The main goal of this study has been to learn about the practical medicinal uses of various substances by the members of the Jewish community of Cairo as a reflection of Mediterranean society as a whole. We need to assess this information in relation to the medical professions prevailing in this region in the medieval period and the contribution of the Arabs to medicine\(^1\) as well as pharmacy,\(^2\) mainly in the subject of this book i.e. medicinal substances.

In this chapter we discusses the reconstructed inventory of practical \textit{materia medica}, which is based upon documents such as prescriptions, lists of \textit{materia medica}, and ‘medical’ letters.\(^3\) We also consider the theoretical inventory of \textit{materia medica}, which is based on medieval medical books found in the Genizah. The presentation, analysis, and comparison of these two issues are the core of this chapter, although other related subjects are addressed too.

\textbf{A. Reconstructed inventory of practical materia medica}

As noted, the reconstructed inventory of practical \textit{materia medica} is based on medicinal substances that feature in prescriptions and letters written by medical practitioners of the Jewish community of Cairo, and recorded in lists of \textit{materia medica} written by pharmacists, drug sellers, and drug traders. These medicinal substances were identified, learned, arranged in a mini database and analysed.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Ali; Conrad; Savage-Smith, Medicine ; Hamarneh, Diet; Hamarneh, Sources; Johnstone.

\(^2\) Ali & Qadry; Hamarneh, Climax; Hamarneh, Development; Hamarneh, Origins; Hamarneh, Rise.

\(^3\) These were considered in detail in the previous chapter.

\(^4\) See the complete detailed list of practical M.M. in Part D, Appendix 1.
The inventory comprises 278 substances, of which 224 (80.6%), the great majority, are of plant origin; 31 substances (11.1%) are of inorganic origin, and 23 (8.3%) are of animal origin. The figures and their division by substance origin are set out in table 5.

Table 5  Total data of the inventory of practical *materia medica* of the medieval Genizah people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plant</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inorganic</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our main aim is to evaluate and analyze the figures and subdivisions of the reconstructed inventory of the Genizah people by comparing it with present-day traditional practical inventories of some ethnic groups, as well as traditional societies with a similar social background and of the same geographical area, namely the Middle East and North Africa. These data are from surveys of markets in Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Syria, and from inventories drawn up in studies of medicinal substances used by Jewish and Muslim ethnic groups. They are presented in Table 6.

Table 7 clearly shows that the size of the Genizah’s practical *materia medica* inventory (278 substances) is close to the average size (284) of the other inventories that appear in the table. The division of the contents of traditional inventories of present-day Middle Eastern societies and ethnic groups by substance origin is also similar, in absolute figures and percentages (see table 7).

*Analysis of the inventory of practical materia medica*

Table 5, 6 and 7 show that the reconstructed inventory is clearly of the usual size, as are its subdivisions according to substance origin. These subdivisions are treated in the next section, giving the figures and the history of the medicinal uses of each group (plant, inorganic, and animal origin).