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DISEASE, HEALING AND MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE IN AN OLD BULGARIAN COLLECTION OF MIRACLE STORIES

Abstract. The Old Bulgarian hagiographical collection of miracle stories, named *A Tale of the Iron Cross*, is relatively well known among the scholars, but a sufficient number of its details still has not been studied properly. In fact, such a peculiarity seems somehow strange, especially if we take into consideration that the mixture of translated and original strata in the present *Tale's* version does not hinder its significance as a valuable primary source of historical information. There can be no doubt that the religious aspect in the hagiographical collection in question is the leading one in the foreground. On the other hand, however, the records of the daily life activities should not be underestimated either. Their presence within the frames of the *Tale* helps a lot in the scholars' attempts to reconstruct the knowledge, skills, habits or principles of social behaviour in the Bulgarian society in the late 9th – early 10th century.

Keywords: hagiography, healing dreams, Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories, health problems, disease, medical knowledge, treatment

Introduction

In the concluding section of a relatively voluminous collection of miracle stories, known among the scholars as *A Tale of the Iron Cross* (hereinafter referred as *Tale*), one can read:

Brother Christodoulos, he told us about this cross, given to him by George [, a man of] the Bulgarian [origin]. All these are the miracles of healing, performed through the power of Christ and with the help of the great glorious martyr George, which he confessed to us. That is why I have asked these brethren and senior monks to come – he told me this in front of them, so that you too would believe and not be tempted. And here with this cross he has already healed about 15 people from various diseases. When we heard this, we all glorified God and St. George, the great helper in troubles and sufferings. And we took the monk who had brought the cross to the grave, and we buried him with honor and Christian religious

chants. We celebrated the Holy Cross and St. George for three days, glorifying the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹

A few lines below, with the inherent manner of a medieval author in the Orthodox world, the hagiographer added that he described only a small part of what was heard and seen. In fact, beyond the claim of modesty and incompetence, it must be acknowledged that his creative approach is impressive in performance and culminates in a literary work for the St. George's cult in the recently Christianized Bulgarian society. It must be pointed out that it is not just a matter of skillfully compiling translated and edited Byzantine texts in the first three of the ten miracle stories and thematically linking them to the Tale's original fragments (miracles from the fourth to the tenth), putting them together in a common framework of extensive introductory and concluding parts². What is important is the development of a complete and full of characters and events narrative, intertwined with many details with diverse information about daily life of the low society strata. Some of these details allow a close look at the voluminous and compelling topic of health problems in the early medieval Bulgaria. However, studying the collection of miracles, as we have already emphasized, must be performed cautiously, because the religious aspect is the leading one and the miraculous is dominant, while data with specific historical information are in a minor position of the necessary background³. On the other hand, one cannot ignore the text as a source of information about diseases, healing practices and the level of medical knowledge in the late ninth – early tenth century Bulgarian society, since, as Peregrine Horden noted wisely, hagiography is open windows onto therapeutic landscape of the early Middle Ages, regardless of the fact that the specified group of literary works offers only a partial view of illness and handicap⁴.

¹ The authors of the present article make all enclosed English translations of the *Tale's* fragments [Y.H., D.K.]. Cf. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст*, СЛ 1, 1971, р. 153 [Ое же, брате Хѣдѣе, сповѣда намъ ѡ крѣтѣ сѣ, иже далъ Геворѣинъ Българинъ, и си вса ѹюдеса цѣлѣвы, таже сътъ сътворилъ (sic), исповѣда намъ силою Хѣою и помощію стѣго и великаго и славнаго Хѣа стѣрототръпца Геворѣа. Ое же ти того дѣла призвахъ вратію сію и ѡцѣк при нихъ же ми исповѣда, да вѣрѣши ли и да са не влазниши. И садѣ оуже исцѣлѣна сѣмъ крѣтомъ до .ѣт. ѹлѣкъ ѡ разлунны недѣстѣ. Все же мы слышавше, прославихомъ Бѣа и великаго вѣдѣахъ и в болѣзніе помощника Геворѣа. И проводихомъ врата до гроба, приняаго крѣтъ, и вложихомъ его съ ѹтїю и съ пѣли дѣхъныли, и празновахъ три дні ѹтїномѣ крѣтѣ и стѣа Геворѣю, славаще стѣю трѣцю, ѡца, и снѣа, и стѣго дѣа].

² The *Tale of the Iron Cross* is a particularly remarkable work in the Old Bulgarian literature from the epoch of Tsar Simeon I (893–927). Cf. А. АНГУШЕВА, Н. ГАГОВА, АН. МИЛТЕНОВА, Т. СЛАНОВА, А. СТОЙКОВА, *Книжовността по времето на цар Симеон*, [in:] *Българският Златен век. Сборник в чест на цар Симеон Велики (893–927)*, ed. В. ГЮЗЕЛЕВ, ИЛ.Г. ИЛИЕВ, К. НЕНОВ, Пловдив 2015, р. 242–243.

³ Cf. Y. HRISTOV, *Travelling and Travellers: Persons, Reasons and Destinations According to "A Tale of the Iron Cross"*, [in:] *Voyages and Travel Accounts in Historiography and Literature*, vol. I, ed. В. СТОЈКОВСКИ, Budapest 2021, р. 33–54.

⁴ P. HORDEN, *Sickness and Healing [in the Christian World, c. 600–c. 1100]*, [in:] IDEM, *Cultures of Healing. Medieval and After*, London–New York 2019, р. 91. For the sake of objectivity, it must be

Tale's examples of the hagiographical model of healing dreams

Due to the interest in the *Tale* and its use as a source of specific type of information, it might be helpful to note that the presence of compiled fragments in the extant version of this work, which according to modern (and not quite applicable to medieval texts) criteria for originality is considered a weakness, brings significant advantages. The influence of proven models in the Eastern Christian world allows us a much smoother approach through the prism of productive research solutions applied to such Byzantine hagiography. For example, eight of all ten stories in the Old Bulgarian hagiographical collection in question are for healing. Five of these eight miracle stories are about treatment and healing, and reproduced the motif of a healing dream, which is frequently used in Byzantine hagiography. It is significant that the passages from the text of the *Tale*, which reveal such a creative decision, fit into the classification of healing dreams of Byzantine miracle collections. This classification, as is well known, covers three main large groups – the corporal dreams, the medical dreams as well as the allegorical dreams, the differentiation of which depends on the described way in which healing is achieved⁵.

admitted that few years ago the entire text of the *Tale of the Iron Cross* has been taken into consideration through the prism of the topic of health problems and the challenges of seeking treatment and medical help in the Bulgarian medieval society. Cf. Я. ХРИСТОВ, *За болестите и лечителските практики в старобългарския цикъл разкази “Сказание за железния кръст”*, ИБ 1–2, 2011, p. 178–191. (Cf. also ИДЕМ, *Щрихи към разкази “Сказание за железния кръст”*, Благоевград 2012, p. 73–97). However, the study in question bears somehow a general overview and characteristics. In addition, it is published in Bulgarian and is accessible for a narrow audience.

⁵ S. CONSTANTINOU, *The Morphology of Healing Dreams: Dream and Therapy in Byzantine Collections of Miracle Stories*, [in:] *Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. Ch. ANGELIDI, G. T. CALOFOFONOS, Farnham 2016, p. 25. For some important specifics of the genre as well as for the significance of the collections of miracle stories, see: R. LENNART, *Fiction and Reality in the Hagiographer's Self-Presentation*, TM 14, 2002, p. 547–552; M. HINTERBERGER, *Byzantine Hagiography and its Literary Genres. Some Critical Observations*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. II, *Genres and Contexts*, ed. St. EFTHYMIADIS, Farnham 2014, p. 25–60; St. EFTHYMIADIS, *Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles. A Chronological and Bibliographical Survey*, SO 74.1, 1999, p. 195–211; ИДЕМ, *Collections of Miracles (Fifth–Fifteenth Centuries)*, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. II..., p. 103–142; A. ALWIS, *The Hagiographer's Craft: Narrators and Focalisation in Byzantine Hagiography*, [in:] *The Hagiographical Experiment. Developing Discourses of Sainthood*, ed. Ch. GRAY, J. CORKE-WEBSTER, Leiden–Boston 2020 [= VC.S, 158], p. 300–332. It must be strongly emphasized that the present study does not aim at correcting the well-known classification of healing dreams in the Byzantine (Orthodox) hagiography. In addition, it is also far from the ambition for certain type of an overview of the bibliography on the matter. On the other hand, even a cursory glance at the text of the *Tale of the Iron Cross* makes it possible to highlight that in many of its fragments the hagiographer's approach is accomplished precisely through the motif of healing dreams. A characteristic that requires some additional explanations and clarifications, quite intentionally placed in the enclosed footnotes when it comes to the aspects that would burden the main text of the article if they were presented in it.

Whether it is a coincidence or not, the first example of a healing dream described in the *Tale* is in *The Miracle with the Monk* (the third story in the collection), which is considered as part of the compiled Byzantine parts in the work⁶. In this fragment, healing is instantaneous, and a description of healed monk's actions is used to reveal the St. George's intervention. The text reads:

And immediately brother Theodore got up, as if he had never been ill. He went to church and bowed three times in front of the altar. He turned, bowed to the hegumenos and to all the brethren. He embraced the feet (of the hegumenos) and said, "Servant of the Great God, through your prayers the Lord has healed me". The Archimandrite replied: "No, child, not my prayer, but the help of St. George". [...] And he said: "During the night St. George appeared to me in a dream and told me everything about you and your unbelief". And he ordered me all this again: "Lay my cross on him, that he may see the power of Christ and the help of St. George"⁷.

And if in the third miracle of the *Tale* we come across a relatively recognizable variant of the subcategory of medical pharmacological healing dream, according to the classifications derived from the Byzantine collections of miracle stories referring to a consummation or applying over the diseased body *the miraculous medicine provided by the saint*⁸, the original parts of the work consists of various

⁶ This is the opinion of the Russian scholar Anatoliy A. Turilov, whose efforts regarding the *Tale* still remain unsurpassed and are a solid basis for any research. Cf. with the enclosed bibliography: А. Турилов, *Византийский и славянский пласты в „Сказание инока Христодула“*. (К вопросу происхождения памятника), [in:] *Славяне и их соседи. Греческий и славянский мир в средние века и новое время*, vol. VI, Москва 1996, p. 81–99. Cf. also: ИДЕМ, *Сказание о железном кресте как источник по истории и общественно-политической мысли Болгарии конца IX – начала X вв.*, [in:] *Идеология и общественно-политическая мысль в странах Центральной и Юго-Восточной Европы в период Средневековья: Сборник материалов и тезисов IV чтений памяти В.Д. Королюка*, ed. В.Н. Виноградов et al., Москва 1986, p. 36–37; ИДЕМ, *Данные «Сказания о железном кресте» о христианизации Болгарии*, [in:] *Введение христианства у народов Центральной и Восточной Европы. Крещение Руси: Сборник тезисов*, ed. Н.И. Толстой et al., Москва 1987, p. 53–54; ИДЕМ, *Новосибирский список Сказания инока Христодула*, [in:] *Общественное сознание, книжность, литература периода феодализма*, ed. Д.С. Лихачев et al., Новосибирск 1990, p. 220–222; ИДЕМ, *К изучению Сказания инока Христодула: датировка цикла и имя автора*, [in:] *Florilegium. К 60-летию Б.Н. Флори: Сб. статей*, ed. ИДЕМ, Москва 2000, p. 412–427; ИДЕМ, *Мъдра Пльсковская и Мъдра Дръсторская – две Мундраги первой болгаро-венгерской войны (география чудес Вмч. Георгия в Сказании инока Христодула)*, [in:] *Славяне и их соседи. Славяне и кочевой мир*, vol. X, ed. Б.Н. Флоря et al., Москва 2001, p. 40–58; ИДЕМ, *Не где князь живет но вне (Болгарское общество конца IX века «Сказании о железном кресте»)*, *Слав* 2, 2005, p. 20–27.

⁷ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 140 [И абіе вѣрѣ Февдорѣ вѣста, тако не имѣ болѣзни на собѣ. И идѣ въ црѣвъ и поклони сѧ прѣ алтаремѣ трижды. И швратив сѧ, поклони сѧ имѣменѣ и всен братѣн. И имѣ за ногѣ, глаше: Раке бѣа вышнаго, твоими млѣтвами мене исцѣли бѣ. И рѣ архимандритѣ: Ни, ѹадо, не мож млѣтва, но помощь стѣго Гевурѣа. ... И рѣ: В сію ношь гави ми сѧ стѣн Гевурѣн въ снѣ и рѣ ми все, еже ѡ тоѣѣ и ѡ невѣрованіе твоѣмѣ. И пакы рече ми все: Положи на неаѣ крѣтъ мои, да види силѣ Хѣѣ и помощь стѣго Гевурѣа].

⁸ Cf. S. CONSTANTINOY, *The Morphology of Healing Dreams...*, p. 28.

author's decisions. For instance, taken together, the fourth and the fifth fragments of the collection appearing under the titles *The Miracle with the Cross and the Bulgarian* (also known as *The Miracle of Saint George with a Bulgarian Warrior*) and *The Miracle with the Woman*, reveal another case of a medical pharmacological healing dream. The first of these two texts is without a doubt the *Tale's* best-known part in the scholars' milieu. The reasons are more than understandable: it consists of information about the Bulgarian conversion to Christianity, the establishment of the church hierarchy, the overthrow of Knyaz Vladimir (889–893) and the accession of his brother Simeon (893–927) to the throne, the hints of the military actions against the Magyars during the war of 894–896⁹. Against the background of a number of important details about the last decades of the ninth century, the hagiographer describes how St. George in a dream gave instructions to an ordinary warrior, named George, who was going to take part in a Bulgarian counter-offensive against the Magyars in the late 895 – early 896. The hagiographer unequivocally highlights the Saint's specific orders that three iron hoops would be obtained and should be used only for forging a cross¹⁰. The story *The Miracle with the Woman* describes that the warrior George, who had returned from the campaign against the Magyars, found his wife ill. After two weeks of failing to alleviate her suffering, he offered prayers, afterwards according to the well-known hagiographic motif, he puts the saintly provided iron objects on the body of his wife, and she heals instantly¹¹.

⁹ Using this story as a historical source started as early as the middle of 19th century. Cf. Епископъ Филаретъ Рижскій, *Кирилъ и Методій, славянскіе просвѣтителі*, Москва 1846, р. 5, п. 10; Архиепископъ Евгений Астраханскій, *Внѣшнее состояніе церкви Восточной Православной, с половины IX-го вѣка до начало XIII-го*, ХЧ 1, 1848, р. 249–250; О. Бодянский, *О времени происхождения славянскихъ письменъ*, Москва 1855, р. 357–358, СХІV–СХV; С. Палаузовъ, *Вѣкъ болгарскаго царя Симеона*, Санкт-Петербург 1852, р. 23–24, п. 34; Е. Голубинскій, *Краткій очеркъ исторіи православныхъ церквей: Болгарской, сербской и румынской или молдо-валаиской*, Москва 1871, р. 34, 256; Хр. Лопарев, *Чудо святого Георгия о болгарине*, ПДП 100, 1894, р. 19–21; М. Дринов, *Исторически преглед на Българската църква от самото ѝ начало до днес*, [in:] *ИДЕМ, Избрани съчинения*, vol. II, София 1971, р. 34.

¹⁰ Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 142 [И лежашю ми в ношѣ въ клѣти свои с подръжїѣ, прииде ко мнѣ во снѣ мѣжѣ голоуцѣстѣ, свѣтелѣ. И не можѣ на лице его възрѣти. И рече ми: Ити ти, Георгіе, на воинѣ, кѣпи совѣи инѣ конѣ. Ты во конѣ. шѣ с тобою. ꙗко дѣи и напрасно оумреть. Нѣ заповѣдаю ти да водрешши еиѣ ногѣ, юже вѣ преломилѣ, да видиши силѣ пресѣтъла тѣца и помощь стѣго Георгіа. И еже тѣ вѣрлещи на ногѣ твои, не можи никакѣю же сътворити потребѣ, развѣк ѣтѣнаго крѣта, и мѣлѣи доидѣже оузриши славу еиѣ. И рекѣ: Ги, кто еси ии же не могѣ възрѣти на лице твое? И рече ми: Язѣ есмѣ рабѣ Хѣвъ, егоже мола, призываеши Георгіа].

¹¹ Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 143 [И егда придохѣ в домѣ свои, вѣче, видѣхѣ женѣ свою волашю, огиѣ люте дръжилаѣ, вѣо тѣрасвицею. И тако пречеѣ за неделю и дръгѣю и видѣхѣ ю люте стражюшю, и помыслихѣ и рекѣ: Ги Ісѣ Хѣ, помилѣи ма, и стѣго своего оугодника Георгіа, и положи моѣмѣ невѣрїю, и сътвори со мною мѣтъ и на рабѣ твоѣи Мѣрин. И положи на неѣ вѣрѣхѣ, и паки дръгѣи, и тако третїи, и вѣнѣсти волекѣзнь томѣ ѣдѣкѣ. И вѣста и прослави еѣ и великого мѣника Георгіа. И азѣ, развѣмѣтъ мѣрдїю и ѣлѣколюбію прѣтъла тѣца, и призвак кѣзѣнца и рекѣ еиѣ, показавѣ

In the text of the last tenth story of the Old Bulgarian collection under review, the subcategory medical pharmacological healing dream is combined with another popular technique in the hagiographic literature, namely, sick people traveling to Constantinople in searching for a cure. Following this well-known creative approaches in the Byzantine literature, *The Miracle with the Woman Having a Breast Wound* describes a sick woman who spent the night at the gates of the Byzantine capital and her surprising miraculous healing. The text reads as follows:

As I was approaching Constantinople, a man and a sick woman with a severe wound on her right breast who was sitting on a donkey's back overtook me. As we walked, it got dark and we could not get through the city gates because it was too late. We veered off the road and lay down next to each other. As I stuck my cross over my head, I lay down and fell asleep. As I was sleeping, suddenly at midnight the woman jumped up, saying, "Hey you Monk, give me the cross so I can put it on the wound. During the night, a young man on a white horse told me, "Woman, why do you scream and suffer like this? Take the monk's cross and place it on the wound. God's grace the power of Christ and the prayer of St. George will help you".¹²

In view of the use of the hagiographic motif for a healing dream, perhaps the most impressive and quite illustrative is the hagiographer's creativity in *The Miracle with the Furious Adolescent*, which is the sixth miracle of the present version of the *Tale's* macro-composition. The very first lines of the fragment bear multifaceted meaning:

Three days after the cross was forged, an impious spirit settled in a man from the village. Those who looked after him had immense trouble with him, because he broke the chains, and many times this evil spirit made him either burn like fire, or sweat profusely as if a water¹³.

вѣрѣхъ ты: Сѣкъши ми крѣтъ. Много же мене въпраша, что сѣ^т желѣза си, азъ же не дръзихъ еми повѣдати. И скованъ крѣтъ, такоже вѣ оуказалъ въ снѣ стѣни].

¹² Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 151–152 [Походацию ми ис Константиноу града, постиже ма мѣжъ, носѣ на вѣлати женѣ, илѣши на деснѣмъ сѣсѣтъ вѣдѣтъ лютъ. Нѣдѣше же, вѣвѣ-уѣрѣхѣмъ сѣ и не заидохомъ вратѣ града. Бѣ во дже позда. И съвратихомъ сѣ съ пѣти, и легахомъ близъ сѣвѣ. Язъ же, потокъ крѣтъ на главою, легѣ и оуенѣхъ. И се напрасно, спашю ми, полнощи вѣскоуи жена глѣощи: Калѣгерѣ, дажъ ми крѣтъ, да приложю къ вѣдѣ. Глѣ во сѣи ноши мѣжъ оуиъ, на вѣлѣ конѣ: Жено, что вопѣши тако и волишь? Вѣзми оу калѣгерѣа того крѣтъ и положи на вѣдѣ, и уѣлолювѣе бѣкѣ и сила Хѣба, и мѣтва стѣо Георгѣа поможетъ ти].

¹³ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 143 [Ико вѣи скованъ (крѣтъ) потомъ въ третѣи днѣ въ веси тои впаде въ уѣловѣка дѣхъ неустын и много вѣдѣ нагѣтахъ, держащи его, изламаше во желѣза и на огнь многожды, помѣташе и и въ вода]. Vide: A.-M. TALBOT, *Pilgrimage to Healing Shrines: the Evidence of Miracle Accounts*, DOP 56, 2002, p. 153–173; P. HORDEN, *Travel Sickness: Medicine and Mobility in the Mediterranean from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, [in:] *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. W. V. HARRIS, Oxford 2005, p. 179–199; G. SIMEONOV, *Crossing the Straits in the Search for a Cure. Travelling to Constantinople in Miracles of its Healer Saints*, [in:] *Constantinople as Center and Crossroad*, ed. O. HEILO, I. NILSSON, Istanbul 2019 p. 34–54.

The following lines of the story describe that the healing was achieved by placing the miraculous iron cross on the body of the sick young man, however he did not receive an instant healing, but fainted for a while and people there even believed he was dead. In fact, the differences go beyond the “instant – delayed” healing dichotomy. For example, it can be said that there are two dreams in the story, not one. The first is of the already miraculously healed wife of the owner of the iron cross. She encourages him to help because she dreamed of a young man holding a cross while beating four other men and driving them away. The second dream is of the unconscious sick man. After being healed, he felt an incentive to share his experience, he described being tortured by “four black men with scary faces” who, however, left him alone after the appearance of a young horseman on a white horse carrying a cross. At first glance, there is an undoubted similarity between the two healing dreams within the sixth miracle of the collection. However, the Saint’s intervention seems different. In the woman’s dream, the young man, unrecognized as St. George, is presented unequivocally as participating in a bodily contact. On the contrary, to the healed young man the saint appears on a horseback and only his words and presence with the cross in his hand are sufficient¹⁴. The direct bodily contact with the saint is a key feature in the category of corporal healing dream. According to the dream of the sick young man, only the appearance of the saint is sufficient for healing. A feature that corresponds more to the so-called speech healing dream. However, if it is assumed that for the hagiographer the “the four with evil faces” are the personification of the disease that occurs after the mother’s curse, then some more features are added, which seem to point to the category of the so-called allegorical healing dream¹⁵. It is in the young man’s dream that it becomes clear that the reason for his suffering is his own attitude towards his mother and her curse on him. The author reinforces the suggestions towards his audience by putting in his text a Saint’s guideline with an addressed insist to obey the Old Testament order “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex 20: 12)¹⁶.

¹⁴ Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 144 [И въставъ, поклони сѧ попъ и всѣмъ намъ. И не бы емѧ никого же зла. И въпраша и попъ: Видиши ли что? И рѣ: Уерни, зловерзани мѡжъ ꙗ. Ёгда же мѡтръ прогнѣвахъ и науа ма клати, и авіе похитиша ма. И великѧ вѣдѧ творѡхъ, въметахъ ма въ огнь и въ водѧ. И се нѡмѣ хотѡхът' ма въ пропасть вринѡти. И приѣха мѡжъ оунъ на бѣли конѣ, крѣтъ дръжа. И тако оузрѣша и, пѡстиша ма и повѣроша ѿ мене, глаше: Насиленъ еси, Геворгіе, поучто ѡгониши ны ѿ штрока сего, а нашъ естъ, предала ны естъ мѡти его. И слышѧ глающа, держа крѣтъ: И развонникъ, иже распаша жидове, вашъ вѣ сосѣдъ, но понеже възпи изъ глѡбини сѡци къ сѡмъ бѣжѡ, тъ нѡмѣ раискыа житель пави сѧ. И мѡти сего, кого ради слезы прольѧ. Васъ же заклинаю, ѡидѣте ѿ създаніа бѣжѡ, идѣте въ пѡсто мѡесто, идѣже не ходитъ родъ улѡв. И не видахъ ихъ камо сѧ дѣша].

¹⁵ Cf. S. CONSTANTINOY, *The Morphology of Healing Dreams...*, р. 28–34.

¹⁶ Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, р. 144 [И къ мѡмѣ рѣ: Блюди сѧ да пакы не предастьтѧ ма нѡмѣ, да не въверѡтътѧ въ пропасть. Писано во естъ ѿ бѣга: Ути ѡца и мѡтръ].

Sickness and miraculous healing (and medical knowledge)

Noteworthy, within the original parts of the Old Bulgarian miracle collection, there are descriptions of healings with the help of the miraculous iron cross, obtained with the assistance of St. George that are beyond the hagiographic motif of a healing dream. In *The Miracle with the Shepherd Bitten by a Snake* (the *Tale's* seventh miracle story), the thief shepherd is healed after drinking water with which the cross was doused¹⁷. The hagiographer also writes about the use of water, which is poured over the iron cross in *The Miracle with the Man with a Leg Wound* (the *Tale's* eighth miracle story). However, in the eighth miracle a suffering traveler was healed after washing the wound on his leg, following the instructions of the old monk Sophronius, in whose cell he spent the night¹⁸. As a matter of fact, despite the relatively short text of the *Tale's* eighth miracle story in question, it provides an opportunity to further comment on the phrase *this is a scab called panukā* [се есть стрѣпъ (строупъ), зовемыи панѣкъ (панѣкъ)]. The word стрѣпъ – scab, a wound with dry crust (often inflamed and festering). Стрѣпъ, synonymous with ulcer – язва, is attested at a very early stage in the Old Bulgarian narratives. Its presence in the early translations of the Gospel texts, as well as in the *Codex Supraliensis* and the *Euchologium Sinaicum* (there is also the adjective стрѣпивъ – festering/septic) is undoubted and is used for translation of the Greek

¹⁷ In contrast, the rescue of the shepherd bitten by a snake takes place after St. George appears to Sophronius (but not in a dream), gives him the appropriate instructions and sends him to meet the former Bulgarian warrior George, who rejected the secular life and carries the iron cross and to whom the old monk must be a spiritual mentor during his novitiate. Vide: Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 146 [И глѣ пастѣхъ: Си, ѿѹе, тако есть. Како ты оубѣделъ? Рѣ старецъ: Уадо, сѣдащю ми оу кѣли своа, прииде мѣжъ на конѣ вѣлѣ и рѣ: Софроніе, въстани, иди воздо къ истоуникѣ, иже воденю тевѣ на оупъ, и вижъ ѿлака ѿ змаіа оубедена. И ѿ толѣ иди на сѣверьскын пѣтъ, и сѣрлащеша уерница, носаша крѣтъ желѣзнын на дровѣ]. Cf. Appendix 1.

¹⁸ Cf. Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 147. The eighth miracle in the *Tale* is among the shortest. The text is as follows: УЮДО .И. ѿ МЪЖИ, ИМЪЩИ ВРЕДЪ НА НОУЪ. И в' тѣ ноцѣ наѹа единъ ѿ нихъ стонати и тѣжити. Реѹе ми старецъ: Призови ми того сѣлю. И рѣ: Уто имаша, да тако тѣжиши? ѿнъ же ѿвѣща: Гѹе утѣнын, вре ми ѣ на ноге. И реѹе старецъ: Сади, изди са. И не можаше сѣвляещи уервіа, нъ ножкына разрѣза и показа ногѣ старцю при свѣщи. И реѹе, видѣвъ старецъ: Се есть стрѣпъ, зовемыи панѣкъ. И въпроси его, давно ли ѣ. ѿнъ же реѹе: .лї. мѣць. Глѣ мнѣ старецъ: Георгіе, иди възми крѣтъ, иже еси принесла и швади водо (sic) на вредомъ силъ и шлгын, и сила Хѣа и помоцъ стго Георгіа исцѣланти имать. И сотворихъ тако же повелѣ. И авіе легъ ѿлкъ и оупе. Заоутра въставъ и не видѣ вреда на ногѣ, но чѣлѣ тако дрѣгѣю. И пришедъ, поклони са до земли. И елгъ старца за ногѣ, глѣше: Гѹе утѣнын, твоими мѣтвлами бѣтъ исцѣли ногѣ. ѿвѣща старецъ: Уадо, сила Хѣа и мѣтва Георгіа. И видѣвши же дрѣжина его уюдо, не хотѣхъ ѿити, глѣше: Помили ны, да сѣе скончавемъ дни своа. Старецъ же не да, ни повелѣ илгъ. Блѣхѣтъ же ѿ мыдрьпъсковьскіа .г., ѿ дрѣскерьскыа же .в., .д. влѣгари, а единъ грѹееска родѣ, емоу же реѹе старецъ: Гдѣ хотѣше ѿити вола ѿфреме? Како единъ изѣѣдаше трапезѣ стго Георгіа оу Климентѣ?]. As far as we are concerned, there is no other translation into English of this text, except our translation, enclosed in the Appendix 2.

τραῦμα. For example, [...] *went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine* (Lc 10: 34) is rendered as follows:

...пристапъ оваѣа строуггы его възливаа оѣѣи (масло) и вино...¹⁹

Pouring liquids on the wound, according to what the hagiographer writes in the miracle in question, brings his text closer to the Old Slavonic Gospel translations not only in lexical terms. On the other hand, the additional clarification that it is not about any scab, but one called a *панѣкѣ* seems to point to quite specific sources of medical knowledge. Recently Petros Bouras-Vallianatos noted that the term *πανούκλα* (from Latin *panus*, *panicula*) was enclosed in a particularly interesting manuscript, the so-called *Holkham Gr. 112*, as a synonym for *bubo* (*βούβουνες/βούβονες/βούβωνες*). In his commentaries, the scholar emphasizes that in some variations *πανούκλα* appears in the medical work of Metrodora as well as in the medical handbook by Alexander of Tralles. However, despite its presence in the early Byzantine medical vocabulary it seems that the term is not connected with the plague of the Justinian era. This took place afterwards, in the fourteenth century, at the time of the Black Death and since then has been used to denote the plague²⁰. Without excluding the possibility that the use of the specific *панѣкѣ* within the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories is related to the hagiographer's knowledge of Byzantine works on medical topics (or at least of part of the vocabulary in them), it seems more likely that it was the result of the influence of emblematic literary works written in honor of famous saints in the Orthodox world such as Symeon the Stylite (the Elder). Moreover, in his *Vita*, the term *πανούκλα* refers precisely to a festering wound on the leg, which tormented the saint for a long time²¹.

¹⁹ Cf. *Lexicon Palaeoslovenico-Graeco-Latinum*, ed. F. MIKLOŠIČIČ, Vindobonae 1864–1816, p. 892; *Материалы для словаря древнерусского языка по письменным памятникам*, vol. III, ed. И. СРЕЗНЕВСКИЙ, Санкт-Петербург 1912, p. 560; *Slovník jazyka staroslověnského / Lexicon linguae palaeoslovenicae*, ed. J. KURZ et al., Praha 1958, С, p. 185–186; *Старославянский словарь (по рукописям X–XI веков)*, ed. Р.М. ЦЕЙТЛИН, Р. ВЕЧЕРКА, Э. БЛАГОВА, Москва 1994, p. 630; *Старобългарски речник*, vol. II, ed. Д. ИВАНОВА-МИРЧЕВА et al., София 2009, p. 754.

²⁰ P. BOURAS-VALLIANATOS, *Enrichment of the Medical Vocabulary in the Greek-Speaking Medieval Communities of Southern Italy: The Lexica of Plant Names*, [in:] *Life is Short, Art is Long. The Art of Healing in Byzantium. New Perspectives*, ed. G. TANMAN, Br. PITARAKIS, Istanbul 2018, p. 177–178.

²¹ *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*, ed. H. LIETZMANN, Leipzig 1908, p. 43–44. It is a curious fact that in the Southwestern parts of the Bulgarian ethnic space – Bitola and Kastoria area (present-day Republic of North Macedonia, and present-day Northwestern Greece), in the local dialects *панούκλα/панουκλα* means a contagious deadly disease, plague. Cf. *Етнолингвистичен речник на българската народна медицина*, ed. М. ВИТАНОВА, В. МИЧЕВА, София 2021, p. 45. We would like to express our gratitude for the productive suggestions of the reviewer of the present text, who brought to our attention the very recently published edition in question.

The vocabulary in other fragments of the *Tale* used by the Old Bulgarian hagiographer to denote diseases and health ailments, and the description of their symptoms, is also a reason to continue in the attempts to trace his familiarity with some healing practices of the epoch²². In this connection, attention should be paid to the second miracle of the *Tale*, and in particular to the description of a child suffering from a disease that causes wheezing and excreting bloody foam through the nose and mouth.

While we were sitting, Strategos my lord, there came a woman of our kin named Theodosia, carrying a child in her arms, who had suffered from evil eye for four years, tormented by an impious spirit. As she greeted me, she sat down and shed many tears. Suddenly the demon snatched the child from her and threw him down, and he began writhing in front of all of us and bloody foam was pouring from his nostrils and mouth, so we all thought he was dead²³.

The text emphasizes that the child *suffered from evil eye for four years, tormented by an impious spirit* [.,Ѡ. лѣ ѡчима болно, ѡ дѣла нечѣта мѡчимѡ]. Bearing in mind supposedly the compilative character of this particular part of the *Tale*, it must be acknowledged that the existence of such information is highly likely due to a Byzantine protograph²⁴. The belief in evil spirits, nefarious demonic possession, so-called “evil eye” and the accompanying specifics were well-known in the Eastern Mediterranean. Popular beliefs in this direction were so strong that the clergy paid special attention to them²⁵. Undoubtedly, the second miracle of the *Tale* also does provide sufficiently clear hints in this direction. The text reads:

²² This is also a well-known inherent specificity of the hagiographic literature in Byzantium. Cf. for the well know studies H. MAGOULIAS, *The Lives of the Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries*, BZ 57, 1964, p. 127–150; J. DUFFY, *Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries. Aspects of Teaching and Practice*, DOP 38, 1984, p. 21–27; A. KAZHDAN, *The Image of the Medical Doctor in Byzantine Literature of the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries*, DOP 38, 1984, p. 43–51; S. CONSTANTINOVA, *Healing Dreams in Early Byzantine Miracle Collections*, [in:] *Dreams, Healing, and Medicine in Greece from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. S.M. OBERHELMAN, Farnham 2013, p. 189–197. Judging by the abstract as well as by the cross-references, the article *When Medicine is Powerless: Illness and Healing Viewed by the Byzantine Hagiographers in the 8th–12th Centuries*, written by the Russian scholar Irina Okhlopina, would be useful here. Unfortunately, our attempts for access to the journal “*История*” (issue 10 [74], year 2018) are not successful. Due to the current situation with sanctions against Russia, even the payment of such insignificant amount of 200 RUR has been blocked. Meanwhile, a personal request to the author remain unanswered (and disregarded for some reason).

²³ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 138 [И сѣдѡщиѡ намѣ, гнѣ страѡиже, се жена приидѣ ѡ роженіѡ нашего, и именѣ Феѡѡтіѡ, носѡщи на рѡцѣ ѡтроуѡ, .Ѡ. лѣ ѡчима болно, ѡ дѣла нечѣта мѡчимѡ. Ико сѣде, цѣловѡваше ма и много слезы пѡстнеши изъ ѡчию. Явѣ исторже оу неѡ ѡтроуѡ вѣксѣ и повѣрже, и прѣ вѣсѡни науѡ прѣгати са и пѣны тоуѡнти кровавы ноуѡрѡли и оуѡсты, тако мнѣти вѣсѡнѣ намѣ оуѡре].

²⁴ А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Византийский и славянский пласты...*, p. 92–94.

²⁵ M.W. DICKIE, *The Fathers of the Church and the Evil Eye*, [in:] *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington DC 1995, p. 9–34; P. HORDEN, *Responses to Possession and Insanity in the Earlier Byz-*

[...] Oh, Saint, you know that I have no other **opsim** in my home but only the Saracen one in the glass bottle. And he said, “In the name of the Holy Trinity”. And when he made a cross sign, he gave the child to drink, and he poured out some of the liquid onto the child’s head and eyes. And again the demon threw him down shaking. And many heard the voice of the demon shouting, “Oh, I must flee! George, it is not you who drives us away, but you blessed a small drop of the Saracen drink and you turned it into a fire. Burning us with it, you drive us away [...]”²⁶.

The hagiographer clearly points out that an alcoholic beverage was used for the healing (it is unequivocally noted that the liquid in question have been obtained by the St. George’s miraculous intervention). Unfortunately, the lack of clarification (or at least a hint) that this is considered a medical solution based on the prevailing medical concepts of the balance in the human body of blood, mucus, black bile, yellow (red) bile is quite limiting for further comments in the outlined topic. On the contrary, the text emphasizes the miraculous healing power of St. George.

antine World, [in:] IDEM, *Hospitals and Healing from Antiquity to the Later Middle Ages*, Aldershot 2008, p. 177–194. Cf. also: H. MAGUIRE, *From the Evil Eye to Eye of Justice: The Saints, Art and Justice in Byzantium*, [in:] *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth–Twelfth Centuries*, ed. A. LAIOU, D. SIMON, Washington DC 1994, p. 217–239; P. HORDEN, *Afterword: Pandaemonium*, [in:] *Demons and Illness from Antiquity to the Early-Modern Period*, ed. S. BHAYRO, C. RIDER, Leiden–Boston 2017 [= MRL-LA, 5], p. 412–418; A. KUZNETSOVA, *Demons versus Saints in the Early Eastern Orthodox Monastic Literature*, [in:] *Universum Hagiographicum: Mémorial R.P. Michel van Esbroeck, s. j. (1934–2003)*, ed. A. MOURAVIEV, Piscataway NJ 2009, p. 136–143; H. BJÖRKLUND, *Protecting against Child-killing Daemons: Uterus Amulets in the Late Antiquity and Byzantine Magical World* [PhD Dissertation, Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki, Helsinki 2017]. It must be specified that the *Tale*’s second miracle story dependence on a compiled text, as well as on well-known literary models in the Byzantine hagiography, does not mean that “evil eye” superstitions were not also inherent to the Bulgarian society in the Middle Ages. For example, the existence of a special prayer against “evil eye” in the South Slavic euchography, which has an archaic origin and registers a stable tradition, is sufficiently indicative. Cf. *Стара българска литература*, vol. V, *Естествознание*, ed. А. МИЛТЕНОВА, София 1992, p. 260–261, 465. Regarding specifically nosebleed, there is clear evidence of the translation of earlier Old Bulgarian medical treatises. See Ц. КРИСТАНОВ, ИВ. ДУЙЧЕВ, *Естествознанието в средновековна България*, София 1954, p. 153–155.

²⁶ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 139 [Ты вѣси, стѣе, яко не имамъ в домѣ своемъ шпсма развѣ сего срауиньскаго въ стекланици. И рѣ: Въ имѣ прѣтѣмъ трѣца, и прекрѣтивъ, дасть штрѣвати пити, и възлѣдѣ ендѣ на главѣ и на ушѣ. И пакы поврѣже и вѣсѣ. И слышахѣ мнозѣ гла ѿ дѣмона, еже възпѣаше: Бѣжа, влѣ, нѣжа Геворгіе, не самъ на прогонниши, но малѣ каплю пива срауиньскаго шѣтиль еси, и на огнь преложивъ, и тѣмъ пала прогонниши ны]. Such descriptions in the quoted *Tale*’s fragment are interesting, however, hardly can be specified as surprising. It is worth remembering the well-known peculiarity that according to the concepts concerning diseases and ailments these ones caused by demons were similar to these of “natural origin” and have the same symptoms as fever, high temperature, fatigue, etc. Cf. For example: J. KROLL, B.S. WACHRACH, *Sin and the Etiology of Disease in Pre-Crusade Europe*, JHM 41.4, 1986, p. 395–414; A. CRISLIP, *From Monastery to Hospital. Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity*, Michigan 2005, p. 19, 99; K. KELLY, *The History of Medicine. The Middle Ages, 500–1450*, New York 2009, p. 51; P. HORDEN, *Sickness and Healing...*, p. 91–112.

It seems that all doubts and ambiguities concerning the references to high temperature are quite fewer or at least are of different character. In purely quantitative terms, these are the largest number of symptoms registered by the hagiographer within the frames of the Old Bulgarian collection. There are mentions of physical fatigue or profuse sweating in some of the records. References of this kind can be seen in the third, fifth, sixth and ninth of the miracle stories in today's version of the *Tale*. What stands out is that the phrases *волицъ огньемъ люто* (*be seriously ill with fever*), *тажккъ огнь* (literally *heavy fire*, i.e. *high temperature*), and *огнемъ жегомъ лютъ* (literally *burned with fierce fire*, i.e. *suffered by fever and high temperature*), which are often found in the various Old Bulgarian texts²⁷. The single use of the word *трѣсавица* in *The Miracle with the Woman* also points to fever, a disease with high temperature and chills over the body²⁸. Anyone interested in the topic of health issues and medical practices in Slavia Orthodoxa in the Middle Ages finds it tempting to accept these pieces of information as a reflection of the then inherent beliefs about the so-called diseases of the excessive heat²⁹. Not in each of the mentions, however, do we come across a description of an attempt at treatment, and surprisingly, not even a miraculous cure. For example, according to what is written in the ninth miracle, the sick old monk Sophronius was not treated, and accordingly the outcome of the fever and high temperature was lethal³⁰. No treatment was applied in the above-mentioned *Tale's* third and fifth miracle stories. Both of the fragments (*The Miracle with the Monk* and *The Miracle with the Woman*) describe miraculous healings, not treatments based on medical knowledge³¹.

²⁷ Maria Spasova emphasizes this aspect in describing the linguistic specifics of the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories. See М. СПАСОВА, *Езикови особености на "Сказание за железния кръст"*, [in:] А. КАЛОЯНОВ, М. СПАСОВА, Т. МОЛЛОВ, "Сказание за железния кръст" и епохата на цар Симеон, Велико Търново 2007, p. 144. An interesting example with recent comments in К. ПОПКОНСТАНТИНОВ, *Заклинателни молитви против трѣсавици в епиграфски паметници от X век*, ГИФВУКМ 2 (34), 2018, p. 407–415.

²⁸ М. СПАСОВА, *Езикови особености...*, p. 143. Cf. *Старобългарски речник...*, p. 975.

²⁹ As is well known, a wide range of diseases have been referred to as fever, with the inherent symptom of high temperature. In fact, according to the notions of health problems during the era in question, diseases were divided into two types – fever and all sorts of other diseases. М. ГЕОРГИЕВ, К. ГИТОВ, С. ТОНЕВ, Н. ЦАНКОВ, *История на българската медицина*, vol. I, Велико Търново 2009, p. 48–49. Cf. also. Ц. КРИСТАНОВ, Ив. ДУЙЧЕВ, *Естествознанието...*, p. 199.

³⁰ Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 151 [И тако поидѣ въ грѣ и сказахъ емѣ, еже ли реуе старецъ, и въздохъ се все, еже въ на потребѣ. И шербѣтоховѣ старѣца, лежаща въ волѣзни, огнемъ жгома лютъ. И ре ли старецъ: Подвигни прозвнтера литоургисати. Ико съврѣши са слѣжеа, старецъ причасти са стѣхъ танинъ и реуе: Нитѣ шпоуцаеши раба своего, вѣдо. И ре къ прозвнтерѣ: Блѣви, шѣ. И то рекъ шдасть дѣ свои с лиромѣ].

³¹ As for the third miracle, according to the mentioned Russian scholar Anatoliy A. Turilov, when considering that particular part of the *Tale*, scholars' efforts should always take into account the influence of the Byzantine source, which he believes is probably subject to mechanical reduction when compiling it. See: А. ТУРИЛОВ, *Византийский и славянский пласты...*, p. 93. Cf. also: I. LUNDE,

The sixth miracle (*The Miracle with the Furious Adolescent*), along with the complex motif of healing dreams, seems to provide a bigger chance to seek reflections on healing practices (whether successful or not) and medical knowledge to diagnose the disease. Such a statement, of course, can be made only taking into account that in the very first lines of the story the disease is presented as a result of the intervention of demonic evil forces. It is well known that in the Old Bulgarian texts *вѣцъ* has the meaning of an impious evil spirit, devil, demon, demonic force and even an idol, but it can also be used for a reference of a disease. Certainly, it is assumed that an evil force most often causes the latter. However, in addition to the meaning of being obsessed, *вѣсьнъ* and *вѣсьновати* [сѧ] (*вѣсьноуѣнъ* [сѧ]) also denote to those suffering from rabies or mentally ill³². Some more nuances related to alternating profuse sweating and fever, and the notice of violent behavior of these persons and using shackles to stop them, suggest that *вѣцъ* was deliberately used in the broadest sense by the author of the text in question. Moreover, in the Middle Ages, shackles were a well-known practice in the care of the mentally ill and in attempts to treat rabies in humans³³. The reasons exist insofar as what the hagiographer said coincides with the only effective preventive measure known in the Byzantine medical practice to limit rabies infection – supervised quarantine and shackles. So that the person suffering from rabies could not bite someone around him “like a beast” during a violent crisis. In Byzantium, treatment attempts ranged from herbal ointments, extracts and decoctions, through cutting and burning of the bitten areas, to the use of manure and eating the causative dog’s liver³⁴. It is difficult to say which of the listed measures were known in the early medieval Bulgarian society after the Christianization, but judging by the section named *Cures of St. Cosmas* in the Glagolitic Old Church Slavonic manuscript of the 10th–11th century known as *Psalterium Demetrii Sinaitici*, attempts to deal with the disease were fact. The specified part of the Psalter in question refers to about twenty diseases among which rabies is mentioned. The use (no information how) of the roots of *Chelidonium majus* is recommended³⁵. In view of the efforts to highlight the medical knowledge and

Slavic Hagiography, [in:] *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, vol. I, *Periods and Places*, ed. St. ЕФТΥΜΙΑΔΙΣ, Farnham 2014, p. 369–383.

³² *Старобългарски речник*, vol. I, ed. Д. ИВАНОВА-МИРЧЕВА et al., София 1999, p. 134–135.

³³ M. FOUCAULT, *History of Madness*, trans. J. МУРФУ, J. КНАЛФА, London 2006, p. 146–147. Of course, the heartless measure of chain shackles is far from the only therapeutic technique. Vide: C. TRENER, P. HORDEN, *Madness in the Middle Ages*, [in:] *The Routledge History of Madness and Mental Health*, ed. G. EGHIGIAN, London–New York 2017, p. 62–80. Cf. also: S. KOTSOPoulos, *Treatment of Mental Illness in Post-Hippocratic Ancient Medicine*, Enc 55.4, 2018, p. 36–41.

³⁴ J. THEODORIDES, *Rabies in Byzantine Medicine*, DOP 38, 1984, p. 149–158. The effectiveness of the prescriptions in question is more than debatable. Until the modern age and the discovery of the vaccine, rabies was still a serious health problem with fatalities in humans. See: *The Cambridge Historical Dictionary of Disease*, ed. K. KIPLE, Cambridge 2003, p. 270–272.

³⁵ H. ΜΙΚΛΑΣ, *The Slavonic Manuscripts discovered in 1975 at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai*, Thessaloniki 1988, p. 99; Б. ВЕЛЧЕВА, *Новооткрит лекарственник, написан с глаголица*,

the healing practices within the Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories, it is necessary to recognize that if we exclude the shackles, the details presented in that particular part of hagiographer's text are also rendered in the direction of miraculous healing with the intervention of St. George. This again deprives of certainty the attempts to speak about the registration of rabies, despite the availability of the respective grounds.

Four decades ago, at the Second National Congress devoted to the History of Medicine in Bulgaria, held in Veliko Tŕrnovo in 1985, one of the distinguished talks was dedicated to the records in the most popular of the stories within the *Tale – The Miracle of St. George with the Bulgarian warrior*. The focus is on the healing of the horse with which the Bulgarian warrior George managed to escape after the unsuccessful first battle with the Magyars during the war of 894–896³⁶. At the background of the above-mentioned complex rendering of the hagiographic motif for healing dream, uniting the fourth and fifth miracles of the Old Bulgarian collection, it is specified that the longitudinally broken bone of the horse's leg was tightened with iron rings, from which the miraculous cross was forged³⁷. Without disregarding some possible echo of a knowledge in the field of veterinary medicine, the detail of tightening with metal hoops is a reason to ask whether the hagiographer did not refer to a practice, concerning treatment of fractures of the humans' lower extremity and used it in the narrative of another miracle story within the framework of his collection. In fact, the desire to see the registration of an achievement in the humanitarian medicine is comprehensible, especially given that the treatment of severe fractures with metal hoops and plates has been practiced since the medieval world. It is understandable why this method became known in medieval Christian Europe as well³⁸. For the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that only on the basis of studies of medieval necropolises in the Bulgarian lands the existence of the mentioned medical practice cannot be confirmed with certainty. Treatments of fractures with metal hoops and plates are not attested in the studied sites, which does not mean that one should be supercritical and skeptical about the detail in question from the narrative in *The Miracle of St. George with the Bulgarian*. Moreover, it is possible that future finds

СЛ 25–26, 1991, p. 95–97. Cf. also: H. MIKLAS, M. GAU, D. HÜRNER, *Preliminary Remarks on the Old Church Slavonic Psalterium Demetrii Sinaitici*, [in:] *The Bible in Slavic Tradition*, ed. A. KULIK et al., Leiden–Boston 2016 [= Sjsl, 9], p. 21–88.

³⁶ М. Попов, *За състоянието на ветеринарната медицина в епохата на цар Симеон*, [in:] *Втори национален конгрес по история на медицината, Велико Търново, 1–4. XI. 1985 г. Доклади*, София 1985, p. 213–214.

³⁷ Б. Ангелов, *Сказание за железния кръст...*, p. 141–143. Interestingly, such a practice is not found in Byzantium. Vide: A. McCABE, *A Byzantine Encyclopedia of Horse Medicine*, Oxford 2007.

³⁸ E. SAVAGE-SMITH, *Europe and Islam*, [in:] *Western Medicine. An Illustrated History*, ed. I. LOUDON, Oxford–New York 1997, p. 40–53; К. Зудгоф, *Медицина средних веков и эпохи Возрождения*, Москва 2007, p. 7–18.

on the territory of modern Bulgaria may show not only the “usual” skills to deal with fractures of the lower extremity bones, but also examples of the use of metal plates, brackets and hoops³⁹.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is worth emphasizing at least two aspects of high importance. The first one is related to the application at a very early stage of the development of the original Old Bulgarian literature of the emblematic hagiographic model of healing dream, inherent for the Byzantine hagiography of the epoch. Secondly, but of no less importance, due to the mentions of the various health problems within the frames of the *Tale*, this literary work certainly can and must be used as a source of information while dealing with the topic of diseases and medical knowledge in medieval Bulgaria. Beyond any doubt, it seemingly poses considerable challenges to the scholars. A large group of the difficulties stems from the fact that the text of miracles usually does not provide detailed descriptions of the diseases or details about the symptoms. In addition, the records of the miraculous healings in the collection of miracles in question do not coincide (at least not in full) with the prescriptions in the preserved Old Bulgarian texts on medical topics, which is largely understandable if is taken into consideration that the *Tale* is a hagiographic work with completely different aims and purpose. On the other hand, those interested in the aspects of everyday life in early medieval Southeastern Europe should not neglect the very important fact that number of the health

³⁹ Cf. С. Чолаков, П. Боев, Н. Кондова, *Палеоантропологични данни за средновековното българско население*, ИИАИМ 2, 1978, p. 16–26; П. Боев, С. Чолаков, *Антропологично проучване на некропола при с. Крагулово*, ИНМВ 20 (35), 1984, p. 59–64; Н. Кондова, С. Чолаков, *Антропологични данни за физическия тип продължителността на живота и заболяемостта на една средновековна популация от Добруджа*, БЕ 3, 1993, p. 45–54; П. Боев, С. Чолаков, *Антропологично и палеоантропологично проучване на скелетите от некропол в северния сектор на Западната крепостна стена на Плиска*, [in:] *Плиска-Преслав*, vol. V, Шумен 1992, p. 302–311; С. Чолаков, *Антропологично изследване на средновековен некропол от Дръстър*, ГСУИФ 86 (1993), 1995, p. 105–133. It may be worth pointing to the fact that in the similar ethnic and/or cultural milieu on the Northern Black Sea coast, in the well-known necropolis near the village of Zholtoe (Southeastern Ukraine), dated ca. 850s – early 10th century, graves № 3 and № 15 reveal an interesting picture. In the grave № 15 was buried a warrior who had a round cutting fragment of the skull due to an attempt of surgical procedure. The treatment, as far as can be judged from the excavations, was not completed. In the mentioned grave № 3, along with the rest of the grave objects, a round silver plate corresponding to the size of the cut on the skull of grave № 15 was found. This leads archaeologists to believe that both graves belonged to the deceased due to serious trauma on the head, of the patient and his doctor. К.И. Красильников, А.А. Руженко, *Погребение хирурга на древнеболгарском могильнике у с. Жёлтое*, САрх 2, 1981, p. 283–289; Р. Рашев, *Единство и различие в ямния (български) погребален обред на Салтово-Маяцката култура*, [in:] *Българи и хазари през ранното средновековие*, ed. Цв. Степанов, София 2003 [= ББВ, 43], p. 19.

problems referred in the collection cannot be traced unless they have not been described in the narratives⁴⁰. Due to the peculiarities in most parts of the Balkans, the soft tissues cannot stay preserved in the soil, and after the great chronological distance there is no way to find out about scabs as, e.g., in the *The Miracle with the Man with a Leg Wound* through archeological work. The situation is similar with the rest of the diseases mentioned in the fragments of the *Tale* – infections (accompanied by bleeding) of the upper respiratory tract, faints and seizures, fever and fatigue from colds, бѣзъ (whether mentally ill or infected with rabies), poisoning, sepsis and wound and breast problems in women. All or most of them cannot be traced with the methods and means of the archeology.

At the end, beyond any fictitious attempt for an academic modesty, it must be acknowledged that the comments enclosed in the present paper cannot be claimed to be the only correct and useful ones, and they might obtain well-deserved reasoned criticism and commentaries. Hopefully, after the newly added details, the research interest will increase as widely as possible and thus revealing more aspects of concerning this astonishing Old Bulgarian collection of miracle stories.

Appendix 1

*The Shepherd Bitten by a Snake*⁴¹

And this is what the same monk George told us. “When I went deep into this mountain, a monk met me and said: “Come, child, you are late”. And taking the cross from me, he went ahead. After walking for a while, he turned off the road following a path. And I followed him. And here was a flock of sheep, and the shepherd was lying and already dying, bitten by a snake. There was a spring nearby. The old monk told me: “Take some water from the spring and bring it here, pour the water onto this cross over the cup you are carrying”. As we opened the shepherd’s mouth, we poured the water in it. The old man said: “In the name of the

⁴⁰ The new methods and the diverse approach only partially help to overcome the outlined problem. Cf. S. MAYS, *The Archaeology of Human Bones*, London–New York 1998, p. 122–145, 162–181; T. WALDRON, *Paleopathology*, Cambridge 2009.

⁴¹ The text enclosed in the Appendix 1 is a translation of the copy of the miracle story from a 14th-century manuscript kept in the Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, so-called manuscript N 73 (BAS). Three separate parts are clearly distinctive in the manuscript N 73. *The Miracle with the Shepherd, Bitten by a Snake* is in the third part (folia 346–413) and its text is written on folia 358a–359b. Among the scholars, the copy in question has been known for years. Vide: Хр. Кодов, *Опис на славянските ръкописи в библиотеката на Българската академия на науките*, София 1969, p. 143–145; Б. АНГЕЛОВ, *Старославянски текстове: 2. Разказ за пастира, ухапан от змия*, ИИБЛ 2, 1955, p. 174–177.

Holy Trinity, through the power of Christ, the servant of Christ, St. George, heals you. Get up and take the sheep to their place". As soon as he got up, the young man began swearing so nastily that even the old monk himself was astounded. And he swore for a long time, then got up, trying to take the sheep away to the pastures.

The old monk asked: "Tell me how you swore yesterday to the poor widow who gave you a male lamb to look after it in the flock, and you sold it for three pieces of silver, and you told her that the wolf ate it?". The shepherd replied: "Yes, Father, that's right! How did you find out?". The old monk said: "Child, as I was sitting in my cell, a man on a white horse came and said: "Sophronius, get up quickly and go to the spring to the south, to your right, and find the man, who was bitten by a snake. From there, go to the northern road and you will meet a monk carrying an iron cross on a wooden pole. When you take it, pour water over it and give this water to the bitten shepherd to drink. And then tell him: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by the power of Christ, the servant of God, George heals now. From now on, do not swear by God's name, nor by His Saints. Don't lie for the sake of lie, and give a male lamb to the poor widow, so that you will not suffer a much bitter fate".

When he heard this from the old monk, the young man fell at his feet, saying: "Forgive me, Father, this is true. Yes, I sold the male lamb for three pieces of silver yesterday; I lied to the widow by telling her that a wolf had eaten it. The widow told me: "Is it true or are you lying?". I said: "Oh my God, it's true". The widow told me: "You know I'm poor. Do as you wish. If you lie, God and St. George will hold you accountable, because I had sworn to St. George to slaughter the lamb for him on His holy day". I told her again: "This is it. St. George, whom you mention, knows that a wolf ate a lamb". Now, Father, pray to God and to St. George to forgive my sin, and to the widow I will give three instead of one lamb, and on the day of St. George I will give to the poor one tenth of the sheep of my flocks until my last day".

And the old monk prayed and let him go, saying: "Child, be careful not to fall worse, and give to the widow according to your promise".

When I heard him say his own name, Sophronius, I glorified God greatly and secretly told myself: "Here is the one to whom St. George sent me". The old monk took me with him to his cell, where I spent 40 days with him, wondering and marveling at his strict way of life. A presbyter named Sava came from the city. He served the holy service and clothed me in this holy attire. In the third year, as the old monk and I were once sitting and making ropes, because that is how he made a living – when people came from the city or from somewhere else, he gave them the ropes and received food from them. Even then, his hands worked, and his lips and tongue did not cease to praise God with psalms and hymns. And one day, as we were sitting and making ropes, the old monk told me: "George, get up, prepare some food, because guests from your homeland are coming to us".

As the old monk said this, five men arrived and asked for a blessing. The old monk told them: "You are welcome, but you have left your homes with evil, without peace". They began to pray and bow down to allow them to dwell near him and clothe them in monastic garments. The old monk told each of them what their personal reason to leave home was. And he did not allow them to dwell here, but he made them swear, saying: "Go home and arrange all your affairs and then accept an angelic image" [the monastic vow – Y.H., D.K.]. And the old monk ordered me to give them to eat. It was evening and they stayed the night.

Appendix 2

The Miracle with the Man with a Leg Wound

During the night, one of them began moaning and suffering. The old monk told me: "Call him here". And he asked: "What's the matter with you that you are suffering like that?". He replied: "Honest Father, I have a wound on my leg". And the old man said: "Sit down and take off the boot". He could not take off his boot, so he cut it with a knife and showed it to the old monk on a candle light. As soon as the old monk looked, he said: "This is a scab, a wound that is called a **panukă**". And then he asked him how long he had had it. He replied: "For eleven months". The old man told me: "George, go and take the cross you brought, pour water over the cross onto the wound and wash the wound with this water, and the power of Christ and the help of St. George will heal him. I did as he told me. And immediately the man fell asleep. He woke up in the morning and saw no wound on his leg, which was already as healthy as his other leg. When he came, he bowed to the ground. And he embraced the old monk's feet and said: "Honest Father, through your prayers the Lord has healed my leg". The old monk replied: "Child, the power of Christ and the prayer of (St.) George". When his fellow companions saw the miracle, they did not want to leave, saying: "Have mercy on us, so that here (near you) we can end our days". The old monk did not agree or forbid them. Three were from Mădra P(li)skovska, two from Drăstarska, four Bulgarians and one native Greek, to whom the old monk said: "Where are you going, oh my bull Ephraim? How did you use to eat all St. George's dishes on the table [during the feast – Y.H., D.K.] at Clement's house?"

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