

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CONSULTATION LIAISON PSYCHIATRY AND PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE IN TURKISH CULTURE

KONSÜLTASYON LİYEZON PSİKİYATRİSİ VE PSİKOSOMATİK TIBBIN TÜRK KÜLTÜRÜNDE GELİŞİMİ

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Before discussing the approach traditionally taken towards the mentally ill by Turkish society, let me say a few words about just who the Turks are. The first historical references to them appear in Chinese records of about 200 BC who lived in Central Asia and are believed to be the ancestors of modern-day Turks. Other Turkic tribes gradually came and settled in Anatolia, where they found a local culture that had been developing over the centuries from a mixture of peoples and societies. The Turks themselves were assimilated into this culture, while at the same time preserving much of their own cultural traditions. It is within the framework of this amalgamation of traditional Turkish with the centuries-long accumulation of culture in Anatolia that the historical development of mental health in what is called “Turkish culture” can be discussed.

Anatolia (traditionally called “Asia Minor”) is home to some of mankind’s earliest settlements. It is a broad peninsula that lies between the Black and Mediterranean Seas. Much of what we refer to as the “Ancient World.” Over the centuries, several urban civilizations and great empires thrived in Anatolia. From prehistoric man to one of the world’s first towns (Çatal Höyük), through the successive periods of the Hittites and Trojans, Ionians and Lydians, Romans, Byzantines, Ottoman Empire and finally, the present-day Turkish Republic,. It is through this accumulated experience that the Turks have been able to develop their own approach towards learning and living together as a community.

Although the ordinary understanding has sometimes seen mental illness as the result of evil spirits, the mentally ill have generally not been abused or stigmatized. Instead, they have been recognized as members of the community in need of protection and care. Turkish thinkers like Mevlana and İbn-i Sina (otherwise known as Avicenna) emphasized the integrity of, and the holistic interaction between, the body-mind-brain.

The first hospital in the world to combine treatment for the mentally and physically ill was built in Anatolia in 1206, during the Seljuk Empire. Early forms of therapy used in the treatment of mental patients included music therapy and water therapy. This tradition of treating the mentally ill rather than punishing them continued throughout the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires. This extends all the way to the contemporary mental hospitals in the Republic of Turkey, which meet the standards of the western world.

The history of mental health in Anatolia starts with Asklepieion Temple, which is thought to be the first mental hospital in the world, continues with Darülşifas and Bimarhanes during the Seljuk and Ottoman Empires extending all the way to the contemporary mental hospitals in the Republic of Turkey.



Picture. Ottoman Music Therapy

With great Turkish thinkers like Mevlana and Avicenna emphasizing the holistic interaction between, the mind, body and brain, many scholars believe Avicenna to be the founder of Turkish psychiatry. Writing in the 1st century AD, Avicenna discussed and described psychiatric disorders, recognized mania and depression as illnesses, and wrote about mind-body connections. The common belief was based on the close relationship between psychological makeup, mood and the body. Avicenna used a combined method of persuasion, psychotherapy and

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Consultation-liaison psychiatry

pharmacotherapy in the form of different remedies.

In contrast, the mentally ill in the west at that time were generally feared and were ostracized from society. This stigma of mental illness was not seen in among the peoples of Anatolia with whom the Turks would intermingle centuries later. The mentally ill were protected and treated kindly as early as the 1st century. The stage had been set in pre-Islamic days of Anatolia. Medical pioneers such as Hippocrates (460-177 BC) and Galen (121-201 AD), who have continued to be influential in the development of medicine and psychiatry today, lived in Anatolia during the Hellenistic Era.



Picture 1. Mevlana

Let's take a closer look at their philosophical contribution:

Hippocrates argued that psychological disorders had natural origins and were no different than other diseases. And, important for our discussion, he was also the first physician that held the belief that thoughts, ideas, and feelings come from the brain and not the heart as others of his time believed. He defined such clinical profiles as mania and melancholia.

One of the followers of Hippocrates, Aesclepiades from Ancient Rome, distinguished between delusion and hallucinations, espoused music therapy, and opposed bleeding and imprisonment as treatments. Another noted pioneer in the development of medicine and psychiatry is Galen extended Hippocrates' doctrine of the humors to personality and predisposition to mental disorder, and separated emotional causes from medical ones.



Picture 2. İbn-i Sina

While both East and West had familiarity with these early philosophical sources, it was the disposition of Turks, the influence of Islam, and the intermingling of the two that was to form the basis for the more humanistic development of what might be called a "Turkish psychiatry."

Religious beliefs and spirituality constituted a very large place in the Turkish lifestyle and understanding of health and medicine before the acceptance of Islam. Like a majority of medieval cultures, medical practices mostly involved religious-magical understanding and included empirical interventions in early Turks. In those early days, there were two groups of "healers" among the Turks. The first group was composed of the shamans, who carried out religious-magical treatments. The second group consisted of doctors who applied treatment with medicinal substances. The two groups often worked together in treating the ill in Central Asian Turkish societies.

The Sufi movement emancipating some elements of the Islamic thought with pre Islamic Turkish heritage and centuries old philosophy of the land emphasized the evolution of human mental and spiritual development. Man went from a purely self-gratifying state to a state of inner peace and self-assuredness. People can be helped to reach better levels of inner calm and peace. This philosophical approach speaks of taking care of the mentally ill and speaking to them kindly. The Sufi movement is a traditional medieval Turkish approach that teaches spirituality through near-mysticism, using song, dance and narcotics to induce an altered state and closer connection to God. This new attitude towards the mind, freeing mental illness from implications of wrongdoing, paved the way for a more scientific examination of the causes and symptoms of mental illness. During the Turkish period, dervish convents emerged as a social institution providing many services in the area of the treatment of the mentally ill.

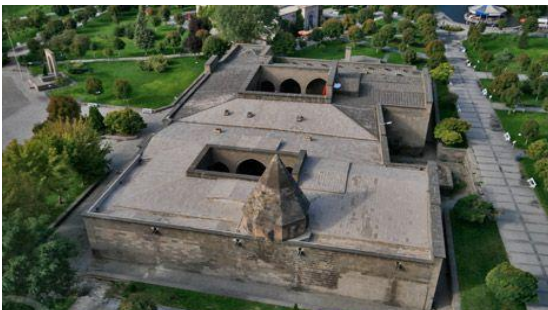
Konsültasyon liyezon psikiyatrisi

With the development of Seljuk and Ottoman cultures, other great thinkers and doctors, who, following in the footsteps of Avicenna, fostered the understanding of the unity of mind and body and made major contributions to contemporary medical understanding. The Ottoman approach was based on unity and core values of compassion, justice, and benevolence. The emphasis on the unity of mental and physical care continued under the Seljuks who had dominated Anatolia, Caucasus, today's north Iran and Iraq. It is important to note that the first mental hospitals in the West, set up at the turn of the 15th century in Spain and England, appeared more than 500 years later than the ones in the Turkish world.

The contributions of the philosophy and accumulated learning on the development of Turkish psychiatry up to and including the Seljuk period are outstanding examples of the way in which Turks were able to combine traditional belief systems and rituals with the expanding input of Islam to come up with unique and effective ways of dealing with the mentally ill. During the Seljuk period in what is considered the medieval age in Anatolia "houses of healing" were common. What characterized these institutions were the integration of mental and physical care. One example of this is the Gevher Nesibe Şifahanesi. Moreover, social welfare institutions and hospitals became widespread. Health care services were provided in caravanserai, where people traveling long distances from one place to another could stop and receive food, shelter, and medical assistance, too. Foundations were set up, as well, by the state to carry out these kinds of services. As a consequence of state policy, medical care facilities were found throughout the empire. Care was provided to all members of the empire without regard to religion, language, or race.



Picture 3. Gevher Nesibe Hospital 1



Medicines were made on location and distributed for free. In these places psychiatry and medicine was combined and psychological service was given to the medically ill.



Picture 4. The Ottoman Empire

From the 13th to the 19th centuries, the world of Anatolia was changed with the coming of the Ottoman Empire. While much can be said about the political, economic and cultural impact the Ottomans were to have on the course of events in Anatolia and the regions subjugated by them, let me talk about the development of mental health care under the Ottomans, who were inheritors of the Anatolian Seljuk's health care system, if I can take the liberty of calling it such.

During the reign of the Ottoman Sultans, Medresehs and Darülşifas (in other words, hospitals) flourished all over the empire's land which covered Anatolia, Balkans, Middle East and the Mediterranean region. Some mosques incorporated hospitals, dispensaries and asylums, using them entirely for the treatment of physical and mental diseases. Even at that time, the insane were not feared or subject to abuse. Rather, they were treated as ill persons, even if their illness was brought on by evil spirits, who were accepted by the community and protected. They received whatever treatment they needed, free of charge.

The first asylum in Edirne was opened in the Mosque of Sultan Bayazıt II. Before that, a small asylum had existed there. Other asylums were built over the years, up to and including the 20th century. Many founders of modern Turkish psychiatry, including Mazhar Osman Uzman, İhsan Şükrü Aksel and Fahrettin Kerim Gökay, were trained in western countries.

Before going on to end my talk on the development of Turkish psychiatry, I'd like to summarize the point I have been trying to make.

Turks have had a special role in history. They served as a bridge between the early culture of Central Asia and the many cultures and peoples of Anatolia. They were able to assimilate the knowledge based on early Greek and Roman philosophers that was present among the peoples they came in contact with when they came from Central Asia.

Each time they encountered a new milieu, Turks have had the creative energy to both assimilate into existing cultures and transform those cultures into something uniquely “Turkish.” The same thing can be said for their adoption of Islam. Not only did they accept the existing principles of Islam, they interpreted certain aspects of Islam that could strengthen their already humanistic leanings. Combined with their culturally endogenous mysticism, they came to have greater appreciation of the needs of the mentally ill. This has been evident in the development of institutions throughout the Turkish world that are designed to care for the mentally ill. The tendency to combine existing scientific knowledge, with more humanistic approaches to treatment can still be seen in the development of contemporary Turkish psychiatry, particularly with its incorporation of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry in recent years. The philosophy and concept of CLP has its roots in the cultural heritage of the people.

With the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, a program of far-reaching structural reforms was put into motion, aiming to better meet the challenges of the modern world. Despite the more immediate tasks at hand related to this social reorganization, the Republic did not neglect Anatolia’s heritage and worked towards a synthesis of the different civilizations and peoples there, adhering to the principle stated by Atatürk, “culture is the foundation of the Turkish Republic.” Atatürk institutionalized 200 years of westernization and proclaimed laicism as the basic principle upon which the state was founded. Through this laicism, the contributions of past cultures are made possible. At present, Turkey spares no effort to protect and enhance the treasures of the past civilizations that grew on its land.

The history of contemporary Turkish psychiatry dates back to the mid-1800s, a time marked by reforms designed to westernize the country. A modern clinic for mental illness and neurology was opened by Dr. Mongeri in 1889. The first neuropsychiatric clinic in Turkey was opened in 1898 at Gülhane Military Hospital (GATA).



Picture 5. GATA Hospital

After the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923, and the university reforms in 1933, Turkish psychiatry began to make enormous progress. In addition to introducing more modern practices in 19th-20th centuries through the adoption of Western values and standards, it has come to make major contributions in biological, dynamic and descriptive psychiatry, while at the same time attempting to work with the superstitious and outmoded beliefs of much of the people it actually serves.

Turkish psychiatry continued to make progress in the 20th century. But it has never been satisfied with simply adopting practices from abroad. Like it has traditionally done, it has continued to forge a Turkish path in the field.

One of the reasons for this is that Turkish psychiatry has to take into consideration socio-cultural factors in treating its people. In many parts of the country, particularly the poorer areas, people tend to believe mental illness is caused by evil spirits. By taking aspects of folkloric practices into consideration as therapeutic factors when working with people, and patients from similar cultural backgrounds across the world, psychiatrists can achieve more. Moreover, given the importance of the family and friends to Turks, involving their families and friends in counseling and helping them share their concerns with each other often has a therapeutic role in treating patients. Thus, while the individual is valued for individuality and uniqueness, the fact that he is part of a greater organic socio-cultural whole is not overlooked. I think this is one of the strengths of Turkish psychiatry.

CONCLUSION

Let me now conclude by touching upon the close link that Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry has with the culturo-historical roots of Turks. The development of Turkish psychiatry over the centuries has been an expression of cultural values unique to the Anatolian setting. While it has always tried to adopt more or less universally-agreed-upon scientific standards existing at any time, Turkish psychiatry has developed a humanistic orientation that is concerned with treating the “whole person.” This emphasis on the integrity of the individual – his mind and body – is in line with the early founders of medicine and psychiatry, such as early Turkish cultural traditions as shamanism and mysticism, and the more religiously influenced practices seen during the Seljuk and Ottoman period.

With the emphasis of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry on the mind-body connection, the incorporation of Consultation-Liaison Psychiatry into Turkish psychiatry brings Turkish psychiatry back to its culturo-historical roots. It is with this point that I would like to leave you today.

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