

**Greek Medical Manuscripts  
of the Period of 16th - Middle 19th Centuries**

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## GREEK MEDICAL MANUSCRIPTS OF THE PERIOD OF 16<sup>th</sup>-MIDDLE 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

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Printing of medical books in the Greek language started in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the first book being «*Antidotarium*»<sup>1</sup>, in 1724, by Dr. Stavros Moulaimis, who studied medicine in Padova and later the Italian book about fever «*Istruzione, intorno alle febbri*, Venice 1734» by the famous Italian professor of Anatomy Domenico Santorini, (1681-1737), which in 1745 was translated in Greek by Anton Stratigos<sup>2</sup> and printed in Venice. Since then the printed medical books progressively were increased particularly at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially after the foundation of Athens Medical School in 1837 and so the medical manuscripts, which circulated after the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Greek region, were replaced.

The Greeks, who studied Medicine even as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the universities of Europe, especially in Italy (Padova, Pavia, Piza), were not enough to meet the demand in the Greek region. For this reason the Greek people utilized the medical manuscripts for their therapeutical needs. Characteristic are the phrases in some manuscripts, which show the purpose for which they were written. In a manuscript of 17<sup>th</sup> century by Dr. Nikolaos Agraphiotis<sup>3</sup>, it is written «*for use by patients of villages and places where no doctors nor pharmacists are available*».

Another manuscript titled «Treasure of health»<sup>4</sup> was written by Dr. Michael Kontopidis (1659-1705), who studied in Padova, «in order to be used

<sup>1</sup> D. Karaberopoulos, «Stavros Moulaimis, *Antidotarium*, Venice 1724: The first medical book in the Greek language?», *Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά*, Ioannina, vol. 37, 2003, pp. 483-490.

<sup>2</sup> E. Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellenique, 18e siecle*, vol. 1, Paris 1918, p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscript No. 256 in the Patriarchate Library of Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> Manuscript No. 458 in the Patriarchate Library of Jerusalem. Regarding Dr. Micael Kontopidis' date of birth and death see Arist. Stergellis, *Le pubblicazioni degli studenti greci dell'Universita de Padova nel 17o e 18 sec.*, Atene 1970, p. 225. G. Ploumidis, «Οι πράξεις εγγραφής των Ελλήνων σπουδαστών της Παδούης (Μέρος Α'. Artisti), Συμπλήρωμα (έτη 1674-1701)», *Θησαυρίσματα*, Venice, vol. 8, 1971, pp. 188-204.

for treatment not only by experienced doctors, but by any person without any medical knowledge». Especially on page 97 he notes that «all these, I saw with my eyes in Padovas' hospital when I was student and I went for practice everyday for seven years with the doctors, at the time of the most illustrious professors... in 1688».

In a manuscript titled «Dictionary in three languages of the maladies of medicine» Doctor Alexander Konstantinou<sup>5</sup> noted that he wrote it in 1812 «for the most usefulness by those who practice medicine in Greece» and «for a clear understanding by conventional doctors». Doctor Dionysios Pyrros<sup>6</sup> in his «Pharmacopoeia», published 1818, which was translated from the book of Luigi Brugnatelli (1761-1818), professor of Chimie in Pavia, noted that «he wanted his Pharmacopoeia to be very useful to people, who don't have the means of living, and can't call doctors to their houses». And Balanos Vasiliopoulos<sup>7</sup> in 1719 interpreted Hippocrates' Aphorisms «not for those who sufficiently studied medicine, but for those, who didn't attain a good amount of theory in medicine, as they chose to follow the practical sector».

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The Greek medical manuscripts<sup>8</sup> of the trial period, which are in various Libraries, can be classified in three large categories:

A. Manuscripts with texts of ancient Greek and Byzantine doctors. This category consists of 218 manuscripts. 123 of them refer to the ancient Greek doctors and most of them to Hippocrates Galen, Dioscuridis, and a few to Xenocrates, Areteos, Roufos and Adamantios. 95 manuscripts are attributed to Byzantine doctors: Aetios, Paul Aeginitis, Nemesios, Meletios, John Actuarios, Alexander Trallianos, John bishop of Prisdianon, Theophilos Protospatharios, Symeon Sethes, Maximos Planoudes, Nicolaos Myrepsos, Michael Psellos.

We must emphasize that Galen's interpretations of Aphorisms of Hippocrates were translated and commented in the modern Greek language by literary persons such as Markos Porphyropoulos (there are 8 manuscripts after 1713) and Balanos Vassilopoulos (there are 15 manuscripts after 1719). Also Doctor John Klados<sup>9</sup> in 1823 translated in the modern Greek language Hippocrates' works «*About air, water and places*», «*Law*» and Galen's «*The su-*

<sup>5</sup> This manuscript is in the Public Record Office of Greece, number 47, G. Ladas 2.

<sup>6</sup> D. Karaberopoulos, *The medical European knowledge in the Greek region, 1745-1821*, Athens, 2003, pp. 48 and 96.

<sup>7</sup> Manuscript no. 299 in the Patriarchate Library of Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup> Basic source of our study was the significant book of John Karas, *Sciences during Turkish domination, Manuscripts and printings*, Vol. 3, *The sciences of life*, Athens 1994.

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript no. 51 of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece.

perior doctor is also a philosopher». We note that Ad. Corays<sup>10</sup> in 1816 had published in Paris the three previous mentioned works.

Dioscuridis' work «*De Materia Medica*» has been found in 16 manuscripts and it is interesting to note that one of them which is in the library of Monasteri Koutloumoussi (No. 239) of Mount Athos was translated in the modern Greek language in 1637 by Nikiforos Prigileas the Athenian, after the request of a habitant of Tyrnavos of Thessaly for his use and for doctors without university training. Another manuscript no 113 of the Library of Monasteri Olympiotissa contains texts of Dioscuridis, which were translated in modern Greek by Maximos Peloponnesios. Also another manuscript<sup>11</sup> «*De Materia Medica*» was written in 1774 by a habitant of the village Milies of Mount Peliou in order to use it for his therapeutic needs and also by the other habitants of the village.

B. The second category is the Anonymous manuscripts in which there are 334 of them. From these, two manuscripts of the period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have been found in History of Medicine and the first one titled «*Short History of Medicine*»<sup>12</sup> ends by mentioning the French Doctor Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), and the second one titled «*Short history about the beginning and progress of medicine art and some important doctors*» is transcription, as we have shown, of the Greek book by Doctor Konstantin Michael<sup>13</sup>, (1751-1816), who studied and worked in Vienna. Another two manuscripts have been found with content referring to the circulation of blood titled «*About microsom and its circulation and a little as to how the circular movoment of blood is done*»<sup>14</sup>. 10 manuscripts have content about diet of old men, in gout etc. and 23 have been found having their content in alpfa-beta manner the names of diseases and herbs, as the manuscript of George Konstantinou<sup>15</sup>.

The most anonymous medical manuscripts are the called popular remedies, which were written on the basis of the work of the ancient Greek doctors and the medicine of common citizens<sup>16</sup>. Impressive is the great number

<sup>10</sup> See Phil. Eliou, *Hellenic Bibliography of 19th century. Books-pamphlets*, Vol. 1, 1801-1818, Athens 1997, No. 1816.46, p. 461.

<sup>11</sup> Manuscript No. 78 of the Library of Milies Peliou.

<sup>12</sup> Manuscript No. 1504 of the National Library of Greece. Dim. Karaberopoulos, «The manuscript «*A Short History of Medicine*» (end of 18th – Beginning of 19th century) of the National Library of Greece», *Deltos*, 23, 2002, pp. 16-19.

<sup>13</sup> D. Karaberopoulos, *The first History of Medicine in the Greek language*, Publisher A. Stamilis, Athens 1994.

<sup>14</sup> D. Karaberopoulos, «Presentation of a manuscript of 18th century regarding circulation of blood», *23rd Annual Panhellenic Medical Congress*, Athens 1997, *Proceedings*, p. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Manuscript in the Public Record Office, Greece, number 47, G. Ladas 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ag. Tselicas, «The Greek populal remedies: A scorning category of manuscripts», in Ath. Diamantopoulos (ed.), *Byzantine Medical manuscripts*, Athens 1995, pp. 57-69.

of anonymous popular manuscripts, which contained cures for diseases and the properties of herbs. Through this manner people were able to cover the shortage of scientific doctors, or they were a help to those who didn't have the economical ability to call a doctor.

We have noticed that quite a few anonymous manuscripts start their text with the names of Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscuridis and Meletios, and we assume that the writers of these anonymous popular manuscripts wanted to place greater importance on their manuscripts or they originated from a common shared model, which was composed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Also it is interesting to mention that some of the popular remedies contain prescriptions not only of the ancient Greek and Byzantine doctors but also by other Italian doctors, as the anonymous manuscript number 25 of the Dimitisanas' School in Peloponnesos titled «*Popular remedies selected from many books and expert doctors, Galen, Hippocrates, Meletios, Jacob of Mainis, Matiolus, Castor and many others Italian philosophers and doctors*». Also manuscript No. 97 (pages 557-694) of the Library of the Monasteri Olympiotissa contains texts of the Italian Doctor Castor Durante.

In some popular remedies there are a lot of prescriptions, as for example manuscript number 16 of the Library of Iasi, in which the prescriptions were collected in 50 years of 18<sup>th</sup> century and manuscript number 8 of the Monasteri of Scopelos island, in which there are 1.390 prescriptions for various diseases. In some manuscripts there are drawings, which might be for phlebotomy, of the exterior of the human body such as in the manuscript of the 16<sup>th</sup> century number 218 of the Library of Monastery Iviron in Mount Athos titled «*New popular remedies selected from old and authentic doctors*» and also in a manuscript of Nicolaos Agrafiotis<sup>17</sup>, who has also written other works such as the «*Medical Book*», and «*Farmacopeea*», which contain texts selected from ancient Greek doctors and later Italian doctors.

C. The third category of the Greek Medical Manuscripts contains those which are translation from European medical books. We have found 128 such manuscripts and indicatively mention some of them.

The book «*Geoponicon*» published in Venice in 1643, and its texts have been found in two manuscripts. We note that the text of this work was from the Doctors Castor Durante (1526-1590), the head physician of Papas Sextos the 5<sup>th</sup> and Pietro Andrea Mattioli<sup>18</sup>, (1501-1577). The «*Anatomy*» of Hispanian Doctor Juan Valverde de Hamusco was translated in Greek by Leandros Patousas in 1723 and there are two manuscripts of this work in the National

<sup>17</sup> Public Record Office, Greece, number 47, G. Ladas 65.

<sup>18</sup> See Agapios Landos, *Geoponicon*, Venice 1643, Study edition, Introduction, Comments, Intex D.D. Kostoula, Volos 1991.

Library of Greece<sup>19</sup> (No. 1487) and the Library of the Greece Parliament (No. 151). There are four anonymous manuscripts<sup>20</sup> dated 1789 of the translation of the book by Giov. Capello, (1690?-1764), «*Lessico Farmaceutico-chimico*», Napoli 1775. There are nine manuscripts after 1745 of the translation by Doctor Alexander Giakouleas<sup>21</sup> of the book by John Allen, *Synopsis universalae medicinae practicae*, London 1719.

We would also like to mention two manuscripts, one dated 1693 and the other 1742, which contain the translation by Doctor Georgios Homeros<sup>22</sup> of Aphorisms by the hippocratic Doctor Giorgio Baglivi (1668-1706). The same Greek Doctor translated from the work of Jean Fermel (1497-1558), «*Medicina*», 1554, the third part «*About pulse and urine*» and also a part from the work of Michaelis Etmuller, «*Chimia rationalis ac experimentalis curiosa*», 1684, and in 1745 translated the fourth chapter of the work «*Pharmacopee universalle*», by Nicolas Lemery (1645-1715). The work of Antoine Baume, «*Elements de pharmacie theorique et pratique*», Paris 1762, was translated from the Italian edition by doctor Konstantin Fitzios<sup>23</sup> from Ioannina, who also translated from the Italian edition the third part «*De morbis mulierum*» by Bernardinus Christinus, «*Pratica Medicinale*», 1680 (pages 357-461).

There are two anonymous manuscripts in the National Library of Greece (No. 1495), one being a translation of Ber. Ramazzini's book «*L'art de conserver le sante des princes*», 1724, and the other (No. 2884) translated from Latin in 1789 from the work of Lazar Riverius, «*Praxis Medica*».

### Conclusion

The medical knowledge of the ancient Greek and Byzantine doctors was not only transferred to Europe but it was included in the manuscripts which circulated from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and after in the Greek region. Furthermore the above mentioned manuscripts attributed to the development of the popular manuscripts, which are called quack remedies and which contain medical prescriptions for many diseases. Greek people during the serious politi-

<sup>19</sup> Kodellas, Pan. S., «Veasalius-Valverde-Patousasa: The unpublished manuscript of the first modern anatomy in the Greek language (i.e the translation by L. Patousas of Valderle's *Anatomia*, National Library of Greece Ms no. 1487)», Peprinted from *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1944.

<sup>20</sup> The Greek title is «Λεξικόν καρά το ιταλικόν αλφάβητον φαρμακευτικόν χημικόν του Ιωάννου Βαπτιστού Καπέλλου, περιέχον όλα τα ιατρικά τε και φαρμακευτικά οπού είναι εις χρ'ησιν σήμερον». See John Karas, as above, p. 155.

<sup>21</sup> John Karas, as above, pp. 43-46.

<sup>22</sup> John Karas, as above, pp. 117-122.

<sup>23</sup> John Karas, as above, pp. 140-141.

cal difficulties in the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later used these manuscripts in order to cover their medical needs.

Occasionally the ancient Greek texts of Hippocrates, Galen and Dioscoridis were translated in modern Greek in order to be known to people, giving the Greek people the sense that they were somehow connected to the ancient Greeks. At the same time there were manuscripts which were translations of European books, from which the scientific medical knowledge was transferred to the Greek region. So there was in other words a transition from empiric to scientific medicine.

Generally the medical manuscripts of the period 16<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries would be an index for the general culture of Neo-Hellenism.