

MANSUR IBN SAHLAN IBN MUQASHSHIR

A famous Christian physician—probably a Copt—who was attached to the court of the [Fatimid](#) caliphs. His scientific knowledge and experience became authoritative for many decades. In particular, al-‘Aziz (975-996) and [al-HAKIM](#) BI-AMR ALLAH (996-1021) honored him. In 995, he fell ill and was unable to appear at the palace. When he recovered, al-‘Aziz wrote him a letter in his own hand, filled with expressions of kindness and good wishes for a long life. This letter was reproduced by al-Qifti.

The Melchite [historian](#) Yahya ibn Sa‘id al-Antaki in his *Appendix* to the *Annals* of Sa‘id ibn al-Bitriq, composed before 1015 and then revised and completed as far as 1028, gave firsthand information, as he was himself a contemporary of these events. His account reads:

Al-Hakim [bi-Amr Allah] had the Christian staff of the government offices arrested, and they were thrown into prison on Monday the fourteenth day of the month of Jumada II of this same year (A.H. 393). They were subsequently freed, one week later, at the request of his physician Abu al-Fath [ibn] Sahlan ibn Muqashshir al-Nasrani. This physician was one of al-Hakim’s confidants, who had already received from al-‘Aziz a great fortune, an important position, and also particular favor and esteem. And [al-Hakim](#) restored them all to their former employ.

(Kratchkovsky, 1976, p. 464).

This date corresponds to Monday 20 March A.D. 1003. The text quoted shows the positive influence exercised by Abu al-[Fath](#) at the caliph’s court, and indicates he was still alive in the year 1003. Later in the text (pp. 480-81), the same historian [records](#) that when Abu al-[Fath](#) Mansur ibn Sahlan died, he was replaced by another Christian physician, [ISHAQ](#) IBN IBRAHIM IBN NASTAS, who advised [al-Hakim](#) to drink a little wine for his health. After some time Abu Ya‘qub also died, and al-Hakim once more banned wine. The [historian](#) then recounts an event which can be

dated during Lent 1007.

Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah also confirmed that Mansur ibn Sahlan died during the reign of al-Hakim. The date must have been between March 1003 and March 1007, probably around the year 1004.

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