

A.Ü. Veterinary Faculty, Department of the History
of Veterinary Medicine and Deontology

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ferruh Dinçer

A REPORT ON THE FOLKLORE ACTIVITIES AND FOLK VETERINARY MEDICINE IN TURKEY*

Ferruh Dinçer**

Özet: *Türkiye’de Halkbilgisi Çalışmaları ve Veteriner Folkloru*

Anadolu toprakları yüzyıllar boyu sayısız toplumlara yurt olmuş, burada, öncekilerin kalıntısı üzerine diğerlerinin katkıları sonu bir uygarlıklar karışımı doğmuştur. Bugün, gerek yazılı kaynaklarda bulunan, gerekse halkın günlük yaşamında izlenebilen halk bilgilerinin veterinerlik bölümü de aynı görünümündedir. Sosyo-ekonomik değişimler sonu çoğu unutulmakta olan bu bilgilerin, özellikle hayvancılıkla geçinen “göçer”lerde yaşayan örnekleri vardır. Bunların kökü binlerce yıl önceye gitmektedir. Hayvan yetiştiriciliği ve 3 grup altında toplanabilen hastalıkların sağitumları geleneksel biçimlerini korumaktadırlar.

Summary: *Turkey or Anatolia was occupied by different kinds of human communities for centuries. Finally a mixture of ancient civilizations was produced. Its veterinary folklore is also in the same character. Today, some of the folk veterinary practice is partly being applied by some nomad tribes and the rest has been forgotten. Folk veterinary literature (MSS) is very rich and important from historical point of view. Data on the subject go as early as 3rd millenium B.C. Samples of the treatment and prevention of disease in farm animals can be classified into 3 groups as magico-religious, empirical and rational. Folk knowledge on animal raising and on their products are still conducted on a traditional line in some parts of Eastern Turkey.*

* Presented at the 16 th International Symposium on the History of Veterinary Medicine, May 21-24, 1980, Bärau-Switzerland.

** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Department of the History of Veterinary Medicine and Deontology, Veterinary Faculty, Ankara University, Ankara-Turkey.

Introduction

Folklore as a whole, as a specific field of artistic culture is a continuously and regularly developing phenomenon, and this development abides with the objective laws of the historical evolution of society, peoples and folk life (25).

Although the term "Folklore" in contemporary scientific terminology is a comparatively young one-it appeared in England for the first time in 1846- and has only been elaborated and extended in the 20 th century, its scope today is very wide and varied(7). Therefore the science of folklore has an abundance of terms and definitions (9). It is indeed possible to find twenty one definitions of folklore recorded in dictionaries (20).

As a whole, folklore, could be said laying in the unity between the history of peoples and the culture of mankind (25). Its veterinary and medical aspects can also be analyzed as a reflection of this phenomenon.

Although the history of medicine has been established as a side-line of professional study, one of its most interesting branches- that of medical folklore- has been strangely neglected (23). Whereas, folk medicine coexists with modern medicine in almost every civilized country (31). The folklore of veterinary science has received even less attention (23).

For this reason, on the occasion of the 16 th Symposium we are very much indebted to Froehner (16), Leclaince (21), Smith (28) and Smithcors (29) for their information from the ancient civilizations which give us the possibilities to trace the earliest origins of some valid practices in veterinary folklore. We are also grateful to the Executive Committee for their efforts for the discussion of the subject on an international basis.

Folklore Activities in Turkey

In Turkey, folklore as an independent discipline was introduced in the university programme in 1930 s. (5). Likewise, in 1924, the decision to establish an Ethnographical Museum was the first effort of this field. Then "*The Folk's Knowledge Congress*" was held in 1927. Publications, beginning with "*The Folk's Knowledge Magazine*" between 1929-1942 have continued up to now (15). In the First

International Turkish Folklore Congress which met in Istanbul during the 23-30 th of June 1975, 146 papers were presented by 211 scholars of whom 74 were from abroad (4). The Second Congress will be held in Bursa during the period between the 22 nd-28 th of June 1981.

Profesör Ünver (31) taught medical folklore in his lectures on medical history in Istanbul University. He also initiated the research on the subject and published various papers.

In my Faculty, Öktel (24) studied folk remedies and their pharmacological effects. I have been interested in veterinary folklore ever since my doctoral dissertation (11). I presented a paper (13) on the subject at "The First International Turkish Veterinary Congress" in 1975.

Folk Veterinary Medicine

When we look over the veterinary folklore with its general frame, we observe that husbandry and animal care have had a vital part in the life of communities. From the time of Cro-Magnon man to our time we are able to trace the presence, role and influences of the animal in all human societies. As Rousseau (27) stated "Ever since the beginning of pictorial representations in the paleolithic age, almost every civilization has left behind images which assign a great deal of space to animals". Recent publications (1, 2, 17, 18, 19, 26) on the cave pictures or on written documents from India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and Anatolia confirm this conclusion.

Many of the earliest references to the veterinary art have been found in the writings of encyclopaedists, philosophers and poets, as well as in those agriculturalists (6). Our textbooks on veterinary history (16, 21, 28, 29) contain most of those references. Besides these Newman (23) insisted that the medical care of animals was a matter of general interest to all classes of society during the pre-mechanical ages of transport. As Davitson (8) said, prior to the foundation of the veterinary schools, animal care and treatment was in the hands of farriers, herbalists, gypsies and wisemen using traditionally sanctioned forms of folk-cures and remedies.

Almost in all countries, veterinary folklore is more or less in the same character. Taking this as a common point I am going to try to summarize the basics of the Turkish Veterinary Folklore.

First of all, it is necessary to remember here the position and the historical value of Turkey, or Asia Minor, the geographical name of the peninsula which is also known as Anatolia.

Anatolia is one of the few countries on the World with its rich and unexploited natural and faunal resources. It has always played an important role as a "land bridge" on the "silk roads" between Asia and Europe over which advanced great cultures once passed. Over 10 civilizations have succeeded each other on its soil through the thousand years. All those populations did not establish their own traditions, but easily absorbed the cultures with which they came in contact. Finally, a mixture of ancient civilizations was produced on the remnants of prehistoric nomadic tribes from the Hittites to Mesopotamians, Greeks, Romans, Persians, Mongols, Seljuks and the Ottomans. Neighboring kingdoms such as Sumero-Babylonians, Assyrians had been reciprocally influenced with Anatolian communities (1, 2, 3, 14, 22). Today in Turkey there are many remains of those cultures.

The bones of the neolithic-age domestic animals which were found during the recent excavations made at Keban Dam region in the southeastern Turkey (10) indicated that the earliest inhabitants of Anatolia raised animals and paid attention to their herds.

Documents among the tablets found in Hittite sites deal with bulls, cows, rams, sheep, goats are proofs of this claim. The textbook, written by Kikkulus -the oldest Hippologist, as indicated in ref. No. 18- around 1400 B.C. is on the management and training of horses. Hittites, the first horse-breeding nation (18) were superior to their neighbours in this field (1, 2, 14, 18).

Not only in the Hittite era, but through the history of Anatolia animals were the most valuable possessions and even the measure of value. Today, in the ritualistic rustic plays of Anatolia one of the basic and most widespread element is the representations of animals. On the other hand some plays are especially performed for the occasion of animal raising such as to celebrate the breeding of cattles in April (3).

In such circumstances, it is natural that an immense folk knowledge and practice was produced and transferred from father to son or from master to apprentice. The oral sources of the folk knowledge are mostly peasants and especially nomads. Written sources are

the manuscripts on veterinary art which were called "Baytarname". As I presented at our 5 th International Congress (12) these are very important from both scientific and a folkloric point of view.

The knowledge on animal diseases and their treatment mentioned in these manuscripts or conducted on a traditional line among the folk can be classified into 3 groups:

1. Magico-religious forms. These are used either in unidentifiable cases or where medical treatment is ineffective. The causes are attributed to the effect of so-called "evil eye". Fethiches, charms are used in the treatment.

In some parts of Turkey there are some masters who have the abilities to cure animals and are called as "ocak". We know today that the ocak's treatment originated from the oldest religion of the Turks, Schamanism, in which Shaman also cures.

2. Emprical treatments. These are harmless cures and even include beneficial effects. Operative measures applied to abcesses, poulitices, pommades and medicines made of plants and minerals may be mentioned in this part.

3. The rational forms of treatment. These are divided into two categories:

- a. Curative methods such as the use of laxative foods, bloodletting and cold hydorthérapie in laminitis; oral copper sulfate solution for trichostrongylosis; the use of vinegar, thyme infusion alum and salt in foot-and-mouth disease.

- b. Preventive methods such as vaccination against sheeppox, PPLO and enterotoxemia and protective measures in malleus.

In Turkey, vaccinations by smearing the skin of both men and animals have long been performed. According to Şehsuvaroğlu (30) Long before Jenner's method of vaccination, the variolisation technique which had come down to Anatolia from China through Central Asia had been carried to Ottomans. It is, hereby suggested that the vaccination of human beings may have originated from the practice on animals.

During our research we realised that in most of the undeveloped parts of Turkey, the traditional characteristics are survived on the conventional methods concerning animal raising and on the technics for animal productions. In the western part of Turkey where-

the social and economic life is better, those traditional characters are being lost rapidly or modified and adapted to new forms. This is especially true for the 1st and 2nd form of treatments (13)

As a result, I may say that not only for my country, but for all other countries it is necessary to start a research project to collect data and to make ethnological and comparative studies on veterinary folklore. This will help to explain the similarities and interrelations within cultures of the past and present.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to my colleagues from the Department of National Folklore Research, The Ministry of Culture, Ankara-Turkey, for their contributions to obtain some articles and slides on the subject.

References

- 1- **Akurgal, E.** (1976): *Die Kunst der Hethiter*. Hirmer Verlag, München, s. 105 u. Abb. 150.
- 2- **Akurgal, E.** (1978): *Ancient Civilizations and Ruins of Turkey From Prehistoric Times Until the End of the Roman Empire*. 4th Ed. (Translated By: J. Whybraun and M. Emre) Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, Ankara, pp. 398+112 plates.
- 3- **And, M.** (1978): *On the Dramatic Fertility Rituals of Anatolian Turkey*. In: I. Başgöz and M. Glazer (Eds) 1978: "*Studies In Turkish Folklore*." Indiana Univ., Turkish Studies No.1. Bloomington, Indiana, pp. 1-24.
- 4- **Anon.** (1975): *The First International Turkish Folklore Congress 23-30 June 1975 Istanbul-Turkey*. Programme and Abstracts of Papers Presented. Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları: 13, Ankara, p. 193.
- 5- **Başgöz, I. and Glazer, M.** (Eds.) (1978): *Studies In Turkish Folklore*. Indiana Univ., Turkish Studies No. 1. Bloomington, Indiana, p. V.
- 6- **Bishop, W. J.** (1950): *The Collection of Early Veterinary Works In the Wellcome Historical Medical Library*. The Veterinary Record, 62, 481-482.

- 7- **Cubelic, T.** (1976): *Folklore and Its Methodology With Selected Examples of Turkish Folklore and the Folklore of the Yugoslav Peoples*. I. Uluslararası Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri I. Cilt Genel Konular, Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları: 16, Ankara, pp. 87-88.
- 8- **Davitson, T. D.** (1960): *A Survey of Some British Veterinary Folklore*. Bull. Hist. Med., 34, (3): 199-232.
- 9- **Değh, L.** (1978): *The Legend and the Sparrow*. In: I. Başgöz and M. Glazer (Eds.): Ibid, pp. 78-88.
- 10- **Deniz, E.** (1976): *Neolithic, Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Faunal Remains From Pulur Höyük (Keban Dam Region), Turkey*. Arkeozoological Studies, A.T. Clason, North Holland Pub. Comp., pp. 284-294.
- 11- **Dinçer, F.** (1967): *Türk Folklorunda Veteriner Hekimliği Üzerinde Araştırmalar*. Doktora Tezi. A.Ü. Vet. Fak. Yay. No: 214, Ankara, 64 s. (Summary: Studies on the Turkish Veterinary Folklore. A.Ü. Vet. Fak. Derg., 13, (4): 451-454, 1966).
- 12- **Dinçer, F.** (1974): *Old Manuscripts In Turkey and A Study on the 15 th Century Manuscript*. A.Ü. Vet. Fak. Derg., 21, (1-2): 3-12. (Reprinted In The California Vet., 29, (12): 18-24, 1975.)
- 13- **Dinçer, F.** (1976): *Türk Folklorunda Veteriner Hekimliği-Beş Doğu İlimizde Yeni Örnekleriyle*. Birinci Uluslararası Türk Folklor Kongresi. IV. Cilt: Gelenek-Görenek ve İnançlar. Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları: 21, Ankara, s. 85-92.
- 14- **Dinçer, F.** (1977): *The Intermediate Role of Anatolian Civilization on the Transition in Veterinary Art*. (In German, Autorreferat) TIHO-ANZEIGER, 6, (2): 30-31.
- 15- **Erdentuğ, N.** (1970): *A Shorth Report on Etnographical Activities In Turkey*. II eme Congress International des Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen. Athenes, 7-13 mai 1970, pp. 10.
- 16- **Froehner, R.** (1952): *Kulturgeschichte der Tierheilkunde. I. Band. Tierkrankheiten, Heilbestrebungen, Tierärzte im Altertum*. Terra-Verlag Konstanz, s. 187.
- 17- **Hausmann, W.** (1976): *Veterinärhistorische Keilschrifttexte aus Mesopotamien*. Hist. Med. Vet., 1: 82-86.

- 18- **Isenbügel, E. and Seiferle, E.** (1971): *The Horse*. Blue Book Vet. Profession, 21: 61-71.
- 19- **Kurtz, R.** (1975): *Tiere im alten Peru, ihre Bedeutung und Darstellung*. Ibid., 54: 129-134.
- 20- **Leach, M. and Fried, J. (Eds.)** (1949): *Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*. Vol. I. New York, pp., 398-403.
- 21- **Leclaince, E.** (1936): *Histoire de la Médecine Vétérinaire*. Office Du Livre, Toulouse, pp. 812.
- 22- **Marsh-Jones, J.** (1977): *Symbolism In Turkish Embroidery*. Birinci Uluslararası Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri V. Cilt: Etnografya. Folklor Araştırmaları Dairesi Yayınları: 22, Ankara, pp. 191-198.
- 23- **Newman, L. F.** (1952): *Some Notes on the Folklore and History of Veterinary Science*. J. Royal Army Vet. Corps, 23, 61-65.
- 24- **Öktel, N.** (1939): *Türkiye'de Kullanılan Ev İlaçları İle Bunların Farmakolojik Tesirleri ve Tedavice Ehemmiyetleri*. (Doktora tezi) A.Ü. Veteriner Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara, 63 s.
- 25- **Putilov, B. N.** (1976): *Methodological Principles for the Study of International Folklore Relations In Soviet Science (1958-1974)*. Report to the First International Congress on Turkish Folklore. Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları: 16, Ankara, pp. 211-222.
- 26- **Rothfuchs, H.** (1963): *Ice-Age Man and Animals*. Blue Book Vet. Profession, 6: 44-52.
- 27- **Rousseau, M.** (1978): *L'Animal et son Image dans L'Aventure Humaine*. Cah. Med. Vet., 47, (Numero Special): 49-66.
- 28- **Smith, F.** (1919): *The Early History of Veterinary Literature and Its British Development*. Vol. I. Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London.
- 29- **Smithcors, J. F.** (1958): *Evolution of the Veterinary Art*. A Narrative Account to 1850. Baillière, Tindall and Cox, London, pp. 408.
- 30- **Şehsuvaroğlu, B. N.** (1957): *Turkish History of Medicine In Anatolia For Nine Centuries*. World Medical Association XI th General Assambly, Istanbul, Sep. 29-Nov. 5, 1957. İsmail Akgün Mat., Istanbul, pp. 33-45.

- 31- **Ünver, S.** (1975): *Mystical Folklore and Suggestion Therapy*. The First International Turkish Folklore Congress 23-30 June 1975 Istanbul-Turkey, Programme and Abstracts of Paper Presented. Milli Folklor Araştırma Dairesi Yayınları No: 13, Ankara, pp. 215-216.

Received on June 18, 1980.