

BULGARIAN HAND-WRITTEN MEDICAL BOOKS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

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In our country printed medical books first appear not until the XIX c., in the 40's. They are translated and original books. Similarly to other countries, in Bulgaria there exists a tendency to publish printed popular medical books, too (1).

The first communication in the medical periodicals after the Liberation concerning our medical books is made by the physician Dr. Lyubenov (2). Up to now several dozens of hand-written medical books are known. However, there are reasons for the assumption that there are still a lot of them to unearth.

First Emanuil Sprostranov, an eminent Bulgarian linguist in the past, made public in 1907 a total of 8 medical books which he had seen by himself. This edition remains till now in a class by itself when exactness of reading the books is concerned. It was the only one during several decades in Bulgaria. Em. Sprostranov describes hand-written books from the National Library in Sofia and private collections as well. He dates the hand-written books and designates their origin. He compiles a biographic information for the compilers of these books, too. Thus Sprostranov occupies deservedly an eminent place in the series of investigators of our folk medicine. Then E. Tzonev describes the same medical books concisely and as a reference book. He is a notable Bulgarian philologist and bibliographer. Later on Manyo Stoyanov and Hristo Kodov describe other medical books in the National Library in Sofia. The latter publishes one medical book in 1922 (3). B. Tzonev describes one medical book in the National Library in Plovdiv (4). Hr. Kodov describes 2 medical books in the Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Recently, V. Stefanov describes 27 medical books. (5). Besides the texts of medical books published by Sprostranov and Kodov there are no other ones. B. Buchvarov dedicates a small monograph to folk medicine and skin diseases. It is based also on unpublished medical books and it is provided by a dictionary. In the book there are interpretations of prescriptions and their therapeutic value is determined from a modern point of view. This is the only work in its kind. It is valuable and interesting (6).

Recently, two theses were dedicated to our folk medicine: Mincho Georgiev Atanassov's PhD thesis (Higher Institute of Medicine — Sofia) and Assoc. Prof. Nikola Sapryanov's Dr. sc. one (Higher Institute of Medicine — Plovdiv) (7, 8). N. Sapryanov evaluated the medical books, their relation with the medical science. He listed the drugs in them and so on.

In our own works on the Bulgarian folk medical books we discussed some concrete problems: prescriptions, medical evaluation of the prescriptions, linguistic peculiarities of the medical books. A special attention was paid to the continuity in the therapy in antiquity (9).

Our study covers a total of 23 medical books from XVIII till the second half of the XIX c., respectively the Liberation. In the present paper we discuss some problems which have not been touched on by any other investigators mentioned. The classification elaborated by us is based on some peculiarities as follows: dating, location of origin, drug indications, dosage.

1. The date of manuscripts can be used as an index in the classification. 11 of the medical books studied by us belong to group of books with a fixed date. The oldest one is that of priest Gregory dated 1800. It is described by Sprostranov. According to the same author, the newest one is that of Ivancho Minchov Kalifar from the years between 1835 and 1860.

To the second group of books with unknown date belong the rest 12 ones. According to Sprostranov the oldest book is dated the XVII c., but according to B. Tzonev — the XVIII c. We agree with B. Tzonev's opinion. The newest book is dated the beginning of the second half of the XIX c. It differs in its content. The comprehensive text analysis shows that it presents a folklorized transcript of "Practical medicine", a book of Dionisios Pyros, a Professor in Medicine in Athens. It appears in a Bulgarian translation by Atanasij Granitski in 1854 (10). This influence is expressed in the order of the medicinals as well as in their denominations. The latter are in Bulgarian, Greek and Italian just like in the Greek original version. In its nature this medical book is the first Bulgarian pharmacology.

2. The location of origin of medical books is also indicative. The books with known date originate from the towns: Svishtov — three; Veliko Tirnovo, Teteven, Bucuresti, Gabrovo, Kalofer, Karnobat, and Samokov — one each. That from Bucuresti is the only one Bulgarian printed medical book (11). The medical books with unknown date are mainly with unknown location of origin, too — eight of them. Two originate from the Sredna Gora region, one is from Svishtov and another one from Plovdiv. It can be summarized that the origin is related with centres of the Bulgarian Renaissance. In these towns relatively early the manufacture springs up, there exists a big sheep-breeding, heaping of Bulgarian population, creation of monastery and secular schools, and so on.

3. The indications for application of medicinals present in their nature a nomenclature of the diseases in folk medicine. Two distinct groups are formed here: a) ordinary where the names of the diseases are almost only Bulgarian and there is no scientific terminology; b) folklorized adapted transcripts and translations from Greek and Turkish medical works. In the second subgroup the denominations of the diseases are most often Greek or Turkish. A series of officinal drugs (i. g. Epsom salts, chininum, terpenine, etc.) can be found out while they are absent in the ordinary medical books.

4. The dosage in the ordinary medical books is primitive: number, blade, handful, palmful, pail and so on while in the folklorized ones it is with a scientific character based on the metric system of the Ottoman empire — dram-oka, etc.

We could give a high historical evaluation to the popular medical books. First of all they are the only Bulgarian folk medical manuscripts. They reflect the interest of the Bulgarians in the medical practice as well as their possibilities to cope with works in foreign languages. The medical books exist together with popular traditions for ages and ages. They enable to follow-up with a certain exactness when the officinal drugs appear in our country as mentioned above.

There exists an opinion which is substantiated to a great extent that popular healers in the past century were most often charlatans, especially the so-called "bilers" (of Cuzo-Wallachian or Albanese origin) and that their activity amidst the Bulgarian society was most often unsuccessful, indeed. (12).

Our opinion concerning known and unknown compilers or even authors of popular medical books based on the evaluation of the texts of these books is rather high. Their content is various and directed predominantly towards the therapeutics of the internal diseases and less towards the surgical, gynaecological, dermatological, venereal and other diseases. We could not find any surgical hand-written medical books. The medicinals are rather various: we establish a total of 504 therapeutic drugs of three natural kingdoms of village origin and official drugs (13).

All that allows us to consider the medical books historic documents reflecting their contemporary traditional medicine and thus valuable monuments of the history of medicine in Bulgaria.

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I БОЛГАРСКИЕ РУКОПИСНЫЕ ЛЕЧЕБНИКИ И ИХ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ДЛЯ ИСТОРИИ МЕДИЦИНЫ

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Автором рассматриваются болгарские рукописные и печатные лечебники с XVIII века до второй половины XIX века, которые отражают уровень народной и научной медицины эпохи. Устанавливаются некоторые основные признаки с целью проведения сравнения. Сделана классификация народных лечебников, согласно которой они относятся к двум основным группам.

К первой группе отнесены малочисленные рукописи, составленные народными лечителями, которые отражают народный опыт. Ко второй большей группе отнесены фольклоризованные переписи пока неизвестных оригиналов, в которых ощущается иноязычное влияние. Произведения, отнесенные ко второй группе, соответствуют уровню современной им медицинской науки.