

A Review of The Books Composed in Unani Medicine from 462 BC to 800 AD

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Abstract-This study has been undertaken to compile a monograph on the books written by Unani Physicians from 462 BC to 800 AD in chronological order. This work was carried out at the CCRAS-National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage (NIIMH), Hyderabad. NIIMH has the mandate to work and preserve the heritage of all medical sciences at CCRAS-NIINH, Ministry of AYUSH, Gov. of India, Hyderabad, India. The details of the works of eminent authors of Unani literature along with their brief biographical accounts are mentioned in this monograph.

Keywords: History of Medicine, Unani medicine

INTRODUCTION

The Unani Medical system has a huge reservoir of literature composed by various authors, and many of these authors require a large book because of their glorious and distinguished works. For some authors, not a massive book but huge volumes of books will be required and winding up their works and introducing them will not be an easy task for a researcher. When I started studying the history of books in Unani Medicine, I noticed that there is an ocean of literature composed during the last two thousand years and above. I was greatly impressed by the marvelous works carried out by Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman on the history of medicine, more so because there was no book on this topic in the English language. The Unani system of Medicine has a huge reservoir of literature composed by various authors of which many personalities require regular books because of their glorious and distinguished works. For some figures, not a massive book but huge volumes of books will be required and winding up their works and introducing them will not be an easy task for a researcher.

HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN A GLANCE

It is reported that the first recognized physician in the history of medicine was Asclepius I who lived in ancient Greece around 5500 BCE. Subsequent

Asclepius, Pharaoh Amun of Ancient Egypt was considered a God by the Egyptians because he could cure many diseases. Famous physicians, who came just after Asclepius and Pharaoh Amun, were Horus, Menes, Bermanedes, Plato, Asclepius II, Hippocrates, Galen, etc. The works of Hippocrates and Galen were composed in Greek and Latin languages but they were translated into Arabic during the Muslim rules. During the early days of Muslim rules, established folk healers practiced ancient medicine and surgery based upon information inherited from their forefathers or through personal experience. With this knowledge, they were capable of treating some prevalent diseases and caring for wounded soldiers on the battlefield. During the Umayyad period, they attempted to translate some scientific books, but serious efforts for translations began at the Baitul Hikmat (House of Wisdom) (fl. 775 AD) in Baghdad, where expert physicians and numerous translators were engaged. Baitul Hikmat was known as the Grand Library of Baghdad. Many scientific and medicinal books by important Authors were translated during this era such as Pythagoras, Badighorus (d. 495 BC), Plato (d. 348 BC), Aristotle (d. 322 BC), Diocles (d. 295 BC), Praxagoras of Cos (fl. 295 BC), Herophilos (fl. 280 BC), Erasistratos, Hippocrates, Euclid, Plotinus, and Galen, etc. Many translators were employed like Georgis Ibn Jibril Ibn Bakhtyashu, Hunayn Ibn Ishaq Abadi, his son Ishaq Ibn Hunayn and his nephew Hūbaish Al-A'asam. Several major medical encyclopedias were compiled based on the knowledge gained from the translation of Greek, Persian, Indian, and Syriac books.¹ During the early days of Muslim rules, many original books were also composed in the Arabic language and they were translated from Arabic into Latin by famous translators like Gerard of Cremona (1147-1187 CE), Andreas Alpagu (fl. 1547), Constantine the African (d. 1098) and others. They translated several major medical encyclopedias into Latin, such as "Book of the Ten Treatises on the Eye" by Hunayn Ibn Ishaq, Al-

Hawi by Al-Razi, Kamil al-Sana by Majusi (d. 994 CE), Al-Qanun by Ibn Sina, Al-Tasrif by Al-Zahrawi, etc. The Latin translation of those books remained the main source of teaching material in European Universities till the 16th century. Therefore the medical principles inherited especially from the Greeks provided continuity to professionally learned medical practice throughout medieval Muslim countries. ²

Early medicine

Since the birth of human beings, they have searched for food as well to solve the problems of disease and death. They may have searched through a process of trial and error on which plants could be used as medicine. Lucky charm and superstition played a large part in medicine in ancient times. Administration of a plant-origin remedy by mouth was accompanied by a magic spell or charm. The root of amulets and talismans widespread in modern times goes to the ancient origin.

Mesopotamia

It is the region in the Tigris-Euphrates valley that hosted the earliest known civilization. The earliest known civilization in the historical region of southern Mesopotamia is Sumer. The cities that emerged at the time were Ur (founded ca 4000 BCE), Uruk, and Babylon. The Code of Hammurabi (ca 1750 BCE) belongs to the Mesopotamian civilization of Sumer, Assyria, and Babylon. The Sumerians were highly developed in astronomy and Metallurgy. The vast progress in Mesopotamia was part of the common heritage of mankind. The link of the present Unani System of Medicine goes to this earliest civilization of Mesopotamia.

Ancient Egypt

The Egyptian civilization (ca 3000 BCE to 300 CE) was developed after the Mesopotamians. Egyptian medicine, practiced in the second millennium BC, was the most sophisticated in ancient times, and some statues from around 2500 BC indicate that a surgical operation was in progress. Imhotep, an Egyptian physician, and architect (d. ca 2950 BCE) was considered the high priest of the sun God Ra at Heliopolis, but in the 2600 BCE following his death, he was gradually glorified and deified. The Greeks identified him with Asclepius. In Ancient Egypt,

medicines were given, surgery was done and diseases were diagnosed. Ancient Egypt had some sophisticated methods of treating certain diseases. In many places, there was a system to provide water and remove the garbage. Most important to historians of medicine, the ancient Egyptians began to prescribe their medicines and the way they should be used. Evidence of medicine in Ancient Egypt comes in the form of the most famous scrolls, written on papyrus. These are among the earliest written records of medical practice. This knowledge comes from the study of Egyptian papyri, especially the Ebers papyrus and Edwin Smith papyrus which were discovered in the 19th century. The Ebers papyrus is a list of remedies, while the Edwin Smith papyrus is a surgical treatise. The scrolls show us the types of medicines and potions used are recorded. Papyrus evidence points to a strong link between medical practice and religious beliefs. They were experts in the careful process of mummification that took place throughout much of the Egyptian Civilization. ⁴

Ancient Greek Medicine

The Greeks also added value to the development of science and technology. The Greek civilization flourished from 600 BC to 529 CE. It was an heir to the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Its influence on the Arabs took place two centuries after the advent of Islam. The Greeks also were involved in Medical practice through religious beliefs. Asclepius was known as the God of medicine in ancient Greek religion and was a major provider of medical care. They developed old theories and introduced several treatments that were no different from modern 'alternative medicine'. There was a belief in ancient Greek medicine that illness is a "divine punishment" and healing is a gift from the Gods, and it grew to such an extent that it converted the cause and effect. ⁵

Pre-Hippocratic Medicine

Information about medicine in the Pre-Hippocratic era is relatively limited and most of the knowledge comes from Homer and his epics. Homer tried to move his society towards scientific approaches in medicine. Asclepius was endorsed as the first physician. Temples in the name of God Asclepius functioned as centers of medical advice, prognosis, and healing. The disease was regarded as supernatural by Ancient Greek physicians and it was considered a result of

dissatisfaction with God. The liability of the disease was placed on the patient and the role of the physician was to appease God or purify the body with prayers, spells, and sacrifices.⁷

Hippocratic Medicine

"Healthy mind in a healthy body" was the main constituent of the Hippocratic theory. Hippocrates, an author of many books, made the greatest Greek contribution to medicine. The medical profession still uses the Hippocratic Oath as a code of ethics. Hippocrates freed medicine from magical intervention and religion. This medicine spread to Rome, where the physician Galen, through his teaching and abundant writings popularized it. The Hippocratic Corpus is a collection of seventy early ancient Greek medical works associated with Hippocrates and his disciples. The theory of four humors in medicine by Hippocrates focused on the balance between blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm in the human body. It offered a new method of how physicians interacted with patients.⁸

Roman Medicine:

The strong influence of Greek on Roman medicine can be seen. Pedanius Dioscorides (c. 40–90 CE), was a Greek physician who practiced in Rome. Ancient Roman medicine was divided into specializations such as urology and ophthalmology. The integration of Greek medicine into Roman medicine transferred Rome into a mammoth city by 100 BC. Roman physicians also relied on natural causes of diseases like Greek physicians rather than on spiritual rituals, but despite that spiritual belief could not be abolished completely. There was a concept of contagion resulting in practices of quarantine and improved sanitation. One of the first prominent physicians in Rome was Galen (129–200 CE). He was dissecting animals so he became an expert on anatomy. Galen became the personal physician of Emperor Marcus Aurelius due to his expertise in medicine. Alexandria, which was an important center for learning, was conquered by the Romans. This great Library held countless volumes of ancient Greek medical information. Between the death of Hippocrates in 375 BC and the founding of the school in Alexandria, Egypt, few advances were seen in Greek medicine. Four physicians engaged in the study of anatomy during this period: Diocles of Carystus (fl. 4th century

BC), Herophilus (c. 335-280 BC), Erasistratus (c. 304-250 BC), and finally Praxagoras.¹⁰

Hellenistic and Roman medicine

When we compare the contribution of Rome to medicine with that of Greece, it seems insignificant but the Romans set a great example in the issue of public health. A famous medical school was established in Alexandria in about 300 BC., so the center of Greek medicine shifted here.¹¹ Even after the Roman Empire conquered the Greek world; Alexandria continued to be a center of medical education and medical knowledge remained primarily Greek. Asclepiades of Bithynia (B. 124 BC) disagreed with Hippocrates in that he denied the healing power of nature. Soranus of Ephesus was a leading physician of the 2nd century CE. He wrote books on the subject of obstetrics, gynecology, and pediatrics. The books of Soranus were referred to greatly by an Arab physician Razi in his book *al-Hawi*. The city of Rome had an unparalleled water supply. After the decline of Rome, learning was discouraged and medicine shifted into the hands of the Christian church and Arab scholars.¹²

Byzantine Medicine:

Byzantine medicine covers general medical practices from 400 AD to 1453 AD. Byzantine medicine was built on the scientific basis developed by its Greco-Roman predecessors. Byzantine medicine influenced Islamic medicine. Byzantine physicians often composed textbooks on standardized medical knowledge. Constantinople (The modern name Istanbul) was a center of medicine during the Middle Ages. Byzantine physicians expanded upon the knowledge preserved from Greek and Roman sources. The author of the Vienna Dioscorides manuscript was the first Byzantine physician. He also drew his knowledge from ancient authorities like Galen and Hippocrates. Oribasius, the most prolific Byzantine compiler of medical knowledge, was frequently referred to by Ibn Zakariya Razi in his encyclopedia *al-Hawi*. Several of his books along with those of other Byzantine physicians, were translated into Latin, and subsequently into English and French.¹³

Translations

The Greek texts were rendered in Latin and Arabic. Jurjīs ibn Bukhtīshū' was the first of a dynasty of translators and physicians that lasted for six

generations. He was the chief physician in the great hospital that was located at Jundi Shāhpūr in southwest Persia. A famous translator was Ḥunayn ibn Iṣḥāq (b. 809) and his son, whose translations were said to be worth their weight in gold.¹⁴

Arabian Medicine

The great Muslim empire, which extended from Persia to Spain, patronized medical learning. One of the earliest figures was Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Zakariyya al-Razi (Rhazes) (864-935), who wrote a voluminous treatise on medicine, *Kitab al-Hāwī* ("Comprehensive Book") and most famous work "A Treatise on Smallpox and Measles". This book tells the difference between these two diseases and clearly describes both. Later many physicians rose to prominence like 'Ali ibn al-'Abbaṣ al-Majuṣī, (d. 994 AD), Avicenna (980–1037), and Spanish Arab surgeon Abū al-Qāsim Zahrawī (Albucasis) (d. 1013), etc.^{15, 16, 17, 18}

STUDY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

Finding old manuscripts is tracing one's heritage. Our artistic, intellectual, and cultural heritage is connected to them. Preserving the intellectual heritage is the need of the hour. The medical literature composed during these periods covered different topics and structures.

Salient features of the work

This monograph deals with the books composed in Unani Medicine from 462 BC to 799 AD. Many books written on this topic are in the Urdu language which deals with the biographies of Unani physicians rather than discussing their literary works in detail. This monograph written in the English language will help the scholars who are unaware of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu languages to get introduced to precious Unani works of literature and link the past with the present going back again and again to the vast reservoir of empirical knowledge of ancient traditions derived from experiments and observations for culling out new ideas for study and investigation. The present work will make Unani classical literature in the public domain due to its global popularity leading to collaboration and intra-AYUSH referral. The study will cater to the needs of the scholars and scientists who with a mind free of bias and prejudice are willing to accept the challenge of making the young

generation interested in the perusal of classic medical literature that contains unique natural cures for many diseases which are still cureless.

Authentic primary sources were utilized to review the biography of authors and their compositions. Original Arabic and Persian resource books were studied for this purpose, and the author has visited many libraries in India personally like HMS Central Library, Hamdard University, New Delhi, Ibn Sina Academy of Medieval Medicine Aligarh, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Arabic Persian Research Institute Tonk Rajasthan, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama Library Lucknow, Raza Library Rampur, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Library Patna, National Library Kolkata, and the Library of Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Furthermore, relevant books, periodicals, and online resources have been reviewed for the history of medicine.

Content: Of course, the physicians were the luminaries of that period. Books of history on medicine are full of the description of physicians of that period. It is not easy for any author to cover all of them. This monograph contains the account of the books composed in Unani Medicine from 462 BC to 799 AD in chronological order as following

1. Kitāb al-Ahwia wal-Miah by Hippocrates (fl. 462 BC)
2. Kitāb fi Abdal al-Advia by Badighorus (d. 495 BC)
3. Kitāb Timaeus al-Tabi'I By Plato (d. 348 BC)
4. Kitāb fi al-Nafs By Aristotle (d. 322 BC)
5. A Book on Animal Anatomy by Diocles (d. 295 BC)
6. A Work on Anatomy By Praxagoras of Cos (fl. 295 BC)
7. A Book On Pulses By Herophilus (fl. 280 BC)
8. Book on anatomy By Erasistratos (fl. 250 BC)
9. De Medicina by Aulus Cornelius Celsus (fl. 30 AD)
10. Kitāb al-Hashaish by Dioscorides (d. 90 AD)
11. Risalah al-Nabidh By Rufus of Ephesus (fl. 100 AD)
12. Ilm Amraz al-Nisa by Soranus (fl. 138 AD)
13. Jawāmi al-Iskandariyīn By Galen (fl. 198 AD)
14. Kitāb al-Nafs (De anima) by Alexander (fl. 200 AD)
15. Risala fi Waja al-Niqras by Philagrius (fl. 382 AD)
16. Kitāb Al-Adwiyah By Oribasius (d. 403 AD)

17. Kitab fil-Istisqa By Sergius of Ra's al-'Ayn (536 AD)
18. Tarikh al-Atibba al-Qudama by al-Nahwī (d. 575 AD)
19. Kunnash by Aëtius of Amida (d. 575 AD)
20. Ilal al-Ain by Alexander Trallianus (d. 605 AD)
21. Al-Risālah fī al-As'ilah by ibn Kaladah (635 AD)
22. Al-Kunnash fi al-Tibb by Paulus Aegineta (d. 690 AD)
23. Al-Kunnash By Ahrunthe Priest (fl. 7th century)
24. Maqalah Maryanus By Khalid ibn Yazid (d. 704 AD)
25. Kunnash Kabir By Tayāzūq (d. 708 AD)
26. Kitab Quwa al-At'ima By Masarjawaih (d. 730 AD)
27. Kunnasha By Jūrjis ibn Jibrāil (fl. 765 AD)
28. Kunnash Mukhtasar by Bakhtīshū` (fl. 800 AD)
29. Kitab al-Sumumat by Yahya Ibn al-Bitriq (fl. 800 AD)
30. Rislā ila Mamun by Jibra'il ibn Bakhtīshū` (fl. 800 AD)

The statistics I have gathered about these books are awesome and are recorded in the order of their occurrence so that the books in Unani medicine are presented in each century according to their compositions, which will make it easier to see that in each century abundant books have been written. This work is kind of introductory and commemorative. It is not aimed to do a critical review. This is another topic and I am confident after the publication of this seminal work, more work can be carried out methodically along these lines.

Some books have detailed descriptions and some are very short because I couldn't find detailed information. I have tried at my best level to include in this monograph as many treatises as possible but I may have missed some also, certainly more materials can be added. This book is the first attempt to include the Unani publications in this period. However, there is always a space for improvement, addition, and deletion and by no means is it the last draft on the topic.

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