

Environmental Health During the Ottoman Era in Sixteen Century (An Example of Nişân-ı Hümâyûn)

16.Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Çevre Sağlığı (Bir Nişân-ı Hümâyûn Örneğinde)

Eray YURTSEVEN,^a
İbrahim BAŞAĞAOĞLU,^b
Selçuk KÖKSAL,^a
Suphi VEHİD,^a
Ayşe KAYPMAZ^a

^aDepartment of Public Health,
^bDepartment of Deontology and
History, Istanbul University Cerrah-
pasa Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul

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Yazışma Adresi/Correspondence:
Eray YURTSEVEN
Istanbul University Cerrahpasa Faculty
of Medicine, Department of
Public Health, Istanbul
TÜRKİYE/TURKEY
eyurt@istanbul.edu.tr

ABSTRACT One of the most fundamental problems faced contemporarily in the world and by humanity is environmental pollution. Along with industrialization, an increase has been observed in environmental problems and pollution levels that seemed to be unimportant at the beginning have in time started to threaten life and the environment that people live in. When we look at the world, we observe that the current situation is heartbreaking. Attaching the necessary attention on subjects such as environmental cleaning and environmental protection started only at the beginning of the 20th century. However, it is a well known fact the situation had been different in the stated that have been founded by Turks. One of the principal reasons of this results from the importance that the Muslim religion attaches on cleanliness. The level of importance attached on environmental cleaning was quite high during the Ottoman era. The Code of laws with respect to environmental cleaning to be presented in our study determines the legal framework for environmental cleaning under the responsibility of the superintendent responsible from garbage dumps. This Code of Obligations has been prepared in year 1539 (946 as per the Muslim calendar) in order to be presented to the superintendent responsible from Edirne.

Key Words: Environment; ethics; environmental health; history of medicine

ÖZET Son yıllarda dünya ve insanlığın karşı karşıya geldiği en önemli problemlerden biri çevresel kirliliktir. Başlangıçta önemsiz gibi görünen çevresel problemler ve kirlilik düzeyleri endüstrileşmeyle beraber zamanla artış göstermiş olup, bu artışın insanların yaşadığı çevre ve yaşam açısından tehlike yaratmaya başladığı belirlenmiştir. Dünyada günümüzdeki duruma baktığımızda söz konusu hususun çok üzücü olduğu gözlenmektedir. Çevresel temizlik ve çevresel korumayla ilgili gerekli önemlerin alınması sadece 20th yüzyıl başlarına rastlamaktadır. Bununla birlikte Türklerde bu durumun oldukça farklı olduğu iyi bilinmektedir. Bu prensip ve sonuçlar eşliğinde Müslüman inancının temizliğe verdiği önem bunun temel nedenlerinden birisidir. Osmanlı imparatorluğunda çevresel temizliğe verilen önemin oldukça yüksek olduğu bilinmektedir. Çalışmamızda Osmanlı imparatorluğu döneminde çevresel temizlik konusundaki bir kanun belirtilmekte, yasal çerçevede ise çevresel temizliğe uyumu sağlamak, çöp ve çöplük alanlarının ortadan kaldırılmasından, subaşı (yönetici)nin sorumlu olduğu belirtilmektedir. Bu yasal sorumluluk çerçevesindeki kanun 1539 yılında hazırlanmış olup (Müslüman takvimine hicri takvimle 946) Edirne subaşısına bu yasal emirler uygulanmak üzere verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çevre; etik; çevre sağlığı; tıp tarihi

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One of the most fundamental problems faced contemporarily in the world and by humanity is environmental pollution. A significant increase is observed lately in the level of consciousness with regard to the protection of the world and the environment and that the problems and solution proposals are discussed at local and global scales. Along with

industrialization, an increase has been observed in environmental problems and pollution levels that seemed to be unimportant at the beginning have in time started to threaten life and the environment that people live in. For this reason, subjects such as protection of environmental health started to gain more importance.

People have certain responsibilities against the environment and the society that they live in. The most important one among these is the responsibility people have against environment and nature. When we look at the world, we observe that the current situation is heartbreaking. Attaching the necessary attention on subjects such as environmental cleaning and environmental protection started only at the beginning of the 20th century. Prerequisites such as environmental morality and continuation of life in the earth without people giving harm to the air, water, soil and all living creatures in the world are concepts, that the western civilizations have been newly introduced with and should protect.^{1,2} However, it is a well known fact the situation had been different in the stated that have been founded by Turks. One of the principal reasons of this results from the importance that the Muslim religion attaches on cleanliness. One of the records of saying of the Prophet Muhammad says that half of faith arises from cleanliness. As a matter of fact, Turks have been a nation that acted with the mentality that “If everyone cleans the front of their doors, then everywhere will be clean.”^{1,3}

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW SENSITIVE THE OTTOMAN SULTANS WERE ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Turks have attached a significant level of importance on environmental cleaning in the states that they founded and the sultans expressed this clearly in the Codes of Laws that they published and their speeches. The sensitiveness of Fatih Sultan Mehmed, one of the sultans of the Ottoman era is understood from his following expression given below.^{1,3}

“I the undersigned, Fatih Sultan Mehmed, a faithful creature of Allah and the conqueror of Istanbul, devote and dedicate my 136 shops, with their boundaries certain within the Taşlık district in the



PHOTO 1: Cover of the book with number 1970 in the Veliyyüddin Efendi Collection.

Fatih Sultan Mehmed

province of Istanbul, which I have purchased with the coins that I have personally won after decent working under the conditions given below. Thus, I appointed two persons for each street of Istanbul to be employed by using the funds, the profit and income to be generated from these real estates of mine. Each day, they shall go around these streets a few times at certain times of the day, holding lime dusts and coal ashes in a pot that they shall hold in their hands. They shall pour those dusts or ashes on the spits of those who have spit on the streets and they shall receive two coins daily for the job that they perform”.

The English explanation of the expression given above:

It is easy to understand that these words belong to Fatih Sultan Mehmed Khan, world famous conqueror who closed a historical era and opened a new era. The great Sultan, has donated his 136 shops, which he has purchased on condition that certain prerequisites are met. The appointment of two persons for each street of the city with the duty of strolling around all parts and corners of the city and pouring dust and ash on the spits of people who spit here and there is an indicator of how sensitive the Ottoman Sultans are about environmental health.



PHOTO 2: Inner page of the book with number 1970 in the Veliyyüddin Efendi Collection.



PHOTO 3: Inner cover of the book with number 1970 of the Veliyyüddin Efendi collection.

AN EXAMPLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS IN EDIRNE (1539):

The code of laws were an example of environmental health regulations for Ottoman empire.

The Code of laws with respect to environmental cleaning to be presented in our study determines the legal framework for environmental cleaning under the responsibility of the superintendent responsible from garbage dumps. This Code of Obligations has been prepared in year 1539 (946 as per the Muslim calendar) in order to be presented to the superintendent responsible from Edirne. The province of Edirne: It is located in the Trakya section of the Balkan Peninsula close to the part where Tunca and Arda rivers reach Meric and it is located in an arc that is formed with the meeting of Tunca with Meric. The conquest of Edirne has constituted a major turning point in history both for European and Turkish history. II. Mehmed, made all his plans with regard to the conquest of Istanbul, the casting of famous cannons destructing the city walls of Istanbul and all other preparations in Edirne during 1452-1453. Following the conquest of Edirne, the importance that has been attached on Edirne continued to remain in effect for a long time. Edirne underwent a fast

development during the XVI. Century and magnificent buildings were made. The city gained importance once again during the second half of the XVIII. Century. The fact that the Ottoman Sultans used to reside in this province has been effective for this. Edirne has almost resembled a second capital.^{4,6}

The Code of Obligations, which came into effect during the rule of the Kanuni Suleiman (Magnificent Suleiman) is given below. The original of the text is recorded in the archives of the Istanbul Beyazıt State Library, Rare Pieces Section, Veliyyüddin Efendi Collection under number 1970. The Code of Obligations is of dimensions 310 x 160 mm, 250x90 mm comprising of 21 lines and the type of writing used is Nesih.⁷

DISCUSSION

The level of importance attached on environmental cleaning was quite high during the Ottoman era. Officers responsible for the security and other aspects of the city used to be appointed in each settlement area whether it was a village or a large province. They were generally referred to as “subaşı” (in Turkish) (superintendent). The superintendents used to be responsible from different duties.

PHOTO 4: Code of Obligations with number 1970 of the Veliyyüddin Efendi Collection.**NIŞÂN-I HÜMÂYÛN (Decree of the Sultan) HAVING BEEN ISSUED FOR CLEANING THE NEIGHBORHOODS, STREETS AND BAZAARS OF EDİRNE**

Nişân-ı hümâyûn yazıla; şimdiki hâde Daru's-Saltanatı'l-Âliyye ve'l-Hilâfeti's-Seniyye Mahrûse-i Edirne -hümiyet anî'l-beliyye-nin mahallât ve çarşuların ve sokakların görüp gözedüp temiz eylemek için Dârende-i misâl-i bî-misâl ve râfi'-i refi'-i ferhunde-fâl Ömer'in maslahat-güzârlığına i'timâd olunmağın belde-i mezburde subaşılığı ta'yin edüp işbu yasak-nâme-i hümâyûnumu verdüm ve buyurdum ki;

I. Çağırdup ve yasak ede; min ba'd hiç ehad evi yörelerin ve dükkânların nâ-pâk tutmayıp mezbele ve anın emsâlinde nesne vâkî' olmaya, olursa gidereler.

II. Mezkûr subaşı bu bâbda kemâl-i ihtimâm üzere olup çarşularda ve mahallelerde dökülen mezbeleleri kimin evine ve havlisine yakın olursa anın döküdüğü ma'lûm olıcak pâk etdüre, biz etmedik derler ise edeni bulvereler anun yasağı ana ola.

III. Ve kârbân-sarâyaların mezbelelerin kârbân-sarâyıcıya çıkardup hâfi yere iletdüre.

IV. Ve hamâmların çirk-âbı yolları mezbeleler ile tutulmuş ola kimin evine ve havlisine ve haremine yakın olursa ayrılatduralar. Biz etmedik derlerse edeni bulvereler ana pâk etdüre.

V. Ve çirk-âb yolu üzerine kadem-gâh yapıdırmaya. Yaparlarsa şehir subaşısı ana bu bâbda mu'âvin ola

VI. Ve câme-şüyların ve kan alıcıların kanlarını ve çirk-âbların tarîk-ı âmma dökmekten men' edüp hâfi ve halvet yerlere iletdüre.

VII. Ve boyacıların ve aşçıların ve başçıların ve semercilerin otların ve gübrelerin yol üstünde dökmekten tamam men' ve yasak edüp hâfi ve halvet yerlere iletdüre.

VIII. Ve yasak ede ki; arabacılar sığırların na'l-bend dükkânında aleflemeyüp evelden kande alefler ise gerü anda alefleye. Eđer zarûret olursa na'l9 bend dükkânlarında aleflemelü olursa anlara pâk etdüre. Ve mezbeleden ve sığırları teresinden ne olursa hâricden hâfi yerlere iletdüre.

IX. Ve açık makbereleri yasak edüp ördüre. Ve at ve it ve kedi ve anun emsâli cife ve kem-releri makâbir arasında bırakmaktan men' ede, edenin hakkından gele.

X. Ve arabacılar yasak edüp öküzlerin halkın evleri önünde ve havluları dibinde kondurmayıp bağlatmayalar. Mâ-takaddemden kona geldikleri yere varup anda bağlayalar ve anda konalar. Ve kona geldikleri yerde dahi gübreden ve mezbeleden ne ederlerse hâfi mahallere iledüp pâk edeler.

XI. Ve hem onat vechile yasak ede ki, evlerde don yudukları sabun suyun yol üstüne saçmayalar ve dökmeyeler. Ve bu hususu dahi men' edüp etdirmeyesin. Edenin hakkından gele.

XII. Mahalleleri dahi onat vechile görüp gözedüp cifeden ve sair mezbeleden pâk etdüre. Ve at ölüsün ve sair davar cifesin halkı incittiği yerde komaya. Gereği gibi yasak edüp men' eyleye. Her kim ki, eslemeyüp temerrüd ederlerse ol cifenin başın kesüp birakan kimesnenin boynuna takıp şehri teşhir edüp men' edeler. Eslemeyeni yazup bildüre.

XIII. Ve kapı halkından kimesne temerrüd etmeyip ve yasağıma mâni' olmayalar. Olurlarsa dergâh-ı mu'allâma arz oluna, hakkından geline. Ve kadı ve şehir subaşısı mezkûre mu'âvin olup ihmâl etmeyeler, şöyle bileler.⁷

Fi Safer sene 946 (1539)



The English explanation of the expression given above:

The simplified version of the text

NIŞÂN-I HÜMÂYÛN (Decree of the Sultan) HAVING BEEN ISSUED FOR CLEANING THE NEIGHBORHOODS, STREETS AND BAZAARS OF EDİRNE

With this decree, it is prayed the Allah guard the city of Edirne, the house of the existing sultanate and caliphate from all evil – it is trusted that Omer, who has been appointed with the unmatched and auspicious token as an indication of his authority and responsibility to supervise, superintend and clean the neighborhoods, bazaars and streets of Edirne and I hereby appoint him as the subası (superintendent) of Edirne, handed over this Code of Obligations to him and ordered;

- I. That he make announcements and ban the people from keeping the surroundings of their houses and shops dirty and that they eliminate all kinds of surrounding garbage and rubbish.
- II. That the superintendent display utmost care and attention in this respect and in the event that he detects the presence of garbage and rubbish in or close to the bazaars and houses, he shall keep those close to such locations to be responsible for such garbage and rubbish and have them cleaned by those persons. If they claim not to be the party that is responsible for placing garbage and rubbish there, then they shall find the responsible party and that obligation shall be imposed on such party.
- III. That the garbage and rubbish of caravansaries be removed by the persons in charge caravansaries.
- IV. That in the event that the sewer system of Turkish Baths are filled with garbage and rubbish, those whose house, courtyard or harem is closest shall be responsible from their cleaning. If they claim not to be responsible, then those who are responsible shall be found and they shall be responsible from such cleaning.
- V. That no toilets be constructed on sewer system passages and in the event that they are constructed, then the superintendent provide the necessary assistance and for their maintenance and cleaning.
- VI. That dirty laundry water and blood of those parties getting blood be prevented from pouring such water or blood on the streets and that they be imposed with the obligation of disposing them in empty and desolated locations where people do not live.
- VII. That the painters, cooks, butchers and pack saddlers be banned from disposing their grass, dung and garbage on the streets and that they be imposed with the obligation of disposing them in empty and desolated locations where people do not live.
- VIII. Those riders not feed their animals by the horse-shoer and that they feed in the place that they used to feed before. In the event that there is a necessity to feed them there, (and if they make such places dirty), they be forced to clean them. That all garbage and excrements of animals be removed and transferred to other locations.
- IX. That open graves and tombs not be allowed and they that be covered. That the carcass of horses, dogs and similar animals not be left between graves and tombs and those who fail to comply to this provision be strictly punished.
- X. Those riders be banned from allowing their oafs to stay in front of houses and courtyards. That they be kept in the place where they are usually kept. That all dirt from such animals be removed and their places be cleaned regularly.
- XI. Those housewives shall not spill or scatter the laundry water on the road. That this matter be strictly prohibited. That those who fail to abide by the requirements of this provision be punished.
- XII. That utmost attention and care be given for the supervision of neighborhoods, that they be cleaned from carcass and all garbage and rubbish. That dead horses and dead sheep not be left on the streets and in a manner that may offend the population. That the necessary bans be imposed for these rules. That who fails to abide by this provision shall be forced to stroll around in the city with the head of the dead animal being hung from his neck and he shall be exposed in this manner to the whole city. Those who fail to conform to these shall be reported and punished.
- XIII. That nobody from my population obstruct or hinder the implementation of these rules. In the event that they obstruct or hinder their implementation, they shall be brought to my attention and punished. The Kadi (Muslim judge) and the superintendent shall work in cooperation with each other for the implementation of the requisites of this Code of Obligations.

Fi Safer sene
946 (1539).^{8,4,5,7}

One of them responsible from garbage dumps. Evliyâ Çelebi who referred to the duties of this superintendent in his book of travels and indicted them had been mainly responsible from the cleaning of the city and destruction of garbage. The streets used to be cleaned by untrained young boys catching attention with their shaven faces and felt, conical hats. This appointment also continued in the future years and were then included among the duties of İhtisâb Nezâreti (the unit responsible from the cleaning and tradesmen of the city) in 1242 (1826-1827).⁸⁻¹⁰ This Code of Obligations should not be

compared with today's legal arrangements about environmental cleaning. This is because the time and locations have varied. However, it is striking that it includes provisions that are still applicable today. Subjects such as keeping the surroundings of houses and shops clean, having the dirt observed to be cleaned by the residents of that place, paying attention to the cleanliness of public places such as Turkish Baths and caravanserais (hotels), the obligation of riders corresponding to today's car owners to park in special parking places instead of the fronts of houses and shops are among these .

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