

Folk Medicine: Healing With Magic

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SUMMARY During 2000 and 2001, in preparing the exhibition on folk medicine, the Ethnographic museum in Zagreb undertook researches into the topic. As there was a lot of writing about the methods of folk medicine at the end of the 19th and throughout the first half of the 20th century, while there was fairly less evidence for the later period of time, the researches were organised to gather information in several parts of Croatia, namely in Podravina, Slavonia, Lika, Hrvatsko primorje and the surroundings of Zadar. In such a way we tried to find out the relationship of the potential sick person towards the use of traditional methods of healing among the peasant as well as urban population in the second half of the 20th century up to the present moment. We wanted to find out whether the methods of healing used in folk medicine are still in use and if so - who are the persons that seek this kind of help, also who are the healers. Folk medicine uses in fact a series of elements that can help preventing, curing or easing various health problems of the individual, without asking help from the official medicine. We can consider here two different approaches: the one that uses rational and the one that uses irrational methods. The latter one includes a magical and a religious component as well. It is characteristic for folk medicine that all three approaches are intertwined and often difficult to look upon separately. This paper has the aim to present certain results to which the researches have led, especially so considering some magical procedures that are still in use today with the purpose to heal illnesses that supposedly have their origin in magic.

Key words: magic, folk medicine, magical procedures, sorcerer, distribution, Croatia.

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1. Introduction

In 2000 and 2001 I undertook, together with my colleague A. Brenko, a research into the role of folk medicine in everyday life - in the first place of rural population, but also of the townspeople in Croatia. Our goal was to prepare an exhibition on the topic, what we actually realised by the end of 2001 in our institution - the Ethnographic museum of Zagreb. A field research was undertaken because in medical and ethnological literature from the end of the 19th and the first half of

the 20th century there was a lot of evidence from Croatian and other south-Slavic areas on healing by using the procedures of folk medicine, whereas the material was a lot scarcer for the newer period of time.¹ Physicians (Vladimir Bazala, Lujo Thaller), wrote about different aspects of folk healing especially in the medical journal *Liječnički vjesnik (Medical Gazette)*. In monographs of *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena (Collection of papers on folk life and customs of the South Slavs* - an annual published by the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, today by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), there were also questions that considered the topic of folk medicine (Josip Lovretić,² ilan Lang,³ and Frano Ivanišević⁴ analysed their regions with special care). At the beginning of the 20th century, Mojo Medić and Rudolph Strohal also wrote a certain number of papers concerning folk medicine. The data for the later period of time are less numerous. The most important authors from the second half of the 20th century are, among physicians, Mirko Dražen Grmek and Biserka Belicza, while among ethnologists this is Vesna Čulinović-Konstantinović.

The research project was organised through several regions of Croatia: Podravina, Lika, Hrvatsko primorje and the vicinity of Zadar. In this way we wanted to state which is today the relationship of potential patients towards the methods of the traditional ways of healing. The aim of our project was to gather and display to the public the basic elements used in the process of healing in the frames of folk medicine. The intention of this paper is to present some of the results of these researches, especially in relation to magical procedures used in order to heal or to protect from disease.

Namely, in folk medicine various procedures are used in order to prevent, heal or ease health problems of individuals without asking help from official medicine. We can view here two different approaches: the healing can be undertaken by adopting rational or irrational procedures. While the rational procedures usually include the use of various medicinal plants and other means of animal, human or mineral origin, the irrational procedures originate mostly from magic and are used along with components of a religious pattern. According to the definition in the *Medical Encyclopaedia* of the Yugoslav Lexicographic Institute »in folk medicine of South Slavs, the Old Slavic beliefs in vile - good spirits - and evil spirits of illnesses (mora, morina, noćnice, tresavice, urok and uročice, poganica, maljik, bjes, nežit) are merged and intertwined with Christian teachings of possession by the devil and evil spirits« (Grmek and Sielski, 1958: 151). The trust in

¹ This paper was written on initiative of *Antun Petak*, editor-in-chief of the quarterly »Rural Sociology« (*Sociologija sela*), to whom I am grateful for multiple conversations, suggestions and help during its production.

² *Otok* near Vinkovci, published in *Zbornik* no. 2 (1897), 3 (1898), 4 (1899), 7 (1902), 21 (1916), and 23 (1918).

³ *Samobor*, published in *Zbornik* no. 16 (1911), 17 (1912), 18 (1913) and 19 (1914).

⁴ *Poljica*, published in *Zbornik* no. 8 (1903), 9 (1904) and 10 (1905).

efficiency of the procedures used in folk medicine, of course, does not exclude consulting the official, »real« doctor at the same time when seeking help from practitioners of unofficial medicine (but also before or after that).

Let us, therefore, explain the general approach to magic and magical procedures in the first place.

2. Approach to the Research of Magic and Magical Procedures

In the past centuries the attention of numerous researchers was engaged with studying traditional ways of life of peoples in distant countries. Willing to find patterns of behaviour especially in the so-called primitive societies (illiterate societies), anthropologists studied their spiritual life and religious perceptions with great care, trying to apply the conclusions concerning the stages of development and changes in particular societies to their own nations. Their attention was focused on the belief characteristic to many peoples, which supposes that there exists life in the universe beyond the observable world. The belief in supernatural forces or capabilities exists today as well and is generally accepted under the term of religion. One of the definitions of religion says that it is the cultural means by which humans deal with the supernatural, but humans also believe that the reverse is true - that the supernatural deals with humans (Rosman and Rubel, 2001: 209). In their wish to explain why man believes in the existence of unknown powers beyond the cognitive sphere, many theorists tried to give valid answers. One of them was Melford Spiro. He suggested that there were three kinds of needs that religion can fulfil: the first is called the cognitive need, the need to understand, to find explanations. The second is the substantive need - to bring about specific goals, such as rain, good crops, and health - by carrying out religious acts. The third is the psychological need to reduce fear and anxiety in particular situations (Spiro, 1966 according to Rosman and Rubel, 2001: 210). In pre-modern societies magic is or was a constituent of the specialised status of a sorcerer. In such societies a magician plays the role that does not always differ from the role of a religious or medical specialist. Although magic is considered to be a part of religion, magic and religion demonstrate different attitudes of man towards the supernatural or the way of impact on supernatural powers and on natural world itself. Religious practices try to emphasise human beings' powerlessness: with religious rites man appeals to the gods for help that they may or may not give. Although magical rituals may symbolically represent, something that religious behaviour always does, a system of formed values and beliefs, magic - in contrast to religion - expresses an active attitude and the possibility that with certain manipulation, a prescribed ritual, it produces actions and effects necessary to man.⁵ magician believes that he has a complete control over super-

⁵ On this methodical procedure of magical rites with which man tries to operate on nature and on his endeavours to master it, lie the attempts to emphasize the similarities of magic

natural forces (and with this over nature too), but also in the certainty of the efficiency - magical ritual will certainly help, if it is performed correctly (Rosman and Rubel, 2001: 212).

Magic is usually defined as a technique or ability to impact on natural or supernatural forces with certain actions, rituals and sorcery, in order to achieve the desired practical goals in life (Winick, 1975: 334, Marshall, 1998: 379). It is considered to be a part of religion or closely linked to the beginnings of religion. In some cases only a small group of people performs magical rituals, in other it is the ownership of all the members of a social community (Winick, 1975: 334). The classical division of magic is to the *black magic* and *white magic*; black magic denotes such magical rites or procedures which have the aim to do harm, to act in a negative sense, or it indicates the use of supernatural powers that produce some evil. White magic uses rites that bring good; this term usually understands procedures undertaken for the welfare of people or animals, often with the intention to abolish the effects of black magic.

Religion and magic were the objects of study of numerous anthropologists who focused on the peoples whose cultures were considered to be less complex than the civilisation of the western society. In the 19th century the evolutionist Edward Burnett Tylor, the founder of comparative anthropology, coined the term *animism*, with which he marked the belief in souls and spirits. His mayor work, *Primitive Culture*, was published in 1871. Tylor has noted four reasons for believing in magic: 1. Some magical effects really exist. 2. A sorcerer can perform a trick or fraud. 3. People who believe in magic are more impressed by positive than by negative examples. 4. If the ritual proves ineffective, one can always blame it on the influence of counter magic, on more powerful magical means or on some errors in a magical procedure (Winick, 1975: 334).

The basic classification of magic was given by James George Frazer in several books, the best known of which is *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, published in 1890. He defines magic as »primitive« or »wrong« science and divides it into a practical and a theoretical one. Practical magic can be active or passive: the first one presumes influencing a person with various procedures, while the second one implies avoiding certain acts or places. *Sympathetic magic* is used for the welfare of people, based on the principle that a magical proce-

with science and technique. However, as in magic the empirical base of conclusion is distorted, this similarity should be understood only as a stimulus for the development of rational means of mastering nature. In the same way, in archaic society magic was one of the primitive elements of culture from which religion developed later on. The element of sacral, wich is characteristic for most religions, was not established in magic. For this problem the introductory study by Jean Cazeneuve (1966) is instructive. It is often supposed that raw and intelectually unrefined applications of religious and scientific interpretations befit or border with practising magic (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1970: 238).

dure performed in one situation or on a certain object may influence another situation or object in the similar way, because they were once connected or because they are alike. Sympathetic magic can be divided into a homeopathic (imitative) and a contagious (transferable) magic. The homeopathic principle works with the supposition that the symbolically performed action on the object that represents a particular person will produce the same effect on that person. The contagious magic - magic of the touch - is based on the belief that the connection between two objects that were once a whole continues even after their separation. The aim of symbolic procedures that this kind of sympathetic magic uses is to transfer the disease from the sick person on another human, animal or plant that will continue to suffer from the particular disease instead the person from whom it has been transferred (Frazer, 1977: 20-29).

Richard R. Marett also dealt with the notion of magic, in the frames of religion, having come to the conclusion that magic is essentially an individualistic and antisocial act. The esteemed sociological theorist, Émile Durkheim (1912), considered magic to be a result of social needs put into operation, but in fact an antisocial activity. In the first half of the 20th century Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1954) also studied magical procedures. So did Arnold van Gennep, creator of the term »rites de passage« (1909), with which he defined formal ceremonies that marked some important changes of status such as, for example, ritual patterns of accepting young people in the circle of adults in the so-called primitive societies (initiations) or marriages.⁶ any magical procedures were included there. Alfred Vierkandt (*Naturvölker und Kulturvölker*, 1896) tried to give psychological explanations for performing magical rites, while Bronislaw Malinowski studied the impact of magic, science and religion in cases of change of cultural patterns. Explaining magic with its mental functionality, Malinowski stressed out the role of verbal component in a magical rite: with such ritual man frees himself from insecurity and tension, what makes him believe that the expected effects are really achieved (Winick, 1975: 334). The results of his studies were published in his book entitled *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays* (1948). Claude Lévy-Strauss undertook important studies into totemistic perceptions in the frames of structural anthropology (1958).

In his classical work, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1937), Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard made the first step towards detailed studies of believing and practices connected with magic, witchcraft and sorcery. He came to the conclusion that witchcraft was not considered the cause of illness or mischief of an individual, but it could help in explaining why the illness or mischief struck that particular person (Marshall, 1998: 380). While Evans-Pritchard and other an-

⁶ In 1909, Arnold van Gennep, the Belgian anthropologist, proposed in his classical study of rituals, *Les rites de passage*, a frame for the categorization of general structure of rituals, differentiating in rituals three degrees connected with the change of social status: rituals of separation, rituals of segregation and rituals of integration.

thropologists of his time tried to explain that the ideas of witchcraft and magic within so-called primitive societies stood on wrong presumptions, round the 1950s cultural relativists spoke for the attitude that those cultures should not be looked upon from the Eurocentric point of view, suggesting that every society by itself creates its own criteria of reality and rationality (Marshall, 1998: 381).

Historians and ethnologists in Croatia undertook studies into magic in the frames of their studies into mythological and customary spheres of folk life. Their attention was focussed on annual and life customs of the Croatian and the neighbouring nations. Natko Nodilo was the author of contributions that were published under the name *Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata (Old Religion of Serbs and Croats)* from 1885 till 1890 in *Rad (Work)* of Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences. In his famous work, *Godina dana hrvatskih narodnih običaja (Croatian Folk Customs within the Space of a Year)*, published in 1935, Milovan Gavazzi presented numerous examples of magical acts that were performed on particular days, mainly in order to secure prosperity and welfare of the wider or narrower community. Vesna Čulinović-Konstantinović devoted her attention to the study of magical procedures in the book *Aždajkinja iz Manite Drage (The Dragon/Vixen from Manita Draga)*. In her commentaries on people that stand out in their social environment for greater intelligence and diligence, knowledge of medicinal plants and changes of weather, what leads others to believe that such people possess special magical capabilities, the author pictured typical representatives of magical healers (Čulinović-Konstantinović, 1989: 77). Writing about myths and legends common to all Slavic and other European nations in his book *Hod kroz godinu: mitska pozadina hrvatskih narodnih običaja i vjerovanja (Walk Through the Year: Mythical Background of Croatian Folk Customs and Beliefs)* (1998), Vitomir Belaj considers magical elements as well.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century several Serbian physicians and ethnologists made researches into magic; the best known were Tihomir R. Đorđević and Manojlo Gluščević. In recent times Ljubinko Radenković dealt with magical thematic; in his book *Simbolika sveta u narodnoj magiji Južnih Slovena (Symbolic of the World in Folk Magic of the South Slavs)*, he defined folk magic as »a symbolical instrument that has the goal to achieve changes in a wished direction or to preserve the status quo from unwanted changes« (Radenković, 1996: 353).

Regardless to the fact whether we agree or not with the definition that magic is »believing in the existence of supernatural forces upon which man can operate with *charms* and *rituals* in order to achieve certain good or noxious goals« (Beaver, Bergman and Langley, 1991: 414), in modern society as well there exist people who believe that magic can help in everyday life in different ways. It can achieve luck in love, success in work, welfare in a household or disablement of an enemy, while in folk medicine it is used for healing and protection from disease. In this paper we approach it from this point of view. In other words, although in modern society magic is not part of a particularly structured and organ-

ised system of beliefs or roles, at places where religion and science cannot urgently fulfil man's wish to solve problems that weigh down upon him, people are likely to prefer magic as a substitute. Even if every ritual behaviour is not a magical one at the same time, if it can be practised automatically, its prior effect will be emotional satisfaction and relief on which lays the conviction that magic helps in protection from evil (dishonest) powers, bad luck or an enemy whose intention is to endanger, do harm or destroy some sort of man's harmony.

3. Methods of Research

The material was gathered through the method of interview, photo and video-recordings,⁷ as well as by analysis of already published results and literary sources concerning the object of research.

The method of interview, with a help of a questionnaire, was used to gather evidence on knowing particular methods of healing in folk medicine, medicinal plants, other means of healing, and of magical procedures. A questionnaire was distributed to a number of Museum collaborators who answered the questions and returned the questionnaires to us, but it was also used in the form of a reminder while interviewing people *in situ*. Interviews were made by the authors of the exhibition themselves - Mirjana Randić and Aida Brenko, with a help of a photographer who, in consultation with them, photographed and filmed procedures, situations and persons. Museum collaborators were of great help in this research, because in particular regions they located narrators and practitioners of folk medicine. This was not always easy, as people are not very eager to talk about the healing methods used in folk medicine, especially so when magical procedures are concerned. There were also refusals to talk and sometimes long persuasions to interviews had to be performed, even more so when certain methods were to be filmed with a video camera. From time to time we ourselves offered as »patients« and sometimes we observed the application of some healing methods. Some techniques were applied on healthy persons, in order to be filmed, in cases where there were no patients. Different profiles of people were chosen for interviews: those that appreciated and used healing principles of folk medicine, those that did not use them, and those who healed. The stress was on practitioners. About a hundred persons of different sex and age were interviewed. Except for photo- and video-recordings we did not use other technical support. Notes were written by hand, because neither the tape recorder was always welcome. Interviews lasted approximately for one to two hours; they were led in the house of the respondent, sometimes with other members of the household who were watching the filming. It should be stressed out that

⁷ For the purposes of the mentioned exhibition, photo and video-recordings of the work of practitioners of folk medicine were used to produce a film that demonstrates some rational and magical procedures in healing.

shooting with video-camera was rather attractive to a number of practitioners of folk medicine: they eagerly spoke about their earlier performing on »television« or that they would like to do so, although we informed them right away that we were not TV-reporters and that we worked for the Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb.

The answers were interpreted qualitatively (with a specific analyse of the matter), therefore I present here the results in the form of summarised report and interpretation.

Attention should be drawn here to the limitations of the method of interview in gathering of (worthy, reliable etc.) evidence in healing with magical procedures! The fact known to every researcher who uses the method of interview - that people do not like to speak about events from their private sphere of life with strangers - was here stressed out with general conviction that one should not talk in public about healing methods connected with the magical frame. The reason why is from the one hand because of the negative attitude of official medicine towards magic in general, while from the other there is the conviction that in such a way the efficiency of magical procedures is weakened or actually abolished. Moreover, it is believed that the magical healer (the person who uses magic, magical procedures, sorcery - where the word sorcerer defines a village healer) will lose his/her power if the formula used in the process of healing is spoken aloud. Nevertheless, under certain conditions these formulas can be said without bad consequences;⁸ herefore in ethnological literature numerous examples of such formulae are recorded, in particular in *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena*. Some examples have been noted during the mentioned research; they have been kept in the Documentation Centre of the Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb, together with other data gathered on the project.

Together with already mentioned, we analysed any data regarding folk medicine that we succeeded in gathering (paintings of naïve painters, archive documentation of the School for public health »Andrija Štampar« in Zagreb, information on the existence of practitioners that heal with leeches, blood-letting, magical techniques; our informers were our colleagues, vendors on the market, neighbours, relatives, even passers-by in the street).

⁸ The formula can be revealed if one of the following conditions is respected: 1. it can be said in church during the Christmas-Eve mass. 2. at the same moment it can be written on the piece of paper and given to another person. 3. if the healer does not wish to perform this kind of healing any longer. 4. if the healer only demonstrates the magic procedure on a healthy person.

4. Results of the Research

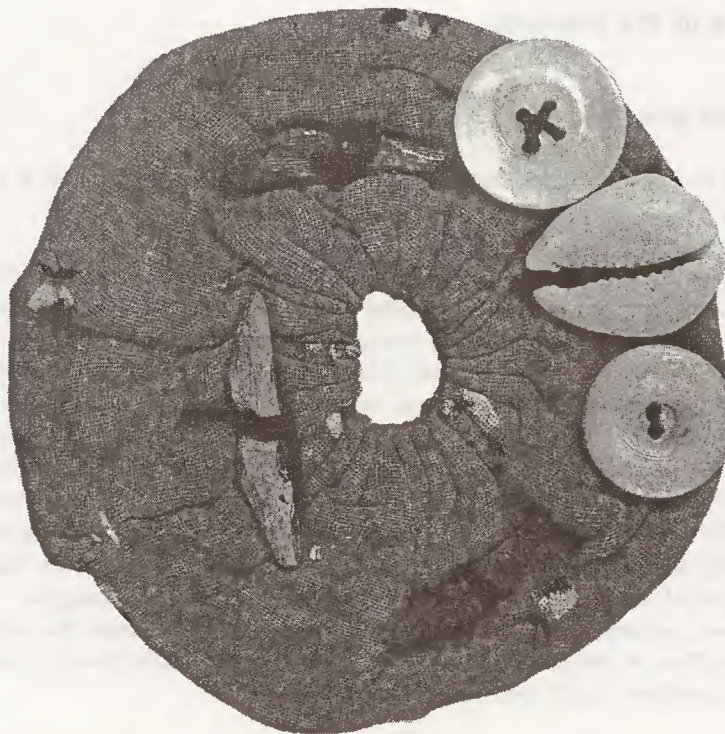
4.1. Magical procedures

According to a folk belief in the past, but relatively often today too, it is supposed that a disease can be caused by magic.

People suspect that a disease is caused by magic in the circumstances when man suddenly feels sick but there seems to be no evident reason for this, especially so if the baby is restless, irritable and weepy, or if a person gets a fever or strong pains in a localised part of the body (Grmek and Sielski, 1958: 151). No matter whether magical spells were oriented towards a patient consciously or subconsciously, it is believed that the disease that evolved through magic can be healed only with the same, i.e. magical procedures. It is also advisable to protect oneself in advance against such influences. In other words, as the goal of magic is to achieve the wished changes or to preserve the status quo from unwanted changes, healing in folk medicine is conducted through the procedures that, according to general division, can be categorised into imitative or contagious magic. In the first one, actions are performed that have the goal to imitate the state of health and welfare in nature, while in the second one the healer tries to transfer the illness on another object or living being.

4.1.1. The Cause of Disease

If supposed that the disease has developed through magic, most often one suspects that the illness has been imposed upon a person (*namet*), that it is stepped upon (*nagaz*) or that a spell (*urok*) has been thrown on someone by an evil eye (Brenko, Dugac and Randić, 2001: 121). The disease is imposed upon a person by witches who act by their own wishes or on order of someone from the sick person's environment. From the other side, the illness may be stepped upon on dangerous places, as are the crossroads. In 1897 in Otok near Vinkovci Ivan Lovretić noted a way that such a stepped-upon fever (*nametna groznica*) can be got: »...one may get it at a cross-roads. If someone that is sick from the stepped-upon fever bathed in water taken under the stepped-upon bridges, and then splashed that water on the cross-roads and another person stepped on that place when water was still lukewarm, the fever will be transferred to this person« (Lovretić, 1990: 581). Things are different when spells are concerned: namely, almost anyone can, even unwillingly, cast a spell on a young and weak person - even the one that wishes him/her no harm at all. The most difficult task is to abolish the spell that is cast upon someone on purpose.



Picture 1.

Amulet (*hamajlija*) from a village near Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina, start of the 20th century. Three pieces of yew wood, one cowry shell (*Cypraea moneta*) and two mother-of-pearl buttons sewn on a red silk ribbon. Such amulets were sewn onto children's clothes in order to protect the child from the evil eye. (Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb)

Results of our research, as well as data from literature (Randić Barlek, 1987; Brenko, 1996 and 1999), stress out the idea of evil eye as something that is out of control and intention of a particular person. Therefore, it is the best to protect oneself from persons with eyes that can cast a spell, using certain procedures (picture no. 1). A way how to detect from which side the spell came to the sick child is described in Otok; it is evident here that suspicion can fall even to the members of the narrowest family:

»The woman who heals goes to the water-well, kneels by the trough and hails Our Lady. She brings water in a cup into the house, sits near the fire, says three pater-nosters, three Hail Marys, makes three times the sign of the cross over the cup. Then she takes live charcoals, drops one piece in water and asks did father cast the spell? If the charcoal does not sink, she asks, did mother do it? If the second charcoal does not sink either, she asks about all the relatives. If the spell is on a boy or a girl, and the charcoals did not sink when asked, they continue to ask on, whether the eye is black, blue, yellow? consecutively on whom they suspect that his/her eye had to be the one that cast the spell. If the charcoals are of light wood,

all the people may be mentioned and still not one charcoal sank. The healer then cannot rub the head or eyes (of the patient, with water, i.e. cannot continue with the procedure), but she goes on dropping charcoals and mentioning every saint: was it St. Bonus, St. Anthony, St. Marcus, St. George, St. Joseph, St. Martin, St. Lucas? So she counts all the saints, until some heavier piece of charcoal finally sinks. Then they promise him to that saint, because there are no spells on him, but he has to visit the saint» (Lovretić, 1990: 565).

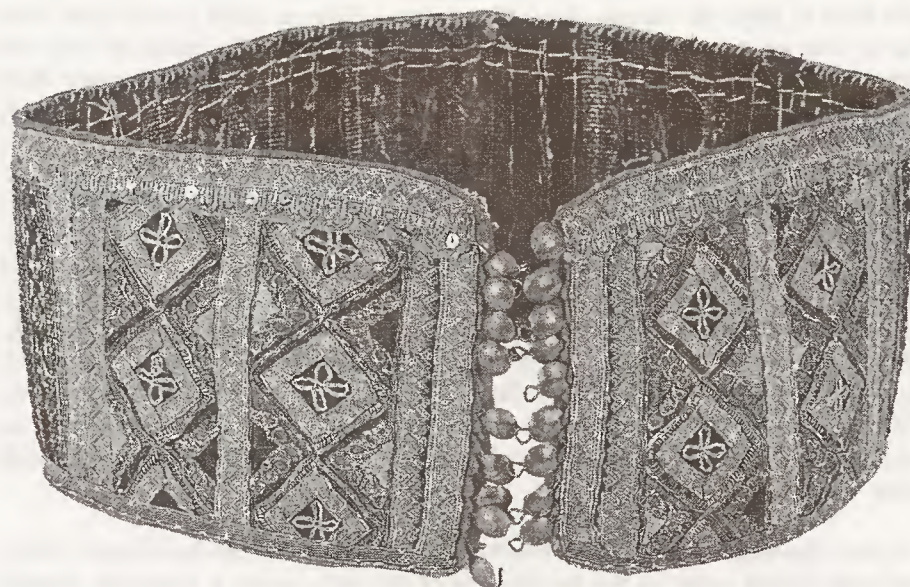
Various formulas that man has to pronounce when visiting a newborn child, for example »What a beautiful child, let no spells fall on him!« (or one should spit, what is another way of chasing evil spirits away) prove that today there still exists the belief that one should be careful not to unwillingly cast a spell on a weak being. In the neighbourhood of Zagreb, when visiting the newborn baby for the first time, the following statement should be uttered: »Let you have as many headaches as many times I have already seen you«, i.e. - never (Randić Barlek, 1987: 408).

In folk belief, incubuses/hobgoblins (*more*) and witches are blamed for illnesses even today. It is supposed that these are persons who obtained supernatural power and use it, usually at night, against their neighbours or even members of their own families from pure malice. On the contrary, during the day they live like perfectly normal females. It is usually believed that *incubuses/hobgoblins* are girls who at night sit on the chest of an asleep child or adult person and press him so that he cannot breathe (or they suck his breasts). The belief in their evil powers can be encountered today in reports from daily papers. In January 2003, in the newspaper *Večernji list*, an interview was made with members of a family who were certain that their young boy was the victim of a incubus/hobgoblin. The protection consists in wearing amulets or objects that reject incubuses/hobgoblins and witches (for example a mirror fixed on the cradle will protect the child from the witch because it will reflect her evil powers back to her). It is often believed that incubus/hobgoblin is turned into a witch when she gets old, while witches receive their evil powers from the devil. There are numerous ways how to detect who is a incubus/hobgoblin in the neighbourhood. For example, when man feels her presence, he should throw a sharp object (a knife) towards the place where he supposes that she is standing, and watch next morning who will appear on his front door with a cut on some part of the body: this should be the incubus/hobgoblin. Then he should threaten her with beating and she would never enter his house again.

It is also characteristic that a incubus/hobgoblin or a witch can be tricked. Therefore, one should write on the house door of the sick person a particular formula in hope that it will avert her from entering, for example »Incubus/hobgoblin, girl, Mary is not at home«.

4.1.2. Protection

In folk medicine great attention is given to procedures which have the aim to stop the activity of evil powers. In the past the most numerous were acts with which young and sensitive persons were protected - children, girls, pregnant women and women in labour. Radenković lists moments when man is the most sensitive to the influence of evil powers; for the child this is the time around birth, for the couple to be married the act of marriage, for a woman the time of pregnancy (picture no. 2) and lying-in (Radenković, 1996: 353). Various magical ways of protection include, for example, wearing a necklace with a pendant made of the root of angelica, in Samobor in the early 20th century (picture no. 3), also wearing the peacock-eye's feather on a girl's cap (in Dalmatian hinterland). A red ribbon or a corral bracelet protect a newborn girl even today in Podravina (in particular cases at least until the christening). The newborn baby was also protected with the pentagram (five-pointed star) - the *Solomon's letter*, drawn on the cradle, as was noted in Slavonija during the 1950s (Toldi, 1979: 19). The same custom of drawing the pentagram, with the usual warning that it should be drawn in one stroke, was noted in Samobor, under the name of *murska capa - incubus/hobgoblin's paw* (Lang, 1914: 194). The newest researches also confirm the belief of efficacy of this magical symbol in healing and protection from disease, as we recorded on the island of Krk in 2001.



Picture 2.

A pregnant woman's belt (neighbourhood of Karlovac, 19th century). Quadrangular decorations on the belt are made for the magical protection of the woman and her child from evil powers that could harm them during pregnancy. The colour inside the quadrangles (green, blue, brown) at the same time reveals the desired colour of the eyes of the future baby. Woollen fabric adorned with appliqué in sterling silver and cloth. (Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb)

4.1.3. Healing

If, following the particular procedure, the healer concludes that the disease had evolved from some kind of magical activity, he/she will try to treat it in the same way. Procedures that are used in healing try to abolish the action of evil powers, like pronouncing »magical« formulas and »prelevanje vuroka« (a procedure with which, using pieces of charcoal and water, one can confirm the existence of spells). It is characteristic that magical formulas are intertwined with religious symbols. Before the formula usually a Christian prayer is uttered, the healer makes the sign of the cross at the beginning and at the end of the healing process, he/she also makes the sign of the cross on the patient, »sacred« water is used (blessed in the church on the Epiphany) and the similar. Here we can find the principle of healing that uses the magical pattern from the pre-Christian times, in which Christian elements were later incorporated (Španiček, 2003: 209-217).



Picture 3.

Necklace with the pendant made of the root of *Angelica sylvestris*, Samobor, 20th century. It was believed that the plant protects from plague, evil eye and magical spells, therefore children, as well as adult persons, wore it round the neck. (Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb)

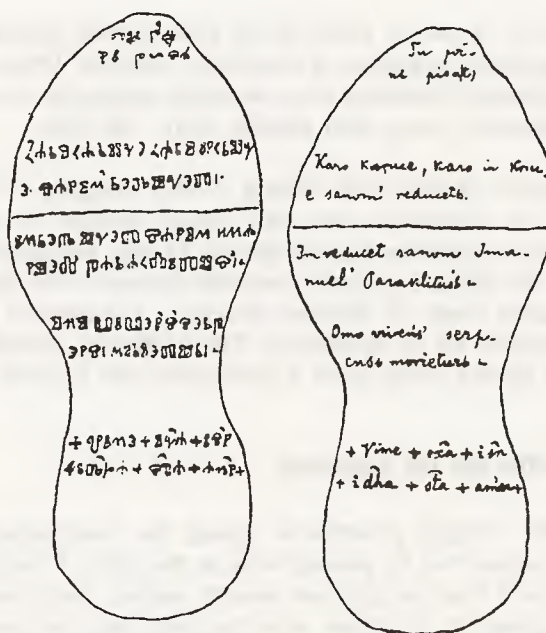
The disease is often considered to be a living being who can enter a human organism, therefore it is chased out with magical formulas. Formulas try to drive the disease away from the head towards the feet of the patient and away from the body to distant and waste places where it cannot harm other people. Greater attention is paid to the left arm or leg, the back part of the body, because according to the binary principle that divides the human body into the upper and the lower part, the right and the left side, the front and the rear part, they are considered to be closer to the »wild« underworld, with which the communication is established during the healing process (Radenković, 1996: 354).

We shall quote, as an example, a formula for healing the spellbound child noted in Sikirevci in Slavonija in 2001:

*»Where are you going, mother of a spell?
Here I am going to cast a spell on Marko (name of the sick person).
Do not go to cast a spell on Marko,
But go to the depths of the sea,
Where birds do not sing,
Where fish do not swim,
Where the ox does not bellow,
Where the peasant does not shout!
Let the power of the Holly Virgin,
With the assistance of our Lord,
Be the help to Marko!«*

In folk medicine magical formulas are used also to treat diseases that are supposed to have magical origin, such as headache or various skin diseases like warts. Snakebite was healed with invocations in a written or spoken form. In ethnological literature (Putanec, Strohal, Hovorka) there are formulas from the 14th and the 15th centuries (or from more recent times), written in the Glagolitic letters. They use a mixture of the Croatian and Latin language in which snakes are damned and remedies for the healing are asked for (picture no. 4).⁹ here exist also magical procedures for protection from the snakebite, which are in use today. In vicinity of Zagreb, in Pokuplje and Hrvatsko zagorje people protect themselves from the snakebite by smearing their arms and legs with the sauerkraut soup remained after the Shrove Tuesday supper, while pronouncing the following formula: »Run, snake, run, or the Shrove Tuesday soup will get you!«. This custom takes place on Ash Wednesday (Brenko, Dugac and Randić, 2001: 170).

⁹ One of such invocations from the 15th century goes as follows: »Karo karuce, karo in kruce, sanom reducet, - imreducet sanom Imanuel Paraklitus. - omo vivens, serpens morietur + v ime (in the name) + oca (of Father) + i sina (and Son) + i duha (and Ghost) + svetoga (Holy) + amen +«. The text had to be written in the earth on the spot where the bitten person had stepped (Strohal, 1910: 129).



Picture 4.

Treating snakebite by the inscription of a magical formula, in Glagolitic letters, into the curve drawn around the patient's foot: The Senj bishopric, 15th century (Strohal, 1910: 129).

Except pronouncing the »magical« formulas, there are other things for protection or healing in the frames of magic. They belong to different categories: a rather long list of the plants used here includes garlic, valerian, scabwort, yew, ivy, butcher's broom, fuller's teasel, oak, hazelnut... These plants in the first place protected children in the cradle (valerian¹⁰), but they also helped women in labour (rose of Jericho¹¹), or adult persons (scabwort¹²). In the part of Hrvatsko zagorje

¹⁰ Rose of Jericho (*Anastatica hierochuntica*) is a shrub that grows in the deserts of northern Africa and southwestern Asia. It is very hygroscopic and can live without water for a long time. When a piece of the shrub is put into water, it suddenly gets »alive« and spreads its twigs like the fingers on the hand. The rose of Jericho was used in difficult childbirth, when it was put in water, because according the principles of imitative magic it was believed that at the same way the mother's womb will widen and the baby will be born more easily. In the 19th century pieces of this plant were sold by travelling merchants along the Dalmatian coast under the name of »rosa di Gericon« (Carić, 1900: 350). In Bosnia it was known as the »hand of hazreti Fatima« (Sielski, 1941: 110).

¹¹ Scabwort (*Inula helentium L.*) is the name of the plant the root of which was used as amulet. Pieces of the root were worn on necklaces by deserted women in order to regain the affection of their husbands (Sielski, 1941: 110).

¹² From the point of view of structural anthropology, Claude Lévi-Strauss devoted special attention to the sorcerer in the chapters *Sorcerer and his magic* (1977: 173-179) and *Symbolical efficacy* (1977: 193-211).

it is still the practice to carry a piece of the plant named *gugan* (*Chlorocyperus longus* L.) in the pocket, to prevent a snakebite. Until the 1950s in Hrvatsko primorje people protected themselves from the same danger by carrying pebbles of St. Gaudentius (Brenko, Dugac and Randić, 2001: 168-169).

Apotropaic scriptures (*zapisi*) also belong to this category. These are shorter Christian prayers or quotations from the Koran, written on pieces of paper usually by Franciscan monks or Moslem priests, khojas, and given to members of the congregation for protection from particular diseases. For the same purpose people wear amulets made of different material - primarily of silver, gold and precious stones, which act as apotropays. These objects - usually earrings, necklaces, rings and girdles, often have a decorative role as well.

4.2. Who Heals? Who are the Sorcerers?

Today healing with magical procedures among the rural population in Croatia has been mostly carried out by people who, in the eyes of the community, possess special powers.¹² Their neighbours usually respect them and fear them, according to the supposition that those who can help may also harm. Therefore, it is better to keep on their good side. Among their neighbours they try to maintain the image of untouchableness, but in conversation with educated people »from the town«, they show no distrust, especially if the visitors were announced, if they were recommended. In recent times many of them already have their »business cards« with the address, mobile phone number and indication of the kind of help they can grant (for example: »I take off evil spells«, »I treat on distance«, »I help through the Koranic script«). Some are happy to be able to demonstrate their abilities; some are actually very amiable. All of them are very religious, so beside magical formulas, they use also Christian or Moslem prayers. They usually suggest their patients to go to church, to pay a mass and to pray.

Practitioners of folk medicine often live the same lives as their neighbours, they work on the field or in the garden, do the housework. They are of both sexes, they are usually married, have children and grandchildren, the number of whom is on average with their community. Many of them are middle-aged (50-60 years old), having demonstrated their capabilities from the childhood. A certain number of such healers gained their »capability for healing« after a particular event: for example after visiting a sacred place (like Medugorje), or the Virgin Mary appeared in their dreams and revealed them the secret of healing of a particular disease, or they felt to have special powers after the death of a member of the narrow family. They keep in secret the magical formulas used in healing to the end of life, when they are ready to reveal them to a younger member of the family whom they choose themselves, after estimating who had certain predisposition for this work.

They never ask money or any fixed compensation for their help, although they do take a contribution in money or a gift according to the possibilities of the pa-

tient or his/her family (Brenko, Dugac and Randić, 2001: 57). They consider that their capability is the »gift from God« and should not be charged. In spite of a rather profitable occupation, their houses and their clothes give the impression of modesty. They often donate money to charity. By contrast, practitioners of magical healing that live in towns usually have a »tariff« and are more inclined towards arrogant behaviour. Yet, they all have one thing in common: they are always ready to help in the case of disease.

5. Conclusion

The belief in magic and the possibilities of magical healing is not something that existed only in the past nor is it characteristic only for less educated or peasant population. The results of the researches made in 2000 and 2001 in different parts of Croatia showed that a certain number of a peasant and urban population alike trusts even today that magical procedures used in healing or protection from disease will help. We should remark here that in the present times urban population has greater possibilities of turning to so-called alternative ways of healing which often use traditional methods of medical practice of other nations, where, along the rational methods, we encounter those of the magical nature as well.

However, people try to keep magical procedures in secret. In the first contact the informers, in fear of the public disapproval, usually distance themselves from any active or passive magical activity, attributing it to near or distant neighbours. A *sorcerer* usually lives in another village. After a longer conversation on the topic, we were often surprised when, in a moment of confidence, people started to take out little bundles, scriptures and amulets that they use to carry around with them. All those objects were given to them by practitioners of folk medicine. After the appearance of the authors in a TV-show in which a part of the film devoted to practitioners of traditional methods of healing was played, the TV-studio and the Ethnographic Museum of Zagreb received a dozen calls by the viewers with a request to unveil the names of the healers who demonstrated taking off the spells - in order to ask them for help with their own problems. After all, numerous advertisements in magazines like *Arena*, *Astromagazin* etc. show that today as well there exists a broad interest for such kind of healing.

In recent times other misfortunes in life than disease, such as failure at work or bad mark of the child at school, are often also attributed to the influence of the evil spells (Brenko, 1999: 114).

There certainly are many reasons for seeking help in illness through magical procedures; it is difficult to list all of them. Let us mention at least those that hide in human disappointment with attitudes and possibilities of official medicine. A frustrated man, who was in the past persuaded by the Church authorities that he himself was to blame for his misfortune and for his illness as well, has difficulties

in accepting today's accusations of the medical workers, reproaches in the radio- and TV-shows, reports in daily press, who all try to convince him that the blame is on him. From the persuasions that we are ill because we ate or drank too much, or we ate fat food, or because we smoke, do not walk enough, have too many black thoughts... it is easier to accept the possibility that the disease is the result of bad luck and spells. In such a way man is freed from the feeling of guilt, what enables him to live with his diseases more easily.

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