

Stars, Djinns, and the Air: Reconciling Natural and Supernatural in Explaining Diseases in the Ottoman Healing Domain in the 1660s

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This paper delves into the relationship between the natural and supernatural realms in the understandings of disease and sickness in the late seventeenth century, particularly in the 1660s. Its main objective is to explore both the boundaries and the points of reconciliation between the natural and supernatural realms as they relate to disease and sickness during this period. The historiography of early modern Ottoman medicine has placed emphasis on categorical distinctions between various medical sectors such as learned medicine, folk medicine, and prophetic medicine.¹ Seeking to underscore intersecting epistemologies

1 Remaining the most comprehensive historical analysis of Ottoman medicine in English to this day, M. Shefer-Mossensohn's seminal work *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions* elaborates on three "building blocks" of Ottoman medicine (i.e., folk medicine, mechanistic learned medicine, and prophetic medicine). M. Shefer-Mossensohn, *Ottoman Medicine: Healing and Medical Institutions, 1500–1700* (Albany 2009), 22–29. Even

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instead, the study argues that such reconciliation of natural and supernatural phenomena in contemporary etiologies fosters a more comprehensive understanding of healing practices in the Ottoman world. To that end, what follows is an examination of a case study on Ibn Sellum's medical manual *Gâyetü'l-Beyân fi Tedbir-i Bedenü'l-İnsan* (The Utmost Explanations on the Protection of the Human Body), compiled in the early 1660s.

Pursuing intersecting epistemologies of disease

The prevailing medical system in the pre-bacteriological era was humoralism, which regarded bodily health as existing in the balance between the four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile.² Scholarship has considered humoral theory a framework of learned medicine. Nevertheless, this ancient epistemology of health and sickness permeated the collective mindset across societal layers for centuries, with transcendent influence over the realm of learned medicine. First, humors were employed by non-medical intellectuals as a means of analogy and allegory in the Ottoman world. For instance, Katip Çelebi (d. 1657) was so familiar with the four humors that he compared the four social classes (i.e., scholars, soldiers, traders, and the commoners) to the four humors of the body.³ This practice was also common in poetry. Poets like Fuzûlî (d. 1556), who had formal medical training, often made extensive references to humoral pathology in their work.⁴ However, the use of humors as metaphors extended well beyond the realm of medically trained poets. One

though Shefer-Mossensohn acknowledges the possible overlaps between these categories, the distinctions still prevail in the narrative of Ottoman healing practices (ibid., 25–26).

- 2 For a comprehensive analysis of humoral theory see, R.J. Hankinson, "Humours and Humoral Theory," in M. Jackson (ed.), *The Routledge History of Disease* (London 2017), 21–38.
- 3 K. Sözen, "Katip Çelebi'nin Devlet Görüşü ve Osmanlı Türk Düşüncesindeki Etkileri," *Süleyman Demirel Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, 22 (2009), 93–105. For a transcription of the particular section in Katip Çelebi's *Düstürü'l-Amel li İslâhi'l-Halel* ("The Ways to Follow in Reforming the Defects"), see O. Ş. Gökyay, *Katip Çelebi'den seçmeler* (Istanbul 1968), 154–161.
- 4 M. Eliaçık, "Fuzûlî'nin Sıhhat u Maraz'ında Ahlât Erbaanın İşlenişi ve Bir Tıp Eseri Terceme-i Hulâsa-i Tıb İle Mukayesesi," *Türkiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 27 (2010), 131–147. Z. Koyuncu, "Ahlât-i Erbaa/Humoral Patoloji Teorisi ve Divan Şiirinde Hakkânî Örneğinde İşlenişi," *Hikmet – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi*, 10 (2019), 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.28981/hikmet.512320>.

such instance is evidenced in the poetry of Hakkânî, a sufi poet from the 15th or 16th centuries, whose poetry drew upon the humors.⁵

Furthermore, humoralism formed the basis of healing practices applied by ordinary people. The extent to which they engaged with the theoretical framework of humoralism held little pertinence in their practices. In this context, certain contemporary sources provide direct evidence, with the most notable being Evliya Çelebi's (d. 1683/4) *Seyahatnâme* (The Book of Travels).⁶ In his work, Evliya Çelebi documents an intriguing account of a healing spring in Darıca, renowned for its therapeutic properties against various diseases. This spring attracted thousands of people from Istanbul and beyond during the cherry season in July, which evolved into an elaborate annual festival. Those suffering from ailments would consume the healing water for three days. The accounts of Evliya provide examples of individuals who, through divine intervention, underwent significant purging, expelling excessive quantities of yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm ("*sarı sarı yeşil yeşil safra ve sevda ve balgam*").⁷

Such examples from Evliya Çelebi's accounts illustrate the existence of humoralism within widespread healing practices, indicating that the humoral theory was not exclusively a learned medical framework. Similarly, it is also possible that certain phenomena—labeled as 'folk beliefs'—were considered by medical experts and authors. In order to highlight complexities of Ottoman medical epistemologies, and to reconsider terms such as learned medicine, or popular/folk medicine, I present a case study on the renowned medical manuscript *Gâyetü'l-Beyân fî Tedbir-i Bedenü'l-İnsan* (The Utmost Explanations on the Protection of the Human Body), compiled in the early 1660s by Salih bin Nasrullah, also known as Ibn Sellum. Ibn Sellum served as the court physician of Mehmed IV (r. 1648–1687) from 1656.⁸ He became a familiar figure for the

5 Z. Koyuncu, "Ahlât-i Erbaa/Humoral Patoloji Teorisi ve Divan Şiirinde Hakkânî Örneğinde İşlenişi," *Hikmet – Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi*, 10 (2019), 75–97, <https://doi.org/10.28981/hikmet.512320>.

6 For an extensive biography of Evliya Çelebi see R. Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality: The World of Evliya Çelebi*, Rev. 2nd ed, Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, v. 31 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2006), 1–214.

7 Evliya Çelebi b. Derviş Muhammad Zillî, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi, II. Kitap: Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi Bağdat 304 Numaralı Yazmanın Transkripsiyonu – Dizini*, eds Z. Kurşun, S.A. Kahraman and R. Dankoff (Istanbul 1998), 38.

8 For more information on the life of Ibn Sellum, see Şeyhî Mehmed Efendi, *Vekayü'l-Fuzela Şeyhî'nin Şakâ'ik Zeyli II*, ed. D. Örs, trans. R. Ekinci (Istanbul 2018), 976; A. Demirhan

subsequent generation of physicians, due primarily to his interest and initiatives in iatrochemistry (i.e., medical chemistry).⁹

The rationale behind my focus on his *Gâyetü'l-Beyân* lies in its distinct characteristics, particularly its open integration of supernatural elements in its explanations. This sets it apart from previous medical works, where such phenomena were either omitted or explicitly rejected. The subsequent sections of the paper examine a case study in two parts: The *Gâyet* and the concepts of transformation in Ottoman medicine during the late seventeenth century (i), and the harmonization of natural and supernatural elements in Ibn Sellum's etiology (ii).

***Gâyet* and the ideas of transformation in medical knowledge**

The *Gâyet* is a manual on bodily health intended for both medical and non-medical readership.¹⁰ Its textual structure is akin to that of any contemporary treatise on the same topic. The tome continues a tradition followed by some pre-

Erdemir, "Hekimbaşı Salih Bin Nasrullah (?–1669)," *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları*, 100 (1996), 195–202; M. Shefer-Mossensohn, "An Ottoman Physician and His Social and Intellectual Milieu: The Case of Salih Bin Nasrallah Ibn Sallum," *Studia Islamica*, 106/1 (2011), 102–23, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341254>; *TDVİA*, s.v. "Salih b. Nasrullah" (K. Kırbıyık) <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/salih-b-nasrullah>; S. Aydüz, "Ottoman Chief Physician Sâlih Naşrallah b. Sallûm al-Ḥalabî," *Dört Öge*, 9 (2016), 131–138.

9 For Ibn Sellum's medical career and interests, see A. Adıvar, *Osmanlı Türklerinde İlim*, 4. Baskı (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1982), 130–32; N. Bachour, *Oswaldus Crollius und Daniel Sennert im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul Studien zur Rezeption des Paracelsismus im Werk des osmanischen Arztes Şâlih b. Naşrullâh Ibn Sallûm al-Ḥalabî*, 2012, 35–139, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-86226-965-5>; N. Bachour, "Iatrochemistry and Paracelsism in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6, no. 1–2 (2018): 102–10, <https://doi.org/10.1163/2212943X-00601008>. H. Küçük, *Science without Leisure: Practical Naturalism in Istanbul, 1660–1732* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 144–49.

10 Using author's copy, Zekiye Gül Elbir transcribed *Gâyet* to modern Turkish alphabet in form of a doctoral dissertation in 2000: Z. G. Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Fırat Üniversitesi, 2000. The available facsimile of Elbir's dissertation does not include page numbers. Therefore, I directly cite folios provided within the text.

vious medical writers such as Emir Çelebi¹¹ (d. 1638) and Sakızlı İsa Efendi¹² (d. 1649). The work focuses on two aspects of healing: preventive measures (*hıfz-ı sıhhât*) and eradicating disease from the body (*izâle-i maraz*). It consists of three sections: The first section is comprised of discourse on the importance of medicine and lists certain factors that may affect bodily health. The second section is a pharmacopoeia (*edvîyye* or *müfredât*) that lists plants and drug recipes. This part particularly reflects the author's interest in chemical medicine (*tıbb-ı kimyevî*) and active substances. The majority of the plant names appear in Arabic. The last part of the work is a nosology, namely a categorical listing of all the diseases with respective entries on causes, diagnosis, and remedies.

In the introductory section, Ibn Sellum's rationale for composing the book (*sebeb-i telîf*) is preceded by discussion on the need for "updating" the existing knowledge. It is noteworthy that he emphasized the necessity to elucidate the proliferation of diverse and "marvelous" medical practices (*mücerrebât-ı acîbe*) and "strange" methods of treatment (*mualecât-ı gâribe*). Furthermore, he underscored the emergence of diseases that were previously unknown to medical scholars (*ulemâ-ı etibbâ*) and therefore not documented.¹³ The author highlights the prominence of certain diseases, such as syphilis (*efrencî*) and epilepsy

11 Emir Çelebi (d. 1638) served as the head physician at the court of Murad IV. He is particularly known for his work titled *Enmûzecû't-tıbb* (*The Specimens of Medicine*). Emir Çelebi's work not only focuses on the air, soil, and climate as the main factors affecting human health but also explains certain types of diseases and their possible remedies including the medicinal ones. For more on Emir Çelebi, see *TDVİA* s.v. "Emîr Çelebi" (A. Demirhan Erdemir <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/emir-celebi>).

12 Sakızlı İsa Efendi (d. 1649) intermittently served as the head physician at the court of İbrahim IV, having been deposed and appointed four times in this position. When Mehmed IV assumed the throne in 1648, İsa Efendi got indefinitely removed from the position by the sultan. He died a year after in 1649. He is known for his *Nizâmü'l-Edviye* (*The Order of Remedies*) and *Devâ'ü-Emrâz* (*The Cure for Diseases*). The first one is a lexicon of medicinal substances and plants. The second one is an attempt to sort and discuss certain diseases. It is a rare book in the sense that it is one of the few texts that was solely devoted to nosology at the time. Even though it is outside the periodical focus of this study, İsa Efendi and his *Devâ'ü-Emrâz* is a significant point of reference for envisioning the intellectual background of Ibn Sellum. For more on İsa Efendi see A. Akdağ, "Sakızlı İsa Efendi'nin Deva-i Emraz İsimli Eseri," in S. Murad and M. Kaçar (eds), *Sakızlı İsa Efendi ve Nizamül Edviye'si Üzerine İncelemeler* (Istanbul 2021); Sakızlı İsa Efendi, *Nizamül Edviye*, ed. S. Murad and M. Bedizel Aydın (Istanbul 2019).

13 Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan", 5a.

(*sar'*), which had attained 'particular infamy' (*rütbe-i şöret*),¹⁴ warranting specific mention. This is of enormous significance in the sense that the author here reflects on a notable shift that captured his attention. According to his analysis, this shift warranted intervention, prompting him to leverage his expertise. His specific focus on syphilis and epilepsy also merits detailed examination. It could be that these two diseases mattered more than the others. It could perhaps have been a response to a rising number of cases in these two instances. These diseases may somehow have caused considerably more concern. Attempting to address these conundrums requires complementary empirical evidence. At this juncture, court records (*kadı sicilleri*) can be utilized as significant sources of circumstantial evidence. Examination of cases recorded at Istanbul courts during this period, reveals a considerable number of instances involving syphilis. Many of these records document cases in which the selling of a slave was revoked because it was later revealed that the latter was infected with syphilis.¹⁵ Similarly, cases involving epilepsy (*sar'*) were also considered a reason for the nullification of contracts of sale.¹⁶

Ibn Sellum's reliance on unconventional sources in addressing such matters has drawn scholarly attention. Notably, Nathalia Bachour's seminal monograph examines the relevance of Ibn Sellum within the question of Paracelsianism, while also addressing the authorship and legitimacy of works attributed to Ibn Sellum.¹⁷ The author's reliance on a combination of traditional sources, specif-

14 Elbir, *ibid.*, 5b.

15 For example, a certain Selim beşe returned a female slave because it turned out that she was afflicted with syphilis. See *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri Transkripsiyon Projesi*, İstanbul Mahkemesi Kayıtları (1072–73/1661–1663), Defter no. 10, folio 5a–5. Accessed on <http://www.kadısicilleri.org/goster.php?blm=ist010&bsm=ist010b130>

16 A case from the Istanbul Court (*İstanbul Mahkemesi*) in the year 1072/1661 draws particular attention in this context: A certain el-Hac Mustafa b. Hüseyin comes to the court to renunciate the contract of sale of a slave by the name of Marya, whom he bought from a certain Hüseyin Beşe. El-Hac Mustafa said that Marya had exhibited certain impairments such as afflicted eyes and was reportedly suffering from scabies at the time of sale. Yet, it was revealed subsequently that she also had epilepsy as she experienced a severe seizure, characterized by convulsions and foaming at the mouth. The court found el-Hac Mustafa's demand proper and approved the renunciation of the contract. *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri* (İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi), İstanbul Mahkemesi Kayıtları (Hicri 1072) Defter no. 9, folio 7b.

17 N. Bachour, *Oswaldus Crollius und Daniel Sennert im frühneuzeitlichen Istanbul Studien zur Rezeption des Paracelsismus im Werk des osmanischen Arztes Şâlih b. Naşrullâh Ibn*

ically from the sources of Islamic medicine, and contemporary Latin/European medicine such as the works of Daniel Sennert and Oswald Crollius, holds scholarly importance. Yet, Ibn Sellum's eclectic and reconciliatory tendencies went beyond his interest in European medicine. His etiological treatments in *Gâyetü'l-beyân* also exhibits a notably reconciliatory character, as he successfully combines observation with belief, nature with the supernatural, and the environment with the body. Environmental conditions and natural phenomena play a visibly crucial role in the author's grasp of bodily health and diseases. Intriguingly, this is accompanied by a widespread recognition of the supernatural, or as they refer to it, *avamin inancı*, in relation to illness and maladies.

Nature and supernatural: Ibn Sellum's etiological comments

Ibn Sellum, like his predecessors, sought to understand the factors contributing to a healthy lifestyle and the causes of diseases. He identified six essential codes (*esbâb-ı sitte-i zarûriye*) consisting of: (a) air, (b) eating and drinking, (c) bodily movement and rest, (d) emotional and mental movement and rest, (e) sleeping and wakefulness, (f) evacuation and constipation.¹⁸ These six conditions were designed to govern the interaction between the human body and its natural environment. According to Ibn Sellum's theory, any deviation from these conditions would result in an imbalance of bodily humors, consequently leading to the onset of illness. This emphasis on the organic relationship between the body and its natural surrounding does not undermine the role of the supernatural. Instead, the author delicately positions his stance where observable phenomena embrace the imperceptible. Ibn Sellum's evident attention to common beliefs of people emerges as the primary means in this self-positioning between natural and supernatural.

In my opinion, two instances from *Gâyet* present the most striking examples in support of this assertion:

(1) As in any pre-bacteriological medical domain, the quality of air (*hava*) in

Sallûm al-Ḥalabî (Freiburg 2012) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-86226-965-5>. For her publication in English on the subject, see Bachour, "Iatrochemistry and Paracelsism in the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries."

18 (a) *ebdanımızı muhit olan hava*, (b) *yemek ve içmek* (c) *hareket ve sükun-ı bedenîyye* (d) *hareket ve sükun-ı nefsanîyye* (e) *uyumak ve uyanıklık* (f) *istifrag ve ihtibas*. Elbir, "Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin)," 7b-26b.

contemporary Ottoman medical thought was considered the most significant aspect of matters of health and disease.¹⁹ *Gâyet*, as a medical text, provides an excellent example of this idea as Ibn Sellum discusses various reasons why air becomes contaminated. The quality of air is important due to its association with disease, as per the miasmatic theory.²⁰ “A human being is not capable of holding their breath for an hour because the soul of the heart (*ruh-ı hayvanî*) lives by constant breathing.”²¹ Therefore, if vapors, smoke, and rotten smells infiltrate the air, the human body begins to experience a variety of pains, nose-bleeding, and fever. Furthermore, corrupted air (*fesadlı hava*) harms the animals and plants; and gives rise to feverish diseases (*humma-ı vebaiyye*), smallpox (*çiçek*), measles (*kızamuk*), and bubonic plague (*ta'un*). [And] this especially scourges the one with a sanguine characteristic (*demeviyyü'l mizâc*).²²

Ibn Sellum believed that the quality of air could become corrupted for two principal reasons. One reason is related to the earth (*arz cihetiyle*). When animals die and their corpses are not buried, the smell they emit pollutes the air. Likewise, if the bodies of fallen soldiers on a battleground are not buried, their smells foul the air. Similarly, stagnant water bodies also tend to emanate unpleasant smells, corrupting the surrounding air. The second reason pertains to the skies (*semâ cihetiyle*) mainly to the astral events that play a significant role in the atmosphere's corruption. According to Ibn Sellum, the assembly of stars causes the contamination of the air, which is because of people's major sins and evil-doings (*ma'asi ve irtikab-ı kebâ'ir*). In such cases, an outbreak of plague was considered unavoidable. Similarly, meteors were thought to cause plague epi-

19 For an overview of air in Ottoman medical texts, see M. Bedizel Aydın, “Osmanlı Tıp Metinlerinde (15–17. Yüzyıl) Hava – Sağlık İlişkisi,” *Sosyal ve Kültürel Araştırmalar Dergisi* 4, no. 7 (2018).

20 According to miasmatic theory or miasmaticism, some epidemic diseases were caused by foul air. M. Worboys, “Contagion,” in *The Routledge History of Disease*, ed. Mark Jackson, The Routledge Histories (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 72. For a general assesment of miasmaticism, also see R. Porter, ed., “What Is Disease?,” in *The Cambridge History of Medicine* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 88.

21 “İnsan bir saat nefisini tutmaya muktedir değildir. Zira ruh-ı hayvaninin hayatı ve itidali taze havayla tenefüs etmekle olur.” Elbir, “Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin),” 9a.

22 Elbir, 9b.

demics towards the end of summer.²³ Ibn Sellum provides rare insight into the prevailing perceptions of the common people of the era, explaining how such events are referred to as shooting-stars (*yıldız düşmesi*), reflecting an etiology of plague combining natural and supernatural explanations.

It is possible to draw connections between the medical field and public perceptions by examining the term “shooting stars” (*yıldız düşüklüğü*). For instance, in 1661, three years before the completion of *Gâyet*, Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi (d. 1688) detailed in his daily notes an outbreak of plague in the neighborhoods of Istanbul that occurred in the late summer of that year.²⁴ The author narrated the devastating process of the epidemic and how several of his families succumbed to it. While recounting the affliction of his son, Mustafa with the plague, he noted that prior to becoming infected he was suffering from a condition known as “shooting star” (*yıldız düşüklüğü*).²⁵ Subsequently, Mustafa became afflicted with the plague, eventually dying within the span of a few days. It is believed that a certain Cinci Ahmed Hoca, a spiritual healer, had diagnosed this effect of shooting stars on Mustafa and provided a *nüsha-i şerîfe* (*sacred copy*).²⁶

(2) Ibn Sellum’s study of epilepsy (*sar*) demonstrates a similar kind of eti-

23 Nükhet Varlık demonstrated the emergence of specific “causal explanations” for the plague during the sixteenth century, a significant change that eventually enabled authors to draw from diverse etiologies. N. Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347–1600* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 231. It appears that Ibn Sellum’s classification of plague causes continues a similar trend in the late seventeenth century.

24 For Hasan Efendi’s narratives of the 1661 plague epidemic, see T. Durmaz, “Family, Companions, and Death: Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi’s Microcosm” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Istanbul, Sabanci University, 2019), 83–90; G. Yakar, “Individual and Community, Public and Private: The Case of 17th Century Istanbulite Dervish and His Diary” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Ankara, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, 2019), 86–94; I. Hathaway, “Experiencing Epidemics,” *Ottoman Experiences of Epidemics*, n.d., <https://experiencing-epidemics.org/ep-7-ottoman-experiences-of-epidemics/>; T. Durmaz, “Bir Duygu ve Tavırlar Tarihçesi 1661 İstanbul Veba Salgını Hakkında Çağdaş Bir Günlüğün Bize Anlattıkları,” *Aktüel Arkeoloji*, December 2020.

25 Seyyid Hasan Nûrî Efendi, «Sohbetnâme I», Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hazine 1426, fol. 13b.

26 fol. 14b. It is possible that this *nüsha-i şerîfe* was a plague prayer (*ta’un duası*). I would like to thank Amila Buturović for highlighting this possibility during our post-presentation discussions at the “Knowing and controlling nature in Ottoman culture: scientific and occultist approaches in a global perspective” conference on November 17, 2023.

ological take, serving as a prominent example among many others recorded in *Gâyet*. The author combines various explanations from the natural, supernatural, and folkloric domains to elaborate on the causes of epilepsy. In this sense, he notes that ordinary people (*halk*) refer to this affliction as “djinn possession” (*cin tutdi*).²⁷ Following this, the author explains that the causes of epilepsy are primarily attributed to imbalances in and corruption of humors.

According to Ibn Sellum, epilepsy is caused by a poisonous and corrupt smell that rises from the stomach. He acknowledges that it is a hereditary disease (*anadan babadan miras/emrâz-ı mevrûse*) and that it usually afflicts those who were born during a lunar eclipse. He also attributes epilepsy in some to the presence of djinn. His reasoning for this is rather intriguing, pointing out that, “there is nothing against the possibility that bodily balances can get disrupted by the djinn, too.” This example illustrates that the etiological take of Ibn Sellum was a syncretic one, drawing together natural and supernatural beliefs as well as folk traditions, to form a unified body of knowledge. In essence, Ibn Sellum synthesized various explanations from different domains of knowledge to create his own unique perspective.²⁸

Conclusion

Foremost among the concerns of healing practitioners was the effective cure of ailments. For this reason, akin to contemporary medical cultures, the medical writing of early modern Ottomans prioritized diagnostics and remedies. As for the quest to explain the causes of diseases (i.e., etiology), it was crucial when the disease presented itself as an enigma. It appears that this was where the supernatural played a significant role in Ibn Sellum’s understanding. Celestial events

27 Elbir, “Salih Bin Nasrullah (Ibn Sellum El-Halebi) Gayetü'l-Beyan Fi Tedbiri Bedeni'l-İnsan (Giriş-İnceleme-Metin-Dizin),” 141b.

28 Ibn Sellum’s take on djinn possession diverges from some of his predecessors’ views. Emir Çelebi (d.1048/1638), the head physician of Murad IV, disregards any attribution to supernatural phenomena when explaining epilepsy. For the section on epilepsy see H. Halit, “XVII. Yüzyıl Hekimbaşısı Emir Çelebi ve Eseri Enmüzecü't-Tıbb” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Kırıkkale, Kırıkkale Üniversitesi, 2021), 294–95. Similarly, Sakızlı İsa Efendi (d.1649), the head physician of İbrahim I, denies the belief connecting the ailment to djinn possession, sharply calling it “erroneous.” Sakızlı İsa Efendi, “*Devai'l-Emrâz*,” Kütahya Zeytinoglu Halk Kütüphanesi 401, fol. 22b. My ongoing doctoral project presents a thorough analysis of the issue, particularly in relation to İbrahim I’s famous encounter with ‘melancholy’ and its consequential impact in the politics of diagnosis and healing.

and the djinns were modes of explanation for incurable diseases such as plague or epilepsy.

The late seventeenth-century Ottoman healing domain emerges in the examples provided in the *Gâyet* as a multifaceted landscape wherein diverse epistemologies of disease coexisted. The modes of thinking in the Ottoman healing domain were informed by the norms of various traditions of knowledge. While definitive approaches may seem convenient, they risk oversimplifying the complexity of healing practices and perceptions. Instead, a more resilient approach would be to either perceive the Ottoman medicine as a uniform entity or acknowledge the particularities of individual cases.

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