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## Qabīṣī: Abū al-Ṣaqr ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Alī al-Qabīṣī

Keiji Yamamoto

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### Alternate name

Alcabitius

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### *Flourished (Iraq), second half of the 10th century*

Qabīṣī, an astronomer and astrologer, came from one of two villages called Qabīṣa in Iraq. He studied **Ptolemy's** *Almagest* under ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-‘Imrānī of Mosul, a mathematician and teacher, and dedicated several works (nos. 2, 3, 4, and 6, as given below) to Sayf al-Dawla, the Ḥamdānid Emir of Aleppo between 945 and 967. Otherwise, details of Qabīṣī's life are little known.

Qabīṣī's extant works are the following:

- (1) A commentary on **Farghānī's** *Kitāb al-fuṣūl* (also referred to as *Kitāb fī jawāmi‘ ‘ilm al-nujūm*).
- (2) A treatise on the distances and volumes of the planets (*Risāla fī al-ab‘ād wa-’l-ajrām*). This treatise provides distances and volumes for the planets other than those of the Sun and the Moon, which had already been given in the *Almagest*. Qabīṣī's account of Mercury was quoted twice by **Bīrūnī** in his *al-Qānūn al-mas‘ūdī* (Vol. X, Chap. 6).
- (3) Book on the introduction to astrology (*Kitāb al-mudkhal ilā ṣinā‘at aḥkām al-nujūm*), comprising five chapters. Qabīṣī's most famous work, this book is preserved in several Arabic manuscripts and in a Latin translation of which there are more than 200 manuscripts as well as 12 editions printed between 1473 and 1521. His text was the main book used in universities in the medieval Latin world where astrology was taught as part of the curriculum in medicine.
- (4) A treatise for the examination of astrologers (*Risāla fī imtiḥān al-munaḥḥimīn*). This

treatise contains 30 astronomical or astrological questions and answers. Qabīṣī divides astrologers into four categories according to their intellectual level: The complete astrologer; the one who knows facts such as the shape of the celestial sphere but can not prove them; the astrologer who accepts things uncritically, like a blind man - the majority of astrologers fall into this category; and one who does not know anything about astronomy and astrology, relying only upon the operations of instruments.

- (5) A work on the conjunction of the planets in the zodiacal signs and their prognostications for the revolutions of the years is attributed to Qabīṣī in Latin (*De coniunctionibus planetarum in duodecim signis et earum pronosticis in revolutionibus annorum*).
- (6) A mathematical work in Arabic on numbers.

Qabīṣī wrote several other works that are not extant. We know of them because he refers to them in his surviving works. These include a treatise on the size of the Earth, referred to in (2) and (6) as *Risāla fī masāfat al-arḍ*, part of which is quoted at the end of (6); a book on the explanations of astronomical tables, referred to in (2) as *Kitāb fī 'ilal al-zījāt*; a book on affirming the validity of astrology, referred to in the preface of (3) as *Kitāb fī ithbāt ṣinā'at aḥkām al-nujūm*, which was a response to the criticism of astrology by 'Alī ibn 'Īsā, an astronomical instrumentmaker of the 9th century; *Kitāb fī al-namūdārāt, i. e.*, a book on the *namūdārs*, the method to fix a person's ascendant when the time of birth is unknown, referred to in the fourth chapter of (3); and a book referred to in the introduction of (4) as *Shukūk al-Majisī* (Doubts on the *Almagest*).

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