

Rönesans Döneminden Bir Tabloda Epilepsi

Özgür Bilgin Topçuoğlu

Uzm. Dr., Erenköy Ruh ve Sinir Hastalıkları Eğitim ve Araştırma Hastanesi, Nöroloji Kliniği Başasistanı

Adres: Erenköy Ruh ve Sinir EAH, Nöroloji Kliniği, Sinan Ercan Caddesi, No:29, 34736, Kadıköy- İstanbul

Telefon: +902163020416

Faks: +902163601706

E-mail: ozgurbilgin1@yahoo.com

ÖZET

Epileptik nöbetler tarihin çok eski çağlarından beri târif edilmektedir. Mısır papirüsleri ve hâttâ daha eski kil tabletler üzerinde epilepsi ve epileptik nöbete ilişkin bildirimler mevcuttur. Hastalığın değişken ve kimi zaman korkutucu tabiatı nedeniyle san'atçılar, yazarlar ve film yapımcıları da epilepsiye ilgi duymuşlardır. En ünlü epileptik figür ise İtalyan ressam Raphael Santi tarafından resmedilmiştir. Bu yazıda, Raphael'in ölümü nedeniyle tamamlayamadığı son tablosu "The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor"'daki epileptik anlatımdan bahsedilmiştir. Epilepsi ile ilgili toplum bilincini artırmak için san'atın evrenselliğinin kullanılması amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: epilepsi, sanat, Raphael

ABSTRACT

Epilepsy in a Renaissance Painting

Epileptic seizures have been described from the very early ages of man. Reports on epilepsy and epileptic seizures may be detected on Egyptian papyri and older cuneiform tablets. Artists, writers and film producers have been interested in epilepsy because of the variable and sometimes scary nature of the illness. The most famous epileptic figure has been painted by Italian artist Raphael Santi. The epileptic description in the the last painting of Raphael; "The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor" which hasn't been finished because of the early death of the artist has been mentioned in this article. It has been aimed to use the universality of art to increase the public knowledge about epilepsy.

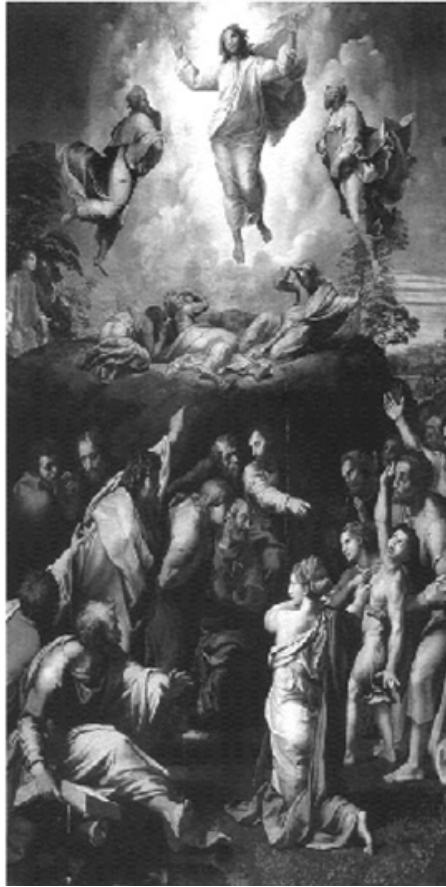
Keywords: epilepsy, art, Raphael

INTRODUCTION

Epileptic seizures have been described and depicted since the very early ages of man. Egyptian papyri (Masia and Devinsky 2000) and Babylonian cuneiform tablets (Wilson and Reynolds 1990) demonstrate the first written medical texts on epilepsy. Various seizure types are contained within these Babylonian tablets of the Sakikku (meaning "All Diseases") which are held in the British Museum, London (Hunt et al. 2007). During ancient times, epilepsy was widely regarded as an expression of evil (Gross 1992) or an unnatural mysterious illness out of this world. It has been mentioned and described in many novels (Krauss et al. 2000, Wolf

2006) and even movies (Baxendale 2003). Because of the variability of its clinical manifestations and the mysterious nature of epilepsy, it was ideal for artistic interpretations by writers and film directors.

For the same reasons, painters have also been interested in epilepsy. Epileptic figures may clearly be seen on votive tablets which have been traditional in Christianity. However, the most famous "epileptic figure" was created by the Italian painter; Raphael Santi (Janz 1986). His last painting; *The Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor* (Fig 1a) which was left unfinished because of Raphael's unexpected early death, has been considered to be demonstrating an epileptic seizure.



The pictures are taken from open article.

EPILEPSY AND ART

Epileptologists know this painting through William Lennox and his two-volume book *Epilepsy and Related Disorders* (Lennox and Lennox 1960). The painting is divided into two parts. The upper part shows Christ rising to heaven while the lower part (Fig 1b) shows the possessed child that Christ has saved from the spirit (Sirven 2002). The painting is based on a biblical passage:

“...Teacher, I brought my son to you, because he has an evil spirit in him and cannot talk. Whenever the spirit attacks him, it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth, grits his teeth and becomes stiff all over...” (Mark 9:17-18). Evaluating the lower part of the painting; we see the father in green clothes which probably symbolizes hope, holding the boy showing that he cannot stand still by himself.

The Gospel and the narration of the painting point to an epileptic seizure. But from the medical point of view it's not easy to semiologically classify this event. We see the tonic posturing of the right arm with the

dystonic posturing of the left hand. The boy looks unresponsive with his eyes deviated above and divergent. Even though it has been described as a generalized tonic-clonic seizure formerly (Janz 1986) this might be a tonic-dialeptic seizure as well. The divergence of the eyes is not a symptom which we specifically expect in a seizure. We could expect the eyes to be deviated to the right as part of a versive seizure, considering the right tonic part of the seizure. One of the most important reasons to describe this painting as a seizure is its religious history. Even though the term epilepsy has not been used in the bible, the details of the story are consistent with an epileptic seizure (deToledo et al. 1996).

DISCUSSION

We conclude that the painting itself might not have been considered as an epileptic seizure without the gospel. But the description of the event combined with the visual scene strengthens the “diagnosis” of an epileptic seizure. Considering that this is not a me-

dical drawing but an art painting, we believe that the uncertainty in the diagnosis may be attributed to the background of the painter.

CONCLUSION

We support the idea that public knowledge and attention of epilepsy may be augmented via this precious art article.

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