

LETTER TO EDITOR

Kavad's, the Sassanid King, Contribution to Making Khuzestan Region Iran's Medical Hub in the Early 6th Century CE

Dear Editor,

On November 3, 2017, Jundishapur University received official recognition from UNESCO as the world's oldest university. Renowned for training physicians in ancient Iran, this university town peaked in prosperity during the Sassanid Empire (Daneshfard, Naseri, and Ghaffari, 2022). The Sassanid Empire, which ruled Persia for more than 4 centuries, from 224 AD to 637 CE, marked the end of the ancient (pre-Islamic) era in Iran and the last Iranian empire before the Arab Muslim invasion of Iran in the 7th century CE. The Sassanid era was characterized by a strong emphasis on wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge in various scientific disciplines, particularly medical sciences (Zargaran, 2019). Jundishapur was one of the most important scientific centers, including a university and hospital, located in the southwest of this empire (Zargaran, 2014; O'Farrell, 2021). This center attracted scholars and students from diverse

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nationalities and religions, such as Indians, Syrians, Romans, Greeks, and Arabs, fostering a rich environment for teaching and learning (Abdoli, and Mahlooji, 2022; Abdoli, et al, 2017). The most well-known Jundishapur-related event during the Islamic era may have been the physicians' migration from this city to Baghdad and the start of the scientific movement there. They transferred the structure of Jondishapour, and the Bayt al-Hikma center was established in Baghdad based on this pattern (Mahlooji, and Abdoli, 2018).

In this letter, we aim to introduce a reference to explain the role of Jondishapur in the spread of medical knowledge as a scientific hub in the Sassanid era. A recently found manuscript from the start of the 10th century AD, "Tabaghat Al-Muhaddithin Besbahan va Al-Wardin Alaiha," authored by Abulsheikh Esfahani, contains a report that indicates Jundishapur contributed to the spread of medical knowledge by sending some of its physicians to other cities in Persia.

Abu Mohammad Abdullah bin Mohammad bin Jafar bin Hayyan, also known as Abul Sheikh Isfahani, was born in or around 886. Following his initial education in Isfahan, he continued to pursue additional education in several cities, including Basra, Baghdad, Mosul, Mecca, and Medina. He acquired extensive historical knowledge from distinguished scholars of that time and passed away in 979 at the age of 96 (Abu al Shekg al Esfahani, 2024).

This book contains a report about the construction of various Sassanid towns, highlighting the strategies employed by Sassanid Emperors to promote their prosperity. One essential approach involved transferring distinguished individuals, including merchants, scientists, and artisans, from one city to another. Moreover, the town of Jundishapur has been mentioned in this context.

The book *Tabaghat Al-Muhaddithin Besbahan va Al-Wardin Alaiha* gives us historical details regarding establishing numerous cities in ancient Iran. The book's first chapter of the first volume discusses Kavad's efforts to organize his country. Kavad was the King of the Sassanid dynasty who ruled Persian from 488 to 531 (Börm, 2022, p. 25). The author of the book mentioned that Kavad conducted forced migration of various trades to enhance the prosperity of different regions of the country and also transferred several prominent people from one location to another to boost the prosperity of less developed cities. Notably, the author mentions the relocation of several physicians from Jundishapur to the cities of Susa and Shushtar (Ibn Mahammad, 920). The reference to these individuals as "Jundishapur Physicians" suggests that they were regarded as a distinct social group, recognized for their medical expertise at the time. This term would later appear in Islamic scriptures as well. Moving some of these physicians to Susa and Shushtar in Khuzestan, Kavad opens up the prospect of using their medical expertise across a larger geographic region. While the text does not explicitly specify which Kavad executed this transfer, historical data points to Kavad I as the likely orchestrator of this initiative (Börm, 2022, p. 25).

Transferring the influential elite from an active society to an inert city for the destination city's development was an important notion. Given the close proximity of



Jundishapur to the cities of Shushtar and Susa, it is plausible that Kavad's intention behind this move was to expand Jundishapur's medical academic community and establish a hub for the education of additional physicians.

This transfer has likely served as the foundation for Jundishapur medicine to establish a closer relationship with the people of Khuzestan. Perhaps due to this transfer, the term "Khuzi" emerged, referring to a type of medicine practiced in these regions. This contributed to Khuzestan becoming a hub for medical education in Iran, which can be attributed to the ingenuity of Kavad I. Further research and documentation are necessary for confirmation of this theory.

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Authors' Contribution

Kamran Mahlooji collected and analyzed the data and wrote the draft of the article. Shahram Jalilian and Arman Zargaran formed the idea and corrected the draft. They also analyzed the results and were the supervisors of the work. All authors read and approved the final version of the work.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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