

## CONFERENCE PAPER

### The Role of Physician Salih Ibn Sallum al-Halabi in Ottoman Medicine

#### Abstract

During a period of relative scientific decline in the Islamic world, Anatolia emerged as a hub for scholars. In this context, Ibn Sallum rose to the position of Chief Physician of the Ottomans and, through his works such as *Ghayat al-Itqan*, played a pioneering role in introducing modern European medical science to the region. Nearly two centuries before the physicians of Muhammad Ali Pasha's era in Egypt, he introduced Paracelsus's revolutionary theories of chemical medicine to the Arab world, serving as a bridge between Eastern medical traditions and emerging Western advances in medicine. This review highlights Salih Ibn Sallum Al-Halabi (Ibn Sallum), a prominent 17<sup>th</sup>-century physician who served as Chief Physician of the Ottoman Empire, highlighting his significant contributions and works.

**Key words:** History of Medicine, Ottoman Empire, Salih Ibn Sallum al-Halabi, Turkey, Physicians

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#### Introduction

The flourishing of intellectual and scientific progress in Islamic civilization, which initially begun during the Abbasid era, gradually expanded to regions such as Andalusia and Iran. Alongside the scholarly centers in Baghdad, these new hubs

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carried the scientific heritage and also contributed to a scientific awakening in the West. Therefore, the Seljuks of Anatolia provided a stable platform with established academic institutions that attracted scholars from various parts of the Islamic world. This intellectual migration transformed Anatolia into a scientific and cultural center during the Ottoman era. In the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire, the position of “Hekimbashi” (Chief Physician) was of great importance. Complete supervision of all medical matters was within the authority of this position, including the appointment and dismissal of physicians, as well as determining qualifications and issuing medical licenses. Salih Ibn Sallum Al-Halabi was one of the most prominent figures appointed to this position in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and played a significant role in the medical history of the period (Uzun, and Haghi, 1998, pp. 587-589).

### Materials and Methods

This review study employed a descriptive research design, relying on the collection and analysis of historical data through library-based research. In this article, key Persian and English terms (Ibn Sallum Al-Halabi, Al-Halabi, Ghayat Al-Itgan, Ghayat Al-Bayan) were systematically queried in academic databases. The required content was extracted and synthesized with categorized data from scholarly sources, forming the basis of the final manuscript.

### Physician Ibn Sallum al-Halabi

Salih Ibn Nasr Allah Afandi al-Halabi, known as Ibn Sallum, was born in Aleppo, though his exact date of birth is unknown. He studied intellectual sciences extensively under the great scholars and masters of the city, and then pursued the study of medicine at Dar al-Shifa (Al-Arghun al-Kamili Hospital). Owing to his talent and success in medicine, he was appointed Chief Physician of Aleppo. He traveled to Istanbul (Constantinople) with Abshir Pasha, the ruler of Aleppo, where he established connections with prominent figures and gained fame. His reputation then reached King Muhammad Ibn Ebrahim, known as the Hunter (1648–1687). The king summoned him and, impressed by his refined character, initially appointed him as his personal physician. Later, he became Chief Physician of Fatih Dar al-Shifa Hospital and was appointed Hakimbashi (Chief Physician) of the Ottoman Empire in 1656. He was also granted a judicial rank in Constantinople. He had a beautiful voice, was familiar with music, and was passionate about poetry; he also wrote poetry himself. His works include *Ghayat Al-Bayan fi Al-Tadbir Al-Badan Al-Insan* (The Ultimate of Expression in Managing the Human Body), *Ghayat Al-Itqan fi Al-Tadbir Al-Badan Al-Insan* (The Ultimate of Expression in Managing the Human Body), and *Bur Al-Sa‘ah* (Immediate Treatments). He passed away in Yeni Anatolia in 1670 (Ibn Sallum, 1998, pp. 9-49; Mohebi, n.d., pp. 240-241) (Figure 1).

### Prominent works of Ibn sallum Halabi

#### 1- *Ghayat Al-Bayan fi Al-Tadbir Al-Badan Al-Insan*

He wrote this medical book in Turkish at the order of King Muhammad Ibn Ebrahim. In the book’s introduction, he states that it includes descriptions of several simple drugs that emerged in his time, therapeutic benefits not addressed in earlier texts, and diseases that were previously unknown but had become prevalent during his era. This work follows a systematic structure, beginning with an introduction that defines the science of medicine and its significance, followed by four detailed chapters (referred to as “articles”) and a





conclusion.

- Article One is dedicated to Sette-ye Daruriyye (The Six Essentials).
- Article Two focuses on simple and compound drugs and is divided into two sections.
- Article Three addresses the causes and treatments of diseases, organized anatomically from head to toe.
- Article Four focuses on general diseases not specific to any one organ, such as various types of fevers, inflammations, and skin conditions, and is divided into two sections (Ibn Sallum, 1766, pp. 1-4).

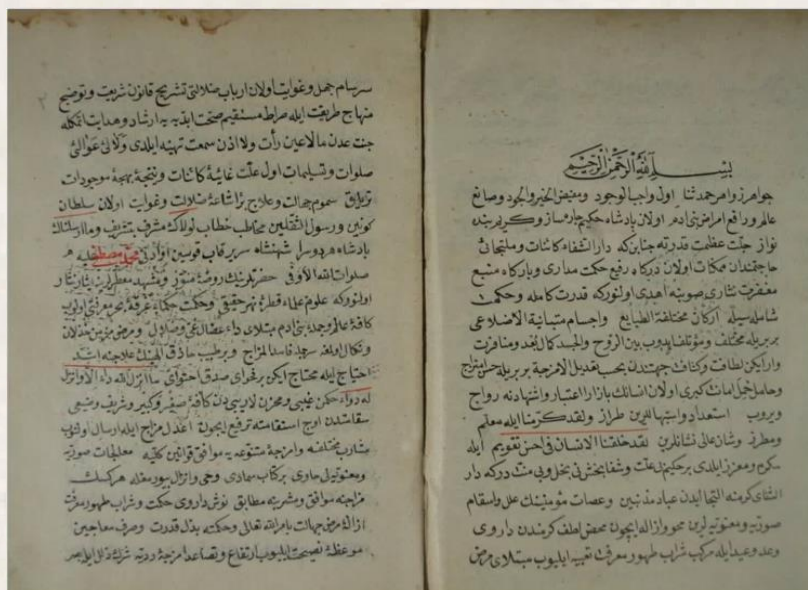


Figure 1. Two pages from Al-Halabi's manuscript: *Ghayat Al-Bayan fi Al-Tadbir Al-Badan Al-Insan* (Ibn sallum, 1766 A.D, pp.1-2)

## 2- *Ghayat Al-Itqan fi Al-Tadbir Al-Badan al-Insan*

He wrote this medical work in Turkish at the order of King Muhammad Ibn Ebrahim. In the introduction, he explains that the book includes descriptions of simple drugs that emerged in his time, therapeutic benefits not found in earlier texts, and diseases previously unknown but increasingly common during his era. The compilation of this work, titled *Ghayat al-Itqan*, was completed by Ibn Sallum, the physician, but he passed away before the final revision. His son, Qazi Askar Yahya Afandi, entrusted the manuscript to Yahya Afandi, the then Chief Physician of Fatih Dar al-Shifa, who edited and reorganized the content and gave it the final title: *Ghayat al-Itqan fi Tadbir Badan al-Insan*. This version was later handed over to Mustafa Abu al-Fayz Afandi, Ibn Sallum's grandson, who translated it from Arabic into Turkish and titled it *Nezhat al-Abdan* (*The Cleanliness of Bodies*).

The book is structured into four main parts, reflecting the author's scientific vision:

- Article One focuses on the treatment of various diseases and is divided into four sections.
- Article Two addresses general principles of drug compounding and is divided into three sections, each with several chapters.
- Article Three covers Qarabadin (pharmacopoeia), comprising two sections, each with detailed chapters (Ibn Sallum, 2009, pp. 15-16).

Article Four is dedicated to the application of alchemy (*Al-Kimiya*) in medical science,





based on the theories of Paracelsus, the famous Swiss physician and chemist who is considered the founder of modern medicine. This section includes an introduction that defines alchemy, followed by six articles titled *Omur Tabieyye (Natural Matters)*, Foundations of Chemical Medicine, The Method of Managing Drugs, Partial Practical Work, and Oils. The content presents Paracelsus's revolutionary theories in chemical medicine and draws on the works of Oswald Crollius. Due to its significance, this section was published independently under the title *al-Ṭibb Al-Jadid Al-Kimiyai (The New Chemical Medicine)*. It was translated into Persian by Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Hosseini during the Qajar period. This reflects the particular attention given to Paracelsus's theories in the region. The book's composition—with its first three parts devoted to humoral medicine and the final part addressing early modern medical theories—serves as an early example of integrating tradition and innovation in medical science (Ibn Sallum, 1998, pp. 9-49).

### Conclusion

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a period marked by the confrontation between ancient medical traditions and revolutionary movements in Europe, Physician Ibn Sallum recognized these developments and worked on translating and introducing modern medical theories to Islamic societies. His efforts to integrate Eastern medical traditions with modern Western medical achievements, as well as his role in transmitting new knowledge to the East—similar to the contributions made by the French physician Clot Bey during Muhammad Ali Pasha's era in 19th-century Egypt—hold great significance. In fact, Ibn Sallum can be regarded as a pioneer in introducing modern European medicine to the Islamic world (Ibn Sallum, 1998, pp. 9-49).

### Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of this study, as well as to the collection of materials and interpretation of the results. The research team have examined and endorsed the final version of the manuscript.

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### Conflict of Interest

None.

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