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‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi

Salim Aydüz

Born **Bursa, (Turkey), 1689**

Died **Istanbul, (Turkey), 1760**

‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi was a scholar who made many valuable contributions to Ottoman astronomy. These included writing a Turkish commentary on the famous astronomical handbook (*Zīj*) of **Ulugh Beg** as well as translating ‘**Abd al-‘Alī al-Birjandī**’s work on solar and lunar eclipses into Turkish. In addition to being an astronomer, he was a physician, a calligrapher, and a poet; he was also a member of the Khalwatiyya and Qādiriyya religious orders. Besides knowing Turkish, ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi knew a number of languages that included Arabic, Persian, Latin, French, and ancient Greek.

‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi, whose father's name was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and whose grandfather's name was ‘Abdallāh, was known as Kambur (Humpback) Vesim Efendi and as Dervish ‘Abbās Ṭabīb. He pursued his education with eminent scholars; apparently his teachers appreciated his cleverness, aptitude, and open-minded attitude. His studies and research took him to Damascus, to Egypt, and to Mecca and Medina (where he performed the *ḥajj* or pilgrimage). Upon his return to Istanbul, ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi opened a pharmacy and a clinic at the Yavuz Selīm Bazaar in the Fatiḥ district of Istanbul, where he treated patients for almost 40 years. He wrote and translated many works on medicine and pharmacology, incorporating the information he obtained through his many contacts with European physicians coming to Istanbul. From these contacts ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi was able to learn Latin and French, translate Italian medical texts into Turkish, and closely follow advancements in medical science in Europe.

‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi's main contribution to Ottoman astronomical literature is his translations and commentaries. Without any doubt, his most important work is his Turkish commentary on Ulugh Beg's *Zīj* (astronomical handbook), which was originally written in Persian and was used as the main reference book by the chief astronomers and timekeepers of the Ottoman State for their astrological and astronomical studies. ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi began working on this book in 1745, at the request of the historian and astronomer Aḥmad Miṣrī, who convinced him of the importance of a Turkish translation. Upon completion, ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi presented it to the Ottoman Sultan Maḥmūd I (reigned: 1730–1754). His commentary is written in clear Turkish, in the same style as **Mīram Chelebī**'s (died: 1525) commentary on the same work. The examples given in the book are all based on ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi's own calculations for the longitude and latitude of Istanbul. He has included findings from ancient Turkish, Hebrew, and Roman Calendars, which were not in the original. He has also explained Ulugh Beg's method for finding the sine of 1°, which was based on

the work of **Jamshid al-Kāshī**. One may deduce that ‘Abbās Wasīm Effendi was interested and well-informed on astrology since he dedicates a separate and large section of the book to the subject.

A valuable work on solar and lunar eclipses that ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi also translated into Turkish was Chapter Ten of Bīrjandī's *Hāshiya‘ala sharḥ al-Mulakhkhaṣ fī al-hay‘a* (which was a supercommentary on **Jaghminī**'s elementary astronomical textbook). He titled his book *Tarjamat kitāb al-Bīrjandī min al-khusūf wa-l-kusūf*.

Another astronomical work concerns lunar crescent visibility, which is important for religious observance. ‘Abbās Wasīm Efendi also wrote a work entitled *Risāla al-wafq* dealing with prognostication and astrology.

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