

# On the Cover

## **Ibn Sina** “Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn Sina”

Iranian physician, the most famous and influential of the philosopher-scientists of Islam. He composed the Kitab al-shifa’ (“Book of Healing”), and The Canon of Medicine, which is among the most famous books in the history of medicine.

Kitab al-shifais treats of logic, the natural sciences, including psychology, the quadrivium (geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music), and metaphysics.

The Canon of Medicine (Al-Qanun fi al-tibb) is the most famous single book in the history of medicine in both East and West.

In medicine the Canon became the medical authority for several centuries, and Avicenna enjoyed an undisputed place of honour equaled only by the early Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen.

He is known in the West as Avicenna (981-1037). He wrote on a wide range of subjects, of which around 240 are present. Of the surviving works, 150 concentrated on philosophy and 40 of them on medicine [6].

His most famous works are The Book of Healing and The Canon of Medicine, which was a standard medical text at many Islamic and European universities up until the 18th century.

Ibn Sīnā developed a medical system that combined his own personal experience with that of Islamic medicine, the medical system of Galen, Aristotelian metaphysics, and ancient Persian, Mesopotamian and Indian medicine. Ibn Sīnā is regarded as the father of modern medicine [7], particularly for his introduction of systematic experimentation and quantification into the study of physiology [8], his discovery of the contagious nature of infectious diseases [9], the introduction of quarantine to limit the spread of contagious diseases, the introduction of clinical trials [10], and the first descriptions on bacteria and viral organisms [11], He is also considered the father of the fundamental concept of momentum in physics [12].

His most important medical works are the Qanun (Canon) and a treatise on Cardiac drugs. The ‘Qanun fi-l-Tibb’ contains some of the most illuminating thoughts pertaining to distinction of mediastinitis from pleurisy; contagious nature of phthisis; distribution of diseases by water and soil; careful description of skin troubles; of sexual diseases and perversions; of nervous ailments [9].

It classifies and describes diseases, and outlines their assumed causes. Hygiene, simple and complex medicines, and functions of parts of the body are also covered.

An Arabic edition of the Canon appeared at Rome in 1593, and a Hebrew version at Naples in 1491.

In the museum at Bukhara, there are displays showing many of his writings, surgical instruments from the period and paintings of patients undergoing treatment. Ibn Sīnā was interested in the effect of the mind on the body, and wrote a great deal on psychology.

6- O’Connor, John J; Edmund F. Robertson “Avicenna”. MacTutor History of Mathematics archive (<http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/Biographies/Avicenna.html>).

7- Cas Lek Cesk (1980). “The father of medicine, Avicenna, in our science and culture: Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037)”, Bečka J. 119 (1), p. 17-23.

8- Katharine Park (March 1990). “Avicenna in Renaissance Italy: The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500 by Nancy G. Siraisi”, The Journal of Modern History 62 (1), p. 169-170.

9- George Sarton, Introduction to the History of Science (<http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic/Introll.html>).

10- David W. Tschanz, MSPH, PhD (August 2003). “Arab Roots of European Medicine”, Heart Views 4 (2).

11- The Canon of Medicine, The American Institute of Unani Medicine, 2003 (<http://www.unani.com/avicenna%20story%203.htm>).

12- Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Islamic Conception Of Intellectual Life”, in Philip P. Wiener (ed.), Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Vol. 2, p. 65, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1973-1974.

## **Suggested Readings:**

1- Wikipedia; the free encyclopedia; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna#\\_note-8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna#_note-8)

2- Ibn Sina (Avicenna): Website <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/sina/>

3- The Window Philosophy on the Internet; <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/phil/philo/phils/muslim/sina.html>

4- Avicenna: The Prince of Physicians and A Giant in Pharmacology. <http://www.afghan-network.net/Culture/avicenna.html>

5- Encyclopedia Britannica on line; <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9011433/Avicenna>

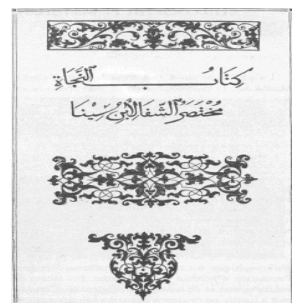
**Figure 1:** Ibn Sina’s Najat cover page from a very old printed copy in Venice (circa 1582).

**Figure 2&3:** The third book of Ibn Sina’s Canon of Medicine.

**Figure 4:** Isfahan’s golden age began in 1598 when Shāh’ Abbās I, created Masjid-i Shāh (Royal Mosque).



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**