

# ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## The Medical Advancements in Shiraz during the Ilkhanid Period: An Investigation of the Contributions of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi

### Abstract

Medical knowledge has developed in Shiraz since a long time ago due to the presence of expert and outstanding doctors. Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Sainuddin Elias Shirazi was one of the prominent doctors in Shiraz during the Ilkhanid period. He was revered by the rulers of Fars and the Ilkhanid governors. Teaching medical knowledge was one of Elias Shirazi's essential activities and had a significant role in maintaining and continuing the development of medical expertise in Shiraz. Elias Shirazi was the head of Darwaza Salam Hospital in Shiraz and had a role in managing medical affairs in Fars. After the death of Najmuddin Mahmoud, prominent doctors were raised from his family; the most important of which was Mansour bin Muhammad bin Ahmed bin Yusuf bin Elias Shirazi. Elias Shirazi wrote many works, some of which have survived. His most important and famous work was the book *Al-Hawi fi Elm al-Tadawi* or *Al-Hawi Saghir*. This research uses a descriptive-analytical method based on library resources to explore the role of Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Sainuddin Elias Shirazi in the advancement of medical knowledge in Shiraz through investigating his biography, actions and works.

**Key words:** Medical knowledge, Shiraz, Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Elias Shirazi, History of Medicine, Persia, Education, Biography

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Sedigheh Parvizinia (Ph.D.)<sup>1</sup>

1- History of Iran after Islam, History Department, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

### Correspondence:

Sedigheh Parvizinia  
History of Iran after Islam, History Department, Shiraz University, Shiraz, Iran

sedighehparvizinia@gmail.com

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## Introduction

There was an advanced medical system in Shiraz long ago called the Shiraz School (Golshani, et al, 2012, pp. 341-350). This school flourished during the period of Al-Boyeh's rule. Prominent doctors appeared in Fars province during this period, the most famous of whom was Abu Maher Shirazi (Golshani, 2012, pp.17-19). Azd-Dula Dilami built a hospital in Shiraz that had been actively working until the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

After the turmoil in the territory of the Seljuk government in 1148 AD, Sonqor bin Modud established the Atabakan Salqori government in Persia (Zarkoob Shirazi, 1971, p. 71). The Mongols invaded Iran during the reign of Atabakan Salqori. Atabak Abu Bakr bin Saad (1260-1226 AD) sent his nephew to the Mughal Qaan Oktay to declare his obedience and readiness to pay tribute. Of course, he sent the Mughal representatives to a place outside the city of Shiraz and appointed supervisors over them (Wasaf Shirazi, 1852, pp. 156-157). In 1258 AD, Ilkhanid government was established by Hulako. At this time, the Atabakan continued to rule over Fars until King Seljuk Salqori was killed in the war with the Mughals in 1263 AD. Later, Atabek Saad's daughter, Abash Khatun was elected as the ruler of Fars. In 1264 AD, Hulako ordered Abash-khatun to marry his son Mangutimur. Since then, the Ilkhanate appointees managed the financial and military affairs of Fars province. In 1284 AD, Abash Khatun was called to Tabriz, the capital of Ilkhanid government, and settled there. In the following, Atabakan Salqori's rule ended in Fars (Forouzani, 2014, p. 318). Ilkhanid government also declined with the death of Sultan Abu Said in 1335 AD.

The development of medical knowledge continued during the reign of Atabakan Salqori in Fars. In this period, Atabak Muzaffar al-Din Abu Bakr bin Saad (1226-1260 AD) and his vizier, Amir Moqrab al-Din Masoud, each established a hospital in Shiraz (Zarkoob Shirazi, 1971, pp. 84-85).

Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, the minister of the Ilkhanate, who was a physician, made many efforts to develop medical knowledge in Iran during the Ilkhanid period. The progress of medical expertise continued in Shiraz, and prominent doctors were raised in this period.

Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Sain al-Din Elias Shirazi was one of the famous doctors in the Ilkhanid period. The exact date of Elias Shirazi's death is unknown, but evidence shows that his death date was probably around 1320-1330 AD (Elias Shirazi, 2007, pp. 41-42). Elias Shirazi was an expert in various sciences but was famous in medicine. Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, the famous minister of the Ilkhanid government, respected him. According to the letter, Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani ordered to give some gifts to the scholars of the Ilkhanid regime. One of these scientists was Elias Shirazi (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, pp. 68-70).

So far, there has been no independent research on the role of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi in preserving and continuing the development of medical knowledge during the Ilkhanate period in Shiraz. Mohammad Taghi Mir (1969) has described the biography of Elias Shirazi in the book *Fars Famous Doctors*. Golshani et al. (2012)



have included some brief information about Elias Shirazi's biography in a study titled Shiraz Medical School from Al-Buye to the beginning of Safavid. In an article titled *the Importance of Anatomy knowledge in the Persian school of medicine in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Hijri centuries*, Fazlinejad and Tajmiri (2018) examined a work of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi called *Treatise on Anatomy*. This research aims to investigate the role of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi in advancing medical knowledge in Shiraz with the descriptive-analytical method by investigating his biography, actions, and works.

### 1- Professors

There is no information about the professors of Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Sainuddin Elias Shirazi. In a version of his *Ghiathiyah treatise*, which dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, his father is mentioned with the title of Fazel al-Atba. If the inclusion of this title is not due to the mistake of the scribes of this version (Elias Shirazi, 2007, p. 34), probably his father, Sainuddin was his most important teacher.

### 2- Students

Teaching medical science was among the most critical activities of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi. His nephew, Jalal, was one of his most famous students. Jalal was a poet and court physician of King Shoja Mozafari. Daulatshah Samarqandi has given a story about the preparation of medicine by Jalal Tabib for king Shoja in *Tadhkirat al-shu'ara* (Daulatshah Samarqandi, 2003, pp. 298-299). Jalal Tabib wrote a poem story called *Flower and Norouz*, a poem in which he poeticized the reverence for his uncle, Najmuddin Mahmoud. In the story of *Flower and Norouz*, Jalal Tabib mentioned his uncle as the Hippocrates of Time and the World's Master and listed the sages who are the masters of the world among his students (Tabib-e Shirazi, 2001, pp. 42-43,56). There are poems in Jalal Tabib's Diwan that show his expertise in medicine (Tabib-e Shirazi, 2010, p. 66).

Maulana Asiluddin was another student of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi. Maulana Asil al-Din was a writer in the field of medicine, and he had written a commentary on Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine*. Haj Zain al-Attar has written about Asiluddin's medical experiences in the book *Ikhtiyarat Badiei* (Ansari Shirazi, 1992, p. 94).

Elias Shirazi's fame and prestige in medicine influenced other family members to become interested in this science. One of the descendants of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi's brother named, Mansour bin Muhammad bin Ahmed bin Yusuf bin Elias Shirazi (died 1406 AD), caused a revolution in a branch of medical science called anatomy. He wrote an illustrated picture book on anatomy called *Tashreeh al-Abadan (Tashreeh Mansouri)* and caused a significant development in this field (Elgood, 1973, pp. 478-486).

### 3- Works

Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi wrote many books. Among his works are the



description of the chapters of Hippocrates, *Asrar al-Nikah*, a treatise on anatomy, a treatise on Rashidiyyah, *Risalah al-saljiah*, *al-Aghdhiyyah wa al-Sharba* (treatise on food and drink), *Al-Hawi fi Elm Tadawi* or *Al-Hawi al-Saqir* (Jonaid Shirazi, 1949, p. 277) and *Risalah Ghiathiyyah* or *Treatise on Medicine*. Elias Shirazi sent the book *Lataef Rashidiyyah* (*Rashidiyyah*) to Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah and presented gifts to appreciate him (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, pp. 231-232). *Rashidiyyah's* treatise is about the life of plants and animals, written in four articles and thirty chapters (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, Introduction, p. 22). Here, we will examine the current works of Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi in medicine.

#### **A. Al-Hawi in the science of treatment or Al-Hawi minor**

The book *Al-Hawi Fi Elm Tadawi* or *Al-Hawi Saqir* is the most important and famous book of Elias Shirazi. *Al-Hawi Saqir* book is written in five articles. The first, second, and third articles are about diseases. The fourth article is about singular drugs based on the alphabets. And the fifth article is about combined herbs and their composition and application (Elias Shirazi, n.d.a, pp. 1-446). It is mentioned in the introduction of *Al-Hawi*, that this book was written based on the famous medicines available in markets and shops (Elias Shirazi, n.d.a, p. 2). Therefore, Elias Shirazi was aware of the importance of providing medicine. This book became one of the most important medical books and has been used by prominent doctors.

#### **B. Risalah Ghiathiyyah or Treatise on Medicine**

Elias Shirazi wrote the *Risalah Ghiathiyyah*, or *Treatise on Medicine* in Persian, at the request of a person named Ghiath al-Din, who was probably one of the rulers of Fars (Elias Shirazi, n.d.c, pp.12, 13). *Risalah Ghiathiyyah*, or *Treatise on Medicine*, is written in four articles. The first article is on the theoretical science of medicine, with seventeen chapters. The second article is on the practical science of medicine and the description of diseases written in fifty-nine chapters. This article states the cause, symptoms, treatment and suitable food for each disease. The third article about singular herbs is written in twenty-eight chapters in alphabetical order. The fourth article of *Ghiathiyyah* treatise is about combined herbs written in twenty-two chapters (Elias Shirazi, 2007, pp. 53, 79, 130, 219, 252). In many cases, the phrases used in *Risalah Ghiathiyyah* are similar to the works of Seyyed Ismail Jorjani (who died in the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD). Nevertheless, *Ghiathiyyah* treatise is an independent work in many cases, especially in *Tadavi* (treatment) and *Qarabadin* (pharmacology) (Elias Shirazi, 2007, pp. 55, 56).

#### **C. Tohfa Al-Hukama**

The book of *Tohfa Al-Hukama* has four articles. The first article is on the theoretical science of medicine and the second one is on the description of diseases and their treatment methods. He dealt with singular herbs in the third article, and in the fourth article, he dealt with combined herbs (Elias Shirazi, n.d.d, pp.1-146). It seems that



the book of *Tohfa-ul-Hukama* and *Risalah Ghiyathiyyah* were originally the same because they have a few differences.

#### **D. Treatise on Anatomy**

Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi wrote a treatise on the science of anatomy. Najmuddin Mahmud's *Risalah Fi Tashrih* consists of four articles. The first article is about the anatomy of bones in 23 chapters. The second article, including 19 chapters, is about the anatomy of nerves, arteries, and veins. The third article is about the anatomy of the muscles in 28 chapters, and the fourth article is about the anatomy of the body organs in 25 chapters. Najmuddin Mahmoud describes the heart's structure in the first chapter of the body organs. It seems that he followed Aristotle's views in the field of anatomy; because he considered the heart to be the origin of sensation and movement according to Aristotle's theory and considered it superior to other body organs (Fazlinejad and Tajmiri, 2018, p. 9). Najmuddin Mahmood's treatise on anatomy was not particularly innovative. Nevertheless, Elias Shirazi, the pioneer of Mansour ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Yusuf ibn Elias Shirazi (died 1406 AD), was one of his family members. Mansour Ibn Muhammad wrote an illustrated book called *Tashrih Al-Abadan*, which caused significant progress in the knowledge of anatomy (Elgood, 1973, pp. 478-486).

#### **E. Ma'kul and Mashrub (Al-Aghdhiyyah va Al-Atameh)**

In the introduction of *Ma'kul and Mashrub* (Food and Drink), Elias Shirazi stated that he designed it according to Ibn Abdoun's *Al-Sahha Calendar*. He initially wrote a short introduction in *Al-Aghdhiyyah va Al-Atameh* (Food and Drinks) books and then drew a table to explain all kinds of foods and drinks. On the right side of the page, he has drawn a table with six boxes in a column and eight boxes in a row. In the first column of the table, the type of food or drink is mentioned, and the names of foods are listed below it. Its discretion, nature, benefits, harm, and elimination of its damage are mentioned in front of each food on the right side. On the left side of the page, eight tables are drawn in front of each food, and various explanations are provided (Figure 1) (Elias Shirazi, n.d.b, pp. 1-82).

The method of preparation, cooking, consumption, and therapeutic properties of the followings are explained in *Al-Aghdhiyyah va Al-Atameh* (Foods and drinks): meats, animal products, beans, vegetables, snacks, cereals, pieces of bread, fruits, syrups, jams, oils, foods, and sweets. Also, there is some information about the places for preparing some foods and where plants grow in this book (Elias Shirazi, n.d.b, pp. 1-82).

#### **4- Contributions of the Works**

*Al-Hawi Fi Elm al-Tadawi* written by Elias Shirazi became a significant work used by doctors to educate and treat patients. A famous physician named Muhammad bin Muhammad Abdullah bin Ubaidullah bin Mahmoud came to Shiraz in 1496 AD to study medicine. He wrote the book *Tohfe-Khani*; in that book, he quoted a story from Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi* about the surgery of a young man who had kidney stones

(Ubaidullah bin Mahmoud, 2004, p. 492). This article shows that the book *Al-Hawi Fi Elm al-Tadawi* was one of the scholarly sources of physicians in Shiraz.



Figure 1. A page from the book *Ma'kul and Mashrub* (Elias Shirazi, n.d.b, pp. 47-48)

A physician named Ali ibn Sheikh Muhammad ibn Abdurrahman (probably in the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD) obtained a copy of Elias Shirazi's *Ghiathiyya* treatise in the Caucasus and wrote that book in poetry. Of course, he made some changes to the contents of the book and added some notes to it. He called the *Ghiathiya*'s collection of poems as *Jawahar-ul-Maqal* (Elias Shirazi, 2007, pp. 57-60). This shows the dispersion of Elias Shirazi's works in different regions and the validity of his works years after his death.

Muhammad bin Yusuf Heravi (died 1531 AD) was a prominent physician from Herat in the late Timurid period. He wrote a book called *Ain Al-Hayat*. Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi* (Heravi and Shirazi, 2007, pp. 26, 28, 72, 77, 82-113) is one of the books used as a resource for *Ain Al-Hayat*. For example, Heravi has written some information about the properties of the lily plant, citing Elias Shirazi (Heravi and Shirazi, 2007, p. 60).

Mahdi Ibn Ali Naqi Sharif wrote the book *Zad al-Mosaferin* at the end of the Safavid period. This book is about the needs of travelers for the health and the treatment of diseases. The review of this book shows that Sharif had a copy of Elias Shirazi's



*Al-Hawi* book and has used it (Ali Naqi Sharif, 2008, p. 83).

Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi fi Elm al-Tadawi* book has been one of the crucial sources used by Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Aqili Alavi Shirazi, a well-known physician of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the text named *Qarabadin Kabir*, he has repeatedly cited the therapeutic prescriptions of Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi* (Aqili Alavi Shirazi, 1843, p. 160; Aqili Alavi Shirazi, 2006, pp. 100, 159, 194, 209, 228, 266, 267, 273, 301; Aqili Alavi Shirazi, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 595-902; Vol. 2, pp. 903-1287). Mohammad Azam Nazem Jahan (died in 1902) who was an Iranian doctor living in India, also referred to Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi* in many cases (Nazem Jahan, 2008, Vol. 1, pp. 1-555, Vol. 2, pp. 1-569, Vol. 3, pp. 1-761, Vol. 4, pp. 1-697), which indicates the use of this book in India.

### **5- Governmental Jobs and Responsibilities in the Hospital**

Ilkhans were interested in medical science. Ghazan and Öljaitü established hospitals. Ghazan built hospitals in Raba'a Rashidi and Shanbe Ghazan in Tabriz, which had qualified doctors and well-equipped pharmacies (Khandmir, 1993, pp. 156-157, 160; Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1977, pp. 145-149).

During the Ilkhanid period, Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, the minister of the Ilkhanid government and a physician himself, made many efforts to improve medical knowledge in Iran. The letters of Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani's correspondence show his actions and activities to supply medicine and equipment for Iranian hospitals (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, pp. 65-67, 176-178, 235-236).

Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani has entrusted the management of Darwaza Salam Hospital, which was one of the buildings of Atabakan Salqori era in Shiraz to Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi in a letter sent to him (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, pp. 231-234). Darwaza Salam or Darb Salam or Darwaza Shah Da'i is located on the south side of Shiraz and got its name from a Sufi named Sheikh Salam bin Abdullah buried nearby (Khoobnazar, 2001, pp. 181-182, 198, 309). Atabak Abu Bakr bin Saad who was one of the governors of Atabak Salqori, had built a hospital at Darwaza Salam in Shiraz and had determined some endowments for it (Zarkoob Shirazi, 1971, p. 85). Most likely, the hospital mentioned in Khwaja Rashiduddin's letter is Atabak Abu Bakr Hospital.

Darwaza Salam hospital had been deteriorating, and Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Elias Shirazi was assigned to repair it. Khwaja Rashid al-Din Fazlullah ordered that Najmuddin Mahmoud be given a stipend yearly to appreciate his services in this hospital. According to this order, ten thousand dinars of money, some clothes and textiles, a horse, and remittance of some wheat, barley, and rice had to be paid every year to Elias Shirazi, obtained from the properties of Ramjard, Firozabad, and Beyza (Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamedani, 1979, pp. 231-234).

Najmuddin Mahmoud Elias Shirazi paid particular attention to the management of drug supply. In the introduction of Elias Shirazi's *Al-Hawi* book, it is stated that this book is based on famous medicines available in markets and shops (Elias Shirazi,



n.d.a, p. 2) (Figure 2). Also, Najmuddin Mahmoud paid attention to the issue of providing medicine for needy patients. He paid for the medications needed by poor patients (Jonaid Shirazi, 1949, p. 277).

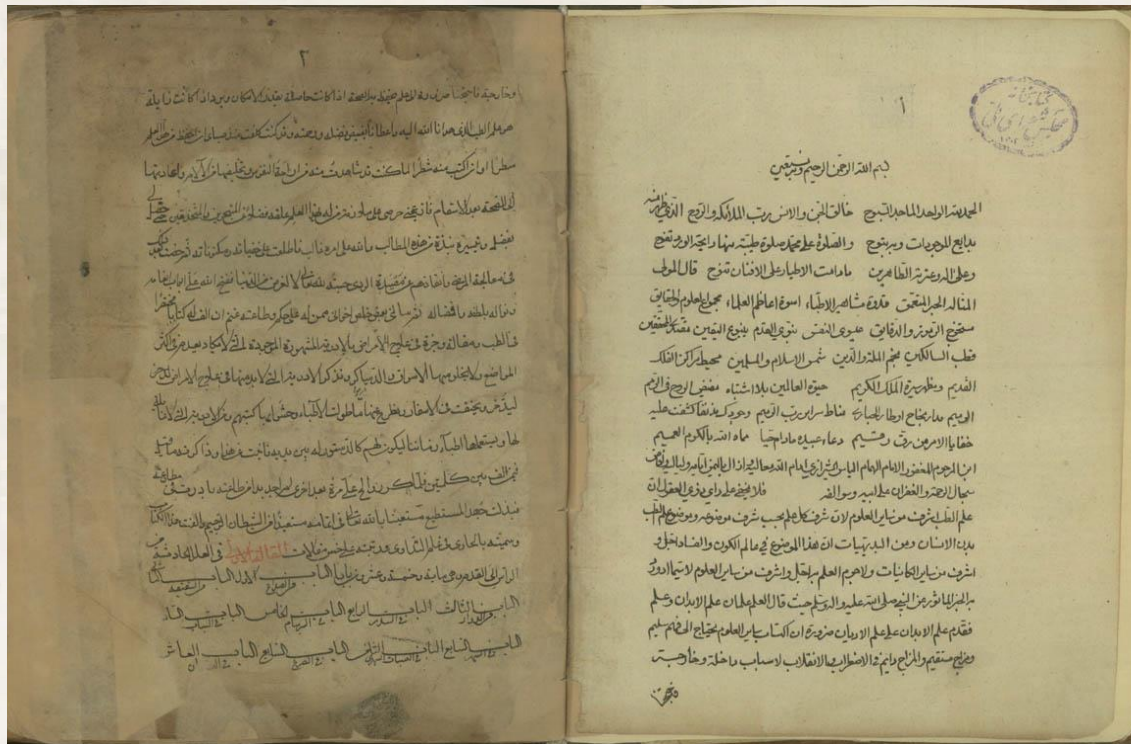


Figure 2. Introduction to the book *Al-Hawi Fi Elm Tadawi* (Elias Shirazi, n.d.a, p. 2).

**Conclusion**

Najmuddin Mahmoud bin Sainuddin Elias Shirazi was one of the prominent doctors in Shiraz during the Ilkhanid period. He has contributed significantly to the advancement of medical knowledge in Shiraz. One of the crucial activities of Elias Shirazi was teaching medical knowledge. Jalal Tabib was one of his most famous students. Elias Shirazi was the head of Darwaza Salam Hospital in Shiraz and paid attention to the issue of providing medicine, especially for the poor. Elias Shirazi wrote several works, the most important and famous of which is *al-Hawi fi Elm al-Tadawi*. This book has become an essential medical source. Among his other pieces of work in the field of medicine are *Risala Fi Tashrih*, *Risala Ghiathiyyah*, *Tohfa Al-Hukama*, and *Risala Ma'kul* and *Mashrub*.

**Conflict of Interest**

None.

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