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The Ottoman Reception of Matthioli's De Materia Medica: Knowledge Transmission and Pharmacobotanical Adaptation

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This study examines the reception of Pietro Andrea Matthioli's commentary on De Materia Medica in the Ottoman Empire, focusing on the 18th-century translation by Osman bin Abdurrahman, a translator based in Belgrade. De Materia Medica, originally authored by Pedanios Dioscorides in the first century CE, was a foundational text in pharmacobotany, influencing both Islamic and European medical traditions. Over centuries, the work was translated into Arabic, Latin, and later European languages, with Matthioli's 16th-century interpretation playing a crucial role in its dissemination.

The paper outlines Dioscorides' contributions to medical botany, highlighting his classification methods and the impact of his work on medieval and early modern pharmacology. It traces the transmission of Dioscorides' text from Greek to Arabic in the 9th-12th centuries, then to Latin and vernacular European languages in the Renaissance, culminating in Matthioli's influential commentary. The role of Ottoman intellectuals in this knowledge transfer is examined through Osman bin Abdurrahman's 18th-century translation of Matthioli's text into Ottoman Turkish, marking a significant phase in the diffusion of pharmacological knowledge.

The study contextualizes this translation within the Ottoman "search for new medicine" period, analyzing how Ottoman scholars engaged with European medical advancements while maintaining connections to Islamic medical traditions. It also explores how Matthioli's visual and textual contributions, enriched by Ottoman botanical knowledge, facilitated the integration of Dioscorides' legacy into early modern Ottoman pharmacology.

By assessing manuscript evidence and tracing intellectual exchanges, the paper highlights the fluid and interconnected nature of scientific knowledge circulation across linguistic, cultural, and geographical boundaries. The case of De Materia Medica exemplifies how medical knowledge was adapted and transformed through centuries, demonstrating the dynamic interplay between translation, commentary, and scientific innovation.

Short Biography

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Yavuz is a faculty member in the Department of the History of Science at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, İstanbul Medeniyet University. He obtained his undergraduate degree in 2001 from the Atatürk Faculty of Education at Marmara University. He completed his master's degree at the Institute of Natural Sciences, Marmara University, with a thesis titled "A Taxonomic and Ecological Study on Lichens from the Pamukkale Region" and his PhD (2010) from the same program with a thesis titled "Lichen Flora of Gölcük Nature Park and Grading Isparta's Air Pollution via Lichens." Additionally, he earned a second PhD (2022) from the Graduate School of Social Sciences, İstanbul Medeniyet University, with a thesis titled "Plants with regard to the Kitab al-Nabat Tradition in the Islamic Philosophy-Science." Between 2002 and 2015, he worked as a teacher in various schools. His publications include Vekilharçtan Mektuplar (2020, Kadran Publishing, short stories), Biyolojiyi Benzersiz Kılan Nedir? (2022, Küre Publishing, translation), Tabiatın Tıbbi Osmanlı'da Canlı Bilimleri (2024, Ketebe Publishing, edited volume), and Bitki Biliminin Kök(en)leri (2024, Ötüken Neşriyat, monograph). His articles on lichen taxonomy, ecology, bio-monitoring, the history of materia medica, botanical history, and the philosophy of biology have been published in national and

international journals. In recent years, he has been organizing his work within the broader theme of the philosophy and history of life sciences, focusing on conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Keywords

De Materia Medica, Pietro Andrea Matthioli, Ottoman pharmacobotany, knowledge transmission, medical translations

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