



KOFRI, MOḤAMMAD KERMĀNŠĀHI

KOFRI, Moḥammad Kermānšāhi (b. Kermānšāh, Iran July 1829; d. Tehran February 1908), physician and surgeon, the son of Pir Moḥammad Zāre', a merchant. Kermānšāhi received his elementary education in his hometown of Kermānšāh. For further education he went to Najaf in Iraq and engaged in religious studies. He returned initially to Kermānšāh, where he met two Frenchmen with whom he studied French. (Bāmdād, III, p. 275, Rustā'i, II, p. 406, and then went to Tehran to study medicine at the newly established Dār al-fonun. He studied traditional medicine under Mirzā 'Abd-al-Bāqi E'tezād-al-Aṭebbā' and Western medicine under Desireé Tholozan, the French physician to Nāṣer-al-Din Shah. After graduating from the Dār al-fonun, Kermānšāhi returned to Kermānšāh on an official mission to establish a quarantine station in the region.

Afterwards, with the encouragement of Dr. Tholozan, and at his own expense, he went to Paris for further medical specialization in 1870. According to his own account in the introduction to *Amrāz al-atfāl*, he says that in order to find sufficient funding for this trip he was forced to sell the refrigerator which he had inherited from his father, as well as some carpets which his mother had woven (Rustā'i, II, p. 407). He spent nine years in Paris studying several branches of medicine. According to various accounts, the Persian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to France, helped him with his expenses in Paris but as the sources refer to him as Sa'd-al-Dawla it is not clear



whether it was the minister who helped him or whether it was in fact Mirzā Jawād Sa‘d-al-Dawla who was in Paris to prepare the Persian pavilion for the Paris International Exhibition in 1878 (Sarmad, pp. 396-98, Bāmdād, 1, p. 289). Kermānšāhi received his medical diploma from the University of Paris (La Sorbonne) in 1879 with a thesis entitled “De la valeur diagnostique du bruit de piaulement dans l’endocardite aigue.” It consisted of 51 pages and he himself inscribed a copy to ‘Aliqoli Mirzā E‘teżād-al-Salṭana, the minister of sciences (Taqizādeh, II, p. 91). He was not the first person to detect this disease but his research made a major contribution to the method of its diagnoses (Taqizādeh, II, p. 92). In 1880 he became a member of the French Society of Clinicians, which awarded him *L’Ordre des Palmes academiques* (Order of the Academic Palm) (Mowahhedi, II, p. 302, Rustā‘i, II, p. 408).

On his return to Tehran, Kermānšāhi stayed at the house of ‘Aliqoli Khan Mokber-al-Dawla, the minister of post and telegraph, to whom his wife was related, and it was Mokber-al-Dawla who presented him to Nāşer-al-Din Shah. As a result of this introduction he became one of the special doctors attendant upon the shah, was appointed physician to the ministry of post and telegraph, put in charge of the government hospital in 1881, and appointed as professor at the Dār al-fonun (E‘temād-al-Salṭana, p. 1256). When he returned from Paris, he brought with him a microscope and slides to examine microbes according to the new method of Louis Pasteur and instructed his students in this new method. He was the first person to show red blood corpuscles to his students (Tājbakaş, 2000, p. 236) and he is also considered to have been the first Iranian bacteriologist.

Politically, socially and religiously Kermānšahi was a liberal. He was against dictatorship and an advocate of democracy. He was against all kinds of superstitions, unsubstantiated folk beliefs and customs. Although a practicing Muslim, he was against un-Islamic ideas and practices advocated by the ulema. For instance, he would encourage his pupils to bring in dead bodies abandoned by Parsees on their Towers of Silence, for dissection, which the religious establishment considered un-Islamic (Tājbakaş, 2000, p. 236). He was the first Iranian doctor to engage in dissection, which he undertook with the help of Dr. Johannes L. Schlimmer (Tājbakeş, 2000, p. 236).

He was an outspoken man and expressed his views openly and frankly. Thus two camps formed in the medical community, one for and one against Kermānšahi. His supporters consisted of those who had studied Western medicine abroad and advocated it. His detractors who were generally opposed



to Western medicine were led first by Malek-al-Aṭebbā' Mirzā Bābā MoĤammad-Taḡi Širāzi and later by Solṭān-al-Ĥokamā Ḥājj Mirzā Abu'l-Qāsem Nā'ini. The traditional doctors were also against any new medicines such as aspirin, which Kermānšāhi had brought from Europe: they called aspirin “*gard-e la'nati*” (The damned powder; Najmābādi, 1975, p. 228).

Due to his candor and new ideas, which the ulema considered heterodox, he was dubbed “*kofri*” (blasphemer; Rustā'i II. p. 411, Tājbkaš, 1996, p. 589). As a result of rumors and intrigues he gradually became *persona non grata* and by 1886 lost all his official positions although he continued teaching his students from home. In 1887 he went to Tabriz as special physician to Ḥasan-'Ali Khan Garrusi Amir Neẓām who was at that time the deputy (*piškār*) of Azarbaijan. While in Tabriz he taught a number of medical students including Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizādeh who relates that he studied the science of dissection, physiology, pathology and physics under the tutelage of Kermānšahi (Taqizādeh, 1989, pp. 30-31, 1971 vol. 2 p. 90). After his return from Tabriz he worked from home and opened his private consulting rooms where he saw private patients. It was here that his real academic teaching began, where his pupils gathered and where he wrote up most of his research (Rustā'i, II. p. 411).

Two types of manuscript written by Kermānšāhi have survived: those that have been published and those which have remained unpublished. The published ones consist of his thesis and some other articles published in France. Those published in Iran consist of *Resāla dar bayān-e serom-e qarābādini wa sāyer-e māye'āt-e ḥaywāniya-ye qābel-e tazriq* (Mošār, 1973, II, col. 1696; Najmābādi, 1995, p. 139) and *Amrāz al-atfāl* (Children's diseases) translated from French (567 pages; lithograph edition, Tehran, n.d.; Mošār, 1973, I, col. 333; idem, 1965, V, p. 697); *Kuft amraž-e moqābarati* (Syphilis, venereal diseases; 469 pages; lithograph edition, Tehran, 1870; Mošār, 1973, II, col. 2698; idem, 1965, V, p. 698); *Elaj-e diftiri* (The treatment of diphtheria; lithograph edition, Tehran, 1900; Najmābādi, 1995, p. 184).

One published work, *Žiā' al-nāẓerin* (lithograph, Tehran, 1892), which is probably a translation of *Traité de maladies des yeux* by the Polish-French ophthalmologist Xavier Galezowski, has been erroneously attributed by Mošār to Kermānšahi himself, although it was translated by MoĤammad Khan Shaikh Eḡyā-al-Molk, an ophthalmologist (Mošār, 1973, I, col. 2243; idem, 1965, V. 697; Bāmdād, III. p. 262).



Amongst his many unpublished works the following titles are listed by Moḥsen Rustā'i (II, pp. 412-13): *Tašriḥ wa bāft-šenāsi-e ṭabi'i, sāktmān wa tanmia-ye ostok^vānhā* (Dissection, histology and normal anatomy); *Wazāyef al-azā³-e mani* (The physiology of seminal effusion); *Fizik, taṭbiq-e ahrom dar jarr-e ṭaqil-e ḥaywāni* (Physics, comparative studies of levers and animal movements); *Šimi, kāšiyat-e ajsām-e morakkab az a'zāy-e motašābeh-e (isomeric) motabalwer šavanda ba yak šakl (isomorphisme) wa nemāyeš-e ajsām ba aškāl-e moḳtalef (polimorphisme)* (Chemistry: on isometric material substances and their crystallization (isomorphism and polymorphism); *Tāriḳ-e ṭabi'i, taḥšil: taḥšil-e qiāsi-e kun wa šir wa pišāb wa šafrā dar selsela-ye ḥaywāni wa ṭoroq-e ta'qibiya jahat-e taḥlil-e in ābgunahā (maye'āt)* (Natural history: comprehensive studies of blood, milk, urine and bile in animal species and the means of analysis of these fluids); *Bimāri-šenāsi-e kāreji: tašriḥ-e maraž ānurismhā* (External pathology: the identification of aneurisms); *Bimāri-šenāsi dākeli: tarkibāt wa 'awarež-e sorḳaja* (Internal pathology: various forms of German measles and complications thereof); *Bimāri-šenāsi-e 'omum: padidāvardagihā-ye pezeški* (General pathology: new advances in medicine); *Tašriḥ-e maraži; (kisthā)* (Anatomical pathology: pathology of cysts); *Ṭebb-e 'amali: ṭoroq-e moḳtalef-e ravānihā-ye šāna* (Practical medicine: various forms of shoulder dislocation); *Dāru-sāzi wa dāru-šenāsi: tarkib-e širahā-ye nabāti chist ?* (Pharmaceutics/Pharmacology: What is the composition of botanic extracts?); *Oṣul-e tadāwi* (Principles of therapeutics); *Behdāšt-e mezāj* (On personal hygiene); *Pezeški-e qānuni: nemāyeš-e ṭoroq-e moḳtalef-e esteḳrāj wa takfiḥ-e mawādd-e 'ożwi jahat-e tajassosāt-e zahrhā* (Forensic medicine: on various means of extraction and analysis/separation of poisonous substances from body organs); *Zāymān: lagan dar ḥālat-e ostok^vāni* (Obstetrics: studies on pelvic bones).

As this list attests, Kermānšāhi was a learned man and possessed an extensive and varied knowledge of medicine. In addition to his expertise in both traditional and Western medicine he was fluent in Arabic and French, and generally familiar with those cultures witnessed by his translation of *Gil Blas* by Alain-Rene Lesage from French to Persian published in 1323/1905. (Mošār, 1973, II. col. 1888; idem, 1965, V, p. 698; Ārianpur, I, pp. 272 n. 6, 402; Nāṭeq, p. 54). He did not suffer fools gladly but was cordial and respectful to the cognoscenti (Hedāyat, p. 68; Taqizādeh, 1971, p. 92). Kermānšāhi was married twice. He died in Tehran in 1908 and was buried at Ebn Bābuya. (Bāmdād, III, p. 278; Qazvini, VIII p. 242).



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