

LETTER TO EDITOR

The Report of *Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari* about Jondishapour (Gandhi Shapur) Hospital in the 9th Century

Dear Editor,

In the Sassanid empire (222-636 AD), a dynasty of Iran's history, the School of Jondishapour, as the most popular Medical school, a place for gathering scholars and physicians around the world, was developed by the Sassanid emperor (Zargaran, 2020, p. 65).

Several documents introduce the school of Jondishapour as the first medical school from the Islamic era and also its effects on developing medical sciences in the Islamic era and other parts of the world (Mahlooji, and Abdoli, 2018, pp. 209-218).

Some researchers believe that the school of Jondishapour did not exist at that time (Pormann,

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and Savage-Smith, 2014, p. 51).

Accordingly, the significant point in our research and in particular, Jondishapur (Gandhi Shapur) that was formed the main pillar of medical knowledge development in Islamic Civilization (Ghasemlo, F., et al, 2015, pp. 10-15).

Different research in the Sasanid empire provided that medical evolution and development in this period either in medical science or legal – administrative systems showed noticeable development (Zargaran, 2014, pp. 307-312). On one side, different medical schools, such as Manichaeism, Zoroastrian, were born in this period and on the other, Zoroastrian priests intended to reconstruct the Iranian ancient knowledge scattered all over the world during Alexander ruling. They translated different texts and books, including Indian, Greek and Roman books to the Pahlavi language. All these discoveries and achievements formed in a civil frame were spread and managed by a structured administrative system in Iran. Then, this established a foundation of knowledge, contributing to the development of Persian medicine in Islamic civilization. The Gandhi Shapur hospital in the west south of Iran was important evidence of it. The hospital and scientific center in Islamic civilization played an important role in transferring the medical knowledge and system as well as hospital pattern. Gandhi Shapur was an ancient city in Khuzestan province and was considered as one of the important cities in the Sasanid dynasty (Ahmadzadeh, 2008, pp. 1-11).

Several books and research documents are published about the history of this significant scientific structure and they showed that different medical books from the other languages into Arabic has been translated by Sassanid. So, they organized them, trained the physicians and wrote medical books, leading to the development of this knowledge.

Despite mentioned pieces of evidence, a historiography trend tried to deny the existence of this hospital and scientific center by distorting the related historical evidence and rewriting the regional changes. One of these documents is the book entitled “Medieval Islamic Medicine” by Peter E. Pormann and Emilie Savage-Smith (Pormann, and Savage-Smith, 2014, p. 51).

While Pormann and Smith’s thoughts have not considered the great documentation of this hospital’s antiquity, the researchers’ total denial of the evidence is questionable. One of these documents is *Ferdows al-Hekmah* by *Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari* in the first of the nine century. *Ali ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari* was an Iranian physician who gathered medical knowledge from Indian and Greek medicines as well as folk remedies. His com-



pilation is considered as the first medical encyclopedia in which different styles were mentioned. He pointed to a discussion with the rector of Gandhi Shapur hospital on the problems of abortion:

“I was informed that the head of Jondishapour Hospital, in the city of Ahvaz, protects the fetus by hanging a stone ...”(Ibn Raban Tabari, 2002, p. 35).

Some points in this discussion are considered important in historical research. First, *Tabari* used the word of Gandhi Shapur for this medical center. This word was naturally Persian and showed that the concept was known for a therapeutic and administrative system. Furthermore, he asked his questions from the hospital’s rector. This indicated that he respected him as a scientific authority. In addition, the word head was dedicated to a big organization. The owner of the big organization would be referred to as the owner and/or rector/ manager. This showed the importance of the hospital’s head as *Tabari* mentioned to him with the status he had in the hospital. The other important point is their discussion about folk remedies. They did not discuss Indian or Greek medicine. This showed that this hospital knew folk medicine as well as classic schools in that period.

It is necessary to mention that other aspects of the book “Ferdous Al-Hikmah” of the 8th century, has been mentioned by Pormann and Smith. However, for some unknown reasons, they did not refer to this book on this specific topic. Instead, they referred to a document from the thirteen century. We hope that more research about this hospital provides more information for researchers.

Conflict of interest

None.

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