

## **Medical History in Turkey: A Review of Past Studies and Recent Researches**

(Studies in history of medicine and science in Turkey:  
Initiators, their researches, interrelations and impacts)

**Feza Günergun**

Chair for History of Science, Faculty of Letters  
Istanbul University, 34459 Beyazıt – Istanbul  
fezagun@attglobal.net

The present paper has a three fold aim. The primary aim is to study the emergence of researches in medical history in Turkey during the first half of the 20th century by presenting the biographies and works of two medical historians, Dr. Süheyl Ünver (1898-1986), and Dr. Feridun Nafiz Uzluk (1902-1974). They were the founders and directors of the first two chairs of medical history in Turkey and initiators of research within these institutions.

The second aim is to examine the emergence of researches in the field of history of science in Turkey, by considering the work undertaken by Dr. Adnan Adivar (1882-1955) and Dr. Aydın Sayili (1913-1993). The former is the author of the book *La Science chez les Turcs ottomans* (Paris, 1938), the first study of scientific literature produced in Ottoman Turkey both on mathematical and on medical sciences. The latter, A. Sayili, was the founder and director of the first chair of history of science in Turkey.

The third and final aim is to analyze the mutual connections between medical historians and historians of science, how and why they started to do researches on their subjects, what did they produced and the impact of their studies on later researches.

### ***Beginnings of medical history in Turkey: teaching and publications in the 19th c.***

Before systematic and academic researches in medical history started in 1930s, courses of medical history were in the curriculum of the Military Medical School in 1857 in Istanbul. One of the first lecturers was an English physician Dr. Charles Edwards (d.1894) who had come to Turkey during the Crimean War (1853-1856) and stayed in the entourage of the imperial family after the war ended. Between 1860 and 1863, courses on medical history

were given by Dr. Zoeros Pacha (1841/44-1917), professor of internal medicine, who taught the history of medicine from the antiquity to modern times.<sup>1</sup>

Early interest in researching medical history started in late 1860s within the nationalistic movement led by Turkish physicians to secure the teaching of medical sciences in Turkish. The teaching in French at the Military Medical School was a primary obstacle for Turkish students and was hindering the number of Turkish graduates. The aim of young Turkish doctors was to prove that medical sciences had a long tradition within the Islamic world and thus, Turkish was an appropriate language for the teaching of medical sciences. The teaching needed the compilation of a French-Turkish medical dictionary. Turkish doctors decided to translate Pierre-Hubert Nysten's (1771-1818) dictionary<sup>2</sup> into Turkish and this work urged them to examine old Turkish medical texts in order to find out the Ottoman equivalents of French medical terms or coin new terms by having recourse to Arabic. The dictionary was published in Istanbul in 1873 under the titles *Lugat-ı Tibbiye / Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales Français-Turc*.

Beside translating the dictionary, Turkish doctors also published texts on history of medicine and related sciences. The 68-page introduction to *Kimya-i Tibbi* (Medical Chemistry, 1869) by Dr. Kırımlı Aziz (1840-1878), an active member of the group, can be regarded as an early Turkish text on history of chemistry. An early essay on medical history is the 88-page *Hakayık-ı Tababet* (Realities of medicine, 1870) by Dr. Mehmed Emin Fehmi, professor of hygiene at the Civilian School of Medicine. In this essay, he strongly criticises those who don't believe in the benefits of scientific medicine that is the supporters of traditional medicine, and enumerates the arguments proving that medicine started in Egypt and not with Hippocrates. A medical history published in French in the same period was the *Aperçu historique sur la médecine arabe* (Istanbul 1876). The compiler was Dr. Joseph Nouridjan (born 1827), an Ottoman doctor who had worked as a

---

<sup>1</sup> Nuran Yıldırım & Yeşim Işıl Ulman, "The past and present of medical history and ethics (deontology) teaching at Istanbul University," *Proceedings of the 37th International Congress on the History of Medicine* (September 10-15, 2000, Texas (ABD) 2000, s. 238-243.

<sup>2</sup> Nysten's *Dictionnaire de médecine et des sciences accessoires à la médecine* was especially helpful in compiling a French-Ottoman medical dictionary since it contained explanations on the etymology of medical terms. Nysten's dictionary, first published in 1810 made several editions. The 10<sup>th</sup> edition (Paris 1855) was "augmenté de la synonymie latine, grecque, allemande, anglaise, italienne et espagnole et suivi d'un glossaire de ces diverses langues". A vocabulary in Latin and Greek was annexed to the 12<sup>th</sup> edition (Paris 1865).

physician in Istanbul's various hospitals, and taught deontology in the Military Medical School between 1877 and 1881.

In 1887, Dr. Hüseyin Remzi (1839-1896), one of the supporters of medical teaching in Turkish, published the *Tarih-i Tib* (Istanbul, 1887) dealing with medical history from ancient civilisations up to Galen's time. This volume, translated from Pierre Victor Renouard's (born 1789) *Histoire de la médecine depuis son origine jusqu'à XIXième siècle* (Paris 1846) can be considered among the early medical history books issued in Turkish. Although Dr. Remzi planned to compile a three volume work, including chapters on the history of Turkish and Islamic medical sciences, the remaining two volumes were never issued.

### ***History of science and medical history in the first two decades of the 20th century***

Interest in medical history was rather poor at the turn of the century. Dr. Rıza Tahsin's (1875-1950) book on the history of the Military Medical School (*Mirat-ı Mekteb-i Tıbbiye*, 1912) seems to be the only noteworthy work since it was one of the earliest books written on the history of a medical institution. In history of science however, two monumental works were produced by the mathematician Salih Zeki<sup>3</sup> (1864-1921): *Asar-ı Bakiye* (Immortal oeuvres that survive, 5 vols) and *Kamus-i Riyaziyat* (Encyclopaedia of mathematical sciences, 11 vols). The former is a five volume work dealing with the history of mathematics and astronomy. The first two volumes on trigonometry and algebra were printed in 1913 in Istanbul, while the three remaining volumes on astronomy are still manuscripts (Istanbul University Library). *Kamus-i Riyaziyat* is an alphabetical encyclopedia of mathematical sciences, including the explanations of scientific terms, the biographies and works of mathematicians and astronomers. The first volume went into two editions (Istanbul 1897, 1924), the remaining ten volumes (Istanbul University Library) are still unpublished.. These two works are both based on Salih Zeki's studies on the corpus of

---

<sup>3</sup> Salih Zeki has been trained on electrical engineering in Paris. Professor of mathematics and physics, he became the director of the Imperial Observatory, the dean of the Faculty of Science and the rector of the Istanbul University. He greatly contributed to the teaching of mathematical sciences in Turkey by publishing more than thirty textbooks for secondary and higher education, which went into many editions. His articles concerning mathematics and history of science were published in various Turkish journals. Salih Zeki, who may well have attended H.Poincaré's lectures in Paris, translated into Turkish the following books: *La Valeur de la Science (İlimin Kıymeti, 1914)*, *La science et la méthode (İlim ve Usul, 1915, 1928.)* *La science et l'hypothèse (İlim ve Faraziye, 1916, 1927)*. He also translated Alexis Bertrand's *Principes de philosophie scientifique et de philosophie morale* under the title *Mebadi-i Felsefe-i İlmiye ve Felsefe-i Ahlakiye* (2 vols) in 1917.

medieval Islamic mathematicians and astronomers and the publications of European historians of science.

The driving motive which led Salih Zeki to study the history of mathematical sciences was not very different from those guiding medical historians. His aim was to show what kind of knowledge did mathematicians of medieval Islam added to the Greek mathematical lore. On this purpose he learned Greek and Indian mathematics through the works of European historians and read their research articles on Islamic mathematics. He examined the original works of medieval Islamic and Ottoman mathematical and astronomical works kept in Istanbul libraries. He endeavored to refute the arguments of European historians (Hankel, Hobson, Suter, Woepke) about the early use of trigonometry and Hindu numerals.<sup>4</sup>

In the second decade of the twentieth century, studies on medical history focused especially the history of Turkish medicine. The leading idea was to prove that Turks practiced medicine and produced medical works throughout their history. Physicians such as Osman Sevki Uludag (1889-1964) and Galip Ata [Ataç] (1879-1947) wrote with the purpose of refuting European views claiming that Turks were enemies of science, and revealed Turkish contributions to Islamic science.<sup>5</sup> This attitude which was influenced by the cultural policy of the new Turkish Republic (founded in 1923) will last for many years, at least until mid 20th century.

On the other hand, the fact that all medieval physicians writing in Arabic or to lesser extent in Persian were considered as Arabs or Persians by the European historians of medicine, was an important guiding factor in Turkish medical historiography. Dr. Galip Ata stressed the necessity of taking into consideration the contributions of people from different religions and nationalities to Islamic science.<sup>6</sup> He published several articles and books on medical history. *Tıp Tarihi* (1925) is a standard medical history translated from European literature, also introduced the medical practices in far-eastern cultures such as India, Tibet,

---

<sup>4</sup> Celal Saraç, *Salih Zeki Bey, Hayatı ve Eserleri*. Ed. Yesim Isil Ulman, Istanbul, Kizil Elma Yay. 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Osman Sevki Uludag, *Besbucuk asirlik Türk tababet tarihi* (Five and a half centuries of Turkish medical history), Istanbul 1925.

<sup>6</sup> "tous les peuples de l'Asie, qui étaient conquis à la Révolution islamique mais qui n'étaient pas tous arabes, ni même souvent musulmans, ont produit des savants qui contribuèrent à la création d'une nouvelle civilisation. Parmi ces savants il y eut autant de Persans, de Turcs, de Hindous que Arabes; de chrétiens, de juifs, de budhistes, de paganistes que de musulmans. La seule communauté entre eux était la langue arabe; mais chacun conservait sa nationalité, sa religion et faisait valoir son pays d'origine." Galip Ata, "Evolution de la médecine en Turquie", *Neuvième Congrès International d'Histoire de la Médecine* (Bucuresti, 10-18 Septembre 1932) *Comptes-Rendus*, ed. Victor Gomoiu and Viorica Gomoiu, Bucuresti, (...), pp.95-131.

China and Japan. *Tıp Fakültesi* (Medical Faculty, 1925) is a short history of medical education and institutions in Turkey. He also translated into Turkish Claude Bernard's (1817-1878) *Principes de médecine expérimentale*.<sup>7</sup>

### **Süheyl Unver and the foundation of the first chair of medical history in Turkey**

The foremost figure of Turkish medical history was no doubt Dr. Süheyl Unver (1898-1986), the founder of the first chair of medical history in Turkey.<sup>8</sup> He not only started systematic research in medical history, but largely created a widespread interest in the subject through his numerous articles on a large variety of subjects. Through the foundation of the “Institute for Medical History” in 1933 in the Faculty of Medicine of Istanbul University, research activities which were carried on by interested individuals, acquired an institutional basis.

As soon as he graduated from the Medical Faculty at Istanbul, Dr. Unver was sent to Hôpital Pitié to work with Dr. Marcel Labbé (1870-1939) by Professor Dr. Akil Muhtar Özden (1877-1949) who personally covered all the expenses of his student during his two-year stay (1927-29) in Paris. During the conversations he had with French doctors at Labbé's house, Unver was questioned about Turkish medical history and was told that Turkish medical and health institutions were first established by European doctors. Conscious of his poor knowledge in medical history and wishing to prove that Turks had established health institutions long before European physicians came to Turkey, he immediately started to study Turkish medical history. In his free time he diligently worked in the Bibliothèque Nationale and examined a large number of Turkish, Arabic and Persian medical manuscripts. His interest in miniatures and the art of illumination began in Paris as well.

Back to Turkey, Unver worked for some years at the Chair of Pharmacodynamics. Dr. Akil Muhtar Özden, when re-organizing the medical faculty at the eve of the University Reformation in 1933, decided to create a Chair for History of Medicine and Deontology.

---

<sup>7</sup> Tıbbın tecrübi usullerine dair.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed biography see Ahmed Güner Sayar, *A.Süheyl Unver, Hayatı, Sahsiyeti ve Eserleri 1898-1986*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul 1994..

The same year Unver was appointed as chairman and given the task to start research on medical history.

Unver's primarily published works exposing the sources of Turkish medicine. He published *Medicine of the Uygurs* (1936) and *History of Seljuk Medicine* (1943). He tried to prove that Avicenna, Rhazes, el-Biruni and el-Farabi were of Turkish origin. His researches and that of his contemporaries were highly colored by the state's policy stressing the Turkish presence in the history of civilization. He published many articles on various issues ranging from traditional therapies to medical institutions. He especially examined the era prior to the 19th century when European impact was strongly felt in Turkey.<sup>9</sup>

Unver initiated the foundation of the Turkish Society for History of Medicine (est.1940) and created the first journal on Turkish medical history (*Tip Tarihi Arkivi*, 1935-43). The latter helped the dissemination of researches on medical history, especially among Turkish physicians. Besides his contributions in initiating systematic research in Turkish medical history, Unver should also be remembered with the manuscripts and the documents he collected during his career. Thus he was instrumental in preventing the loss of a large amount material documenting the cultural life up to 1980s.

### **Feridun Nafiz Uzluk and the foundation of the chair for medical history in Ankara**

F.N. Uzluk (1902-1974), alike Dr. S. Unver, was no doubt a leading figure of the Turkish medical history. A descendant of the famous Sufi poet Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi (1207-1273), Uzluk was given in his youth a deep Sufi culture (Islamic mysticism) which colored his later years. Graduated from the Medical Faculty (Istanbul) in 1925, he entered the Ministry of Health and served as a physician in Anatolian towns endeavoring to combat malaria. In 1932 he left for Germany for 3 years to study at his own expenses. He first worked in the Medical Faculty at Munich, than in the Institute of Tropical Diseases and the Eppendorfer Krankenhaus in Hamburg. He also visited medical institutions in Berlin and Vienna. Alike Unver, his interest in medical history was born during his studies in Europe. He examined the Arabic, Turkish, Persian manuscripts kept in the Staatsbibliothek in

---

<sup>9</sup> For the detailed bibliography of S.Unver see Gülbün Mesara, Aykut Kazancıgil, Ahmed Güner Sayar, *A. Süheyl Unver Bibliyografyası*, Isaret Yayinlari, Istanbul 1998.

Munich, ordered manuscripts from Vienna's National Library. In Munich he met the orientalist Fritz Hommel (1854-1934) and Karl Süssheim (1878-1947). In Vienna, he visits the Institute for Medical History, the Josephinum Academy, the Allgemeines Krankenhaus. He examines the oriental manuscripts brought from Istanbul to Vienna by the historian Hammer-Purgstall (1774-1856). Back to Turkey in 1935, he continued to serve to combat epidemics and published his early articles on medical history. In 1946, he is appointed as "professor of medical history" to the Medical Faculty of Ankara University. He soon undertook the creation of a chair and started to collect material and books related to Turkish medical history. When he left the chair in 1971, the library counted 15 000 books, manuscripts and documents.

Uzluk not only published on Turkish and Islamic physicians and their works, but undertook the translation of several (more than 30) books on medical history from French and German. He could, however, publish three of them.<sup>10</sup> He also rendered into Turkish a few treatises by Rhazes and Ibn un-Nefis, using their translations in European languages. Uzluk, on the other hand, published several books on the history of Anatolian Seljuks and the Sufi poems in the printing house he had established in 1940. The printing house had also issued a popular book on Islamic catechism. The change in State's cultural policy in 1940s after the death of Atatürk and the understanding favoring European literature, did not rescue Uzluk's printing house which was destroyed together with other buildings during the town planning works in Ankara.

Unver and Uzluk were good friends. They exchanged letters regularly. Uzluk wrote him from Germany during 1932-35 and later on from Ankara. Unver, kept all the letters he received from Uzluk and noted (AGS, p.445) that he would give them to the Chair for Medical History at the Cerrahpasa Faculty of Medicine at Istanbul. The examination made in the archives of this chair proved unfruitful. The file named "Uzluk" contained only one letter<sup>11</sup> and the others seem to have disappeared. On the other hand, a collection of letters written from Unver to Uzluk is kept in the Center for Seljuk Studies in Konya (Central Anatolia). A close study of these letters in the future will no doubt give us a deeper understanding of their relationship and the subjects on medical history they discussed.

---

<sup>10</sup> Jerom Fracastor's (1483-1553) *Siphilidis sive morbi...*; Karl Opitz's (d.1898) *Die Medizin im Koran*; Douglas Guthrie's (1885-1975) *A History of Medicine* (London 1945).

<sup>11</sup> This letter is written from Uzluk to Unver. Uzluk criticises Osman Sevki Uludag's work. Uzluk was given the draft of Uludag's book and was asked to give his comments.

Beside being good friends and assisted each other in scientific fields, Unver and Uzluk cooperated in the foundation of the Türk Tıp Tarihi Kurumu (Turkish Society for History of Medicine). Initiatives to create a society were taken during the XIth Congress on History of Science (Zagreb, 1938) by a group of Turkish doctors participating to the congress. The same year, Unver created the emblem and Uzluk prepared the statutes of the society which was officially founded in 1940. Both also collaborated in the publication of the journal *Tıp Tarihi Arkivi*.

### **Adnan Adivar and *La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans***

Turkish history of science owes much to Dr. Adnan Adivar,<sup>12</sup> a medical doctor who has been an active politician during the formation years of the Turkish Republic. Graduated from the Medical Faculty in 1905, Adivar left for Berlin to be specialized in internal medicine. Following the proclamation of the 2nd Constitution, he came back to Istanbul. As he was close to the Jeunes Turcs, he was appointed as the director of the Medical Faculty at the age of 30. He served in the Red Crescent during the war against Italians in Tripoli, participated to the Balkan Wars and the World War I. In 1917 he married the novelist Halide Edib and both joined the team of Atatürk in 1918 when foreign armies occupied Istanbul. In Ankara, Adnan Adivar was named Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Vice president of the National Assembly between 1920 and 1923. Following the proclamation of the Republic, he founded in 1924 the opposition party with a small number of deputies. He became the secretary general and did not hesitate to criticize the government. The party was abolished in 1925 on the argument that it backed a rebellion against the government. Disappointed, Adivar left for Vienna to accompany his wife who should undergo medical treatment.

Adivar's interest in philosophy and history of science seem to have emerged during his "exile" years. Days spent in Vienna and Karlsbad were a real nightmare for him. His wife Halide Edib was ill and him self disturbed. At the age of 44, his political life was over. His views are not published in Turkey. According to his wife's notes, he is fully anxious and distressed." He thought continuously after the years he spent to fight for the freedom of his country and to give it "a new and independent Western aspect." He deeply feels the sorrow

---

<sup>12</sup> Halide Edib Adivar (ed.), *Doktor Aldülhak Adnan Adivar*, Istanbul 1956.

of not being able to realize his goals. His falling into disfavor and disappointment increased his usual pessimism. His distress also stemmed from his character. Halide Edib proposed him to read philosophy to give up his despair. He agreed immediately and set up to work. This was the beginning of a long period full of reading and research. Adivar left for Paris and then went to London, where he learned that the former members of his party were brought to court and some of them were condemned on the ground that they were preparing a coup. Although Adivar was acquitted, he only returned to Turkey in 1940 after Atatürk passed away in 1938.

These 13 years of research in the libraries of Paris and London were extremely fruitful. While teaching Turkish at the Ecole des Langues Orientales, he worked in the Bibliothèque Nationale and also attended courses at Collège de France and Sorbonne to improve his formation. He met orientalist in Paris and London, where he used to spend the summer months studying in the British Library. He collected a large amount of material for his book *Ilim ve Din* (Science and Religion) and for the *La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans*. In the forewords of latter he does not mention why he started to work on Turkish history of science. It seems that his interest in studying the scientific activities of the Turks during the rule of the Ottoman Empire developed while he was working on his book on science and religion. His correspondence with S. Unver did probably stimulate his researches. A future study of their correspondence may help us to find the decisive answer. As it will be mentioned later, he did not study Turkish history of science with the aim of highlighting Turkish contributions to science as early medical historians have done. He corresponded with George Sarton and introduced Salih Zeki's works on the history of mathematical sciences in ISIS.

Upon his return to Turkey, he carried on his research, published the enlarged edition Turkish of *La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans* in 1943. His proposal of translating the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden) into Turkish was welcomed by the Ministry of Education. He assiduously worked for many years as the president of the commission, then carried on the work voluntarily when his health started to deteriorated. He passed away in 1955.

*La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans: comments and influence*

The book can be regarded as a first attempt to present together the activities displayed by Turkish scholars during the Ottoman period (14th to 19th c.). The Turkish edition<sup>13</sup> published in 1943 was both recognized and criticized. K.I.Gürkan, a professor at the medical faculty stated that the book was fully scientific and objective: “It is a book that has been compiled without exaggeration, pride and inferiority complex. It did neither satisfy those despising the scientific activities of the Turks nor those magnifying them. The reason is that Adivar was indifferent to both extremes. He walked along a path that he considered true and he walked alone.” The use of the word “alone” in this quotation is especially worthy of attention. It points out to the presence of a group of historians aiming only to praise Turkish scientific activities.

On the other hand, the book was severely criticized and was considered as a “document against the Turks and that it appropriates Turkish achievements to other races.” Adivar’s following statement was the primary cause of these critics: “Until the nineteenth century, science in Ottoman Turkey was nothing but a deficient and sometimes wrong continuation of the science written in Arabic and Persian, and neither the content nor the method was different from those of classical Islamic science.”<sup>14</sup>

As for the effects of the book in Turkey, it seems that these were rather restricted at the time it was published. Although Turkish medical history had called the attention of a number of interested people thanks to the efforts of Unver and Uzluk, the study of history of science and its audience was very restrained. Salih Zeki’s personal interest in the history of mathematical sciences and the works he compiled at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not create any followers who would carry on his researches. On the other hand, the book does not seem to have directly influenced the activities of the Chair for History of Science founded in Ankara in 1952. Its director Aydin Sayili, as will be introduced in the coming pages, followed the program proposed by his Ph.D supervisor George Sarton, with whom he had studied the scientific and educational institutions of medieval Islam. His list of publications (1937-1996) shows that he has very few articles on scientific activities in Ottoman Turkey.

---

<sup>13</sup> The second and third Turkish editions are dated 1970 and 1982.

<sup>14</sup> Abdülhak Adnan-[Adivar], *Osmanlı Türklerinde ilim*, Maarif Matbaasi, Istanbul 1943, p.IX

It is interesting to note that Adivar's statement that "the sky of Turkey remained dark until 19<sup>th</sup> century the date when the first rays of modern science penetrated the country" and not the book itself fostered researches in 1980's, that is almost 40 years after its publication. The research program started by E. Ihsanoglu in Istanbul aimed mainly to refute Adivar's claim. A team set by him at IRCICA started to compile bibliographical works on Ottoman scientific literature. Thesis prepared in the Department of History of Science (Istanbul University) focused the history of Ottoman institutions related with science and education. They mostly investigated the functioning, the staff and the curriculum of these institutions. These studies showed that Ottoman scholars produced more works than those examined by Adivar in 1930s. More detailed comparative studies focusing the content of these works are still needed to enlighten the true essence of Ottoman scientific literature and to refute Adivar's argument.

### **The relationship between Adivar and Unver**

The mutual assistance between Adivar and Unver seems to have started through letters when Adivar undertook the compilation of his book *La Science chez les Turcs Ottomans* in Paris. In the same years, Süheyl Unver had already established the chair for medical history in Istanbul. A future study on these letters will no doubt greatly help to understand the relationship between medical history and the history of science in Turkey. Thanks to this correspondence Dr. Unver send Adivar the information he needed from Istanbul libraries. In return, Dr. Adivar collected the material Unver needed from Bibliothèque Nationale. While Unver was working on Cerrahiyet'ül- Haniyye, the 15th c. Turkish surgery book of Sabuncuoglu, Dr. Adivar examined the BN copy and send Unver the information he collected. On the other hand, Adivar reviewed some of Unver's studies in European journals in order to introduce the activities of Unver's institute to European historians and orientalist.

When Adivar returned to Istanbul in 1940, their collaboration continued. Unver exchanged ideas with Adivar before undertaking some of his projects or asked him to comment and criticise his books before sending them to print. Unver acknowledges Adivar for his critics and "affectionate attention" in the foreword of his book *Istanbul Rasathanesi* (Istanbul Observatory, 1969).

Unver's collaboration with Adivar and also with Fatin Gökmen (1877-1955), the director of the Kandilli Observatory in Istanbul, pushed him to publish on history of science as well. He became interested in astronomers, observatories, timekeeper's offices, clocks and astronomical instruments. He published three books, namely *Ali Kusci, Hayatı ve Eserleri* (Ali Kusci's life and works, 1948), *Fatih Devri ve Zamanı İlim Hayatı* (Scientific life during the reign of Mehmed the Conquerant, 1953) and *Istanbul Rasathanesi* (Istanbul Observatory, 1969).

### **Aydin Sayili and the foundation of the chair for history of science in Ankara**

Salih Zeki and Adnan Adivar's works on history of science were individual efforts and the driving force was their interest in exposing the contributions of Muslim scholars to science (for Salih Zeki) and to know more about scientific activities in Turkey (for Adivar). Researches in history of science acquired an institutional basis with the foundation of the "Chair for History of Science" in Ankara in 1952 by A. Sayili (1913-1993). He was the first Turkish historian of science trained in "History of Science." He completed his Ph.D in 1942 at Harvard University with George Sarton, the year before Adivar's book was published in Istanbul. He chaired for 31 years, until his retirement in 1983.

Sayili's researches focused mainly the scientific activities in medieval Islam. His major book *Observatory in Islam* (Ankara 1960) which is based on his Ph.D thesis is the first comprehensive work written on the subject. He did not neglect, however, the issue of "Turkish contributions" and published articles on scholars of Turkish origin such as Ibn Sina (Avicenna), el-Farabi, Abdullah ibn Türk. On the other hand, he wrote to expose and diffuse Atatürk's views on science and its contribution to the modernization and development of societies.

We know little about the relationship between Adivar and the young Aydin Sayili. While Adivar was acting as deputy at the National Assembly in Ankara between 1946 and 1950, Aydin Sayili, a young member of the Ankara University, was publishing on Seljukid science institutions of Anatolia. The fact that they did research on different periods may have hindered their contacts. Adivar, however, reviewed Sayili's article on al-Farabi in 1951 in a daily newspaper *Vatan* and in the academic journal of the Turkish Historical

Society, the *Bellesten*. The absence of a necrology written by Sayili upon Adivar's death may be an indication that Sayili did not feel himself as a follower of Adivar. Besides, Sayili seems to have had little contact with medical historians as well. His training in history of science and physics may be one of the causes of this attitude. He probably regarded "history of science" as a new discipline, different from the "history of medicine" A view which may have stemmed from his education under G. Sarton's supervision. On the other hand, he did not seem to be interested in the work that older scholars had produced in Turkey before him.

## **Conclusion**

From the information given so far, it is clear that a long-standing relationship was established between medical historians Unver and Uzluk, and the historian of science A. Adivar starting from 1930s. The key-person of this trio was S. Unver. He had established good connections with Uzluk and Adivar and carried them on throughout his life. The fact that three of them were physicians and came from similar cultural milieu was an essential factor in the creation of this "association." Thanks to their mutual assistance, the two disciplines developed side by side for about twenty years (from 1930s to 1950s). The divergence came in 1950s with the foundation of the chair for history of science. Its chairman Sayili was a physicist, his cultural background and education differed highly from the trio and was much younger when compared to them. This divergence prevailed up to the present day. But there were, and there are still exceptions. One of Sayili's students made her Ph.D in history of medicine and some historians of science still publish occasionally on medical history.

An interesting point in the emergence of systematic researches in both disciplines was that all the members of the trio, were involved in historical research during their medical specialization in Europe. They examined the Turkish, Arabic and Persian manuscripts on various sciences, which were kept in the national libraries at Paris, London, Munich and Vienna. The driving force of the two medical historians was to prove that Turks did contribute to science and that their scientific activities started long before 19th century when foreign specialists were invited to reform the medical institutions. As for Adivar, he studied the Turkish history of science in order to learn more about what has been produced in Ottoman Turkey.

Unver and Uzluk were not only medical historians. They were active in various other fields. Adivar, initiated the translation of *Encyclopedia of Islam* into Turkish, a large project that he contributed for many years. Unver was deeply interested in cultural history and especially history of art. He drew many pictures of the Seljukid and Ottoman edifices (especially medical institutions and medreses) built in Istanbul and Anatolia. Since a good number of the old small edifices are lost nowadays, his drawings are of primary importance for historians. The miniatures that decorated the cover of some of his books were also drawn by him. As for Uzluk, he translated and published source books of the Seljukid history and poetry. The rich collection of books and documents they formed on Turkish medical history are still awaiting the interest of the present day medical historians.

In short, the enthusiasm of medical historians to refute the claims of European doctors in the beginning of the 20th century matched the cultural program of the newly founded Republic, asking investigations on the origins of Turkish history. This cultural program which stimulated the historical studies had an important effect on medical history. As directors of the chairs for medical history, Unver and Uzluk, focused their early researches on the medieval scholars of Turkish origin and the medical activities of the pre-Ottoman Turkish states. The Adivar case was different. His disagreement with Atatürk after the proclamation of the Republic had major effects on his studies. Away from the influence of Ankara urging the study of origins as well as the exaltation of Turkish contributions, he could freely examine the Ottoman period and evaluate the scientific activities objectively. As the influence of the cultural program waned gradually studies on medical history turned towards the Ottoman period (14-20th c.). Most of the researches on medical history being conducted in present day Turkey focus this six-century period. Researches made so far aimed to introduce physicians, medical institutions and the sources of Turkish medical history. It is hoped that future studies will aim the study of medical manuscripts and the archival material which will greatly help in researching on new issues of Turkish medical history such as diseases, hygiene, therapies and many others.

Before concluding I wish to make some personal remarks and mention the impact of the present symposium on my future researches. Firstly, it pushed me to study more closely the emergence of researches in medical history and history of science in Turkey, and the mutual connection between scholars researching in these fields. Secondly, the present paper

which can be considered as an introduction, allowed me to be aware of the letters exchanged between these scholars. Finding out these letters and studying them will be a further step in my research and I hope that it will help me to understand the various currents, the discussions, the disputes, the divergences, the comments and critics that raised during the formative period Turkish medical history and history of science. In short the symposium gave me “new directions” as its title indicated. .

---

*Acknowledgements*

I cordially thank Dr. Seref Etker (Istanbul) for sharing his ideas with me.