

BIOGRAPHY

Al- Majusi: The Great Moslem Physician of *Buyid Dynasty Era*

Abstract

Ali-Ibn-e-Abbas-Al-Majusi, well known as Haly Abbas in the West, a physician, surgeon and psychologist of *Buyid dynasty* era, lived in the 10th century (A.D). He, along with Tabari, Razi, Avicenna, and Jorjani, established the foundation of Islamic medicine. He authored "*Kamilu Sina'at*" or "*al-Kitab al-Maliki*" (The Royal Book), a book on medicine which was used in European universities until the 18th century. Al- Majusi had an important role in promoting and discussing neuroscience, psychology, internal medicine, and basic medical sciences. Hence, owing to his great contribution to the field of medicine, Al- Majusi deserves to be explored more through research.

Key words: Ali-Ibn-e-Abbas-Al-Majusi, Haly Abbas, *Kamilu Sina'at*, *Kitab al-Maliki*, the Royal Book

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Have you ever heard the story of the porter from Shiraz who suffered from a severe headache? The porter attributed his headache to carrying heavy loads. Eventually, his headache became so worse that he was unable to sleep for about 15 days. One day, the porter's brothers saw a doctor passing the porter's house; they explained their brother's condition to



him and asked the doctor to visit him. The doctor accepted. After visiting the patient, the doctor ordered to take the patient along him to the desert. When they reached the desert, the doctor ordered his servant to tie the patient's turban around his neck, take his shoes off and blow his head 20 times. After that, the servant was asked to take the turban in hand, mount the horse, drag the patient, and make him run. The servant did so until the patient bled from his nose. Then, the servant stopped riding. The patient's nose was bleeding so much that he almost fainted. After that, he was taken to his house; he slept for 24 hours. And when he woke up, his headache was gone. From then on, he required no medication and treatment.¹

The doctor's name was Ali-Ibn-e-Abbas-Al-Majusi, well known as Haly Abbas in the West. He was a physician, surgeon and psychologist of Buyid dynasty era, contemporary with Azod od-Dowleh Panah (Fana) Khusraw, the famous king of this dynasty.²⁻⁶ He was one of the greatest Iranian Moslem physicians who served Islamic medicine. He, along with Tabari, Razi, Avicienna, and Jorjani, established the foundation of Islamic medicine.⁷

The time of his birth is unknown: some dated it in 928 (AD) but some others, 948(AD). What is certain is that he was born in the 10th century (AD) in Arjan (Behbahan), an area near Jondishapour in the southwestern part of Iran.⁸⁻¹⁰

There is little documented information about his personal life but what is certain is that he was one of the students of Abu-Maher Shirazi, the first physician who wrote a book about surgical instruments and operations; he was also known as the father of Shiraz medical school.^{11, 12} Concerning his religious belief, Majusi, like his father, was Moslem, though his grandfather was Zoroastrian (the religion of Iranians before the Islam).^{13, 14}

According to George Sartorn, Al-Majusi was one of the three most famous and greatest Oriental physicians in the world of medicine. The other two physicians were Mohammad Zakaria Razi (Rhazes) and Avicienna.¹⁵

Al-Majusi authored "Kamilu Sina'at" or "al-Kitab al-Maliki" (The Royal Book), a book on medicine which was translated into Latin by Stephen of Antioch in 1127 as "Regalis" and was used in European universities until its replacement by Avicienna's "al-Quanoon fi tibb (Canon of Medicine)".¹⁶⁻¹⁹

- 1- Sepanta, n.d.
- 2- Aciduman et al, 2010: 1466-74.
- 3- Ahmadi et al, 2012: 37-40.
- 4- Ali ibn-i Abbas-i Majusi Ahvazi, 2009.
- 5- Sepanta, n.d.
- 6- Shaabani, n.d.
- 7- Anonymous, 200 articles: article 081
- 8- Ahmadi et al, 2012: 37-40.
- 9- Ali ibn-i Abbas-i Majusi Ahvazi, 2009.
- 10- Shaabani, n.d.
- 11- Golshani, 2012: 17-9.
- 12- Shaabani, n.d.
- 13- Reich, 1995.
- 14- Shaabani, n.d.
- 15- Anonymous, 200 articles: article 081
- 16- Aciduman et al, 2010: 1466-74.
- 17- Ahmadi et al, 2012: 37-40.
- 18- Bassan, 1962: 127-40.
- 19- Anonymous. Al-Majusi physician and psychologist (died at 982-994).



Constantinus Africanus, whose translation of Arabic medical texts into Latin was a foundation of modern science and biology, translated the surgical part of “al-Kitab al-Maliki” into Latin in the 11th century.^{20, 21} However, he presented the translated version as his own book and never admitted that it was a translation; hence, it can be claimed that this is the first incidence of plagiarism reported so far.²²

The book “al-Kitab al-Maliki” contains 20 treatises, ten practical and ten theoretical papers. The book is believed to be the first systematically written book, criticizing other medical theories.^{23, 24} In addition, the book postulates that the brain is the center of movement and sensation. In this book, Al-Majusi describes spastic and flaccid paralysis in spinal cord diseases. He also explains the spinal cord and its 31 pairs of nerves, 8 cervical, 12 thoracic, 5 lumbar, 3 sacral, 3 coccygeal, and a single nerve below the coccyx.^{25, 26} Moreover, he describes the structure and function of the arteries and veins and also the structure of the heart and its role in the circulation of blood.²⁷ Furthermore, he discusses the following neurologic conditions: headache, stroke, epilepsy, dementia, coma, schizophrenia, and skull fractures.^{28, 29} The other areas he explains in his book are the four humors, physiology, anatomy, spirit, air, sport, food, drinks, sleeping, diseases, signs and symptoms, cause of death, health and sanitation, fever, edema, cardiopulmonary problems, diseases of esophagus, stomach, liver, spleen, intestine, kidneys, bladder, and genitalia, pharmacology and pharmacy specially filling prescription.^{30, 31}

In addition to writing books, he modified the hippocratic Oath by adding clinical training, prohibiting the physicians from drinking wine, and emphasizing the treatment of the poor. Furthermore, he encouraged worshipping God instead of taking oaths and swearing to Apolon, Asclepius and Hyjia.³²⁻³⁴

Like his birthdate, the time or even the place of his death is uncertain. Al-Majusi, the great physician of the 10th century (AD), passed away in 384 (AH) or 994(AD) in Shiraz or in Baghdad.^{35, 36} In sum, Al- Majusi had an important role in promoting and discussing neuroscience, psychology, internal medicine, and basic medical sciences. The scientific methodology, he discussed, is comparable to those introduced and explained in modern medicine.³⁷ In addition, he contributed to the development of medical ethics.³⁸ Hence, owing to his great contribution to the field of medicine, Al- Majusi deserves to be explored more through future research.

- 20- Aciduman et al, 2010: 1466-74.
- 21- Bassan, 1962: 127-40.
- 22- Ibid.
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- 26- Anonymous. Al-Majusi physician and psychologist (died at 982-994).
- 27- Azizi *et al*, 2008: 345-50.
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- 31- Anonymous, 200 articles: article 081
- 32- Reich, 1995.
- 33- Ahmadzadeh et al, 2011: 121-9.
- 34- Zargarani *et al*, 2013.
- 35- Shams Ardekani et al, 2008: 33-4.
- 36- Sepanta, n.d.
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