

The impact of archaism discourse on Iranian medical historiography from the Achaemenid period

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Introduction

The post-constitutional period, especially in the Pahlavi period, witnessed the peak activity of several thought streams sought to create national unity and modernization in the stragglng society of the Qajar period (1). Majority of such streams considered Islam and the Arab invasion among main reasons of Iran's retrograde and destruction (2), which led to the formation of a discourse based on antiquity. This discourse became the foundation of cultural context in the Pahlavi period and most of the subsequent changes and developments occurred in this historical context, referred to as antiquity (3). The impact intensity of this discourse was such that it affected majority of Iran's cultural and scientific heritage (4), including the field of historiography.

One of the main cultural fields in this period was historiography, including medical historiography. Retrieving the glory of ancient Iran and reacquiring pre-Islamic Iranian civilization's peak required special attention to historiography and new readings of Iranian and world history, followed by writers and historians. However, how close to reality was this process of historiography influenced by the dominance of nationalist sentiments, and to what extent was this style of historiography subject to political theories? Hence, several items were addressed in this article: (i) In this process of historiography, for what purposes has the medical history of Iran been written? (ii) To what extent does this written history corresponded to historical facts? The authors of this article believe that Iranian medical historiography has been strongly influenced by the discourse of antiquity. This article first explained diverse styles of historiography in medical sciences, and then discussed medical historians' claims. Moreover, after explaining the Achaemenid religion, the reasons for rejecting historians' claims regarding this period's medical history were inspected.

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Received: 3 Mar 2021

Accepted: 1 Nov 2021

Published: 1 Dec 2021

Citation to this article:

Kasiri M. The impact of archaism discourse on Iranian medical historiography from the Achaemenid period. *J Med Ethics Hist Med.* 2021; 14: 16.

The beginning of the medical historiography in Iran

Medical historiography has existed in Iran for hundreds of years. However, the style of medical historiography and the approach of historians to this subject have not always been the same and changed over time (5), which can be divided into two categories of old and new style.

Old style

Medical services have been considered as one of the primary human needs for thousands of years, and medical history has been valued since then. While some consider the principles of medicine to be derived from divine sources (6), others consider them to be semi-divine and semi-experimental (7). Contemporary historians consider the basis of medicine to be experimental (8) and believe that, in the beginning, women practiced medicine in primitive societies (9). Over time, medicine became sacred and associated with divinity, and the divine gods communicated with humans through priests or clergies (8). Ordinary people expected the clergy to save them from the sins and diseases, which was not the case in all places and times (e.g., in Babylon (7)).

Ancient historians, regardless of the origin of medicine, used almost similar method for their work, and most of them based their method on a traditional view of the medicine. By studying ancient medical texts, they enumerated the author's advantages and highlighted the technical and knowledge aspects of those texts. Such a history of medicine was an introspective and thought-

provoking method that based its research on medical geniuses' life. Although this style of historiography had changed in the West during the contemporary period, it continued in Iran until about two decades ago. Although the field of medicine's social history has been recognized and studied by researchers in the West, it has not received much attention in Muslim countries, especially in Iran (10). Regarding the methods used in the medical history of Muslim countries and Iran, not much differences has been observed in various resources including Ibn Abi Asiba'ah (11), Ibn al-'Ebri (12), well-known book by the Philosopher Al-Dawlah (13) to recent decades' studies by Manfred Ullmann, German historian and Arabic scholar, and his two other counterparts, Max Meyerhof, German historian and Joseph Schacht, British-German professor of Islamic and Arabic studies at Columbia University.

New style

In recent years, new perspectives on the medicine's history have emerged seeking to achieve a different outlook of medicine. The purpose of these new approaches arising from such new perspectives is to present the social aspects of medicine as a socio-scientific phenomenon, including methods such as the social history of medicine, and to examine past societies through these new lenses. With such approaches, these ancient medical texts and data can be used as a source for studying social history, along with other known sources such as historiographical texts or historical documents.

Such trend began with the work of George

Rosen (1910-1977), an American historian in the 1970s and 1980s. The history of modern medicine, which began with Foucault (14), referred to as the history of mentality, or so-called mentalities history. This history type, the main author of which can be considered Analytics (16) in France, deciphered the requirements for producing medical discourse.

In such approaches, more emphasis is placed on representations than on historical data mining, common in classical historical research.

In terms of Foucault each historical period had only one style of discourse that it is a reflection of the epistemology of the historians of that period.

Iranian medical historiography in the Pahlavi period

The new discourse that had been formed since the post-constitutional period in all areas of social life as well as in the political and cultural scopes of the society, extended its scope to historiography field. This style of general historiography, initiated by Mirza Aga Khan Kermani (17) and continued by Mirza Hassan Mushir al-Dawla (18), extended its scope to the medical historiography field and caused the history of Iranian medicine in ancient Iran' medical history to be intensely influenced by the prevailing text-based and introspective discourse.

The first historian to write Iran's medical history was Cyril Lioyd Elgood, who was fluent in Persian and familiar with Arabic. He

began to study the history of medicine in Islam and Iran from the very beginning, on the advice of Edward Brown and Max Meyerhoff, and by consulting with Iranian scholars at that time. His presence in Iran coincided with the rise of the nationalist movement in Iran and the emergence of the Pahlavi government. Due to his presence in that period, he published two important writings entitled Medical History of Iran and the Lands of the Eastern Caliphate. Moreover, he wrote Medicine in the Safavid Period as well as several articles on Iranian medicine's history. Mahmoud Najmabadi was the second historian to write regarding the medicine's history with his famous book History of Medicine. In presenting historical data and judgments, the writings of these two historians, especially in the field of ancient Iran, had many similarities. For example, both historians cited an almost similar paragraph in terms of literature and even terminology when writing the history of medicine during the five hundred years of the Parthian ruling. In the only paragraph devoted to the Parthian medicine's history, Elgood believed that they lacked great culture and civilization and the inherent harmony and the chivalry helped them last (7). Najmabadi also shared Elgood's viewpoint in different expressions and wording (19). Although Najmabadi briefly made a few references to Parthians medical traditions' related narrations after the aforementioned viewpoint, he still insisted on his claim that was fully investigated and rejected in the present work's author in (20).

However, the most dubious comments of these two historians were on the medical situation in Iran during the Achaemenid period. Both historians, especially Najmabadi, after scattering reference to Iran, detailed the medical school, which today is known as the Zoroastrian School of Medicine (7, 19). Both historians considered the Achaemenid period as the glorious era of the school of Zoroastrian medicine, which was widely accepted as a principle in the history of medicine and opposition to it was not tolerated by historians. Some of these comments were as follows:

- In the Mazdisna School, the students were taught the methods of treatment and recovery by the clergy and using the rules of religion (19)

- In the early Achaemenid period, a group of Moghan Zoroastrian students studied medicine in the educational centers of Hamedan, Rey, and Persepolis (21). Most of the educational centers in the ancient Iran were located near fire temples and physicians were mainly selected from the Moghan (Zoroastrian clergy) group (21).

- In this period, Darius I, more than other kings, paid attention to medicine by establishing large hospitals and schools and supporting physicians (19).

- At that time, physicians included two groups, "dorstpad" and "tan-basezag". (7)

These comments have led most historians of medical history to consider the Achaemenid period as the glory era of Iranian civilization and insist on it, because they correspond the glory of civilization to the characteristics of a

successful world school derived from the religion of Zoroaster.

Discussion

The Achaemenid era coincided with the presence of three major religions in the world: Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Judaism. The ancient religion of the Iranian Aryans was accepted, along with these three great religions. Scholars who have commented on the Achaemenid religion are divided into two categories: (i) The first group, in minority, believe that the Achaemenids' religion was Zoroastrian; (ii) The second group of orientalist and scholars of ancient Iran (22) believe that Achaemenids' religion was not Zoroastrian (23).

Some historians considered Darius the first Zoroastrian king. One of these historians is Omstad, who believed that when the prophet Zarathustra was a guest of Goshtasb's court in eastern Iran, he often talked to the young Darius, resulted in a religious mission that Darius carried out in spreading Zoroastrian thought and establishing a religious-political government (24).

The name of the greatest god in the Achaemenid inscriptions was always written in the form of Ahura Mmazda while it was never the case in Avesta. Before Darius, none of the Achaemenid kings believed to be chosen by Ahura Mazda, and therefore Ahura Mazda emphasized in the writings of Darius a single and powerful god, not a Zoroastrian god (25).

There is no definite opinion about the religion and religious policy of the Achaemenid

kings, and apparently the Achaemenids' religion is closer to the religion of ancient Iran than the Zoroastrians' religion. According to the researches of historians and archaeologists, Achaemenids did not follow a specific religion and even if they had religious beliefs, they were certainly not Zoroastrians (24).

Medical data from the Achaemenid period

At the court, according to Xenophon, the first Achaemenid emperor (Cyrus) provided free medical services, and, sometimes, paid for treatment from the state budget. He sent each of his suffering individuals, attributed to king, to a physician and thanked that physician. However, this special attention was not based on the principles of Zoroastrian medicine, but on those of the Egyptian medicine (7). At that time, the presence of foreign, non-Zoroastrian physicians, especially Egyptian physicians, increased in the court, and the state of the Zoroastrian Moghans diminished (26).

Achaemenid kings such as Cyrus and Darius might choose their medical advisers from abroad due to the lack of trust in Zoroastrian physicians, as Herodotus wrote: "When Cyrus asked Amasis to send him the most skillful ophthalmologists from Egypt, he chose the best doctor, who became Cyrus' adviser (7)". Greek physicians were more loyal than Iranian physicians, indicating a strong distrust regarding the Iranian physicians, who were dependent on the clergies and Moghans (27).

Among the people

Regarding the first group of physicians among the Iranian tribes, due to the nature of medical science, which was not separate from sciences such as astronomy and religion, physicians were chosen from religious leaders (28). The word Mogh in ancient Iran's history referred to scholars, scientists, and physicians (23). Most historians believed that the Mogh were a special group whose duties were inherited from generation to generation (29).

Prophet Zarathustra acquainted many Moghans with his beliefs and change theirs. With the arrival of the Aryans in the land of Iran and the subsequent spread of the Zoroastrian religion among the people, major changes were made in the ancient people's lifestyle (30).

The Moghans and the Achaemenid kings did not have a good relationship because the Moghans, which were expelled from their lofty position, took every opportunity, albeit quite hostile, to return to their former position. Moghan's position in the Achaemenid system was shaken and collapsed because they and their associates were considered liars, insurgents and enemies of the government, and sometimes even the rest of the rebels were attributed to the Moghans (24).

In such a situation, the Zoroastrian Moghans, who inherited the ancient Iranian's medical traditions, did not find the environment favorable for living, and a group of them might have migrated to find a more suitable environment.

Conclusion

In the process of historiography, for what purposes has the medical history of Iran been written? The efforts and distortions of the Pahlavi government made the culture of antiquity seem unreal and even exaggerated. This exaggeration led the ancient times, antiquity, to be called the golden age of culture and civilization, and kings such as Cyrus and Darius being considered the symbol of culture, civilization and human rights. Following these exaggerations, unrealized, magnified images of the history of culture were also presented, and some historians were misled by the discourse of antiquity. They attributed the medical history

of the Sassanid era and Zoroastrian medicine to the Achaemenid era, with about seven hundred years of incorrect time shifting.

To what extent does this written history corresponded to the historical facts? The writings and discussions of contemporary writers on the history of medicine in the Achaemenid period belong to the Sassanid period and mistakenly attributed to the Achaemenid period. This wrong attribution was because official religion was considered Zoroastrian in the Achaemenid period while many writers and historians believe that no official religion was approved in that period.

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