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## **TRADITIONAL THERAPEUTIC FOOD OF PLANT AND ANIMAL ORIGIN AMONG PEOPLES OF THE NORTH CAUCASUS AND DAGESTAN (XIX–XX cc.)**

*Abstract.* The culture and traditions of peoples associated with nutrition, like all other traditions adopted by a certain ethnic group, represent a separate independent and original category. Nevertheless, only due to a comprehensive analysis of spiritual and material culture that we can identify the commonality and distinctive features of the traditional elements of various ethnic groups. This article presents and describes the historical variations of use of medicinal food of plant and animal origin among the peoples of the North Caucasus. We have carried out a comparative analysis of the composition, technologies of cooking and use of traditional medicinal food among various ethnic groups, as well as an analysis and structuring of literature sources on this subject. The study of the traditional food of peoples combines a huge layer of ethnographic oral and written evidence, archaeological sources, medical, physiological, biochemical, psychological studies, folklore, hundreds of various rites and rituals, prohibitions and calendar regulations, religious beliefs. The relevance of the conducted research lies in addressing the sources of numerous possibilities of applying the centuries-old and diverse experience of the peoples of Russia in the field of health-improving use of plant and animal-based products. Numerous scientific conferences devoted to the problems of application, effects on the body, synergy of the chemical composition of medicinal and animal products indicate an increasing interest in the healing power of nature. In addition, it highlights the issues of the unique beneficial properties of phytopreparations, organopreparations and animal-based preparations. As a result of the conducted research, it is possible to conclude about the geographical variability of the composition of products of plant and animal origin depending on the territory of residence of a certain ethnicity. The formation of traditional features has a specific orientation in the field of economic activity and largely depends on the natural conditions of residence.

*Keywords:* ethnic food culture; healers of the peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan; diet therapy; herbal medicine; organotherapy.

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## **ТРАДИЦИОННАЯ ЛЕЧЕБНАЯ ПИЩА РАСТИТЕЛЬНОГО И ЖИВОТНОГО ПРОИСХОЖДЕНИЯ У НАРОДОВ СЕВЕРНОГО КАВКАЗА И ДАГЕСТАНА (XIX–XX вв.)**

*Аннотация.* Культура и традиции народов, связанные с питанием, как и все другие традиции, принятые определенным народом, представляют его как отдельную самостоятельную и самобытную единицу, отличную от других. Тем не менее, именно на основе всестороннего анализа духовной и материальной культуры можно выявить общность и отличительные черты традиционных элементов различных этносов. В данной статье представлены и описаны исторические варианты использования лечебной пищи растительного и животного происхождения у народов Северного Кавказа и Дагестана. Проведен сравнительный анализ состава, технологий приготовления и использования традиционной лечебной пищи у различных этносов, проведен анализ и структурирование источников литературы по данной теме. Исследование традиционной пищи народов объединяет огромный пласт этнографических устных и письменных свидетельств, археологических источников, медицинских, физиологических, биохимических, психологических исследований, народный фольклор, сотни разнообразных обрядов и ритуалов, запретов и календарных регламентаций, религиозных верований. Актуальность проведенного исследования состоит в обращении к истокам неисчерпаемых возможностей применения многовекового и многообразного опыта народов России в сфере оздоровительного использования продуктов растительного и животного происхождения. Многочисленные научные конференции, посвященные проблемам применения, влияния на организм, синергии химического состава продуктов лекарственного и животного происхождения, и в плане исторического опыта развития в народной медицине и этнографических исследований свидетельствуют о возрастающем интересе к целительной силе природы, к уникальным полезным свойствам фитопрепаратов, органопрепаратов и препаратов на основе продуктов жизнедеятельности животных. В результате проведенного исследования можно прийти к выводам о географической вариативности состава продукции растительного и животного происхождения в зависимости от территории проживания определенного народа. Формирование традиционных особенностей имеют специфическую направленность в сфере хозяйственной деятельности и во многом зависит от природных условий проживания.

*Ключевые слова:* этническая культура питания; целители народов Северного Кавказа и Дагестана; диетотерапия; фитотерапия; органотерапия.

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Food is one of the key elements of the material and spiritual culture of an ethnic group. The numerous variety of specifics and technologies for obtaining food is a fundamental reflection of the economic development of the environment, as well as the cultural and economic way of the ethnic group. In addition, the study of the history of culture and the specifics of the nutrition of various peoples makes it possible to identify the adaptive capacity to changing environmental factors.

Ecosystem differentiation directly affects and determines the variability of food resources. To assess ethnic specific aspects of nutrition, it is necessary to take into account differences in terms of the impact of economic development of the environment, which in turn determines the types of nutrition. From this perspective, we can single out three main groups: 1) hunting (including fishing) and pastoral communities; 2) agricultural groups; 3) societies engaged in both agriculture and cattle breeding. If we describe the composition of food in these groups in general, the first group can be characterized by food with a high content of protein and animal fats due to widely consumed meat and fish products. The second group is mainly carbohydrate food, which is low in protein and animal fats, but rich in vitamins, bone-forming minerals and microelements, while the third is mixed.

The issues of proper nutrition, as a necessary condition for maintaining the vital activity of the body and as the main component of human health, are particularly acute in modern times. The neglect of food culture, lack of time and, as a result, the tendency to consume fast food products, lead to various endocrine, cardiovascular diseases, diseases of the gastrointestinal tract and hormonal imbalance.

Hippocrates mentions in his works that our food substances should be a remedy, and our remedies should be food substances. Ethnic food culture is the most stable element of the spiritual and material culture of society, which determines the identity and degree of development of this ethnic group throughout various historical eras.

Ethnic features of the use and composition of therapeutic nutrition, in their universality, are one of the vital factors determining the identity of people. Folk traditions, customs and rituals associated with folk medicine are preserved in constantly changing conditions and are passed down from generation to generation either unchanged or in new versions adapted to reality.

Food in the concept of ethnography is a reflection of daily activities, trade, habits, opportunities and traditional characteristics of a particular ethnos. Depending on the type of plant or animal food used, it is possible to determine the identity and originality of the ethnic group, which is the basis of the spiritual culture of the studied people. This issue is especially relevant in terms of the use of medicinal food, both in historical progress and in the

modern world, as there is a tendency to return to the origins of the traditions of the use of herbal and animal medicines in terms of healthy and therapeutic nutrition, diet therapy, and phytotherapy.

The presented article covers the use of food of plant and animal origin, which is used as an adjuvant in the treatment of certain diseases. It is no secret that vitamins, microelements and other nutrients enter our body with food. Currently, qualified nutritionists make up many diet plans that can be used in the treatment of various diseases, but in the present article, we consider the traditional options for consuming medicinal food among the peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, what they inherited in this area from the experience of their ancestors. As for the concepts of food – organism, first it should be noted that the organism is considered as an independent quantity in relation to the independent variable quantity – food. This means that we can regulate the quantity and quality of the food consumed at will, but the health and energy of the body depends on the ingredients that make up the basis. In regards to the amount of consumed food, we should emphasize that most of the peoples living in the North Caucasus and Dagestan have always been restrained in food – moderation in food was considered a virtue. For many centuries, peoples have accumulated vast experience in the use of food, its compatibility and quantity, its healing properties. Nutritional science, starting with hygienic nutrition standards that protect against the adverse effects of food, ends with diet therapy. This approach to food and other methods of treatment was widespread everywhere, and experience in this area was very valuable.

The issues of the use of food for medicinal purposes are touched upon in many ethnographic works, where it is considered as one of the elements of the traditional culture of people. In this perspective, it should be analyzed as a separate socio-cultural element of ethnic tradition and a fundamental phenomenon reflecting the spiritual and material culture and self-consciousness of peoples. Many foreign scientists are engaged in research in the field of nutritional science [1-3].

An invaluable contribution to the study of the traditional food of the Russian peoples was made by Soviet ethnographers such as S.A. Tokarev, S.A. Arutyunov, N.L. Zhukovskaya and many other ethnographers who studied particular ethnic groups [4–28].

In Soviet ethnography, an original scientific methodology was developed for studying the nutritional systems of various peoples, which includes the following main elements: 1) a set of basic food products; 2) types of dishes prepared from them; 3) the presence of characteristic additional components such as seasonings and spices; 4) methods of food processing and food preparation; 5) food restrictions and preferences; 6) rules of conduct associated with cooking and eating [29].

In the present article, considering the system of therapeutic nutrition of various ethnic groups, we can include the following elements:

1. Therapeutic food of plant origin.
2. Therapeutic food from animal parts.
3. Therapeutic food based on mixed plant and animal origin.

Many scientists and researchers of the peoples living in Russia have collected a significant amount of ethnographic material, information about the system and psychology of nutrition, about the use of medicinal food for various diseases, about the social function and socio-cultural aspects of nutrition.

In the article titled “On the methodology of ethnographic study of material culture”, one of the leading Soviet ethnographers S.A. Tokarev writes “... the functions of food in human society are very diverse. Food and drink serve man not only for purely physiological satiation, i.e. not only to satisfy the elementary biological need for nutrition, which takes place throughout the organic world, both in animals and plants. Food also plays another important role – a mediator for social communication” [30, pp. 3-17].

On the territory of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, the composition of food is determined by ecological and climate-geographic conditions; therefore, the type of food, both of plant and animal origin, is different among different peoples.

The ethnic specificity of many peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, their material and spiritual culture is due to many factors. The main one is the interaction and mutual influence of such economic and cultural types as settled-agricultural, nomadic-pastoral. There was also a military-commercial type, which was mainly inherent more to the Cossacks. Caucasian cuisine and meals represent a variety of options for food models. Developing over the centuries, it adopted elements of the culinary traditions of neighboring peoples, but local variants were also clearly traced.

For example, if we consider the historical evolution of the nutrition system of Russians living in Dagestan, we can observe changes not only in terms of geographical expansion, but also in terms of gradual variations in the application, preparation and production of products of plant and animal origin.

These changes can be observed in first courses, which were originally prepared on a different basis, but over time acquired common features in basic products. The first dish was prepared on the basis of hogweed (*Heracleum*) and flour. Some representatives of the Russian ethnic group prepared soup from the same plant – the well-known borscht. Other plants were added to the dish, depending on the region. It could be both cultivated and wild plants. Over time, people started to add beets to the soup, and in some dialects a

new term emerged – svekolnik. However, historically the name borscht was fixed. Another example is the sour soup schi, originally based on barley or flour, to which later vegetables were added – cabbage, potatoes, etc.

Both first courses are considered different in Russian cuisine, but in the course of historical variations, they have retained a common quality – the presence of a sour taste and a flour component<sup>1</sup>.

Considering the traditional medicinal food used in Russian cuisine, we can note the tendency to prioritize salty, pickled, sour dishes. For example, pickle soups, sour cabbage soup, pickled and marinated apples, sauerkraut are the most distinctive dishes. Over time, scientific medicine has proven that the best way to preserve vitamins and microelements in food is to soak, pickle, ferment and salt vegetables and fruits. In addition, lactic acid forms in products prepared in this way, which kills pathogenic microbes.

The use of plant- and animal-based products for medicinal purposes is also described in the monograph “History of Medicine”: “The main place in ancient Russian medicine was occupied by ‘potions’ of plant origin: cloves were recommended for visual impairment, ginger was given as a remedy for colds, pepper was considered a panacea for all diseases, nutmeg was used as a diuretic. Medicines prepared from plants were very popular: wormwood, nettle, plantain, wild rosemary, spongilla (bodyaga), lime blossoms, birch leaves, ash bark, juniper berries, as well as horseradish, birch sap and many other folk remedies. The onion family, especially onions and garlic, had a special place. Ancient herbalists noted their ability to stimulate skin regeneration in case of burns, bruises, and wounds. Among medicines of animal origin, honey, raw cod liver, mare’s milk, deer antlers, animal bile, and lard occupied a special place. For heart disease, epilepsy, the mentally ill, and drinking binges, the secret of the gland of the musk deer was used” [14, p. 135].

The tradition of using therapeutic nutrition, methods and technology of cooking and processing food of the representatives of the Russian ethnic group in the Caucasus are somewhat different from other representatives of the Russian people living in other natural areas. The ethnic groups of the Caucasus, who lived in various natural zones in the conditions of mountainous, foothill, steppe space, retained their original way of life. It also preserved the material and spiritual culture of the peoples unchanged. This also certainly applies to the ethnic food culture, the use of plant and animal food for medicinal purposes. The historically established habitation of humans in various geographical areas influenced the ability of the indigenous population to adapt to environmental conditions, which, in turn, affected the national cuisine, aimed mainly at increasing the adaptive capabilities of the body. It is known that the traditional model of nutrition of the mountain

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<sup>1</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informants: Neonila Lavrentievna Tishchenko, 1938; Yulia Nikolaevna Eremina, 1956, Makhachkala, Republic of Dagestan.

peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan was based mostly on products of animal origin, since cattle breeding was the leading form of economic activity in the highlands. Hunting and gathering supplemented the diet in the form of game, wild berries and medicinal plants.

A set of medicinal plants, which they add to food or use in the form of infusions and decoctions, represented the vegetation of forest-steppe and forest zones. These are plants such as yarrow, wormwood, tansy, plantain, St. John's wort, sweet clover, mountain bird, burnet, mother-and-stepmother, cudweeds, red clover, etc.

The Cossacks had a certain influence on the composition of the medical nutrition of representatives of the Russian ethnic group living in the southern regions, in addition to the geographical location and environmental conditions. They were more engaged in gardening and knew about the beneficial properties of berries such as blueberries, lingonberries, currants, blackberries, raspberries, cranberries, elderberries, viburnum; cultivated such medicinal herbs as thyme, sage, oregano, lemon balm, chamomile, rosemary, etc.

As for animal products, the Cossacks knew about the beneficial properties of animal fats, honey, milk, eggs, etc.

For treating colds and cough, they suggest hot milk with the addition of interior goat fat. In the case of fever, it was advised to drink a tincture of wormwood; in case of stomachache, they cooked porridge from honey and crushed plantain leaves and gave it to eat on an empty stomach. Highlander grass was considered as a good remedy for women's pains. Various poisonings they treated with warm milk mixed with a raw egg<sup>2</sup>.

According to informants, people who practiced traditional medicine were called kurrenniye kashevary. They prepared infusions and decoctions from medicinal herbs, and prepared healing ointments based on animal fats<sup>3</sup>.

Folk medicine was also widespread among the Terek Cossacks. The causes of diseases, according to the Terek Cossacks, were the wrath of God, evil spirits, as well as spells of witches, sorcerers. The Cossacks used various herbs and plants as medicines: chamomile, mint, wormwood, garlic, oak bark. In addition, live spiders were used, sewn into amulets (ladanka) along with snakeskins or prayers, which were believed to help with fever. The healers were highly respected among Terek Cossacks. With the introduction of official medicine, folk healers did not stop practicing, especially since they experienced no serious competition [31].

Phytotherapy – herbal treatment – was the main way of healing both in the Kuban villages and among the Don Cossacks. I.D. Popka testified that for

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<sup>2</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informants: Zainulabidova Lyudmila Dolgatovna, 1949, Kizlyar, Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>3</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informants: Saypudinova Valentina Maksimovna, 1952; Chechelova Nadezhda Fedorovna, 1950, Kizlyar city, Republic of Dagestan.

the Black Sea Cossacks “herbal treatment, in various forms, was reality. Of the plants used in the manufacture, medicine and in the kitchen, there are: woad, madder, licorice root, elderberry, chamomile, wintercress, sesame, mustard, asparagus, wild garlic, horseradish...” [21, p. 25].

“The medicinal power contained in nature – herbs, trees, minerals – was understood as vitality, health, fertility and determined their priority use. The Cossack and nonresident population of the Kuban at the beginning of the 19th century, as contemporaries testified, had “a great aversion to medicines, and apart from some herbs they use nothing else” [32, p. 75]. In the folk medicine of the Cossacks, the beneficial properties of birch sap (berezovitsa), mistletoe, betony leaves infusion, nettle, decoction of oak bark, centaury, wormwood, mugwort tincture, plantain broth and many others were recommended. Garlic was widely used to protect against plagues – infectious diseases!; for gastric diseases doctors recommended using gentian [33]. For heartburn, they recommended to drink a decoction of gentian, considering that it lowers the acidity of gastric juice.

In folk medicine of the Kuban Cossacks, a decoction of parsley was given to drink with "constipation of urine", with pain in the bladder. Thyme in herbalists and medical books was recommended to be used to treat “female” ailments: “and whose wife’s chest hurts, sip and steam, God have mercy”; “... girls whose breasts hurt, drowning goat's milk will help.” In folk medicine of the Don Cossacks, thyme was used as an anti-inflammatory remedy for the treatment of gynecological diseases [34, p. 92–105].

Many methods of using medicinal products of plant and animal origin among the Cossacks are identical with other ethnic groups living in the North Caucasus and Dagestan.

Both the geographic environment and the peculiar living conditions and, largely, the rationality of folk remedies contributed to the approval and conservation of traditional medicine in the life of the highlanders [5, p. 170].

It is important to note that in the traditional medicine of the peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan, along with rational methods of treatment, some elements of irrational were also applied. We are talking about prayers, conspiracies, spells and whispers read on medicinal food, supposedly to enhance the effect. This reflects the religious or mythical way of thinking inherent in each ethnic group, depending on the type of religion, and on the forms the basis of traditional oral culture.

In folk medicine of the Nakh-Dagestanian ethnic groups (Chechens, Ingush, Avars, Laks, Dargins, Tabasarans, Lezgins, Aguls, Rutuls, Tsakhurs) and the Abkhazian-Adyghe group (Abkhazians, Kabardins, Abazins, Circassians, Adyghe, Shapsugs), animal products occupied a significant place in the treatment of diseases. More often, they were hunting products. As organotherapy, they used meat, bile, blood, bone marrow, liver, and fat of bear, deer, hare, wild boars, wolves and birds. In folk medicine of the Turkic



group (Nogais, Kumyks, Karachays, and Balkars), phytopreparations occupy a huge layer among the set of medicines. Folk healers had the skills to properly collect, dry and store medicinal herbs, roots, flowers, tree bark. Medicinal plants were collected in spring or early summer. Infusions and decoctions were prepared from dried medicinal plants; also, they crushed and added them to various dishes. For preparing tinctures and decoctions, dried herbs were put in clay pots, filled with water and steamed at a certain temperature. These decoctions and tinctures were used to treat colds, diseases of the gastrointestinal tract, kidneys, liver, etc.

A significant place in the arsenal of traditional remedies of the Karachays and Balkars was occupied by food. The use of good quality, vitamin-rich food and compliance with hygiene rules in itself was the key to health. The traditional food of the Balkars and Karachays was characterized primarily by high nutritional value, and most importantly – high calorie content, which was due to the constant hard physical work performed by the residents of the region due to their traditional occupations. When performing particularly heavy physical work, the most high-calorie food was specially prepared, if possible in each family [24, p. 5].

Plants were the most popular among medicines. A variety of soups based on the flour from germinated grains with the addition of nettle and sorrel were considered healthy. Various porridges made from millet, pea, barley, rice groats with the addition of melted animal fat, melted butter and milk were thought useful for the body.

Adequate nutrition contributed to the success in the treatment of diseases. Priority was given to dairy cuisine. Hot whole milk (goat or cow) with honey and butter was given to drink for sore throats and coughs. Food poisoning was treated with milk, ointments were prepared based on butter and medicinal plants that healed skin diseases.

Fermented milk products were considered useful for the digestive tract and were widely used for the prevention and treatment of gastrointestinal diseases. Mare's milk was considered a panacea for many diseases. It was given to people with tuberculosis, weakened after a severe and prolonged illness. Of particular value was the fermented milk product from mare's milk – koumiss.

Studies have shown the presence of useful enzymes, microelements, amino acids in koumiss. Natural antibiotics have also been found in koumiss, which increases its effectiveness in the treatment of bacterial diseases.

A fermented drink like koumiss, made from goat's milk, was also considered a good remedy among the Karachay people. Dried cheese diluted in broth was used with fever. It was also used to expel helminths, with loose stools, to stimulate appetite, with nausea.

Milk was part of the arsenal of traditional medicine of almost all the peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan. For colds, warm cow or goat's

milk was considered especially useful. It was used with honey, sometimes milk was boiled together with chopped onion or garlic. With bronchitis and cough, herbs collected in spring and dried in the sun were mixed with fresh milk and put to languish in the oven, after which the liquid was filtered and drunk hot with sugar.

The number of medicinal products included other products of animal origin. Fats were mainly used, in particular cooked inner fats. They could be used for both external and internal use. Animal fats in dried or melted form were added to various dishes. In mountainous areas, chicken fat was used more often, in lowland regions goat and goose fat were more common. In addition to fats, different parts of animal carcasses were used to prepare medicines. For example, chicken stomachs were considered curative for diseases of the stomach, gallbladder. They were dried, crushed and added to food. People with weakened immunity were given hot broths from poultry and goat meat to drink. In the case of anemia and general exhaustion of the body, it was considered useful to drink fresh blood of a pet.

The peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan considered honey, propolis, milk, formic acid as medicinal.

Elements of homeopathy were not uncommon in folk medicine of the peoples of the North Caucasus. So, for example, with hearing problems, they offered to eat boiled animal ears, for heart diseases, they gave a boiled animal heart, and animal liver was also used in the treatment of liver diseases.

Among the peoples of the high-altitude zone, bear organs could be used for this purpose. If a person had weakness in his legs, it was advised to eat a bear's paw. The heart of large wild animals was eaten, believing that it would give courage and fortitude, and, conversely, avoided eating the heart of a killed hare<sup>4</sup>.

When using the "like treats like" method in traditional medicine, color analogies should be mentioned. For example, in diseases of the liver, it was advised to use yellow plants and products, such as: decoction or tincture of St. John's wort, oats, sunflower petals, carrots, egg yolk, with rubella – compote from red berries such as currants, viburnum. A strange way to treat jaundice, according to locals, was secretly adding lice to the patient's food, which, according to legend, cleansed the blood and liver<sup>5</sup>.

As the flora of the North Caucasus and Dagestan is rich and includes more than 6,000 plant species, of which more than 1,000 are medicinal, then, accordingly, plant products are of basic importance in therapeutic food. Medicinal plants are widely distributed in the North Caucasus and Dagestan in forests, steppes, meadows, rocks, gardens and backyard fields.

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<sup>4</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informant: Akhmednabiev M., 1953, Mekhelta, Gumbetovsky district, Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>5</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informants: Akhmedov M., 1947, Nizhny Batlukh, Shamilsky district.; Akhmedova K.L. 1923, Gigatli, Tsumadinsky district, Republic of Dagestan.

Rowan, viburnum, cherry, cherry plum, pine, chestnut, locust, dogwood, sea buckthorn, feijoa, raspberries, blackberries and many others are considered medicinal trees and shrubs. Chechens and Ingush prepared diaphoretic and expectorant decoctions from medicinal plants. For the treatment of joint diseases, a tincture of chestnut and white acacia was used. Herbal baths, as well as therapeutic mud and mineral waters, helped with skin diseases. Herbal decoctions were prepared from St. John's wort, plantain, yarrow. They used these plants for treatment of stomach ailments [35].

Juniper, horsetail and rosehip fruits have been successfully used for curing the diseases of the kidneys and urinary tract. It was believed that azulene-containing plants have a beneficial effect in various diseases of the digestive system, erosions and stomach ulcers. These include chamomile and yarrow. They were mixed with honey and recommended to eat on an empty stomach. Plants containing bitter glycosidic substances and plants containing essential oils were considered plants that increase gastric secretion and stimulate appetite. These include wormwood, yarrow, oregano, and onion-garlic. Flaxseed was prescribed to cleanse the small intestine. For treatment, they ate boiled onions, drank warm milk with onions and pepper. Nogays and Kumyks actively used wormwood in the treatment, considering it a strong drug for diseases of the gastrointestinal tract. Cherry berries were used to treat diarrhea. They also knew about the beneficial properties of rosehip.

Among the Vainakhs, medicines of animal origin were widely used. They prepared broths from meat, which they fed the sick and wounded. Chicken broth was more common. The most favorite dishes of national cuisine were zhizhig-galnash (dumplings with a side of meat and garlic sauce), chepalgash (pies with cottage cheese and onions), khingalsh (pumpkin pies), beram (cottage cheese with sour cream), siskal (corn bread), tsu (flour from fried barley and corn grains) [26, p. 350-354]. Pulmonary diseases were treated with bee honey, and the patient was also rubbed with badger and bear fat. They drank hot milk, to which they added badger, goat and bear fat. In cases of dislocations, sheep's wool was fired, then applied to the damaged area and tied up.

Buffalo milk and butter were in great demand. They ate dum (kurdyuk – dried fatty back part of a ram), the healing properties of which are recognized even today. For various diseases, it is cut into a thin layer and applied to the head. Kurdyuk with honey was considered a favorite remedy [36, p. 76-78].

In the folk medicine of the Adyghe, Balkars, Karachays, Kabardians, therapeutic nutrition was widely used. One of the oldest dairy products was koumiss. It was believed that it strengthens and renews the body. The abundance of medicinal herbs in the highland pastures made milk nutritious and healing. To restore their strength, the Kabardians and Balkars prepared a soup of crushed barley, seasoned with milk or cream. In medical nutrition, much attention was paid to the usage of honey, onion and garlic. Walnut was

given to emaciated patients, while walnut juice was believed to have life-empowering properties. Animal products were also used, for example, goat meat, fat and goat milk with finely chopped pieces of fat were used for lung diseases. Sick kidneys, stomach and even heart were treated with the same drink. For stomach pains, crushed dried meat was consumed. Tuberculosis patients were fed fatty bear meat, badger, goat meat, mutton, watered with fat, melted from the chicken, internal fat. To improve vision and anemia, Kabardians and Balkars ate half-raw liver [37, p. 59]. As for the therapeutic nutrition of numerous peoples of Dagestan, it had a lot in common with other ethnic groups, since the experience and skills of treatment were assimilated into neighboring ethnic groups. Food prepared on a plant basis was considered more useful. Knowing the value of plants, people took care of them and tried to follow the rules of their collection and storage.

Diseases of the respiratory system of most peoples of the Caucasus were treated with vitamin infusions and tea in large quantities. Infusions of rosehip, coltsfoot, pine buds, mint, St. John's wort, savory, dried apricot compotes, rowanberry, black currant and pinecones were used. Hot milk with honey, hot urbech (fried flax seed paste) with butter and honey or urbech with hot goat fat; hot meat or chicken broth with garlic; hot buza (fermented oatmeal drink) or ripe vine; figs cooked in milk<sup>6</sup>. For headaches or colds, healers of Dagestan recommended hot compotes, cow and mare's milk mixed with a decoction of thyme, St. John's wort, and cumin seeds.

For the sick, they tried to cook food of a sparing nature, for example, dumplings stuffed with cottage cheese or dried and pounded medicinal herbs, with eggs and finely chopped lard, with pumpkin and fried onions. They prepared light barley porridge with urbech, milk soup with garlic. Dumplings from 10 parts of savory and 1 part of buttercup with eggs were considered a sedative for headaches and insomnia. It was recommended to prepare the following pie: beat up a mixture of 3-4 eggs, add 1 glass of milk, put onions fried in sheep fat, 1 tablespoon of crushed savory and buttercup, add half a glass of corn flour and boil.

In case of lung disease, Kumyk healers put the patient on a diet: it was recommended to consume milk and dairy products as often as possible (goat is best). In addition, a complex medicine was prepared from a mixture of fish oil, hot milk, raw eggs, melted fat and sugar.

In the case of bronchitis and cough, Nogay healers treated the patient with badger fat, sour milk with crushed garlic.

People suffering from pulmonary diseases were fed twice a day unpeeled ground toasted pumpkin seeds mixed with milk. Healers treated cough attacks with various kinds of liquids: hot cow's milk, with and without butter, hot berry and fruit decoctions without sugar, decoctions of nettle, nettle root,

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<sup>6</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informants: Amiraliev M., 1948, village Orota of the Khunzakh region; Ahmad-haji, 1956, village Upper Chugli, Levashinsky District, Republic of Dagestan.

quince seeds [16, p. 113].

Diseases of the digestive system (gastritis, gastric ulcer, colitis, etc.) were treated with a salad of plantain leaves, collected early in the morning with honey and fresh sour cream. Wormwood, savory, yarrow, cumin and other medicinal plants were used in the form of infusions and tea with honey. From bouts of colitis, they prepared scrambled eggs with caraway seeds and onions, which were fried in the lard of a sheep, and the patients were given a decoction of wild rose or blueberries, sour milk, mashed cottage cheese. Mountain healers used fresh and warm curd whey, sour milk, unboiled water, one-day curdled milk as a laxative, and they gave rye, yeast crackers, boiled beets, prunes, dried apricots, and rice.

In the case of bloating (flatulence), folk healers suggested eating overcooked grains of cereals or charcoal with rainwater, a decoction of juniper fruits with honey, infusions of blackcurrant, cumin, and St. John's wort.

To get rid of diarrhea, it was recommended to drink infusions of plants with astringent properties, for example, blueberries, bird cherry, alder cones, oak bark, chamomile. With persistent forms of diarrhea, patients consumed ground dried wild pear or its flour during the day. This remedy was considered a panacea for various forms of diarrhea; especially it was used in difficult cases of curing diarrhea in children.

Diseases of the gastrointestinal tract were among the most common in Dagestan. The treatment of patients with bear bile, which was often referred to by Avar healers, was well known to other ethnic groups. Bear bile should have been mixed with whey.

For internal bleeding, infusions of nettle and yarrow were given. In the presence of worms, healers prescribed a bread day; in the morning and throughout the day, the patient can eat boiled corn, without fat and salt. In addition, in this case, pumpkin seeds with green husks, wormwood and enzyme seeds were used.

As a means of cleansing the gastrointestinal tract and normalizing the activity of the digestive system, many peoples of Dagestan considered white clay. The clay was dissolved in warm water and drunk on an empty stomach. Some peoples, for example, Avars, Dargins, Aguls, Lezgins dried "lollipops" from white clay.

For diseases of the liver and gallbladder, healers recommended drinking warm curd whey on an empty stomach; millet and rice porridge, boiled low-fat meat (veal, chicken), berry and fruit jelly, milk soups were allowed. With jaundice and various liver diseases, it was considered a proven remedy in folk medicine to give the patient live lice with honey. Patients were allowed to eat only soups, fresh cottage cheese, buckwheat and rice porridge, potato, carrot, pumpkin puree, boiled beets, herbal teas and abundant use of boiled whey.

Healers advised patients with jaundice to take decoctions of birch leaves,

wild rose, recommended to use them several times a day in small portions with fresh cottage cheese. A decoction of barberry seeds in a weak honey solution was considered curative. With cholelithiasis, the patient was prescribed a diet that excluded fatty, spicy, and advised to consume more dishes consisting of vegetables, fruits and compotes. In the treatment of patients, some Dagestan folk healers used dried rabbit or hare liver. Therefore, for example, the healer Magomed-Arip from Kahib gave the sick dried and crushed wolf liver mixed with walnut oil<sup>7</sup>.

Kidney diseases were treated with infusions of corn shoots, soup from unripe peas and green beans, oregano tea. There were watermelon days: for three days, they ate as many watermelons as they could and tried not to eat anything else. They recommended drinking birch sap, eating soft young stems of burdock, using wild pear and its leaves, wild lingonberries, corn flowers, petiole pumpkins with honey and figs, an infusion of cherry pedicels, carrot seeds, cumin (Gunibsky and Gergebilsky districts). In case of kidney diseases, patients were also given berries (cherries, currants, strawberries, blueberries), a decoction of corn stigmas. No less importance was attached to the use of products of animal origin. For example, Avar healers gave the sick broths from the meat of wild animals. Doctors and other peoples of Dagestan often mentioned the healing properties of game and broths from it. So, for example, in case of inflammatory processes in the kidneys, bear meat broth was given to drink, thick partridge broth was recommended to patients [16, p. 118].

In the old days, renal colic was treated with a hot drink from various herbs: marjoram, birch branches, chamomile flowers, and cudweed. With painful difficulty urination, two onions were heated in the oven and eaten every night. In case of involuntary urination, an infusion of lingonberries (fruits and leaves) was given with the addition of 2 teaspoons of St. John's wort (0.5 cup before bedtime). They also recommended an infusion of seeds of basil, St. John's wort and centaury. With frequent urination, tea from corn shoots or cherry stalks was recommended.

Doctors and other residents of Dagestan often resort to the healing properties of meat and soups of wild animals. So, for example, inflammatory processes in the kidneys were treated with bear broth.

In the treatment of diseases of the cardiovascular system, a diet was prescribed that limited the intake of salt and animal fats. The combination of honey with foods rich in vitamin C was considered exceptionally beneficial for health: apricot, sea buckthorn, mountain ash, sour sorrel. According to folk observations, pumpkin and Caucasian hemp seeds in a combined composition give a tangible result in the treatment of heart disease. In case of heart disease, decoctions of barberry leaves and juice of ripe fruits were given

<sup>7</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informant: Ibragimov U.O., 1954, village Chvadab, Charodinsky district, Republic of Dagestan.

to drink. Widely used vegetable and fruit juices from pumpkin, watermelon, and apricot, peach. Quince was of particular importance because it is rich in potassium and calcium salts. Very often, the highlanders prepared chudu (stuffed pies) of nettle and sorrel. To relieve back pain and various joint pains, mountain healers mixed black cumin with honey and ate it on an empty stomach. For the same purpose, flax seeds were used.

Nogay healers successfully treated internal diseases, infectious diseases, intestinal diseases, and diseases of the head, throat and nose, diseases of the joints, neuropsychiatric diseases, childhood and gynecological diseases. The Nogay healers considered the heart (yurek) to be one of the most important organs of the human body. They gave them an infusion of plantain (baka yaprak) and black radish (kara tura) with honey. Tabasaran doctors also recommended that their patients take honey mixed with black radish for pain in the heart [13, p. 134].

In severe forms of heart disease, the patient was given porridge made from flour prepared from germinated spring corn with the addition of honey or linseed oil without salt. Animal products were also used. In the old days, tachycardia was treated by eating sheep's heart. Highlanders attributed great importance to the observance of a milk-vegetable diet. The most useful in this diet were cottage cheese and sour milk.

In diseases of the joints, salt-free rice diets were used. Pain in the joints was also treated by fasting. Pine resin was chewed as a preventive measure against cancer<sup>8</sup>.

Many peoples of the Caucasus were able to diagnose and treat anemia. Patients were advised to drink beef or bear blood, add fat tail to food, and increase the consumption of walnuts and hazelnuts with honey, vegetables and fruits.

In a weakened and exhausted state of the body, some peoples (Laks, Kumyks, Tabasarans) ate black beans. They germinated them, baked them a little on a stone slab, poured them into a clay pot, and poured boiling water over them. Then they put the pot in hot ashes for 2-3 hours. For the same purpose, khinkal was prepared from black bean flour with kurdyuk, as well as with sheep cheese, pouring garlic sauce over them<sup>9</sup>. As a means of calming, strengthening and healing, they used apricot kernel paste – apricot urbech.

Tumors were treated with a highly concentrated infusion of spruce and pinecones, roots and young trunks of burdock, plantain, beetroot juice, onion and garlic. There was a tradition to treat tumors with an extract of thorn apple seeds (stramonium).

Dagestan Azerbaijanis attached great importance to the diet of patients. The first place among the products used for curing many diseases was

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<sup>8</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informant: Akhmedov S., 1949, village Tsumada, Tsumadinsky district, Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>9</sup> Field ethnographic material of the authors, informant: Islamova Z.D., 1942, village Aksai the RD.

occupied by fresh and sour milk, tea with medicinal herbs (mint, thyme, barberry, rosehip, oregano, etc.), fruit juices and syrups (grape, watermelon, pomegranate). In addition, many diseases were treated with honey [12, p. 324].

The article covers only a small part of the entire system of therapeutic nutrition. Although much knowledge in the field of therapeutic nutrition has been lost due to the development of official drug therapy, the main basic knowledge associated with the therapeutic use of plant and animal products has been preserved through family traditions, rituals and customs.

Many modern studies confirm the rationality and importance of the use of traditional medicine, which has brought and brings great benefits in the treatment of diseases. Summarizing the presented material, we can conclude that the herbal and animal remedies used by folk healers had some similarities not only with neighboring peoples, but also with ethnic groups of other regions of the country, since it was mostly based on the forms of economic activity that had developed in the region. Nevertheless, the composition of food has huge variations depending on the ecological and natural-geographical environment. Despite the fact that traditional medicine was based on general principles and methods of treatment and manufacture of medicines, in specific regions, even specific healers had their own recipes and methods of healing. The richness and uniqueness of natural and climatic conditions allowed the peoples of the North Caucasus and Dagestan to accumulate a wealth of experience in the treatment of diseases and the preservation of health.

In the centuries-old experience of the people in the field of therapeutic nutrition, diet therapy, one can find a lot of useful material, especially since this experience is passed from generation to generation, bringing new knowledge and discoveries.



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