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Bulgarian traditional medicine has preserved knowledge, remedies, technologies and practices that have come to us from ancient times and have been transmitted through the generations. Folk healing knowledge and skills have been tested through the centuries by the empirical knowledge and are the result of an accumulated enormous human experience and of the magic power of many folk healers. The ancient Thracians who inhabited the Bulgarian lands are famous for their skills in curing with different herbs, with chanting and music, and also for their use of the therapeutic qualities of mineral waters. Written medieval and later sources such as “*The Cures of St. Kozma*” (a Glagolitic text in an Old Bulgarian Psalter prior to the 10th century), parts of the *Hilendar Medical Compilation* from the 14th century, the Rila and the Samokov healers (books with medical prescriptions) from the 18th century, etc. evidence about an old folk curing tradition. Contemporary medicine, especially nowadays, frequently uses and combines, along with the new ones, traditional remedies and technologies, which have proved their qualities and curing effect in the course of time.

Although a complex of specific healing knowledge and skills, folk medicine does not have an independent existence. Traditional culture as a whole is oriented towards the preservation and the restoration of man’s health and welfare. It is believed that the one who observes the rules and the norms of this culture provides a healthy life not only for himself but also for his generation. Every deviation leads to a misbalance and a state of disease. Ritual is the leading principle in this type of culture and, generally speaking, every ritual practice (in the calendar, the economic and the life cycle) has a healing effect. There are rituals in the traditional culture which are directly focused on treating diseases. They can be realized through the ritual action and the curing power of a particular healer or of a group (for example the *rusalii/kalushari* – men’s ritual dancers groups, performing during the week that follows Pentecost, called *Rusalska*).

The traditional healing technologies and remedies are connected with the folklore ideas and notions about the diseases. According to folk beliefs and knowledge some of the diseases come from God and others are due to the influence and the infusion of evil spirits and vicious powers. A disease can be caused by *uroki* – by the bewitchment of “evil” eyes, by an evil place or by an evil time. It is believed that one can get cured of the disease in a magical way. For example up to the present day is widespread the practice to visit curing places and water springs with the belief that there, together with an object or a part of one’s clothing, you can leave the disease as well. In fact, such ritual practices with a curing effect do not always prove to be sufficient for the restoration of the patient’s health. Then the intervention of the folk healer becomes necessary.

Since traditional medicine is mainly associated with the gift and the skills of the particular healer, in the questionnaire study carried out concrete data were required for everyone of these people, who are well-known and with proven qualities in the particular settlement or region – name, ethnicity, what diseases does he/she cure (name of the disease), by what means (with what remedies and curing technologies), how he/she has learned to cure (by inheriting the skills or in another way). Thus the parameters set in the questionnaire study allowed us to obtain some information not only about the preserved ancient remedies and curing technologies but also about their bearers. We established that in most Bulgarian towns and villages there is still a folk healer continuing to practice ancient curing techniques and remedies. Bulgarian traditional medicine is still entirely preserved, it is transmitted through the generations and the cases in which people find through it a cure for different diseases are not at all few in number.

The results from the questionnaire study present the traditional curing remedies and practices that are known and are applied in the different regions of Bulgaria. The outlining of certain specificities for separate regions, ethnographic groups or ethnic communities proved to be inappropriate, because almost all of the curing technologies and remedies are registered and can be found in the whole territory of the country in one form or another. For this reason, in the section *Tradi-*

tional Medicine the regional variants of the list are identical and embrace in a synthesized way the basic methods of the traditional curing practices – *baene* (mumbling incantations), preparing infusions, tinctures and ointments, massaging and folk orthopedics, supernatural healing skills. Respectively, the ancient technologies and the remedies employed are not restricted to the separate methods; they can serve any one of them and can be applied in the treatment of different diseases separately or in a complex. For example, against nocturia in children in the questionnaire cards are pointed out different forms of treatment, either using herbs, *baene*, *leene na kurshum* (lit. melting a bullet), or massaging, using ointments, etc. Of course, traditional is the application of *baene* and melting a bullet against “evil eye” and fear, but, even in a diagnosis like that, the use of infusions, tinctures and other remedies and technologies is not impossible. Very often skin diseases, for example, are explained as “catching an evil eye” or as due to fear, hence, apart from being treated with ointments, infusions, compresses, etc., it is pointed out that they can be also treated by *baene*. The questionnaire cards show that in all the regions of the country there is almost no disease that cannot be treated using herbs. Widespread is the view that the herbs collected before sunrise on St. George’s Day or on Midsummer Day have the strongest healing effect.

The questionnaire cards were filled in mainly by local museum and culture center’s officials and reflect the level of information they have on the state of the traditional medicine in a given settlement or region. Therefore, not infrequent are the cases in which a particular healer is listed only with the name of the diseases he treats, and not with the healing techniques and remedies used by him. This can be due to the fact that the person filling in the questionnaire card has no direct observations on the methodology of treatment. In fact, in most of the cases he can hardly receive more concrete and detailed information, as the techniques and the remedies applied by the healer are his own “secret” – one that he will transmit only under certain circumstances and conditions. In this respect traditional is the view that the healer should not transmit his skill and knowledge while being still alive, healthy and capable of practising. Otherwise he himself will lose his healing powers, i.e. there will be no results of his treatment. Traditionally healing skills are *inherited* – they are

transmitted to relatives, to close friends or acquaintances who demonstrate abilities and a desire to learn. However, it is not considered to be sinful and incorrect if someone manages to acquire the healer's knowledge by "stealing" it on his own initiative and through observation. Also, not an exception are the cases in which the acquisition of healing skills happens by miracle.

Traditional and also most common in the questionnaire cards method of healing is *baene* (mumbling incantations), in which combined are the magic words of the healer with certain magical actions. It turns out that *baene* can be applied as a healing ancient practice for almost any disease – headache, neuro-psychic disorders, epilepsy, skin diseases (verrucae, corn, eczema, wounds, burns, etc.), infertility, etc. The data from the questionnaire study show that for the treatment of sprained joints, broken bones, pains in the lumbar region, joint diseases and for other similar disorders basically applied are techniques like massage, folk orthopedics, extension, shaking. But according to folklore notions the causes of these diseases, too, have an irrational explanation. Hence, along with the techniques mentioned, applied in this type of diseases are, although more rarely, *baene* and bio-treatment.

Traditional medicine has accumulated knowledge and skills not only for treatment but also for the diagnostics of the disease. Most common are the diagnostic-healing practices *leene na kurshum* (lit. melting a bullet) and *throwing flour* (ash). Often the healer has the gift of finding and treating the disease. There are also cases in which the healer is only a good diagnostician (a fortune-teller, a quack) who directs the patient to another healer. Especially valued are healers belonging to the "foreign" community, who are, as a rule, perceived as more effective and with better knowledge. Even today in Bulgaria folk medicine, transmitted from generation to generation and combining the secret knowledge, the magnetic power of the healer and the curing traditional remedies, is popular and applied along with the academic one.