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The Bukhtīshū's : بختيشوع

A generation of Physicians in Early History of Islamic Medicine

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Abstract:

The Bukhtishu's were a generation of physicians who originated from the same family tree. Although of devout Christian faith and Nestorian descent, because of their high education and special knowledge of medicine they enjoyed a special status under the patronage of the Abbasid Caliphs; many of them by being appointed as court physicians. For three centuries (from 2nd century of Hijra , 8th century of CE to the 5th century of AH or 11th Century CE), they contributed greatly to practice of Medicine, of their generation by generously supporting the collection and translation of medical texts, by heading newly formed hospitals and dispensaries. They also disseminated the science by writing and teaching the art to many eager students and last but not least by they themselves practicing a high and ethical standard of medical practice.

They therefore, can be considered as true *“Pioneers of Islamic Medicine”*. In this article we will examine their family tree, their genealogy, their contributions to the practice and teaching of medicine during this, the early period of Islamic civilization. We will also endeavor to examine their origins and close association with the Medical school and hospital in the ancient city

of Jundishapur, an institution which was held in high esteem during the early conquests of Islam. Later at the invitation of the Caliph they were to transfer their practices to the newly founded capital of the Islamic Empire the City of Baghdad. In Baghdad they were to set up medical schools and hospitals after the prototype of Jundishapur, but which in their turn were to exceed the standards of school and hospital in Jundishapur. We will also examine their contributions, and the impact that these made on the practice of Medicine during this early part of the newly developing Islamic Nation.

Key Words:

¹Bukhtīshū's

بختیشوع

Bukhtishu

Bakhtishu's

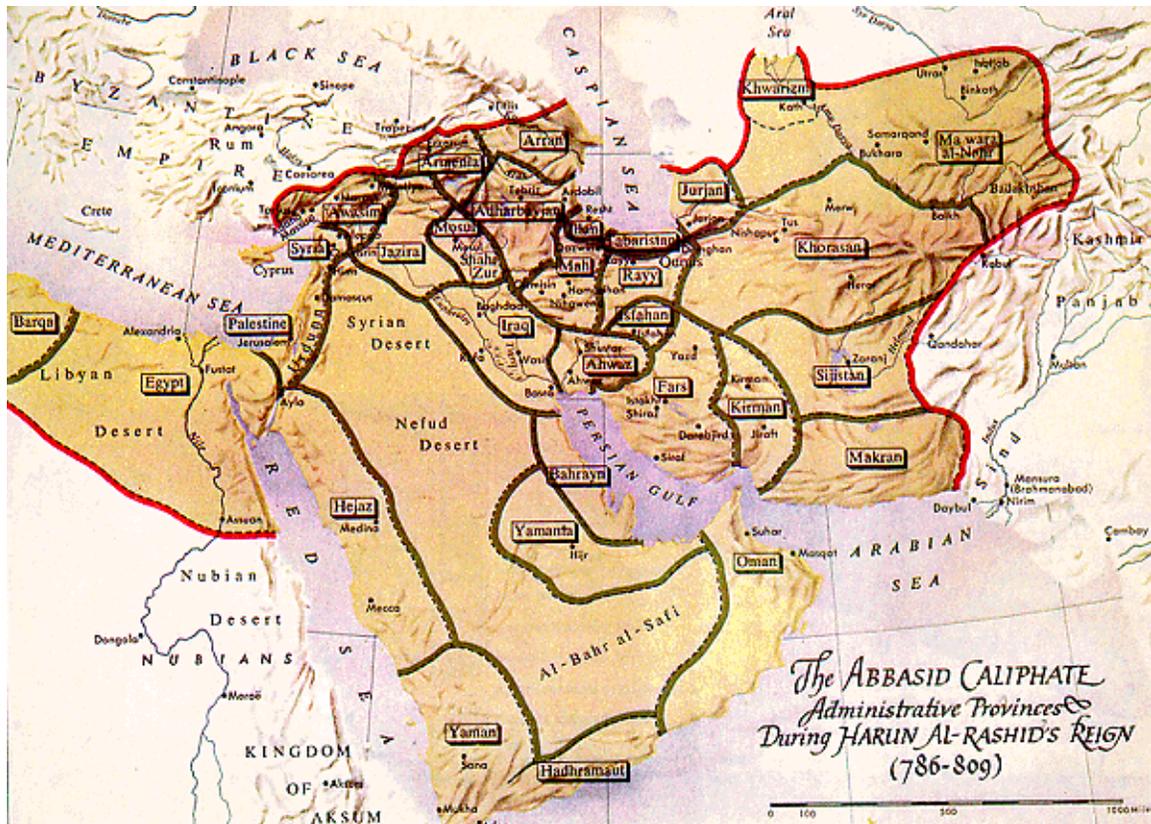
Nestorian Physicians.

Islamic Medicine.

Physicians of Islamic Medicine.

Introduction:

The Bukhtishu's were Nestorian Christians of Persian extraction that were closely related initially to the medical school and hospital in Jundishapur (also referred to as Gondeshapur) established by Sassanid Emperor Anushirwan (531 to 579 AD).



The Medical School and hospital in Jundishapur:

The Greek influence was already predominant in Jundishapur when the closing of the Athenian school in 529 CE by order of the Byzantine emperor Justinian, drove many learned Greek physicians eastward to this town under the protection of the Sassanid king Khusraw Anushirwan the wise (531-579 CE). A University with a medical school and a hospital were established under his patronage and Greco-Syriac medicine blossomed. To this was added medical knowledge from India, brought by his physician minister or 'vizier' 'Burzuyah'. Burzuyah had been sent by Anushirwan to India to learn and bring back the secrets of Indian medicine. On his return the latter brought back from India the famous 'Fables of Bidpai', several Indian Physicians, details of Indian Medical Texts and a Pahlavi (Early Persian) translation of the 'Kalila wa Dimma.' During his search and acquisitions Khusraw was even presented with a translation of Aristotelian Logic and philosophy. Thus at the time of the Islamic invasion and capture of the city the medical school of Jundishapur was already well established and had become a renowned medical center of Greek, Syriac and Indian learning.

This knowledge had intermingled in this crucible to create a highly acclaimed and state of the art Medical school and hospital. After the advent of Islamic rule this Medical School and hospital continued to thrive under the leadership of the first recorded Bukhtishu, nicknamed Bukhtishu the elder or Senior.²

It was in this hospital the first Bukhtishu also called *Bukhtishu the Elder* became the Chief Physician. Unfortunately not much is known about him to historians except that he must have lived before the time of the second Abbasid Caliph Mansur, and probably during the time of the first Abbasid Caliph.

Table I Family Tree of the Bukhtishu's*
 (*adaped from Wikepedia)

- Bukhtishu I (بختيشوع اول)
- Jibrail I (جبرائيل اول)
- Jurjis (جرجيس)
- Bukhtishu II (بختيشوع دوم)
- [Jabril ibn Bukhtishu](#) (جبرائيل دوم)
- Bukhtishu III (بختيشوع سوم)
- [Yuhanna ibn Bukhtishu](#)
- [Ubaidullah ibn Bukhtishu](#) (عبيدالله اول)
- Jibrail III (جبرائيل سوم)
- Ubaidullah II (عبيدالله دوم)

Timeline of The Bukhtishū's:

Bukhtishu I the Senior: Not much known about him.

Jibrail I He was a prominent physician in charge of the hospital in Jundishapur.

Jurgis son of Jibrail ibn Bukhtishu I
 148 AH (768 CE) attended Caliph al Mansur
 152 AH (769 CE) returns to Jundishapur
 D: Unknown

Bukhtishu II son of Jurjis summoned by Caliph al Mahdi to treat his son al-Mahdi
 171 AH (787 CE) summoned to treat Caliph Harun-al Rashid for headaches.
 Appointed chief physician to his court by Harun

175 AH (791 CE) attended al- Barmaki family of viziers or ministers and recommended his son Jibrail as medical attendant.
185 AH (801 CE) he died

Jibrail II son of BukhtishuII

90 AH (805 CE) Jibrail was appointed private physician by Caliph Harun
Condemned to death, but Vazier al Fadl saved him.
Harun's son al Amin appointed him court physician.
Al Mamun overthrew al Amin and as result he was imprisoned.
202 AH (817 CE) Freed by Vazier al-Hassan b Sahl to render him services
205 AH (820 CE) fell in disgrace again and was superseded by his son in law Mikhail in his office.
212 AH (827 CE) al Mamun sent for him as Mikhail could not treat him.
He successfully treated him and for this he was restored his property a and his position
213 AH (828 CE) he died.

Bukhtishu III

213AH (828 CE) Bukhtishu III Son of Jibrail II, succeeds him.
256AH (870 CE) he dies in Bahrain.

Mikhail

Son in law of of Jibrail I competent physician in service of Caliph Wathik.. He took place of Bukhtishu when he was banished to Jundisahpur by Watik.

Yahya (Yuhanna) son of Bukhtishu III

279 AH 892 CE Worked for Al Movaffaq Bellah. Was a translator from Greek to Syriac He wrote “ Ma Yahtaj Elayhe al-Tabib”

Ubaidulla I ibn Bukhtishu III

A Non Physician in a family of physicians.
Al Mukhtadir appoints Ubaidulla as finance officer, but his property is confiscated on his death by al Mukhtadir. His widow marries a physician and instructs her son Jibrail III about his fore fathers and indoctrinates him in Medicine.

Jibrail III

He was physician to Adud-ud-Dawla Daylami. After death of his mother he gets disinherited by his stepfather.

He moves to Baghdad where he receives his medical education and works at the famous Adudi Hospital. His fame reaches Persia after he cures the Ambassador from Kerman. Declines an invitation by the Fatimid al Aziz to go to Cairo, instead chooses to go to Maiyafarikin at invitation of Marwanid Mumahhid al Dawla Abu Mansur, who does not allow him and he to return

396 AH (1005 CE) He died in Mayafarikin

Ubaidulla II

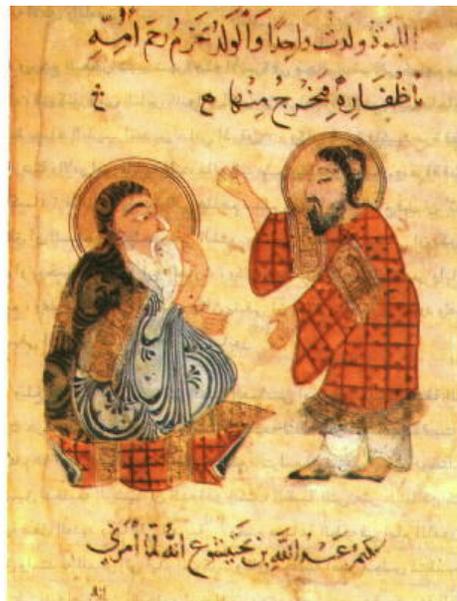
Abu Said Ubaidulla is son of Jibrail III was friend of Ibn Bultan literary works for him survive while works of his ancestors are lost. Notable: Tadhkirat al Hadir wa Zad al Musafir, Kitab al Khawatt Mudjarabb al Manafi and Manafi al-Hayawan and a treatise on Love as a disease. (Kitab al Ishk Maradan).described in greater depth below'

450 AH (1058 CE) He died.

Bukhtishu IV

Was physician of Caliph Moqtader and his son Al-Radi.

We will now proceed to describe the each of these distinguished physicians of this family and their contributions to the development of medicine in the Early Islamic Period.



*Picture of Gibril Ibn Bakhtyshu
with one of his patients 453 H./1061C
(<http://www.levity.com/alchemy/islam13.html>)*

Etymology:

According to **Ibn abi Usaybia** as elaborated in his ‘**Uyun al Anbaa**’³ (كتاب عيون الأنباء في طبقات الأطباء) the name ‘**Bukhtishu**’ means ‘*servant of Jesus*’. However more modern scholars consider the root of the word to be derived from pre Islamic Pahlavi (early Persian) language with **Bukhtag** meaning ‘*the one who is freed or delivered*’ and **Yishu** meaning ‘Jesus Christ’ Thus Bukhtishu meaning one who is freed or delivered by Christ.

Bukhtīshū‘I (Bukhtīshū‘ Senior) and Jibrail I (جبرائيل اول) (ibn Bukhtīshū‘ I):

Both these were the original members of the Bukhtishu family and practiced in Jundishapur. Not much is known about them. They are known by references in the descriptions of their sons and grandsons who became more famous by their association with the Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad and about whom more information is available.

Jurjis I (جرجيس or Jorjis, Georges) Ibn Jibrail I Bukhtīshū‘I

Grandfather of Jibrail II Bukhtishu. He was head of the medical school at Jundishapur. He was son of Bukhtishu I (senior).. He had earned himself a name as a physician of repute with several medical publications. When Caliph (Khalifa) Mansur (136-158 AH) became sick with a stomach ailment he summoned his court physicians. His own physicians could not cure his ailment. At this time Jurjis was heading the medical school and hospital in Jundishapur as their Chief Physician. By his publications, writings and performance as a physician he had earned a high reputation. Caliph Mansur was advised by his physicians to send for Jurgis from Jundishapur. An envoy was sent forthwith to fetch Jurjis.(148 AH 765 CE). Initially he refused but was threatened with death, if he did not comply. He then consented to come to Baghdad and placed his son Bukhtishu II in charge of the hospital in his absence. He was accompanied by two of his assistants Ibrahim and Isa ibn Shahla with whom hew came to Baghdad. He was brought in the presence of the Caliph who asked him several questions to ascertain his credentials. Jurjis had an impressive personality and talented speech. He satisfied the Caliph with his answers .The Caliph then described his symptoms to Jurjis, who listened to him carefully and stated that he would be able to treat the ailment. The Caliph was requested to submit a urine sample. After examining this Jurjis prescribed him medications that cured the Caliph.

The Caliph was very impressed and honored him with gifts and titles. He also gave him a cash rewarded of 10,000 dinars. Since Jurjis’s wife had not accompanied him the Caliph sent him three Roman slave girls. Jurjis accepted the money but returned the slave girls, citing that his religion forbade him from marrying other women, when his wife was still alive. This impressed the Caliph even more and he entrusted him the treatment of his entire clan. He fell ill in 152 AH 769 CE. Before allowing him to return to Jundishapur

the Caliph invited him to convert to Islam but he declined, saying that he wanted to return to the land of his fore fathers, when he died. Amused by his obstinacy, the caliph sent an attendant with Jurjis to ensure that he reached his destination safely. In return Jurjis sent him Isa ibn Sahl for attending to his medical needs as his son Bukhtishu II could not be spared from the Jundishapur hospital.

Bukhtīshū‘II (بختيشوع دوم) (d 185 AH 801 CE)

During the reign of Caliph al-Mahdi his son al-Hadi fell ill the younger Bukhtishu (Bukhtishu II) was summoned to Baghdad in 171 AH 787 CE and succeeded in curing the crown prince. The latter’s mother Khayzuran however favored her own physician Abu Koraish. In view of this the Caliph al Mahdi allowed Bukhtishu to return to Jundishapur.

In 171AH (787 CE) Caliph Harun ul Rashid suffered from severe headaches and had Bukhtishu II summoned again to Baghdad. After he cured him, he appointed him Chief physician in his court and head of a hospital he founded in Baghdad.. As a court physician he also attended the viziers especially the Barmakis. When he attended Jafar b Yahaya al Barmaki in 175AH (791CE) he recommended his son Jibrail as medical attendant.

He died in 185AH 801 CE.

Jibrail Ibn Bukhtīshū‘I (Jibrail II)(جبرائيل دوم) (d: 256AH 870 CE.)

Was the son of Bukhtishu II and the grandson of Jurjis Bukhtishu. He was an astute physician and earned a great repute in the practice of Medicine. He achieved great fame as a Bukhtishu. He was associated with several of the Caliphs but like most of the court physicians of his time, suffered from the vicissitudes of his masters. His father introduced him to the Barmaki Family, a family of viziers or ministers in the service of the Caliphs, and he became the personal physician of Ja'far the Barmakid. In 175 AH 791 CE .

He then entered into the service of the Barmaki family. However by successfully curing a favorite slave of Caliph Harun ul Rashid of a hysterical paralysis he won the confidence of the Caliph and was appointed his private physician in 190AH (805 CE). However during the last illness of Harun at Tus in Persia, he was too candid in the exercise of his duty, totally displeased his master and as a result fell in disgrace.

A Bishop whom the Caliph had consulted in place of him incited Harun still further against Jibrail and he was condemned to death. The Vizier al-Fadl b al-Rabi managed to prevent his execution and the abrogated the decree. Harun’s son al-Amin again appointed him as court physician. When the latter was over thrown by his brother al-

Mamun, Jibrail was again imprisoned and did not receive his freedom till 202AH (817 CE) when the vizier al-Hassan b Sahl required his services. Three years later he again fell into disgrace and was superseded by his son in law Mikhail. In 212AH (827 CE) al Mamun had again to send for him as Mikhail was unable to give advice regarding an illness of the Caliph.

He did not live long to enjoy the favor of his Master, who in gratitude of his rapid recovery replaced him in his office and in enjoyment of his property that had been confiscated. He died the following year .(256AH 870 CE). He was buried at the monastery of St Sergius cloister at al-Madain. (Ctesiphon)

He wrote various medical works and exerted much influence upon the progress of science in Baghdad. He was the most prominent member of the famous Bukhtishu family. He took pains to obtain Greek medical manuscripts and patronized the translators. He recognized the talent of Hunain Ibn Ishaq whom he commissioned to translate many original Greek Medical works.⁴

Yūḥannā ibn Bukhtīshū‘ **يوحنا ابن بختيسوع (279 AH 892 CE)**

Yuhanna ibn Bukhtishu was the illegitimate son of Jibrail Ibn Bukhtishu (d.256 AH 870CE) who was physician to the caliphs al-Ma'mun, al-Wathiq and Al-Mutawakkil in Baghdad. Yuhanna, who worked in Baghdad about 892CE, is known to have written a treatise on astrological knowledge necessary for a physician, but the treatise is now lost. It is uncertain whether he was in fact the author of a treatise on Materia Medica that is attributed to him in the extant copies, of which The National Library of Medicine has one. Yuhanna became Bishop of Mosul in 893 CE.

Bukhtīshū‘ III **(بختيشوع سوم)**

Bukhtishu III was son of Jibrail II, succeeded him. accompanied Mamun on his campaigns. in Asia Minor. During reign of al Wathik the second successor of al Mamun. His rivals have him banished to Jundishapur. He was summoned back to Baghdad in last illness of al Wathik but arrived after his death. Al Mutawakkil appointed him court physician and he practiced with great esteem. He lived in pomp and style comparable to Caliph Mutwakkil himself, but then was banished to Bahrain where he died in exile.

Ubaidulla I **(عبيدالله اول) ibn Bukhtīshū‘**

A Non Physician in a family of physicians. Al Mukhtadir appointed Ubaidulla as a finance officer, but his property was confiscated on his death by al Mukhtadir. His widow married a physician and instructed her son Jibrail III about his fore fathers and indoctrinated him into practicing Medicine.

Jibrail III (جبرائيل سوم) d: 1006 CE

Jibrail III was the son of Ubaydullah I ibn Bukhtishu III, a finance official for the Caliph al-Muktadir. After his father's death, his mother married another physician. Jibrail III began studying medicine exclusively in Baghdad, where he went penniless after the death of his mother. After treating an envoy from Kirman, he was called to Shiraz by the Buwayhid 'Adud al-Dawla but soon after he returned to Baghdad. He only left Baghdad for short consultations, even declining an offer from the Fatimid al-Aziz who wished to establish him in Cairo. Jibrail III died on June 8, 1006

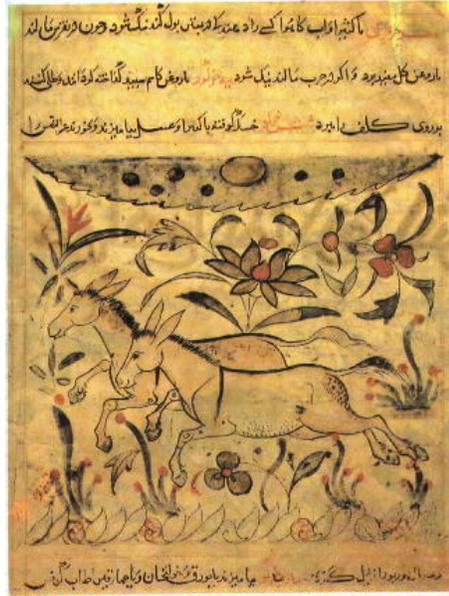
Ubaidullah Ibn Jibrail Ibn Bukhtīshū' or

Ubaidullah II (عبيدالله دوم)

Ubaidullah Ibn Jibrail Ibn Bukhtishu was one of the last descendants of the family of the Bukhtishus. His full name is recorded as Abu Said Ubaidullah b Jibrail b Ubaidullah b Bukhtishu b Jibrail b Bukhtishu b Jurjis b Jibrail. He left a work "*Ar-rauda at Tibbiyya*"⁵ containing fifty definitions of philosophical and medical subjects.⁶

His life has been recorded by Leclerc⁷ and Brockleman⁸. But the in depth record can be found in the descriptions of Ibn Abi Usaibiya⁹. He lived in Mayyafaraqin a town in upper Mesopotamia near Amida or Diyar Bakr. He was friend of Ibn Bultan and contemporary. He died in the year 1058 CE. The following of his works are extant:

1. "*Ar-rauda at Tibbiyya*" containing fifty definitions of philosophical and medical subjects.
2. The Merits of Physicians.
3. A Treatise on different kinds of milk.
4. On the right way to Preserve descent.
5. The Necessity of Respiratory motion.
6. Curiosity of Extemporaneous questions out of scientific principles of Medicine.
7. Memorial of the Resident and provisions of a traveler. *Tadhkiraat al Hadir wa Zad al Musafir* Of which the Medical Garden is an extract. written in 50 Chapters each explaining the use of a Philosophical term.
8. Special Book on the Science of Properties.
9. On the Nature the Properties and utility of the Organs of animals
10. On love as a disease.¹⁰
11. A missive on the Historical wok of a monk Harun Ibn Azzun.



***Persian Copy of Mansucrip named as
"Manaeh Al-Hiwan" by Ibn Bukhtishu or Uses of Animals
in the 8th century****

*<http://www.levity.com/alchemy/islam13.html>

We shall now progress to analyze some of the chapters written in the Tadhkirat which no doubt can be considered his major contribution. As stated already it comprises of 50 chapters on diverse subjects as “ *Kinds, Species Quantity and Quality ,Nature, Substance, Body, Spirit and the Soul, Elements and Humors ,Organs, Activity and Function ,Reason, Appetite and lust, Love Sensation, Imagination, Thought and Memory, Space and Time, Anger and Wrath, Motion, Knowledge, Conjecture, Argument ,Syllogism ,Crises, Voice ,Vision ,Sight, Pulse, Health and Disease, Cause, Symptoms, Nutriments and Remedy.*

It would be impossible to cover the contents of each of these Chapters in depth. We can examine a few of the more pertinent ones :In this work he quotes extensively from Greek Authors citing from translations of Hunain Ibn Ishaq and omits from Arabic authors who preceded him like the famous Al-Kindi and Al Farabi. It seems that he was unaware of the hilosophical works of his contemporaries including the Philosophical works of Ibn Sina, Al-Briunej and Ibn Haitam..

On the soul: The inspiration of this chapter is no doubt from the works of Plutarch,, Aristotle, Pythagoras, the schools of Thales ,Dichearchus , Anaxagorus, Heraclitus and Galen.

On Love: he quotes from various authors including the Greek author Themistius and the Indian Masaqsar and the Love theories of Aristotle and even quotation from a work off his forefather Jibrail entitled Kafi in which he points out that “love is a corruption caused by the influence of the senses, especially the sight on the rational soul which is subdued to a morbid passion. (like when a great king succumbs to the commands of a vile salve with whom he falls in love.

On sight his rendition totally reflects the thoughts and beliefs of the Greeks despite the fact that Ibn Haitham¹¹ had totally digressed and proposed the first truly scientific explanation of sight¹² being resultant from a ray entering the eye from an object and being perceived by the Retina rather than the theory held by the Greeks who had promulgated the concept that site resulted from a ray projecting from the eye and landing the object causing ot to be perceived.

It can thus be concluded that even and up to the time Ubaidullah (eleventh century) Greek philosophical thought and tradition had deeply influenced the Islamic scientific tradition and conduct and was taught and learnt by all Islamic scholars of the time, despite the fact that towards the end of the 12th century, Orthodox Scholasticism was gaining ground in Islamic Philosophy and Scientific tradition.



Ibn Bakhtishu's *Manafi' al-Hayawan*(**الحيوان منافع**), dated 12th century. Captions appear in Persian language.*

*Ref: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bukhtishu>

Conclusion of the Family of the Bukhtīshū's

The Family of Bukhtishu's was a long generation of Physician belonging to a long lineage of a very famous family that contributed much to the art, science in the practice of medicine for several centuries beginning with the earliest identifiable member being Bujkhtishu senior who lived in the early part of the second century of Hijra equivalent to the eight century CE and continued to the last recorded descended Bukhtishu IV who worked for Caliph Moqtader and his son Al-Radi in middle of the 11th Century CE.

Bibliography:

* Bukhtīshū's بختيشوع or Bukhtishu is the connotation by which we will be calling this notable family. To facilitate our typesetters we will be omitting the accent marks in their names when citing them in the body of the this article.

1. Nagamia, Husain '*Islamic Medicine History and Current Practice*': Journal of the INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF ISLAMIC MEDICINE (JISHIM) Vol.2 , No.4 - October 2003

³ Ibn Abi Usaibia '*Uyun, al-Anba'*' *Tabaqaat at Tibba'* ed. A. Muller Konigsberg, 1884, 3 vols ; and Cairo 1886, 2 vols.

⁴ Nagamia Husain and Poyan: '*Hunain Ibn Ishaq a physician translator par excellence:*' JIMA Vol: pp: 2008

⁵ Max Meyeroff "*An Arabic Compendium of Medico Philosophical Definitions.*" Isis

⁶ According to Max Meyeroff this work exists in several manuscripts found at Escorial, Gotha, British Museum, and NationalLibrary of Paris and was prepared and edited by Father Paul Sbath from manuscripts in his possession.

⁷ Leclerc L "*Histoire de le Medicine Arabe*" Paris 1876 p 372-4

⁸ Brocklemann C in *Encyclopedia of Islam*" Vol I 1913 p 601-2

⁹ Ibn Abi Usaibiya "*Uyun al Anba fi Tabaqaat at-tiiba*" (Sources of information about Medical men") Cairo 1882 (1299 AH) Vol 1 pp 148

¹⁰ Brocklemann C in *Encyclopedia of Islam*" Vol I 1913 p 601-2

¹¹ Stephens Bradley: "Ibn Hatham The first true Scientist."

¹² Ibn Haitham Al Manazir (The Vision)