

A Prescription for the Heart from the Late Ottoman Period

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Context

A prescription describing how to make medicine for the heart is written in a notebook in *rik'a*, indicating that it belongs to the late Ottoman period.¹ This notebook is housed in the National Library of Türkiye under the title *Mecmū 'a- 'i Eş 'ār-ı Meḥmed 'Alī Efendi* (No. 06 Mil Yz A 2227). Meḥmed 'Alī Efendi, whose true identity is unknown, compiled a compendium of poems that he found particularly charming. Written on the first of the notebook's twenty-one folios, this prescription precedes the poems that follow. Peppered with literary finesse, this short text gracefully narrates how love blossoms and warns of what will happen if one overdoses on it.

Cemal Kurnaz states that within the larger corpus of Ottoman literature, the heart suffers under the beloved's cruelty and feigned apathy as well as its own yearning for the beloved. As visiting the sick and ailing is an act of worship in Islamic culture, the heart plunges itself into a state of perpetual sickness in an attempt to attract the beloved to the lover's bedside. The beloved arrives and cures the lover's aggrieved heart with his lips.² Kurnaz's statements coincide with the prescription below of a medicine for the heart composed of various ingredients: coyness, flirtation, coquetry, delicacy, truth, love, and kisses. Judging by the disparity between kisses and the other ingredients, it is clear that the former has the greatest effect in curing the lover's affliction.

Transcription

[1b] *Göñül 'İlâcı*

<i>nāz</i>	<i>şīve</i>	<i>cilve</i>	<i>leṭāfet</i>	<i>ḥaḳīkat</i>	<i>muḥabbet</i>	<i>būse</i>
<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>	<i>dirhem</i>
10	10	12	11	10	10	19

¹ Muhittin Serin, "Rik'a," in *TDVIA*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/rika--osmanli>.

² Cemal Kurnaz, "Göñül," in *TDVIA*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/gonul>.

Bu tertīb olınan eczā'larıñ cümlesini cefā tağından ve şafā bağçesinden toplayub vefā çömleğiyle eridüb haqıkat havanıyla döğüb 'aşıklar tekyesinde çile ocağında 'aşq âteşini yakub ve kalbiñ körüğüyle üfleyüb dide-i eşk-i ittifāk şuyıyla kaynadub haqıkat kâsesine doldırub şabâh ve akşâm birer kaşık isti'mâl olına. Eger bir kaşıkdan fazla yiyecek olur iseñ bütün bütün çileden çıkarıñ. Ve's-selâm.

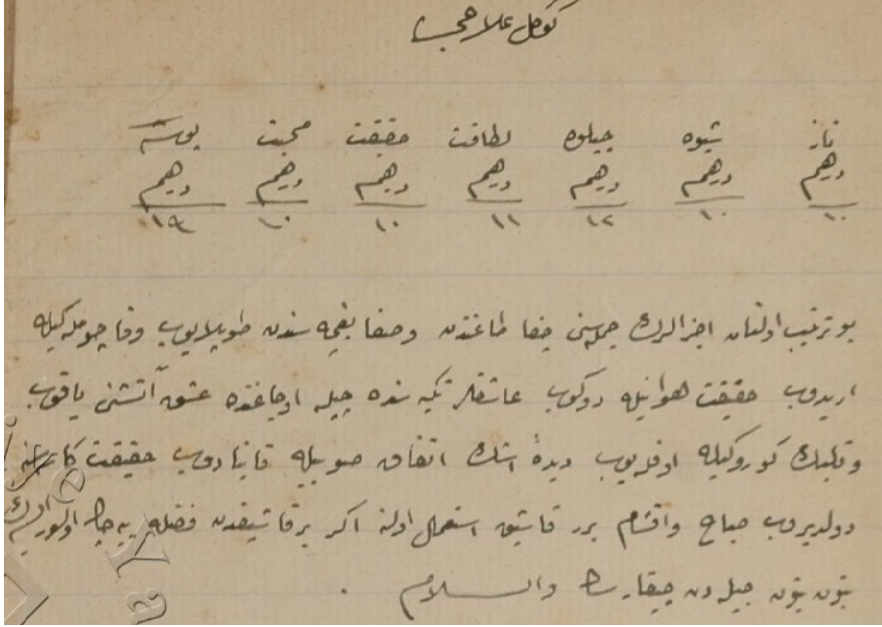
Translation

[1b] Medicine for the Heart.

10	10	12	11	10	10	19
drachmas	drachmas	drachmas	drachmas	drachmas	drachmas	drachmas
of coyness	of flirtation	of coquetry	of delicacy	of truth	of love	of kisses

All of the ingredients listed above are to be gleaned from the mountain of cruelty and the garden of delight, melted in the cauldron of constancy, and molded in the mortar of truth. A fire should be lit in the furnace of anguish in the lovers' lodge, blown with the bellow of the heart, boiled with the water of harmony born from tear droplets, and emptied into the bowl of truth. Take one spoon in the morning and evening. Know that should you take more than one spoonful, you will find yourself overcome with passion. *Wassalâm.*

Facsimile



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