, and their effects on the body and organs. (3) The recipes for twelve sorts of poisons put in foods and drinks. (4) The recipe for a universal antidote called *Kandahastī*, and its effects. (5) The recipes for narcotics, soporifics, and other injurious drugs, and their effects. (6) The effects of the twelve poisons, mentioned in the third part, on the body and organs, and the recipes for antidotes to them. (7) The recipes for ten sorts of poisons put in clothes, perfumes, ointments, and others, and the recipes for antidotes to them.

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