

LETTER TO EDITOR

Hakim Seyyed Ismail Jorjani: An Iranian physician of Gorgan

Dear Editor,

Recently an article entitled “A Contemplation of the Geographical Origin of Seyyed Isma’il Jorjani” (Golshani, and Esmaili, 2021, pp. 137-46) has been published in the *Journal of Research on History of Medicine*, in which the authors have put forward a controversial idea on the birthplace of Seyyed Ismail Jorjani, one of the most prominent physicians in Persian medicine of the late eleven and early twelfth centuries in Iran. Persian medicine is an assortment of Iranian scientists’ medical knowledge at the Gondishapur Hospital and University, exported to Islamic civilization (Mahlooji, and Abdoli, 2021, pp. 199-202). This transfer was mediated by the House of Wisdom, or *Beit al-Hikma*, a major government Institute under the super-

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vision of caliphs (Mahlooji, and Abdoli, 2018, pp. 209-16). The authors of the article, first, give reference to some Iranian and European historians and writers. All of these scholars agree that Jorjani was born in Gorgan or Jorjan, between Tabarestan and Khorasan. However, the authors have questioned the idea for historical and linguistic reasons, and have traced his place of origin to Gorganj or Organj, the capital of Kharazm province in Transoxiana. A study of these reasons shows that the authors of the article hastily made such a claim, ignoring the evidence found in the text of Jorjani's most important work, *Zakhireh Khwarazmshahi*, and in other historical, geographical, and linguistic sources. The present paper can be considered a response to this claim. The authors of the present essay have given reference to appropriate documents, relying on Jorjani's works and first-hand historical and geographical resources to prove Gorgan as Jorjani's birthplace.

The first reason given in the article is based on the assumption that the Jorjan was an abandoned and possibly uninhabited area during the lifetime of Jorjani.

The source of this claim is *Nozhat al-Qolub*, written by Hamdollah Mostowfi of Qazvin (life: 680-750 AH), a famous Iranian historian and geographer. The authors quote Mostowfi, who said that the city was depopulated during the Al-Buwayh period due to cholera and was invaded by the Mongols in the thirteenth century, and hence it became a ruin during Mostowfi's time. Based on this information, it has been hypothesized that "Gorgan" could not have been a suitable place for cultivating a scientist like Jorjani.

A few points about this comment are worth noting. First, after this comment, Mostowfi mentions other points about the economic condition of Gorgan that are not under discussion in the article. He deals with the agricultural products of this region, such as cotton and silk, and describes their characteristics. It is logical to consider these two products as important and strategic products of Gorgan at that time, just as cotton now has such a role in Golestan province. Cultivation, maintenance, and harvest of these crops necessarily required a significant working population and teamwork. Mostowfi also refers to the garden products and fruits and considers grapes, elm, jujube, and dates of Jorjan as the best types of fruits and also talks about the two-year and ten-year-old trees that were taller than their counterparts in other lands. He goes on to discuss the religion of the inhabitants of Jorjan and considers most of the people of this land to be Shiites. He then deals with the outbreak of cholera during the Buwayhid period and the massacre during the Mongol Era, and uses the word "ruined" to describe the situation there, but does not consider that the place was uninhabited and emphasizes that



the population is now small. It is clear that population size is relative and is measured in comparison to other areas of the land. In addition, an important point to consider is that this judgment was made about the devastation and small population of Gorgan after the Mongol invasion, 250 years after the Jorjani era. Logically, the situation in Gorgan before the Mongol invasion was not comparable to that of the post-Mongol period and it is not possible to consider the opinion of just one author for another different period with this long distance.

Instead of relying on a geographical work written long after the Jorjani era, the authors should have considered first-hand resources of travelogues and geographical resources closer to the period under study; these resources, contrary to the information presented by the article under discussion, have provided a different account of the situation in Gorgan. In almost all these documents, including the travelogue of Abu Dolaf (341 AH) (Abu Dolaf, M., 1975, pp. 81-83), *Hodud al-Alam* (372 AH) (Hodud al-Alam, 1982, p. 143), Istakhri's *Mamalek va Masalek* (fourth century AH) (Istakhri, E., 1968, p. 173), and the Yaqut Hamavi's *Mojam al-Boldan* (616 AH) (Hamavi, Y., 2001, p. 33), Gorgan, the cradle of scholars and scientists, has been described as a region enjoying a prosperous climate and economy that relied on the production of silk textiles. To summarize the considerations of this section, it should be pointed out that even if we assume the authors' argument about the demographic and economic condition of Gorgan to be correct, Jorjani's birthplace or his education in ancient Gorgan can not be questioned at all. Furthermore, none of these conditions can be considered an obstacle to his early birth and upbringing in this area. It is possible that the great figures, who came from sparsely populated and poor areas, were brought up by the scholars of the same area or neighboring areas and became the source of great works.

Given the points made about the authors' arguments, once again, based on the textual, historical, geographical, and linguistic evidence presented above, it is more reliable to accept that Jorjani was from ancient Gorgan.

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