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Full Length Research Paper

Medicinal plants from an old Bulgarian medical book

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to conduct an ethnobotanical research of old written sources which give information about medicinal plants and preparation of folk remedies for a particular historical period. The object of the present study is "Canon Prayer to St. Ivan Rilski and Medicinal Text" (1845) - a part of the Bulgarian early printed literature heritage. The 92 submitted recipes cover a wide range of illnesses and symptoms ranging from antiseptic to cures for neurological diseases. High species diversity of medicinal plants is represented in the book - most of them are vascular plants from 36 families (Leguminosae, Umbeliferae, Compositae, Zingiberaceae, Piperaceae, Myristicaceae, Lauraceae, Labiatae, Liliaceae, etc.) and 65 genera. The main components in written folk remedies are medicinal plants (more than 69), followed by the animals and animal products (20) such as honey, eggs, leeches, blood, musk, etc., mineral elements (sulphur (S), mercury (Hg), Au, gold (Au), iron (Fe)) and other organic and inorganic compounds (30). The significant participation of spices such as clove, cinnamon, mastic and ginger in folk remedies sheds new light on the list of species that are traditionally used in the folk medicine. The ethnobotanical study on this book supports the thesis that it was founded on authentic recipes from the healing activity of St. Ivan Rilski, which has increased its historical value a lot.

Key words: Ethnobotany, folk remedies, medicinal plants, old book, St. Ivan Rilski.

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