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978-1-107-01338-4 - Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600

Nükhet Varlık

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## Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World

*The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600*

This is the first systematic scholarly study of the Ottoman experience of plague during the Black Death pandemic and the centuries that followed. Using a wealth of archival and narrative sources, including medical treatises, hagiographies, and travelers' accounts, as well as recent scientific research, Nükhet Varlık demonstrates how plague interacted with the environmental, social, and political structures of the Ottoman Empire from the late medieval through the early modern era. The book argues that the empire's growth transformed the epidemiological patterns of plague by bringing diverse ecological zones into interaction and by intensifying the mobilities of exchange among both human and nonhuman agents. Varlık maintains that persistent plagues elicited new forms of cultural imagination and expression as well as a new body of knowledge about the disease. In turn, this new consciousness sharpened the Ottoman administrative response to the plague, while contributing to the makings of an early modern state.

Nükhet Varlık is Assistant Professor of History at Rutgers University–Newark. She is the author of several articles and is currently editing a collection of essays titled *Plague and Contagion in the Islamic Mediterranean*. She is the recipient of an NEH Fellowship by the American Research Institute in Turkey, a Senior Fellowship from Koç University's Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, and a Turkish Cultural Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellowship.

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# Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World

*The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600*

NÜKHET VARLIK

*Rutgers University–Newark*



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*To Ben, with love and gratitude*

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## Acknowledgments

This book is the result of my fascination with plague – a fascination that took me on a long and winding journey in life – but I first caught the “germs” at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, and they gradually incubated and amplified at the University of Chicago; finally, the infection ran its course at Rutgers University. Along the twists and turns of the journey, I crossed paths with many people, who each in his or her special way left behind a mark on this project; their signatures are hidden in the pages of this book. I am deeply grateful to every one of those people with whom I exchanged ideas and shared long hours of discussion, frustration, and hope. This book would simply not have been brought to completion if it were not for the inspiration, support, and assistance I received from these individuals.

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## Abbreviations

<i>Albèri</i>	Eugenio Albèri, ed., <i>Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato</i> , Series III, 3 vols. (Florence: Società editrice fiorentina, 1840–55)
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives), Istanbul
<i>EI<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam 2</i> , electronic edition
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle East Studies</i>
IRCICA	Research Centre for Islamic History, Art, and Culture, Istanbul
<i>JESHO</i>	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
<i>JHMAS</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences</i>
KK	Kamil Kepeci
MD	Mühimme Defteri
OS	Coşkun Yılmaz and Necdet Yılmaz, ed., <i>Osmanlılarda Sağlık</i> , 2 vols. (Istanbul: Biofarma, 2006)
<i>PLoS</i>	<i>Public Library of Science</i>
<i>PNAS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>
<i>Sanudo</i>	Marino Sanudo, <i>I diarii di Marino Sanuto (MCCCCXCVI–MDXXXIII) dall' autografo Marciano ital. cl. VII codd. CDXIX–CDLXXVII</i> , 58 vols. (Venice: F. Visentini, 1879–1903)
<i>TDVİA</i>	<i>Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi</i> , electronic edition
TSMA	Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi, Istanbul (Topkapı Palace Museum Archives)
TTK	Türk Tarih Kurumu
WHO	World Health Organization

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## Note on Transliteration and Dates

To make reading easier for the nonspecialist, I have followed an eclectic and practical approach to transliteration. I have simplified book titles and personal names in Ottoman Turkish by following modern Turkish orthography and omitting diacritical marks as much as possible. Place-names, if within the boundaries of modern Turkey, are given in modern Turkish forms. For example, I have used “Trabzon” but not “Trebizond,” with the exception of place-names that are well known in Anglicized form, for example, “Gallipoli” but not “Gelibolu.” If outside Turkey, then modern English place-names are adopted, followed by the Ottoman Turkish name in parentheses the first time a place is mentioned in the text. For example, I have used “Rhodes” instead of “Rodos.” When using terms pertaining to the Islamic culture that are already established in modern English, I have preferred Anglicized forms over Turkicized versions. For this reason, I have used “ulama” instead of “*ulema*,” “hadith” instead of “*hadis*,” “waqf” instead of “*vakıf*,” and so on. For other such terms where an Anglicized form is not used commonly, the Turkicized version has been used, without transliteration, for example, “*taun*” or “*askeri*.” Names and book titles in Arabic and Persian in the text follow a simplified version of the *IJMES* transliteration system. Full transliteration is given in the bibliography. Long vowel markers have been omitted as much as possible. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

For Turkish pronunciation, the readers are kindly referred to the following guidelines prepared by Erika H. Gilson: [www.princeton.edu/~ehgilson/alpha.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~ehgilson/alpha.html).

Dates in the main text are given in the Common Era. In the notes, documents from the Ottoman archives are given in the original Hijri date followed by the Common Era date. Conversion of Hijri dates to the Gregorian calendar follows the conversion software of Tarih Çevirme Kılavuzu, offered online at <http://193.255.138.2/takvim.asp>.

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*Note on Transliteration and Dates*

I have used the Hijri months in the following forms:

Muharrem

Safer

Rebiülevvel

Rebiülahir

Cemaziyelevvel

Cemaziyelahir

Receb

Şaban

Ramazan

Şevval

Zilkade

Zilhicce