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## SUFISM IN THE SENSE OF FOLK MEDICINE IN OTTOMAN SOCIETY

Osmanlı Toplumunda Halk Hekimliği Bağlamında Sufilik

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## Sufism in The Sense of Folk Medicine in Ottoman Society

### Abstract

Until the deep-rooted reforms started during the Selim III era, the Ottoman health system was based on the value series of the Seljuk era. The health institutions of the era, named *Dârüṣṣifâ*, *bimarhâne* and *timarhâne*, were not official state institutions. Still, they were instead established through the donations of bureaucrats and members of the public. Based in the classical period, the institution of ‘*Hekimbaşılık* (Chief Physicianship)’ mostly served to organize the health services of the palace and the army. During this period, when the state did not meet the health-related needs of people in Europe and the Ottoman State for an extended amount of time, people’s health and treatment requirements were addressed through physicians, surgeons, and foundation hospitals in larger towns. Moving towards rural areas and greater masses, this duty was assumed by sheikhs, hodja, *ocaklı*, and healers who performed what could be described as traditional medicine or folk medicine. In Turkish communities, the origins of folk medicine date back to Shamanic Kams, who were believed to have supernatural powers in religious and worldly terms. Folks in those times believed that Shamans were men devoted to religion, exorcised evil spirits and had healing abilities. The majority of the population was in this belief. Despite the process of Islamization in the following periods, these beliefs were not forgotten completely but instead continued their existence by being adapted into Islamic beliefs. In this context, Shamans have continued their treatment duties mostly as *ocaklı*, but they assigned their religious tasks and healing duties to the Islamic guardian cult. This way, Sufis became a significant part of traditional folk medicine in Seljuk and the Ottoman era. Through the lodges and monasteries, they established, Sufis integrated into social life in the Ottoman era and performed countless essential tasks for the community and the state, ranging from the settlement of nomads to transportation, accommodation of guests to securing secluded areas, and treatment of numerous psychological and physical diseases. The people strongly believed that Sufis were men of God, miracle workers, and protectors. This belief was foremost crucial for the acceptance of their healing abilities. As such, members of the public were seeking help from Sufis for all kinds of health issues, including mental problems, stomachaches, headaches, pain in different parts of the body, children’s health problems, infertility and behaviour disorders leading to domestic issues to epidemics. So much so that the curing capabilities of Sufis have sometimes been supported by the state and gained an official status. Hence the purpose of this study is to review the folk medicine aspect of Sufis in the Ottoman historic sphere and to reveal the treatment methods they used for several conditions. The subject has been explained under two main headlines; one consisting of spiritual practices such as prayer, dhikr, nazar, ruqya and shrine visitations, and the other one composed of apparent practices such as fasting, herbal mixtures, and so on. While conducting this study, chronicles, Sufi works, memoirs of the era, archives and modern studies have been reviewed.

**Keywords:** Ottoman History, order (tariqa), Sufi, Folk Medicine, Therapy, Treatment.

## Osmanlı Toplumunda Halk Hekimliği Bağlamında Sufilik

### Öz

Osmanlı sağlık sistemi, III. Selim döneminden itibaren yapılmaya başlanan köklü ıslahatlara kadar Selçuklu döneminin değerler silsilesine dayanmıştır. Dârüşşifâ, بیمارhâne, timarhâne isimleriyle anılan dönemin sağlık kuruluşları, devlete ait resmi kurumlar olmayıp bürokrasi ve halktan şahısların hayratı olarak kurulmuştur. Klasik dönemde kurulan Hekimbaşılık müessesesi ise daha çok saray ve orduya yönelik sağlık hizmetlerini sevk ve idare etmek amacıyla ihdas edilmiştir. Avrupa’da ve Osmanlı ülkesinde halkın sağlıkla ilgili ihtiyaçlarının devlet tarafından karşılanmadığı bu uzun dönemde, kitlelerin sağlık ve tedaviyle ilgili sorunları büyük kentlerde hekimler, cerrahlar ve vakıf hastaneleri aracılığıyla çözülmeye çalışılmıştır. Taşraya doğru gidildikçe ve büyük halk kitleleri söz konusu olduğunda bu görevi daha çok şeyh, hoca, ocaklı, okuyucu-üfürükçü gibi geleneksel tıp, halk hekimliği ile izah edebileceğimiz unsurlar üstlenmiştir. Türklerde halk hekimliğinin menşei ise dini ve dünyevi bakımlardan olağanüstü yetilere sahip olduklarına inanılan Şaman, Kam’lara dayanmaktaydı. Halk inançlarında Şamanların, din adamı olduklarına, kötü ruhları vücuttan kovduklarına ve hekim olarak sağaltıcı kabiliyetlere sahip bulunduklarına dair güçlü bir düşünce ve kanaat hâkimdi. İslamiyet’in kabulüyle birlikte kitlelerde bulunan bu inançlar, tamamıyla unutulmamış, İslâmî halk inançları içerisinde taşınarak yaşamaya devam etmiştir. Bu bağlamda Şamanlar hekimlik görevlerini daha çok ocaklı olarak devam ettirseler de dini görevlerini ve birtakım şifacılık vazifelerini İslâmî veli kültüne devretmişlerdir. Böylece sûfiler Selçuklu ve ardından Osmanlı dönemi halk inançları içerisinde, geleneksel, halk hekimliğinin önemli bir parçasına dönüşmüştür. Sûfiler, Osmanlı toplumunda kurdukları tekke ve zaviyelerle sosyal ve içtimai hayat ile bütünleşmiş, göçerlerin iskânından, ulaşma, misafirlerin konaklamasına, münzevi yerlerin güvenliğinden nihayet psikolojik ve bedensel birçok hastalığın tedavisine kadar devlet ve toplum için çok mühim işleri yerine getirmişlerdir. Onların Allah dostu, keramet sahibi, veli şahsiyetler oldukları yönünde halk arasında bulunan güçlü inanç, şifacılıklarının kayıtsız şartsız kabullenilmesinde de başat rol oynamıştır. Nitekim halkın başta akıl hastalıkları olmak üzere mide ağrısı, baş ağrısı, vücudun muhtelif yerlerinde görülen ağrılar, çocukların sağlık sorunları, kısırlık, aile içi huzursuzluğa yol açan davranış bozuklukları, salgın hastalıklar hatta hayvanlarda görülen bazı hastalıklara kadar hemen her türlü sağlık sorununda sûfilere müracaat ettikleri görülmektedir. Öyleki sûfilerin bu şifacı yetenekleri yer yer bizzat devlet tarafından desteklenerek resmi bir mahiyet de kazanmıştır. İşte bu çalışma bugüne kadar halk hekimliği bağlamında pek ele alınmayan sûfilerin Osmanlı tarihsel düzleminde bu yönlerini araştırmak, bir takım hastalıklara dair uyguladıkları tedavi yol ve yöntemlerini ortaya koymak amacıyla hazırlanmıştır. Konu dua, zikir, nazar, rukye, türbe ziyaretleri gibi manevi uygulamalar ile diyet, oruç, bitkisel karışımlar vb. zahiri pratiklerin ele alındığı iki ana başlık altında izah edilmeye gayret edilmiştir. Çalışmada döneme ait kronikler, sûfî çevrelere ait eserler, menakıbnameler, hatıratlar, arşiv kaynakları ve çağdaş araştırmalardan istifade edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Osmanlı tarihi, Tarikat, Sufi, Halk hekimliği, Sağaltıcı, Tedavi.

## Introduction

Until the reforms of the Selim III era, Ottoman health system was based on the Seljuk era in terms of medical practices and hospital structures.<sup>1</sup> Known by the names of 'Dârü'sşifâ, Bimarhâne and Timarhâne', these health institutions were not public spaces but rather social solidarity institutions founded by the donations of bureaucrats and wealthy individuals.<sup>2</sup> As the palace and army gradually became more centralized in the Ottoman state structure, health services provided by the state shifted towards the palace and the military. Therefore, the institution of Physician-Ship, or *Ra'is al-atibbâ*, has been established to regulate health services.<sup>3</sup> Until the reforms that took place under the rule of Mahmud II, health services were regulated by this institution and given by physicians and surgeons, against payment, through foundation hospitals named 'dârü'sşifâ'.<sup>4</sup> However, these health services mainly were limited to larger cities, and health policies and mass health services were achieved only towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, solving the health issues of the masses in the Ottoman era was performed by the folk medicine institution for an extended period of time, and this institution was instrumental in filling a significant gap in medical conditions.

It has been noted that folk physicians have practically cured diseases known to modern men such as warts, rheumatoid arthritis, pain, sexual disability, skin disease, cancer, and diseases that are not recognized by medical science, such as mal ochio or evil eye, mental breakdown, and sorcery effects.<sup>6</sup> The strong bond between folk medicine and culture<sup>7</sup> describes not only the dynamic and continuous aspect of folk medicine but also its strong position against modern medicine. In other words, there is a strong relation between folk medicine and primitive public beliefs seen in organized, high-type religions.<sup>8</sup> As such, the origins of folk medicine in Turks are identified with religious and social life and date back to Shaman, Kams who were thought to have supernatural powers. A Shaman was not only a

<sup>1</sup> Yıldırım Yavuz, "Batılılaşma Döneminde Osmanlı Sağlık Kuruluşları", *ODTÜ Mimarlık Fakültesi Dergisi*, 8/2 (1988), 123.

<sup>2</sup> Necati Çavdar-Erol Karcı, "XIX. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Sağlık Teşkilatlanması'na Dair Bibliyografik Bir Deneme", *Turkish Studies*, 9/4, (2014), 256.

<sup>3</sup> Şeyda Çavmak-Doğancan Çavmak, "Türkiye'de Sağlık Hizmetlerinin Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Sağlıkta Dönüşüm Programı", *Sağlık Yönetimi Dergisi*, 1/1, (2017), 49; Çavdar-Karcı, "Bibliyografik Bir Deneme", 257.

<sup>4</sup> Nusret H. Fişek, *Halk Sağlığına Giriş*, (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi Dünya Sağlık Örgütü Hizmet Araştırma ve Araştırmacı Yetiştirme Merkezi Yayını 1983), 2, 157.

<sup>5</sup> Çavmak, "Türkiye'de Sağlık Hizmetleri", 49.

<sup>6</sup> David J. Hufford, "Halk Hekimleri", Tr. Mustafa Sever, *Milli Folklor*, 19/73 (2007), 79.

<sup>7</sup> Hilal Tavukcu, *Geleniğin Yeniden Keşfi Bağlamında Halk Hekimliği (Ankara Kent Örneği)* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2016), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Gustav Mensching, *Din Sosyolojisi*, (Konya: Literatürk Yayınları, 2012), 149.

man of religion but also a seer and a physician, hence he was able to exorcise evil spirits and supernatural deities before they could cause more harm to the patient's body.<sup>9</sup> However, in the process of radical change experienced in Turkish society after the adoption of Islam, shamans could not preserve their pagan powers for a long time; they left their religious duties -and some of their healing abilities- to Sufi circles such as sheikhs, dervish and guardians, and their duties were continued under the title *ocaklı*.<sup>10</sup> Following the adoption of Islam, folk medicine practices in Anatolia started to be performed by people named hodja, sheikh, reciter-healer, *ocaklı* and *izinli*, and these people were accepted by their communities to additionally have religious identities and sorcery capabilities.<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact, over time, a general opinion had emerged both in Sufi circles and in society as a reflection of this, that Sufis have spiritual power and the ability to cure and heal diseases.<sup>12</sup> The characteristic structure of folk medicine was also influential in forming this situation. As Yoder stated, folk medicine consists of two essential elements: natural folk medicine and religious mysterious medicine. The use of amulets, holy words and similar practices in treating the disease of the spiritual magic folk medicine played a leading role in including Sufi concepts such as 'sheikh, baba and dede'. For according to common belief at the time, saints or guardians were able to overcome the immense gap between them and the far-away Mono-God, and had great powers achieved through prayers and other inexplicable strengths.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the strong belief of the people that the Sufis had outward experiences on the one hand and esoteric abilities that found their place in the cult of the saint on the other played a leading role in their acceptance of it as curative. So much so that the belief that some sheikhs and dervishes were skilled in the treatment of diseases extended to the places where they lived and even to the graves where they were buried when they died. Over time, some shrines have been identified with the treatment of certain diseases.

In addition, it is understood that from the earlier periods, the Sufi circles did not remain indifferent to the subjects of medicine and healing, and showed great interest in heart, and mental and physical diseases.<sup>14</sup> As Hülya

<sup>9</sup> Gülnur Öngel, *Denizli Halk Hekimliğinde Ocaklar* (Denizli: Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 1997), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Öngel, "Ocaklar", 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ayşegül Özaslan, *Halk Hekimliğinde Ocaklık Kurumu ve Araban (Gaziantep) İlçesi Örneğinde Kadın Ocaklılar* (Ankara: Gazi Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, (2012), 13.

<sup>12</sup> Zekeriya Işık, Şeyhler ve Şahlar-Osmanlı Toplumunda Devlet Tarikat İlişkilerinin Gelişim ve Değişim Süreçleri, (Konya: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2017), 62.

<sup>13</sup> Mensching, *Din Sosyolojisi*, 159-160.

<sup>14</sup> Hülya Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp- Selim Kalbin Fizyolojisi*, (İstanbul: Ensar Yayınları, 2018), 37-75.

Küçük states, the fact that medical knowledge is based on inspiration, not on experimentation, must be a common point between Sufism and medicine.<sup>15</sup> The main purpose of the present study is to reveal the meaning and nature of the medical methods of Sufis in the Ottoman society in the context of folk medicine, and the treatment methods they applied in this context. In other words, it is aimed to find answers to the following hypotheses: Sufis played an essential role in the treatment of diseases with their unique methods in the Ottoman society; there is a strong belief and thought that Sufis are healers in all layers of the society; and Sufis have gained a respected and effective position in this society by the help of folk medicine in many aspects. This study has used historical sources of the period, recent researches, and archival documents. In particular, the anecdotal information and findings obtained from the works of the Sufis were critically approached with the method of criticism. Therefore, the sources have been handled with a critical approach. In this study, the subject has been tried to be explained as treatment methods developed with prayer, ruqya and material elements.

#### **Treatment of Diseases by Moral Methods (Prayer, Ruqya, Dhikr, etc.)**

Sufis practiced different methods when treating diseases and two of these methods was prayer and ruqya. According to Weber, the two main characteristics of worshipping, prayer and sacrifice<sup>16</sup> were considered to be curative methods when they involved Sufis. Defined as “going up; healing through prayer” in the dictionary, the term *ruqya* practically means “to recite verses from Qur’an, divine names and titles or a prayer for healing purposes,” and as a noun, it means “breathing, protection from evil-eyes and evil-doers”.<sup>17</sup> Sufis commonly used this method. People believed in the healing powers of these amulets prepared by the Sufis and they wore them inside their hats or on their necks.<sup>18</sup> So much so that their curative abilities have become traditional, and sheikhs gave permission to people with such capabilities. It has been reported that a khalifa of the Sadî order (tariqa) was given the authority to raise followers, organize and manage rituals, He was also given the authority to exorcise evil spirits and perform ruqya against venomous pests. For instance, it is recorded that Huseyin b. Ibrahim, who was the Shaykh of Sadiyya, made Mohammed b. Âkil his khalifa in Mecca to train murid (adherents). In addition, trained him by a giving piece of food and drink, such as figs and date fruits, and to treat it by pressing and

<sup>15</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 82.

<sup>16</sup> Max Weber, *Din Sosyolojisi*, tr. Latif Boyacı (İstanbul: Yarın, 2012), 118.

<sup>17</sup> İlyas Çelebi, ‘Rukye’, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 2008), 35/219.

<sup>18</sup> Lucy Mary Jane Garnett, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Dervişler ve Abdallar*, Translate Hanife Öz, (İstanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2010), 122.

uttering holy words to the area bitten by the insect.<sup>19</sup> He was also given the authority to help people suffering from venomous bites. As such, the Sheikhs of Sa'diyya order became known for their healing effects on patients, mental patients in particular, through their drawings, readings or writings and this fame was helpful in making the order known and accepted in various countries and regions.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Sadreddin Konevî (d. 1274) prepared amulets and phylactery as a form of ruqya while Ibn Arabi (d. 1240) advised people to recite surah Yaseen.<sup>21</sup> Aşçı Dede (d. 1828?), one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century representatives of Ottoman Sufis, advised reciting surah al-Fatihah as a form of ruqya and emphasized the hadith "surah al-Fatihah cures all diseases".<sup>22</sup> He has reported that whenever his own sheikh, Sheikh Fehmi Efendi, was going to pray, he would first recite surah al-Fatihah and then would beg God to give health and happiness to his sons, Mehmed Sıdkı and Ahmed Fevzi.<sup>23</sup> Sheikh Sha'bân Efendi (d. 1569) from the Halvatiyya order used to recite surah al-Fatihah as a ruqya method to treat illnesses. One day a girl suffering from headache was brought to him. Her family thought prayer was the only cure for her. Reported to be consulting eight women at the time, Sheikh Sha'bân Efendi asked them to recite *Surah al-Fatihah* without asking them anything about their complaints. But with regards to the girl suffering from headache, he first removed her crown, anointed the girl's forehead with his right hand, and then asked her to recite the same surah. She was reportedly healed then.<sup>24</sup> As such, it has been reported that such healers first blew to the head and other painful areas of the patient and patted them. Afterwards they made the patient swallow a piece of paper bearing holy words or verses or placed such papers inside a cup of water and asked the patient to drink it or made the patient carry such papers on them for a certain period of time.<sup>25</sup>

Mystics trying to heal people through the recitation of the Qur'an and prayer used to consider physical healing tools as a supporting element of spiritual healing, and therefore, their priority was to consult Qur'an, prayer, poetry, and similar tools.<sup>26</sup> In fact, such practices occupying a significant place in Sufi practices. Morality and words used to be much more effective in individual and social life during the middle and new ages. As such, these

<sup>19</sup> Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Şeyh Sa'deddin Cebâvî ve Sa'dîlik*, (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2010), 343.

<sup>20</sup> Yücer, *Sa'dîlik*, 343.

<sup>21</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 183, 176.

<sup>22</sup> Aşçı İbrahim Dede, *Aşçı Dede'nin Hatıraları-Çok Yönlü Bir Sûfinin Gözüyle Son Dönem Osmanlı Hayatı*, Hazırlayan Mustafa Koç-Eyyüp Tanrıverdi, (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2006), 2/660.

<sup>23</sup> Aşçı İbrahim Dede, *Hatıraları*, 583-584.

<sup>24</sup> Ömer Fuâdî. *Bir Allah Dostunun Hatıraları Şa'bân-ı Velî Menkıbeleri*, Prepared Muhammed Bedirhan, (İstanbul: Ketebe Yayınları, 2019), 106.

<sup>25</sup> Garnett, *Dervişler ve Abdallar*, 121.

<sup>26</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 176.



methods used by Sufis created a significant effect on the public. Some verses in the Holy Book state that the Qur'an itself is a cure and these verses formed the foundations of such Sufi practices.<sup>27</sup> It was believed that the Qur'an was a cure for both spiritual and mental and physical diseases. For example, it has been stated that it is recommended to read Surah Falak and Nas in muakkad sunnah for eye discomfort.<sup>28</sup> For example Sheikh Ali al-Omeri from the Shazeliyya order diagnosed that a woman's illness was related to the cessation of menstruation, and chose the *uttering method* as the treatment method. He read it to a glass of water and asked the woman to drink it. It has been recited that the woman who drank this water was healed.<sup>29</sup>

It is possible to claim that the treatment of patients by prayer and ruqya was highly common among Sufis during the Ottoman era. As a matter of fact, the eyes of İsmail Rusuhî Ankaravî (b. 1631) were healed by the prayers and kindness of Bostan Çelebi I (b. 1630), who was the occupant of the post of the Mawlawi Lodge. There is no information about the content of Bostan Çelebi's prayer and the verses or suras he read during this time. However, it can be said that in these cases, based on the practices of the Sufis such as reciting chapters from the Qur'an and recommending some dhikr and prayers, it can be said that he also put one or more of them into practice. Ankaravî, who was very happy with the healing of his eyes, became a Mawlawi with the guidance of this sheikh.<sup>30</sup> According to a similar incident in Eşrefzâde, a woman who was sick found health with the prayer of the sheikh.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, when Sheikh Ali al-Omerî arrived in Beirut in 1896, a patient who was expected to die was brought to him. It has been recorded that the Sheikh, who had the patient lay on his back, prayed to Allah for healing by running his hand over the patient -probably from the Qur'an- by reciting some words, then holding the hands of the still lying patient and saying get up with the permission of Almighty Allah, while the patient stood up.<sup>32</sup> In the example described here, the healing of the patient is related to both the sheikh's prayers and strong folk beliefs. Again Sheikh Ali al-Omeri, after becoming a member of the Shazeliyye order, diagnosed that a woman who consulted him was related to the cessation of menstruation, and again chose the method

<sup>27</sup> Yunus 10/57, <https://kuran.diyaret.gov.tr/tefsir/Y%C3%BBnus-suresi/1421/57-ayet-tefsiri> (Erişim Tarihi: 20.12.2021)

<sup>28</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 179.

<sup>29</sup> İsmail İbn Yûsuf en-Nebhânî, *Sahabeden Günümüze Veliler ve Kerametleri*, Translate Abdülhalık Duran, İstanbul: Hikmet Neşriyat, undated, c. 4, 130.

<sup>30</sup> İsmail Rusuhî Ankaravî, *Osmanlı Tasavvuf Düşüncesi-Makâsıd-ı Aliyye Fî Şehri't-Tâiyye*, Translate Mehmet Demirci, (İstanbul: Vefa Yayınları, 2008), 20.

<sup>31</sup> Abdullah Veliyyuddin Bursevi, *Menakıb-ı Eşrefzade-Eşrefoğlu Rumi'nin Menkıbeleri*, Prepared Abdullah Uçman, (İstanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009), 55.

<sup>32</sup> Yûsuf en-Nebhânî, 4, 138.

of curative prayer as a treatment method. He recited a prayer to a glass of water and then asked the woman to drink the water. It has been recorded that the woman who drank this water was healed. A particular case in the archive records is important in that it shows that Sufis were one of the first places of contact for those suffering from the disease, and that some practices performed by the sheikh became a tradition and turned into folklore. In the aforementioned case, a person who fell ill made a request to his friend Mustafa Ağa. He asked him to go to Sheikh İbrahim Efendi, who was in the Horse Bazaar, to have *Tawhid* or *Salaten Tüncina* to be read for his recovery. At night, he went to Sheikh İsa Efendi, who was lived in Eyüp, and asked him to pray.<sup>33</sup> In this example, spiritual practices such as dhikr, salutation to the prophet, and prayer for healing are put to work together.

The institutional reflection of ruqya and prayer, in the sense of healing, was *recitation* in the Ottomans. The strong belief among the public that prayers and verses recited by scholars and Sufis led to the curing of patients became even more popular through hearsay. This profession turned into a popular and common one, which is clear from certain indications such as the authorities monitoring those involved in it, giving them permissions, funds and supplies, and confirming that the practiced methods conform to sharia rules. For instance, Mustafa Efendi who is a descendant of Sheikh Şerafeddin, buried in Kemah, used to 'recite' to patients in Aksaray outside the Kâtib Mosque and he was told that there are no religious obstacles for him to perform such practices. Afterwards, he was asked to provide a guarantor to ensure that he did not misconduct. Upon finding a guarantor, he was granted with the license he needed to perform his practices in an official way.<sup>34</sup> The fact that the authorities had growing concerns overtime towards 'reciters' is an indication that from time to time there were abusers of the profession. For instance, it has been reported in state archives that no reciters, tarot readers or blowers were seen in Kale-i Sultaniye area and similarly there were no people scamming the public in the Karahisâr-ı Sahib area.<sup>35</sup> An important example of the reciters of the era is Hüseyin Efendi (d. 1648), known as Cinci (Exorcist) Hodja, and his reciting abilities reached all the way to the royal palace and state authorities. It has been reported that Cinci (Exorcist) Hodja was a descendant of Sadreddin Konevi, a famous mystic from the Seljuk era, and on top of his madrasa education, he was also taught by his brother Hasan

<sup>33</sup> BOA. TSMA.E. 310/12.

<sup>34</sup> BOA. A.MKT.MVL. 31/64, 8 Za 1266/15 September 1850.

<sup>35</sup> BOA. DH.EUM.ADL. 10/13, 25 Za 1333/4 October 1915; DH.EUM.ADL. 47/15, 14 Za 1333/23 September 1915.

Efendizâde Sheikh Mehmed Efendi.<sup>36</sup> Cinci (Exorcist) Hodja, who is stated to have also dealt with enchantment and magic, was known by those around him for his *strong breath*, and the news that his prayers were healing for the afflicted spread in a short time, and his real fame was when Sultan Ibrahim was imprisoned in the palace when he suffered from *hafakan*, *insomnia* and a fear for his life.<sup>37</sup> This person, who gained fame in blessing through prayer, was called to the palace with the thought that Sultan İbrahim would feel comfortable when the doctors' medicines did not help, and it was stated that the sultan was relieved with his blessing. Recitation opened the channels of high-level bureaucracy to Cinci (Exorcist) Hodja and helped him to rise to an active position in the palace.<sup>38</sup>

It is evident that the Sufis also treated the sick through 'nazar'. In Sufism, the sheikh's view of his disciple, full of mercy, nurturing and enlightening, together with his clean, unflinching, lust-free gaze, was called *safa-nazar*.<sup>39</sup> Koyun Baba expressed this as "The gaze of the saints is chemistry, it would heal even the stones and rocks".<sup>40</sup> In one particular instance, a person came to Naqshi Sheikh Sayyid Ahmet al-Bukhari (b. 1516) crying and asked the sheikh to pray for his patients. Emir Efendi came to the patient, who was lying with his eyes closed, as if he had died, and gazed at him, the patient immediately opened his eyes and fell at the feet of the sheikh. Sheikh Efendi gave a rosary to the patient's hand in a mystical way and suggested that he beg for forgiveness and finally the patient found health in a day or two.<sup>41</sup> As in this incident, there were some among the Sufis who recommended to reciting a certain number of dhikr by mystical means in the treatment of diseases. For instance, Sheikh Îsâ (1447-1534) of Akhisar from the Bayramiyye order was once visited by a woman whose new-born babies were dying, apparently due to various conditions. He told her to recite the words "Oh Bâki" a hundred and three times per day. The book titled *Menakıbnâme* reports that her babies born after she started to recite did not die anymore.<sup>42</sup> In another incident, a slave with a serious illness went to Muhammad Jan en-Naqshbandi and wanted to be treated. Muhammad Jan en-Naqshbandi raised his head and

<sup>36</sup> Ahmet Rasim, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, Prepared Hakkı Dursun Yıldız, (İstanbul: İlgi Kültür Sanat Yayınları, 2021), I/325-327.

<sup>37</sup> Ahmet Rasim, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 325-327.

<sup>38</sup> Ahmet Rasim, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 325.

<sup>39</sup> Ethem Cebecioğlu, *Tasavvuf Terimleri Ve Deyimleri Sözlüğü*, (Erişim Tarihi: 31.12.2021)

<sup>40</sup> *Koyun Baba Velâyetnamesi*, Prepared Muzaffer Doğanbaş, (İstanbul: Dörtkapı Yayınevi, 2015), 85.

<sup>41</sup> Abdurrahman-ı Cami. *Nefehatü'l-Üns fi Menâkıbu'l-Evliya*, Hitit Üniversitesi Kütüphanesi, Tarih-siz Osmanlıca nüsha.

<sup>42</sup> *Akhisarlı Şeyh Îsâ Menâkıbnâmesi*, Prepared Sezai Küçük-Ramazan Muslu, (Sakarya: Aşyan Yayınları, 2003), 141.

looked deeply at the slave and the slave was healed.<sup>43</sup> As it can be understood from these examples, the method of treatment by looking was widely used among the Sufis, and the opinion that this method of treatment worked was widespread among the people.

The skills of the Sufis in the treatment of diseases led to the spread of their reputation both in the eyes of the state and the public, and their help was demanded. For instance, Yavuz Sultan Selim was having various ailments after conquering Egypt and Sheikh Hasan b. Sheikh Muhammed (d. 1580) treated him by employing similar methods.<sup>44</sup> One of the aides of Sultan Suleiman's son had an ailment where she was trembling all the time and her condition did not get any better despite all the efforts to cure her. Her condition progressed to a great extent. Kademli Baba, whose reputation for having significant healing powers found its way to the palace, was taken to the town where the aide was living. There is no information on the treatment methods of Kademli Baba in the literature, but it has been reported that the aide got better after being treated by him, and everyone described the incident as the 'healing through the will of God'.<sup>45</sup> Making a remark about this 'healing through the will of God' is a clear indication that Sufis believed their helping powers were only possible by the grace of God and that they acted accordingly.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, what is important here is not the truth or falsity of all these events, but the fact that these stories had a strong reflection on the folk medicine practices and folk beliefs of that day.

There was a popular belief that the power of Sufis to heal diseases continued around their graves and shrines after they passed away. Ömer Ziyaeddin Dagestani, a member of the Nakshi order, advocated this belief as a possibility for the saints of Allah to show miracles and make savings after their death as well as in their lives.<sup>47</sup> A question asked to Dagestani is important in terms of revealing the beliefs and practices among both the Sufi circles and the people: "Visiting the graves of the prophets and saints, as the Sufis do... to pray for them, to ask for blessings, blessings and indications from them, to ask for intercession, help... Is it permissible by the Shariah to use the saints, who are alive or dead, as a means and method to reach reunion?"<sup>48</sup> Dagestani answered this question that all of them are religiously

<sup>43</sup> Yûsuf en-Nebhâni, 2, 80.

<sup>44</sup> Yücer, *Sa'dîlik*, 348.

<sup>45</sup> *Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi*, Prepared Filiz Kılıç-Tuncay Bülbül, (Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları, 2011), 48.

<sup>46</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 183.

<sup>47</sup> Ömer Ziyâeddin Dağistanî, *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlarla İlgili Fetvâlar*, Translate İrfan Gündüz-Yakup Çiçek, (İstanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1992), 172-173.

<sup>48</sup> Dağistanî, *Fetvâlar*, 177.

correct and permissible. He stated that during his visit to the shrine, there was a relationship and influence between the visitor and the person in the shrine, and spiritual influences and spiritual benefits appeared.<sup>49</sup> Hodja Sadettin Efendi's (b. 1599) view on shrine visits is important in that it points to the overlap between folk beliefs and official understanding. He stated that the relations between the saints' bodies and their souls are not broken, so it is religiously permissible to visit the saints' shrine.<sup>50</sup>

This interest in mausoleums and tombs is also related to the primitive instincts and impulses of the broad masses of the people, who are more or less still connected with the beliefs of the pagan periods, as well as the Sufi terms. As a matter of fact, in the sources of the period, it is noted that, apart from the natural places and the carved rocks, the places where the public was most interested were the tombs of a saint who had worked miracles.<sup>51</sup> Eventually, some diseases became identified with some shrines over time, and sometimes water, rock, stone, tree, etc. were placed into the role of a healer, a healer for the disease. For instance, Evliya Çelebi noted that if a patient visited the shrine of co-sheikh Ali Münibat three times, buried in the middle of a lodge by the Nile, he would be healed by Allah's permission.<sup>52</sup> It has been stated that incontinent children who had difficulty swallowing were brought to Derviş Mahmud's (Tut Dede) grave in Çorum, and it was believed that they found cure when they were tied to the round stone at the head of the shrine and kept upside down for half an hour.<sup>53</sup> The shrine of Sheikh Eyüp in the Kale District was reportedly visited to stop the endless crying of little children. Their crying could have been linked to a disease unknown at the time. It has been stated that some of the hairs of the children were cut and the hairs were sprinkled on the shrine and the child was laid on the shrine and sometimes the children were relieved as a result of these practices.<sup>54</sup> It has been noted that the tomb of Selman Çelebi, a Sufi from the Seyyid Murad-ı Veli dynasty, was found under a pine tree in the village of Saraylı, and there was a belief that if pieces of this tree was cut and burned, and its coal and smoke were subjected into the eyes, it would cure eye pain. Sheikh Abdurrahman-i Erzincani Tomb, located in Indere (Zag-Zey) village of Adıyaman, is visited by those who have had a stroke and those who have

<sup>49</sup> Dağıstanî, *Fetvalar*, 178.

<sup>50</sup> Fuâdî, *Şa'bân-ı Velî Menkıbeleri*, 116.

<sup>51</sup> Raphaela Lewis, *Osmanlıda Gündelik Yaşam*, Translate Adile Runa Orhunsoy, (Anakara: Alter, 2009), 49.

<sup>52</sup> *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnamesi (Mısır-Sudan Habeş)*, (İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi, 1938), 10/747.

<sup>53</sup> Ali İzzet Efendi, *Tezkire-i Makamat*, Prepared Mahmut Selim Gürsel. (Çorum: İstikamet, 1997), 67.

<sup>54</sup> Ali İzzet Efendi, *Tezkire-i Makamat*, 59.

psychological problems. Misbehaving children are also being brought here. It has been recorded that it is customary to spend Friday night there for healing, repeat a ritual for three times, drink water from the well in the courtyard, and take a bath with the water in which the soil around the tomb is placed. After the problem was resolved, it was customary to revisit the tomb with friends and relatives, sacrifices were to be made and a special dessert called *lokma* was to be distributed.<sup>55</sup> Hasan Balım Sultan shrine, on the other hand, was being visited by people suffering from pains in all parts of their bodies. It is believed among the people that the patient will be healed by rubbing a stick with a long handle and a mallet, which is still found in the tomb today.<sup>56</sup>

This enthusiasm of the people to find healing in the Sufi tombs did not escape the attention of foreigners who visited the Ottoman state. As a matter of fact, Garnett noted that believers usually came to shrines to get rid of an illness, trouble, or to achieve a desire.<sup>57</sup> Seetzen, on the other hand, stated that those who came to the shrine of a dervish sheikh named Karaballe tied pieces of cloth there and believed that sick people would regain their health in this way and that such practices were highly common.<sup>58</sup> It is possible to provide more similar examples. This is a clear indication that the cult of the guardian, which has a powerful place among Anatolian Islamic folk beliefs, also has an important place in traditional medicine and treatment methods. When these charismatic figures, known by names such as 'dede, baba, sheikh, hodja, and veli' and related to almost all kinds of diseases, died their tombs and shrines were transformed into centers that provide healing for the masses. In the eyes of the public, these healing power continued to maintain their vitality despite the modern developments in medicine. This strong correlation between the Sufis and the healer both opened a wide space for them in the context of folk medicine and caused a continuity in this regard.

Among Sufi circles, in particular, there is a strong belief that it is not only the shrines, preserving the dead bodies of saints, that is a source of relief, but any of their remaining belongings such as books etc. are also helping to cure diseases. For instance, Aşçı Dede preserved the instructions given to him by his sheikh. He inherited those records from his children and asked them not to lose them, read them from time to time to achieve goodness, protect them on the most secure places, and carry them in their backs whenever they were

<sup>55</sup> Tekin Çifçi, *Adıyaman ve Çevresinde Halk İnançları ve Halk Hekimliği*, (Diyarbakır: Dicle Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doktora Tezi, 2019), 59.

<sup>56</sup> Zekeriya Işık, 'Hasan Balım Sultan Zaviyesi'nin Sosyo-Ekonomik ve Kültürel Tarihi', *Turkish Studies*, 13/3, (2018), 332.

<sup>57</sup> Garnett, *Dervişler ve Abdallar*, 73.

<sup>58</sup> Ulrich Jasper Seetzen, *İstanbul Günlükleri ve Anadolu'da Yolculuk (12 Aralık 1802-22 Haziran 1803)*, Translate Selma Türkis Noyan, (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2017), 1/233.



feeling gloomy. This was how the sheikhs used to keep those instructions, The fact that Aşçı Dede continued this tradition belonging to his sheikh shows how such beliefs became traditional.<sup>59</sup>

### Sickness Treatment Through Material Methods

In the treatment of diseases, Sufis used prayer, dhikr, gazing, ruqya, and so on. Apart from this, it is understood that they used some knowledge and experience that were understood to have been transferred in the historical process. In particular, the strong relationship between diet and health had an important place in the knowledge and understanding of traditional medicine of the Sufis. Sufis stated that the stomach has four natures: heat, cold, humidity and dryness, and as the imbalance between them increases, diseases begin to appear, so a balanced diet, in other words not being dependent on any food item, is important for health.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, it was noted, Sufis generally paid attention to washing their hands before and after meals, not eating unless they were hungry,<sup>61</sup> cooking the meals well, ensuring the fruits they ate were ripened, ensuring to eat by chewing well and leaving one-third of the stomach empty.<sup>62</sup>

For Sufis, eating less was as important as a balanced diet, both for the health of the body and for the training of the soul. Eating the food so much that you will stay alive has been accepted as one of the attributes of the abdals.<sup>63</sup> İsâ from Akhisar, one of the Bayrami Sheikhs, described this as eating less, speaking less and sleeping less if you want to be close to your Lord.<sup>64</sup> İbrahim Hakkı of Erzurum, a Sufi famous for his knowledge of medicine, especially focused on the subject of eating less and suggested eating as little as possible and staying hungry in order to have joy in the chest, relief in the heart, and health in the mind. He stated that overeating is wasteful and unlawful, and it causes stains and diseases on the body, causes organs to work more than necessary, wear out and deteriorate, and thus causes early old age.<sup>65</sup> As a matter of fact, this attitude of the Sufis to eat less made them more experienced than all other people about fasting, which is the oldest known natural treatment.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Aşçı Dede, *Hatıraları*, 1/400.

<sup>60</sup> Ebû Tâlib El-Mekkî, *Kûtü'l-Kulûb (Kalplerin Azığı)*. Translate ve Prepared Muharrem Tan, (İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1999), 4/ 80- 89; Erzurumlu İbrahim Hakkı, *Marifetname*, Sadeleştiren Turgut Ulusoy, (İstanbul: Bahar Yay. 1974), 1/57.

<sup>61</sup> el-Mekkî, *Kûtü'l-Kulûb*, 4/138-141.

<sup>62</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 134.

<sup>63</sup> el-Mekkî, *Kûtü'l-Kulûb*, 1/328, 335.

<sup>64</sup> Akhisarlı Şeyh İsâ, 174.

<sup>65</sup> İbrahim Hakkı, *Marifetname*, 1/93, 57.

<sup>66</sup> Şeyh Hakim Muînüddîn Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, Translate Hayrettin Tekümit, (İstanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2005), 115-16.

Considering that fasting technically means resting these functions by staying away from eating and drinking and sexual intercourse,<sup>67</sup> it is understood that fasting has a very important place for Sufis in terms of both self-training and physical well-being. It is stated that the diseases caused by the inability to fully assimilate the nutrients in the digestive system will disappear with the reduction of the digestive processes during fasting and the removal of toxic substances from the body.<sup>68</sup> As such, Sufis encouraged the patients who came to them to fast. For example, Timur Baba advised a woman who applied to him to fast, as a cure for her inability to have a child.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the public beliefs in the Ottoman community, the public officials also had strong beliefs in the healing powers of Sufis, particularly in terms of treating epilepsy and mental diseases.<sup>70</sup> This belief took another positive and official turn once the state encouraged the institutions that preserved and treated those with mental conditions. In fact, institutions such as the Deyrihizkil Lodge in Baghdad, which only dealt with the treatment of the mentally ill since the Seljuk period, were inherited the Ottoman period and became the prototype of similar places.<sup>71</sup> For example, the Karaca Ahmet Tekke near Afyon, Melek Dede Tomb near Burdur, and the lodge in Deli Baba village near Erzurum are stated to be among them. It has been recorded that the dervishes living in the Deli Baba lodge helped the mentally ill and the patients brought there found healing with their treatment.<sup>72</sup> Archive records make it possible to review the mission assumed by lodges to this end. As a matter of fact, it was stated that the lodge in the Pasin Sanjak Zorvans Village was like a hospital, and there was no other place around Erzurum to protect and discipline the mentally ill, and it was requested to allocate this place to the local sheikh, who has been serving since the past.<sup>73</sup> A record from a few years ago indicates that Sheikh Seyyid Mustafa, serving as a physician, was sent a mobilization notification but he kindly refused by stating this would cause an end to the 'long-lasting sacred duty'. By doing this, according to him, the current services would not be disrupted. At the time such people were tasked with raising two soldiers. Sheikh Seyyid Mustafa added in his reply to the sultan that he did not have the funds to raise two soldiers, but

<sup>67</sup> Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, 117; el-Mekkî, *Kûtü'l-Kulûb*, 3/366-367.

<sup>68</sup> Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, 119.

<sup>69</sup> Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi, 138.

<sup>70</sup> Işık, *Şeyhler ve Şahlar*, 64.

<sup>71</sup> Arslan Terzioğlu, 'Bimâristan', *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1992), 6/167.

<sup>72</sup> Terzioğlu, "Bimâristan", 167.

<sup>73</sup> BOA. C.EV. 434/21977-2, 30 M 1147/ 2 July 1734.



he was prepared to raise one.<sup>74</sup> It is understood from the archive records that some sheikh dynasties have been dealing with the treatment of the sick for centuries in the hospitals, which also received grants from foundations. The state did not allow interventions to these places to prevent the disruption of the health services. For instance, it is observed that the local hospital, which was built by a benefactor named Ali bin Süleyman bin Ali in Kastamonu, had been administered for five hundred years by sheikhs who were among the caliphs of Sheikh Abdulkadir Geylani. These sheikhs were treating many epilepsy, mental, and other diseases from Kastamonu and the surrounding provinces with spiritual methods. Sheikh Hafiz Mustafa, the grandson of Sheikh Abdulfettah Efendi from the Qadriyya order, was appointed as the sheikh of the dar al-Shifa on 9 Cemaziyelevvel 1128 (May 1, 1716). As it can be understood, the hospital continued to serve under the administration of a Qadiri sheikh at that time. However, during this period, there was an intervention by Müderris Trabzonî Ali Efendi that there was a madrasa named İbrahim Pasha Madrasa in Kastamonu, and that this place was also closely related to the hospital. However, this intervention was neutralized by the public and administrators who received a critical health service here. Kastamonu judge, hassa voivode, ulema, righteous, imams, orators, sheikhs and people residing there gathered and registered in 1137 that this is not a madrasa but a health care hospital. Hafiz Sheikh Mustafa was appointed to the administration of this place again. This sensitivity of the administrators and all segments of the society about the hospital clearly reveals how important the health service was for them.<sup>75</sup> According to another record, Alemdar Sheikh Ahmed Efendi was assigned the duty of treating and protecting mental patients in and around Mosul and he was allocated an additional two hundred *kuruş* salary per month for the prison expenses.<sup>76</sup>

Such rumors claiming that Sufis were competent in treating epilepsy and mental diseases were reflected in chronicles and anecdotes. For instance, a person suffering from epilepsy and going through three fits a day consulted Sheikh Îsâ of Akhisar and asked for his help. The sheikh told him to perform his night prayer and to go to bed in a ritual manner and face the direction of the sheikh. After observing the instructions, the patient went back to the sheikh the following morning and told him that he had a vision of the sheikh in his dream. In the dream, the sheikh asked the patient to open his mouth and placed his hand inside the patient's mouth. The sheikh extended his hand to his heart and withdrew 'a handful of indolent blood' out and said, "from now on you can be sure of avoiding epilepsy". Upon waking up, the

<sup>74</sup> BOA. C.EV. 434/21977-1, 11 Ca 1144/ 11 November 1731.

<sup>75</sup> BOA. C. SH. 5/224, 1-1, 8 Rebiülevvel 1140/October 24 1727

<sup>76</sup> BOA. İ.DH. 1313/10, lef 1, 25 Şevval 1311/1 May 1894.

patient had no epilepsy anymore.<sup>77</sup> The noteworthy detail here is that the sheikh recommended practices like praying, reciting, washing, and begging to God. It is clear the Sheikh was emphasizing the fact that remedy is granted only by the will of God and the role of the sheikh was nothing more than acting as an intermediary. The turning of the patient towards the sheikh in his sleep ensured that his heart and mind would be occupied by the sheikh, who would hopefully be the medium for remedy. İsmail Rusûhî Ankarâvî, on the other hand, reported that the malady of epilepsy would occur after intercourse with evil spirits, and therefore it was mostly seen in women. He also talked about the other aspects of epilepsy.<sup>78</sup> As it can be understood from all these events, it is understood that the Sufis had a strong response in the eyes of the state and the people and filled an important gap in the treatment of epilepsy and mental illnesses, which were extremely difficult to care for and to treat.

The memoirs of Evliya Çelebi, on the other hand, indicate that Sufis not only cured mental diseases but also other diseases at their lodges. Evliya Çelebi reported a 'Bimarhane (an old Turkish/Ottoman hospital)' named Sultan Müeyyed in Egypt. He describes the hospital as a spacious one with a door leading to the Uzbek lodge.<sup>79</sup> The hospital had several different spacious areas for the patients to get some fresh air. It did not belong to any foundation and guests and patients were served by dervishes.<sup>80</sup> Based on what has been told, those who went there must be lung patients with breathing problems.

One of the ways Sufis adopted for the treatment of various diseases was herbal prescriptions. For instance, in earlier periods, İmam Gazali shared information about which plant or fruit was good for which disease in his pamphlet called *Sırru'l-Âlemeyn*.<sup>81</sup> It was important to prepare herbal mixture formulas according to the instructions formed over time and to adjust the doses based on the age of the patients.<sup>82</sup> For instance, if a herb formula was while pulverizing, it should be grounded into a fine powder and passed through a coarse cloth or a multi-hole sieve. Unless the use of coarse powder was specified in the formula, the herbs should have been removed from the fire as soon as the water started to boil and left for five minutes, then filtered and drank warm. If sugar was to be used in the formula, honey should be used if there was no Mexican sugar.<sup>83</sup> Sufis suggested different mixtures

<sup>77</sup> Akhisarlı Şeyh İsmâ Menâkıbnâmesi, 84.

<sup>78</sup> İsmail Rusuhî Ankaravî, *Osmanlı Tasavvuf Düşüncesi*, 205-206.

<sup>79</sup> Evliya Çelebi, 262.

<sup>80</sup> Evliya Çelebi, 262.

<sup>81</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 211.

<sup>82</sup> Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, 92, 93.

<sup>83</sup> Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, 92.

for different diseases. For instance, Sheikh Hakim Muinüddin Çiştî noted that a light diet consisting of fresh fruits and foods such as chicken soup, liver, offal, beets, carrots, spinach, and fenugreek is recommended against anaemia, and several herbal formulas are recommended for treatment. One of these suggestions is that 6 teaspoons of ground fennel root and 6 teaspoons of red rose petals are boiled in one and a half cups of water and taken twice a day, which would heal the disease.<sup>84</sup> Sheikh İbrahim Hakkı of Erzurum also suggested some herbal and animal-based treatment prescriptions. According to him, eating spinach, whether cooked or dried, is beneficial for the lungs and chest, keeps the stomach soft and relieves lower back pain. Anise is good for kidneys, bladder, uterine, spleen and liver obstructions, as well as rheumatism and eye-ear pain. Cinnamon relieves congestion, dissolves fat in the body, and is beneficial in the treatment of headaches and chest pains, colds, and coughs.<sup>85</sup>

In addition to these, some pharmaceutical compositions written by Ali Nutki Dede are mentioned in the Yenikapı Mawlawihane diary.<sup>86</sup> Again, in various parts of the work in question, it is possible to come across a number of drug compositions and treatment practices against some diseases. For instance, it has been reported that to consume a mixture obtained by adding some yoghurt to buttermilk and adding a spoonful of starch to it is good for diarrhoea.<sup>87</sup> It has been stated that shah, mansûr, and baspare are good for all kinds of *Illet-i sadriye* (heart/chest) diseases, and probably related to this disease again, a mixture of direm Carnation, 2 direm juzbevâ<sup>88</sup> herbs has been proposed. In the same book, under the title of *Terkib-i Hab*, a treatment method was used by using animal foods instead of herbal mixture this time. According to this suggestion, the preparation of a medicine that is claimed to be good for all kinds of *Dişk-ı sadr/heart, chest distress* is made as follows: Cleaning the feathers and inside of the bird called Cormorant, putting it in “a pot with these medicines”, glazing the mouth of the pot after some water is added and after boiling for forty-eight hours over low heat, the yellow oil on it should be skimmed and drunk with five or six drops of coffee in the morning and evening.<sup>89</sup> It is important to state that this experience was narrated by Nusret Efendi, as it shows that the Sufis have an understanding that is both open to the outside and interested in these issues. In the aforementioned diary,

<sup>84</sup> Çiştî, *Sûfî Tıbbı*, 94-114.

<sup>85</sup> İbrahim Hakkı, *Marifetname*, 1/53-56.

<sup>86</sup> *Defteri Dervişan-Yenikapı Mevlevîhânesi Günlükleri*, Ed. Bayram Ali Kaya-Sezai Küçük (İstanbul: Zeytinburnu Belediyesi Kültür, 2011), 23.

<sup>87</sup> *Defteri Dervişan*, 47.

<sup>88</sup> *Defteri Dervişan*, 205.

<sup>89</sup> *Defteri Dervişan*, 205.

a treatment recommendation is made for the stumbling disease of horses, which had vital importance in terms of both transportation and war vehicles and load-bearing in the society of that period. Accordingly, it was said that horse shoes be taken off before going to the meadow, that the animal's feet should be washed and cleaned after walking in the meadow, then garlic and tar should be applied to its skin, and that horseshoes should be nailed while in this state. It has been stated that the horse, which was kept in the barn for fifteen days, would find its health after removing the shoe again, applying wax oil to its feet and putting a leather (wrapped) shoe on it.<sup>90</sup> This example shows that the Sufis were a center of attraction not only for human diseases but also for animal diseases.

Eşrefoğlu Rumî, from the Kadirîyye order, is also known for applying “plant/fit” candy for mouth and tongue wounds. According to the sources, a disease appeared in the mouth and tongue of Fatih Sultan Mehmet's mother. All known physicians were visited, but no solution was found. Finally, as a last resort, Eşrefoğlu Rumi was consulted. Sheikh Efendi asked the sultan's mother to hold a piece of sugar in her mouth until it melted. The mother of the Sultan did what the doctor asked, the disease in her tongue started to heal as the sugar melted, and she got rid of the disease completely when the sugar was gone.<sup>91</sup> Here, sugar was apparently used for treatment, but the Sheikh's breath, whom everyone was sure to be a saint, is also thought to be effective. Apart from these, it is understood that the Sufis experienced other treatment methods and practiced them upon being sure that they helped. For instance, Sheikh Mahmud Salah, who was understood to be alive in Jerusalem in the year 1305 (1887-1888) Hijri, lifted the back of a patient suffering from back pain by sticking it on his back and ensured his health. It is recorded that Muhyiddin al-Iskilibi treated a malaria patient by dressing him in a garment made from goat-hair.<sup>92</sup>

One of the most common health problems brought to Sufis by the people in Ottoman society was the inability of people to have children, that is, infertility. Since medicine was not at advanced at that time, the opinion among the people was that the reason why there were no children in a marriage was due to shortcoming of the woman.<sup>93</sup> However, Sufis tried to resolve such complaints with a number of methods they developed in their own way. These method was based on practices that invoked the grace of God, as it is often used, and aimed to psychologically relieve the patient. For instance,

<sup>90</sup> Defter-i Dervişan, 45.

<sup>91</sup> Bursavi, *Menâkıb-ı Eşrefzâde*, 22-25.

<sup>92</sup> Yûsuf en-Nebhânî, 4, 225.

<sup>93</sup> Ömer Düzbakar, “Osmanlı Toplumunda Çok Eşlilik: 1670-1698 Yılları Arasında Bursa Örneği”, *Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, 23 (2008), 84-100.

Timur Baba, one of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Bektashi Sufis, asked a childless woman if she had a sexual problem in her family life. When the woman declared that there was no physical problem, he decided that the issue was spiritual and psychological, and offered treatment and a solution by adding some of the knowledge he apparently had in the field of astronomy. First of all, Timur Baba, who asked the woman to fast, must have wanted to ensure that the woman took refuge in Allah's mercy and grace and expect healing from Him, and to apply the sexual abstinence made through fasting as a treatment practice. He also asked the woman to look at the sky afterwards and told her she would see a "frost-like star" and if she kept looking at it, she would have a child. Trying to explain this in his own right, Timur Baba said, "for seeds are planted to every object on the spot... the name of that star is Sühâ... If a person fails to bore a son or a daughter, she should look at those stars for the whole night. After having intercourse with the legitimate person, Allah would grant her with sons and daughters".<sup>94</sup> According to what is told, nine women who heard Timur Baba's words and followed his suggestions became pregnant and all of them had sons.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, it is not possible to know whether the treatment proposals worked, the women became pregnant and all of them gave birth to sons, but it is obvious that these legends had a great influence on the masses of people under the deep influence of the Sufis. A similar problem was that domestic unrest, which was understood to be mostly due to psychological and socio-psychological reasons, was often brought to the Sufis by the people in the hope of a solution. As such, Sheikh Îsâ of Akhisar tried to resolve marital behavior disorders through dhikrs. A woman once consulted the sheikh complaining that she was not on good terms with her husband for a year and she was unable to leave as she had two daughters and three sons. Listening to her just like a psychologist, the sheikh asked the woman to recite *Yâ Halîm yâ Şekûr* (*oh Modest oh Grateful*) six hundred and fourteen times a day and hope that Allah would grant her husband's heart with grace.<sup>96</sup> Considering that the first part refers to tendermindedness and the second part refers to being grateful to Allah, it is possible to say that the woman was actually asked to be grateful for what she already has, reign her inner-ego, be patient and beg Allah to grant tenderness to her husband. Thus, the main target could be to achieve psychological ease. Because, just as the treatment of the body when a discomfort such as pain occurs, the treatment of the soul should be done with material things in the form of suitable foods

<sup>94</sup> Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi, 138.

<sup>95</sup> Demir Baba Velâyetnâmesi, 138.

<sup>96</sup> Akhisarlı Şeyh Îsâ Menâkıbnâmesi, 79.

and medicines, the treatment of the soul should also be done with spiritual methods suitable for him,<sup>97</sup> which Sheikh Îsâ did too.

Sufis had a certain amount of knowledge and experience with regards to contagious diseases and pandemics. It has been noted that the Sufis also included issues such as not dealing with patients with contagious diseases, not going to places with plague and similar epidemics, in other words, complying with quarantine.<sup>98</sup> As such, when consoling an individual named Ahmet Efendi about the cholera outbreak, which apparently occurred when he was in Damascus, Aşçı Dede told him that the nuisance called cholera could not reach Damascus and advised him to read the independent section of a certain book if he wanted to have a peace of mind.<sup>99</sup> In the next parts, Aşçı Dede reported that cholera was seen in Damascus on 11 October 1891, and he had seen seven to eight bodies, who all died from that disease, within a single day and he added that he wrote a letter to his sheikh asking him for help to avoid this disease. Referring to the disputes about whether this disease is cholera or fever, Aşçı Dede stated that some Sufi spiritual measures were also employed to get rid of the disease and expel it. He said that in the evening of the Mevlid-i Nebi, in the tomb of Yahya Aleyhisselam, *Khatm-i Khace* was read and prayers were made, on Friday, a thousand *Salavat-ı sherif*, and after the Friday prayer, *Salat-ı Bedriyya* and *Hatm-i Hace* also recorded that prayers were done with the intention of eliminating this disease.<sup>100</sup> Aşçı Dede attributed the disease's incapacity to cause too many casualties in the society, from a Sufi point of view, to the blessings of the prayers of the pure-hearted and faithful in Damascus.<sup>101</sup> All these notions indicate that with the purpose of avoiding pandemics and curing the diseased, several religious, spiritual and mystic practices have been used together in combination, such practices ranging from shrine visits to order-specific dhikr and rituals, reciting of the Qur'an, praying for the prophet, thus aiming to enhance the socio-psychological resistance and fighting spirit of the public.

### Conclusion

Until the 19th century, the understanding of health and the organizational structure of the Ottoman state bore the characteristic features of the medieval Seljuk period. The Physician Head Office, which was established

<sup>97</sup> Ebû Zeyd El-Belhî, *Mesâlihü'l-Ebdân Ve'l-Enfûs-Beden ve Ruh Sağlığı*, Translate Nail Okuyucu-Zahit Tiryaki, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, (İstanbul: Kayhan Matbaacılık, 2012), 438.

<sup>98</sup> Küçük, *Tasavvuf ve Tıp*, 1/147.

<sup>99</sup> Aşçı Dede, *Hatıraları*, 2/760.

<sup>100</sup> Aşçı Dede, *Hatıraları*, 2/760-761.

<sup>101</sup> Aşçı Dede, *Hatıraları*, 2/765.



in the classical period when the state had completed its institutionalization, directed, and administered the health services mostly for the palace and the army. Especially in big cities, the health needs of the people were met by paid physicians and hospitals administered by the foundation system. Moving from towns to more rural areas, folk medicine was being presented by elements such as ocaklı, hodja, sheikh and reciter-healer. With regards to the cult of saints, which occupies an important place in Islamic folk beliefs, played an important role in meeting the needs of the people in this area by continuing their healing and therapeutic virtues and duties, which they took over from Shamanism. So much so that the accumulated experiences of Sufis from the past and their spiritual powers were considered by the folks as a source of healing for religious and earthly problems and diseases. Folks strongly believed that these saints were healers-curiers. As such, folks consulted the Sufis for almost all kinds of health problems, especially mental illnesses, stomach-ache, headache, pain in various parts of the body, infertility, behavioral disorders, epidemics and even some diseases in animals. These healing abilities of the Sufis also affected the public sphere and the lodges serving as hospitals and the Sufis and dervishes serving there have been directly encouraged by the state through the allocated foundations and supports.

The treatment methods practiced by Sufis became traditionalized over time and turned into folklore. Sufis believed that remedy is granted by Allah and that physical and spiritual methods, were just means to achieve a remedy. They have considered apparent practices to be nothing more than supplementary elements to spiritual methods and practices. In fact, the Sufis focused on the power, mercy and the of Shafi name of Allah and tried to relieve the patients psychologically, strengthen them spiritually, and then overcome the disease by increasing the resistance of the recovered body with spiritual advice. Therefore, they have practiced a number of spiritual treatment methods such as prayer, dhikr, gazing and ruqya which first of all aimed to calm the heart of the patient and tame his/her inner egos and desires and pacify the body and soul. Furthermore, as an indication of their apparent experiences, they have also used curing practices such as fasting and herbal mixtures. In conclusion, Sufis and the other parties filled a significant gap in the Ottoman state in terms of folk medicine. They were seen by almost every segment of society as an authority for health problems, especially in the periods when modern medicine was not yet developed or advanced.

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