

## Mushrooms in Folk Medicine of the Eastern Slavs

Irina A. Dudka

N. G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2 Tereshchenkivskaya Str., Kiev 01601, Ukraine

The most ancient sources of information on human diseases and remedies used for their treatment by the eastern Slavs are manuscripts: apokrifhes, chronicles, and so-called "life stories of holy people" existing in Rus from the 11th century. Later special guides, "Vertograds," similar to medieval European "Hortus sanitatis" appeared with descriptions of medicinal plants, minerals, and animals.

The first mention of mushrooms used in ancient Rus as medicines date from manuscripts of the 13th century. In "Vertograds" of the Kiev period the application of ergot (*Claviceps purpurea* Tul.) against uterus cancer and soft middle parts of *Piptoporus betulinus* (Bull.: Fr.) P. Karst. and *Fomes fomentarius* (L.: Fr.) Fr. basidiomata for cauterization of patients' healthy skin parts against tuberculosis were reported. Later notes on use of puffball dried basidiomata as dressing material were found in Novgorod "Vertograds." Prescriptions of macromycetes had reached especially high development in medical practice of the eastern Slavs in the 16th to 17th centuries. The following mushroom species were used more often: *Fomitopsis officinalis* (Vill.: Fr.) Bond. et Sing. internally as a tincture for decrease of tuberculous patients' sweating, and as cathartic and hemostatics for stomach bleedings; *Lycoperdon* spp. as a spore powder for hemostasis of external wounds; *Boletus edulis* Bull.: Fr. as an extract of basidiomata at deep frostbites even with tissue necrosis; and *Amanita muscaria* (L.: Fr.) Hook. as

an extract of basidiomata for edema and rheumatism. *Inonotus obliquus* (Pers.: Fr.)—birch fungus or "tchaga"—had a special place among medicinal mushrooms used in eastern Slavonian medicine. "Tchaga" was long famous as a remedy for treatment of gastrointestinal diseases and cancer. In the middle of the past century befungin—an antitumor symptomatic medicine—was obtained from "tchaga" by Russian scientists in FSU.

Besides those widespread medicinal mushrooms old guides had also enumerated some other species from the pharmaceutical list of the eastern Slavs. Among these are *Amanita phalloides* (Vaill.: Fr.) Gilb. used against cholera; *Auricularia auricula-judae* (Bull.) Wettst. against some throat diseases; *Boletus elegans* Fr. against gout and headache; *Elaphomyces granulatus* Fr. as an aphrodisiac; *Hypholoma fasciculare* (Huds.: Fr.) Kumm. and *H. sublateritium* (Fr.) Quel. as cathartics and vomitives; *Lactarius piperatus* (Scop.: Fr.) S. F. Gray as a diuretic in nephrolithiasis; *L. volemus* Fr. against typhus; *Phallus impudicus* L.: Pers. against diseases of kidneys, rheumatism, and gout.

The role of medicinal mushrooms in folk medicine of the eastern Slavs was rather significant. Unfortunately old knowledge was lost in the process of conducting new research. At the beginning of third millenium it is important to retrieve forgotten information on medicinal mushrooms and continue their research at the modern level.