

CONFERENCE PAPER

Jamal al-Din al-Aqsarai and *Hal al-Mujez*

Abstract

Jamal al-Din al-Aqsarai, a 14th century Iranian physician who lived and worked in Aqsaray (modern-day Turkey), is recognized for his scholarly commentary on *Hal al-Mujez*, a medical treatise by Ibn al-Nafis rooted in Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*. This study is review-based research, compiled through the analysis of scholarly sources available in libraries and information centers. *Hal al-Mujez* is considered one of the most famous and authoritative commentaries due to its ease and clarity. It was widely known and frequently used by physicians, serving as one of the most prevalent educational resources for traditional medicine in India. Understanding physicians like Aqsarai will significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of the medical history of both the Iranian and Ottoman civilizations.

Key words: Iran, Turkey, Traditional Medicine, History of Medicine, Ottoman Empire, Jamal al-Din al-aqsarai



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Introduction

Medicine in Islamic civilization was regarded as more than a mere art of healing; it was deeply intertwined with philosophical wisdom and intellectual inquiry. This dynamic and evolving body of knowledge was profoundly shaped by the political, cultural, and social contexts of each historical

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Aliakbar Vatanparast (M.Sc.)¹ 
Nafise Shaabani (Ph.D. Candidate)¹
Faranak Alembizar (Ph.D. Candidate)^{1,2} 

1- Department of History of Medicine, School of Persian Medicine, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
2- Scientific Student Association of History of Medicine, Pharmacy and Veterinary, Student Scientific Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

Correspondence:

Faranak Alembizar
Department of History of Medicine, School of Persian Medicine, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran; Scientific Student Association of History of Medicine, Pharmacy and Veterinary, Student Scientific Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran
e-mail: alembizarfaranak@gmail.com

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period. Its legacy is preserved in a rich corpus of written works—many of them commentaries and interpretations of foundational texts, most notably Avicenna’s *Canon of Medicine*. Despite the intellectual value of these works, numerous authors and their contributions have remained obscure or anonymous. One such figure is Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Aqsarai. His significant commentary on Ibn Nafis’s *Mujez al-Qanun*, titled *Hal al-Mujez*, reflects both the depth of scholarly engagement and the continuity of medical thought in the post-Avicennian tradition. This article aims to shed light on the scholarly legacy of Jamal al-Din Aqsarai and examine the significance of his work, *Hal al-Mujez*, within the broader framework of Islamic medical literature.

Materials and Methods

This research is a review-based study analyzing texts from reliable academic sources. Initially, relevant Persian and English keywords (*Hal al-Mujez fi al-Tib*, *Hal al-Mujez*, *Sharh al-Mujez*, *al-Aqsara’i*, *Jamal al-Din al-Aqsara’i*) were systematically queried in academic databases. Additionally, the necessary content extracted from *Hal al-Mujez* was compiled and integrated with categorized data from scholarly articles and books. This combined material formed the foundation of the written manuscript.

Discussion

Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Aqsarai

Jamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Aqsarai was a distinguished 14th century Iranian physician. His nisba, “Aqsarai,” derives from his migration to Aqsarai, in present-day Turkey. He traced his lineage to the eminent scholar Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (Imam Fakhr al-Razi) and was regarded as a fourth-generation descendant. Hence, in some sources, his full name appears as Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Fakhr al-Din Aqsarai (Tabrizi, 2004, p. 329). Aqsarai was a prominent intellectual during the reign of Sultan Murad I (1360–1389 CE) of the Ottoman Empire. He was a learned and pious scholar, proficient in Arabic, religious sciences, and rational sciences (Tash-i-koprazade, 1975, pp. 14–15). He completed his formal education in medicine and jurisprudence in Egypt (Al-Rahman, 2004, p. 71). In his medical writings, Aqsarai articulates two primary motivations for pursuing medicine: first, the nobility and importance of the science itself, which addresses the critical need to treat diseases; and second, the substantial divine reward associated with practicing this noble discipline (Aqsarai, 2008, pp. 8–9). He later served as an instructor at the al-Selsele School in the Karaman region. According to the school’s founding conditions, only those who had memorized al-Jawhari’s authoritative Arabic dictionary, *al-Sihah*, and demonstrated excellence in various sciences were permitted to teach there. Aqsarai met these rigorous criteria and was consequently appointed to the position. His students were stratified into three hierarchical groups:

- The lowest group, *al-Mashshā’iyya* (Peripatetics), consisted of students who walked alongside his horse during lessons, learning through direct observation and conversation.
- The intermediate group, *al-Rawāqiyyīn* (Stoics), consisted of students who resided in the school’s portico (riwaq). The term riwaq was adopted from the tradition of ancient philosophers.
- The highest tier comprised those who resided within the school’s inner chambers. His teaching method was structured in stages: he instructed the Mashshā’iyya while walking,



then dismounted to teach the *Rawāqiyyīn* in the portico, and finally entered the school building to instruct the students of the inner circle.

Aqsarai authored numerous valuable works across a range of disciplines, including medicine, philosophy, logic, jurisprudence, hadith, and literature. His notable contributions include:

- A commentary on Zamakhshari's *Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq al-Tanzil (The Discoverer of Revealed Truths)* on the *Qur'an*;
 - A commentary on al-Qazwini's *al-Idah fi al-Ma'ani wa al-Bayan* in rhetoric;
 - A commentary on al-Anmuthaj in morphophonemics;
 - Marginal notes on Ibn al-Sa'ati's commentary;
 - A commentary on al-Baydawi's *Ghayat al-Quswa*; and
 - A commentary on Ibn Nafis's *Mujez al-Qanun* (Al-Rahman, 2004, p. 71).
- He passed away in Aqsaray in 1373 CE (Tash-i-koprazade, 1975, pp. 14–15).

Commentary on Mujez al-Qanon (Summary of Canon)

Aqsarai is especially renowned for his commentary on *Mujaz al-Qanun*, an abridged version of Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, authored by Ibn Nafis in the 13th century. Although it was uncommon to compose commentaries on abridged texts, *Mujaz* attracted considerable scholarly attention, resulting in multiple interpretations and expositions. Aqsarai's commentary, known as *Sharh al-Aqsarai*, is widely regarded as one of the most authoritative and accessible interpretations of *Mujaz al-Qanun*, owing to its systematic structure and clarity. It gained considerable popularity, particularly in India, among physicians and served as a primary educational resource for traditional medicine.

Motivations and Sources Behind *Hal al-Mujez*:

Jamal al-Din Aqsarai articulates two primary motivations for composing *Hal al-Mujez*: to facilitate student learning by simplifying the complexities of the original text, and to attain divine reward. He titled the work *Hal al-Mujez (The Clarification of al-Mujez)* to address and resolve the conceptual challenges found in Ibn Nafis's abridgment of the *Canon*. In writing this commentary, Aqsarai adhered to well-established and reputable methods in both therapeutics and pharmacology. He drew extensively on authoritative sources, including Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*, Rhazes's *al-Hawi*, Haly Abbas's *al-Maliki (The Royal Book)*, as well as the works of Najib ad-Din Samarqandi and other notable scholars.

The book is systematically organized into four sections:

1. The first section addresses the foundational principles of the two branches of medicine: theoretical and practical.
2. The second section discusses simple and compound drugs, and foods.
3. The third section enumerates diseases specific to each organ, detailing their causes, symptoms, and treatments.
4. The fourth section covers diseases that are not organ-specific, likewise explaining their causes, symptoms, and treatments (Aqsarai, 2008, pp. 8–9).

Conclusion

Jamal al-Din Aqsarai exemplifies the profound scientific and civilizational connections between Iran and the Ottoman Empire as a physician-philosopher within the Islamic civilization. His life and scholarly contributions bear witness to the free and dynamic



exchange of knowledge and thought across the Islamic world, transcending political boundaries. A deeper understanding of physicians like Aqsarai significantly enriches the historiography of medicine in both Iranian and Ottoman contexts. (Figure 1)

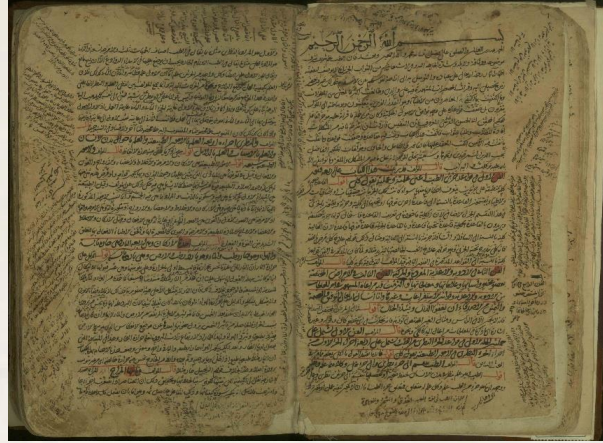


Figure 1. A page from Aqsarai's book *Hal al-Mujez* (Aqsarai, n.d., p. 2)

Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of this study, as well as to the collection of materials and interpretation of the results. The research team have examined and endorsed the final version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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