

THE FIRST TURKISH PHARMACIST'S PIN AND EMBLEM

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Pins which depict the emblems of various educational institutions, associations, vocational groups and commercial companies serve as signs for members of such institutions to recognise each other. Pins which are made of cardboard or various metals are traditionally pinned to the left lapel of the jacket. However, they are not worn as frequently as they used to be in the past. It is known that certain pins were made of valuable metals such as silver or gold while others were carved from precious stones or covered with enamel.

During my studies in 1988 on the history of the Turkish Pharmacist's pin, I interviewed Fuat Mehmet Mirel, a veteran pharmacist, who said that they did not have pins when he graduated from the School of Pharmacy of İstanbul University in 1920 (1). Fuat Mehmet Mirel, who is very well-known in the Turkish Pharmacy circles, participated in the preparation of the 1930 Turkish codex, published "Türk Eczacı Alemi" (Turkish Pharmacist's World), a magazine for pharmacists, completed a doctorate degree in chemistry and was the representative of Sandoz in Turkey for many years.

While conducting a research on the history of Turkish Pharmacy, I came across some news about the pharmacist's pin in "Türk Eczacı Alemi" (1928) which was a publication of the Turkish Association of Pharmacists. "Eczacı" (Pharmacist) and "Resimli Eczacı Gazetesi" (Pharmacist's Illustrated Newspaper) which were published by another esteemed pharmacist, Nail Halid Tipi, preceded "Türk Eczacı Alemi" which is an important source that was first published in Arabic letters and in the Latin alphabet from 1928 onwards. The news published in "Türk Eczacı Alemi" in 1928 informed that lapel pins, the design of which were chosen by the Executive Board of what was then called "Türkiye Eczacıları Cemiyeti" (Turkish Pharmacists' Association), were made in Berlin (Fig. 1).



Fig.1. First Turkish Pharmacist's pin.

The news which described in detail how the pins would be sold to the members of the above Association (2), also stressed the importance of wearing a lapel pin, adding that the pins would only be distributed to those who hold a degree in pharmacy. Pharmacists were also asked to wear their pins at meetings and formal ceremonies. The fact that the pins cost fifty kuruş each tells us that they were by no means cheap in those days.

Adil Şeyhülettibba who is a 1934 graduate of the School of Pharmacy of İstanbul University and whom I interviewed on the history of Turkish Pharmacy, pointed out that Romanian pharmacists who came to İstanbul in those years wore pharmacist's lapel pins (1,3). The fact that Romanian pharmacists as well as other pharmacists in Europe had specially designed pins of their own could have stimulated the pharmacists in İstanbul to produce one of their own.

Another piece of news I came across in "Türk Eczacı Alemi" was that pharmacist's pins that were being sold for fifty kuruş at the head office of the Association correctly depicted the profession of pharmacy and were coloured green, red and blue over a background of white

enamel (4). Some other news in later issues pointed out that the pins were sold to other pharmacists in Anatolia at the same price (5). On the other hand, following the publication of "Türk Eczacı Alemi", another publication, "Farmakolog" of the Turkish Pharmacists Association, reported some more news about the pharmacist's pin in an article addressed to 'Dear Colleagues'. In the annual report for 1937-1938 the eighth item stated the fact that pharmacists' lapel pins had been manufactured (6,7).

Semahattin Yula, İhsan Sönmez and a representative of the Students' Association of the School of Pharmacy, met on 21.3.1959. The Committee, chaired by Prof. Dr. Hayriye Amal, decided to adopt the design of the previous pin. However, they changed the background to dark red with the central motive in gold and added a gold circle to the circumference. The Committee also decided to patent the design and to distribute the pins on a name basis (8).



Fig.2. Today's Turkish Pharmacists' Association Emblem.

Prof.Dr. Turhan Baytop who graduated from the School of Pharmacy of İstanbul University in 1945 recalls that he bought a lapel pin from the Turkish Pharmacists Association while he was still a student and that a shop called Pisalti in Yüksek Kaldırım (a region in İstanbul) sold these pins at that time (1).

A Committee made up of Prof. Selahattin Tandal, Prof.Dr. Hayriye Amal, Assoc. Prof.Dr. Turhan Baytop, pharmacists Muzaffer Dinçol, Remzi Kocaer, Ahmet Kandil, Naşit Baylav,

The 7th issue of "Eczacılık Bülteni"(Bulletin of Pharmacy) (May 1959) which was published by the İstanbul Pharmacists' Association and owned and edited by Assoc. Prof.Dr. Kasım Cemal Güven had the following news:

"The emblem of pharmacy is to be registered: It has been reported that following the copyright registration of the new emblem which has been approved by the temporary Committee of the Association, it will be produced in large numbers. The new emblem will be distributed

to pharmacists through the chambers only". The article reported that in this way those without a diploma or qualifications would not have the privilege of wearing the pharmacist's pin (9) Fig.2.

It is my personal belief that the branch on the pin with green leaves reminds one of the herbal drugs from which many a drug has been obtained. An article I came across in the 1950 yearbook of the School of Pharmacy was titled 'Daphne: the plant featured on our Pin. The author, Assoc. Prof.Dr. Mehpare Heilbronn reports that in the past people used to hang bunches of daphne above the patients' beds and it was believed that the ill would get better after breathing in the aroma of the plant (10).

The snake, the goblet and the branch figures on the Turkish pharmacist's pin today can also be seen on the stamps and emblems of various pharmacists' associations Fig.2. It is quite often the fact that the figures on the pin of a vocational institution are also the ones on its emblem. The snake figure which can be seen in the Turkish pharmacist's emblem is also featured in the emblems of many health institutions and educational establishments in the world. Today we do not know who first used the snake-figure which has become a symbol of health sciences. Historical sources mention that it was used at the time of the Assyrians. We also know that the city of Teb in the old Egyptian civilisation was quite advanced in medicine and the totem of this city was a snake. The fact that there is a relationship between the snake and the patient can be derived from the fact that in old Persian "Mar" was snake, "Bimar" was a patient and "Bimaristan" meant a hospital (11).

We also come across engravings of snakes in historical sites dating from ancient civilisations. Snake figures engraved in stone can be seen on some Hitite ruins in Anatolia (12). The same can also be seen on buildings left from the Anatolian Seljuks (13, 14). The people of Anatolia still narrate legends and stories about snakes. The snake is closely associated with the God of Health in the pre-historic age. Today, the emblems of pharmacy, medicine, dentistry and veterinary medicine also have snake figures.

Asklepios who was the God of Health in the ancient Greek civilisation located in the Aegean

area is depicted with a walking stick and a snake hanging around it in all the engravings and sculptures from that era (15-17). The same God who is also known as Aesculapius, the God of doctors, is described as a skillful doctor in Homeros' Iliada. Asklepios was first knighted for his bravery, then accepted as a God in later years. The cult of Asklepios which was first born in Teselia later spread to a very large part of ancient Greece. Therefore some old Greek and Roman temples and buildings which were originally built for Asklepios, the God of Health, were also used as medical centers named Asklepion. It is widely accepted that the Asklepion in Bergama was used as a hospital in those days. It is known that the priests tried to cure patients by foretelling as well as by making use of the natural elements in the region such as healing baths and herbs which grew in the area (18). Hippocrates and Galenos are believed to have been educated in the Asklepions in Kos and Bergama respectively. The term galenic pharmacy comes from Galenos who introduced many drugs into therapy, created new forms of medicine and wrote more than 50 books. His works have been translated into many languages such as Arabic, Latin and French.

The remains of a broken column with the engraving of two snakes coiled around it can still be seen at the Bergama Asklepion. (Fig.3).



Fig.3. Coiled snakes engraved on a broken column
(Original exhibited in Bergama Asklepion)

The fact that the snakes are shown dipping their heads into a round bowl is an example of the relationship between health and the snake. The poison from a snake was also considered medicinal for many years. In ancient times the snake was used as a theriac and was therefore a component of many drugs (19).

Past civilisations considered the snake to be a creature which could live under the ground and therefore could master the mysteries that existed there. They attributed to it the qualities of a dragon if it lived on the surface of the Earth (20) while others thought of it as a magic and holy being. It was described as a brave and strong creature which could move silently and quickly when necessary. Similarly, physicians and pharmacists today are expected to be discreet and to keep their patients' secrets. All the above qualities attributed to the snake have made it into the symbol of medical sciences today.

Hygieia, one of the daughters of Asklepios, was the Goddess of Health. It is quite common to see her depicted with a snake and a bowl in her hand in many engravings and sculptures (21). Today, the emblem of the International Association of Pharmacy is a modernised bowl and snake. The goblet on the Turkish pharmacist's pin is a symbol of the one Hygieia held in her hand. This could also be interpreted as the snake pouring its poison into the goblet which would later be made into a drug to cure illnesses.

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