

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Muhammad Mumin and his Famous Work “Tuhfat al-Muminin (The Gift of True Believers)” (17th Century AD)

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ABSTRACT

“Tuhfat al-Muminin” (The Gift of True Believers) by Muhammad Mumin (died in 1697) was one from the most famous books, which greatly contributed to development of medicine and pharmacy in the Orient. In this article, the authors provide an account of life and work of Muhammad Mumin and present his contributions to the development of medicine in 17th century AD. *IJHM. Int. 2010; 1: 1-3. ©2010 Int J Hist Philos Med, Inc.*

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INTRODUCTION

One from the most famous books which greatly contributed to development of medicine and pharmacy in the Orient was “Tuhfat al-Muminin” (“The Gift of True Believers”) by Muhammad Mumin (died in 1697). Seyyid Muhammad Mumin ibn Amir Muhammad Zaman Huseyni Deylami Tunkabuni Mazandarani was a famous physician, talented scholar, philosopher and poet. He was born in Isfahan, but the native land of his ancestors was Deyleman, the city between Lahijan and Langrud in the north of Iran. This city for a long time was a capital of sultans of Deylam, and was known as an important center of culture and science in Iran. It was a homeland of a number of distinguished physicians including Muhammad Mumin.

In the 17th-18th centuries, Isfahan was the capital of Iran which was ruled by Safavid dynasty. The ancestors of Muhammad Mumin were physicians of Safavids, and, therefore they resided in Isfahan too. Father and grandfather of Mumin and many other his

relatives were prosperous physicians. Mumin informs about himself that: “The father and grandfather of this humble person (i.e. Mumin himself – F.A., E.H.) served to many khagans, sultans and descendants of Prophet Muhammad”.¹ (page 3)

Muhammad Bagir Khansaria in his “Ravzat al-Jannat” (“The Secrets of Paradise”) writes about Mumin: “The descendant of Prophet Muhammad, the scholar Mumin ibn al-Amir Muhammad Zaman Huseyni ad-Deylami at-Tunkabuni al-Mazandarani is the author of the book “Tuhfat al-Muminin” (“Gift of True Believers”) which was dedicated to high-ranked owner of supreme title and wonderful name shah Suleyman as-Safavi al-Musavi. Mumin was a skilled physician, the son of the “House of Knowledge”, and the first one among persons seeking the truth. He knew perfectly secrets of treatment with the help of food and medicines. His grandfather was great healer and physician, and Mumin, like other his relatives and compatriots, achieved wonderful skills in medicine”.² (page 7)

Muhammad Mumin was born in Isfahan city, but the date of his birth is not known. He perfectly learned medicine and pharmacy, made good professional career and gained popularity among wide range of people. As a result, he was invited to the palace of Shah Suleyman Safavi (1669-1694 AD).

Muhammad Mumin as a court physician of Safavids.

Mumin was the court physician of shah Suleyman

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Safavi (1669-1694 AD), the son of Shah Abbas II who was one of the last Safavid rulers. Safavid (Safavi, Sefevi, Sefevî) dynasty came to power in Iran in 1501 AD. They were leaders of influential Sufi order, which was founded in Ardabil city by their ancestor Sheikh Safiaddin (died in 1334 AD). The Safavids were a Shia dynasty of Azerbaijani origin which ruled Persia from 1501/1502 to 1722.³

Safavids played a great part in development of culture in the region. For example, Shah Ismail I wrote verses in Azeri Turkish and Persian, and his descendants supported fine arts and literature.⁴ Muhammad Mumin served to Shah Suleyman Safavi who was a philanthropist and poetry-lover. Court of Suleyman attracted scholars and poets from different cities and countries. The talented poet Saib Tabrizi certain time lived and wrote poetry at the Shah's court. Besides, in this palace there worked also Muhammad Bakir as-Sabzavari (died in 1671), the author of "Novruzname" ("The Book about New Year") and several treatises on astronomy and chronology. According to the order of Shah Suleyman, Muhammad Bakir composed the comprehensive "Glossary of Turkish Words". Namely by the order of Shah Suleyman Muhammad Mumin created "Tuhfat al-Muminin", the book in Persian that played important part in future development of medicine and pharmacy in the Muslim World.

As a skilled and knowledgeable scholar, physician and pharmacist Muhammad Mumin influenced development of medicine and pharmacy in Iran, Azerbaijan, Minor and Central Asia, North India, and other regions where Persian was widespread and understandable. "Tuhfat al-Muminin" was very popular in these areas, and local physicians used it as a reference book.

"Tuhfat al-Muminin" and its role in development of medicine.

"Tuhfat al-Muminin" (1669 AD) was one of the most informative and reliable sources on medicine and pharmacy in Islamic world. The book provides information about hundreds of species of medicinal plants, animals and minerals. The author mentions names of these pharmaceuticals in 27 languages and dialects like Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Berber, Chinese, Hindu, Syriac, Greek, Coptic, etc.¹

Muhammad Mumin collected information from different sources. Then he analyzed, elaborated and enriched this information with the results of his own experience and observations. He included into "Tuhfat al-Muminin" only facts, which he or his father or his grandfather tested personally, or facts provided by good and reliable sources.

Muhammad Mumin widely used works of his predecessors and he mentions their names in "Tuhfat al-Muminin". These are as follows: Ibn al-Baitar, Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen, Razi, Biruni, Ibn Sina, Ibn Juzla, Ibn Kabir Khoyi, Sheikh Davud An-

taki, Ibn Tilimiz, Bakhtishu, Huneyn Ibn Ishaq, and such Indian scholars as Susruta ana Charaka, etc.⁵

Muhammad Mumin writes in preface of "Tuhfat al-Muminin": "This book was compiled on the basis of "Jam al-Baghdadi", which is reliable in most cases. The author of the mentioned book (*Ibn Kabir Khoyi – ed.*) extracted without negligence all necessary information from "Jam" by Ibn Baitar and other books on medicine. Besides, I used all information from "Tazkira Alva al-Albab" which is known also as "Jameyi-Antaki" by Sheikh Davud Antaki. This book was written after "Jameyi-Baghdadi", and in some cases supplements the abovementioned book. I also widely used "Mugni" and works by Ibn Tilimiz who critically approached to "Jam al-Baghdadi" and quoted facts that were not mentioned in this book. And I have extracted all necessary information from "Kamil al-Adviyya", "Jam al-Adviyya", and from works by Amin ad-Dovlat. Besides, I benefited from other reliable sources, for example, from "Qanun" by Ibn Sina, "Mualijati-Bukrati", "Ikhtiyarati-Ibn Habal", "Havi Kabir", "Havi Sagir", "Shafa al-Asqam", "Mualijati-Ilaqi", "Kunnash Fakhir", "Kunnash Sakhir", and from works by Bakhtishu and "Munkaz as-Samum" by Galen, as well as from works by Ibn Zakariyya, "Kamil as-Sanaa" [...] as well as from "Manqulat" by Huneyn ibn Ishaq, and from the books by Indian physicians like "Tarjumai-Bahir", "Kitabi-Charak", ..., "Furuzshahi", "Susrut", etc."¹

Mumin demonstrates critical approach to the used sources. He severely criticizes some works, especially "Ikhtiyarati-Badii" by Zeynalabdin Attar (Ali bin Husein Ansari). Muhammad Bagir Khansaria writes about it that: "to compile the book, Mumin used principal parts from the works of his predecessors, and he benefited from their experience and activities, and used the written heritage of his ancestors most of which were physicians. General structure of this work is similar to "Ikhtiyarat-i Badii", the book in Persian. Nevertheless, Mumin was sure that the author of "Ikhtiyarati-Badii" was not accurate and serious when studied and described medical substances and, as a result, became a victim of mistakes..."²

Mumin writes in the introduction of the book: "One of reasons why I decided to write this book is that the author of "Ikhtiyarati-Badii" (the book in Persian) was irresponsible studying pharmaceutical compounds and describing their medical properties. Many pharmacists use his book and forgot reliable sources, and, as a result the effective medicines were substituted with useless compounds. Therefore, all people who learn sciences wanted me to provide them with correct information, which is not found in "Ikhtiyarat-i Badii".¹

Describing his own book, Mumin writes: "As the book is shortened, I have not described all properties of medicines, and have not inserted here the names of compounds with unknown composition. As to de-

grees of effectiveness, I was satisfied with experience and comparison, and mentioned only important information related with it. All these things constitute advantages of “Tuhfat al-Muminin” above other informative and reliable sources”.¹

Thus, Mumin shows following main reasons why he wrote “Tuhfat al-Muminin”. It is shortage of comprehensive and reliable pharmacy books in Persian, and numerous mistakes and shortcomings in the widely spread pharmacopeia “Ikhtiyarati-Badii”. Evidently, the author had wide knowledge about medieval Islamic medicine and its heritage. When writing the book, he attracted numerous sources, and refers not only Muslim and Greek, but also Indian scholars.

The abovementioned facts create the basis for the following conclusions.

1. “Tuhfat al-Muminin” is independent, original work, which was written on the basis of evaluation of heritage of Islamic medicine, as well as on the basis of personal observations and conclusions of the author.

2. Mumin often provides references to the used sources. When he quotes other authors he usually provides their names or titles of books.

3. Mumin demonstrates critical approach to the used sources, and exposes them to critical analysis agreeing or disagreeing with this or that author, and criticizing incorrect or mistakenly information.

Owing to all these advantages, the book by Muhammad Mumin gained great popularity in all countries where Persian language was in use: Caucasus including Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Ottoman Empire, North India, present-day Pakistan, etc.

In Ottoman Empire, the book by Muhammad Mumin was translated from Persian into Turkish in the 17th AD. “Tuhfat al-Muminin” gained wide popularity in the present-day Pakistan and India. During life of Mumin, these two countries constituted entire national-cultural area and were named respectively Sind and Hind. In the 18th century AD, the book of Mumin was published by lithographic method in Delhi and Karachi. Besides, the famous Indian physician Muhammad Azam Khan widely used “Tuhfat al-Muminin” as a source, when he compiled his own famous book “Mukhiti-Azam” (“The Great Ocean”).

In Iran itself the Mumin’s work was published several times in 19th and 20th centuries.⁶

In Central Asia, Mumin’s work influenced development of pharmacy and publication of new books in the field of pharmacy and medicine. For example, the famous 19th century’s scholar from Samarkand, Muhammad bin Husein Alavi Samarkandi, was famous not only in Central Asia but in the entire Near and Middle East. He used Mumin’s work when compiled his famous encyclopedias “Makhzan al-Adviyya” (“The Treasure of Medicine”) and “Qarabadini-Kabir” (“The Great Pharmacopeia”).

“Tuhfat al-Muminin” was very popular in Azerbaijan. The Institute of Manuscripts of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences treasures 33 entire manuscripts and 4 fragments of “Tuhfat al-Muminin”.⁷ For a long time, “Tuhfat al-Muminin” was a reference book of physicians and pharmacists of Azerbaijan. During the 18th century AD, such followers of Muhammad Mumin in Azerbaijan as Haji Suleyman Irvani, Hasan bin Riza Shirvani, Abulhasan al-Maragi (Maragayi) widely used and repeatedly quoted Muhammad Mumin in their own books.

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