

The thesis was created in connection with a previous study of Czech printed medical literature from the 16th century. For the purposes of the thesis I newly focused on medical manuscripts written in the 15th and the 16th century, which I consider to be a unique resource for understanding of the popular medicine. Chosen Czech written texts represent a boundary field, the mix of popular therapy and learned medicine.

There were two dominant aetiologic conceptions in the medieval period: a) medical one, b) religious one. According the first one, a cause of illness was viewed as an imbalance of humours. According the religious conception, a cause of illness was considered to be supernatural: either God or devil. I expected lots of manifestations of second conception (prayer, fasting, ritual or other magical acts) and stress on experience in our manuscript sources.

It is hard to discern whether we deal with licit religious act or with illicit magic in certain examples, but there are some clues. Firstly, the evidence of magic might be a strong confidence in ritual itself. Secondly, we can observe both laws of sympathetic magic in our manuscripts.

I formulated three questions during my research: a) The lack of theoretical knowledge in popular medicine had to be necessarily compensated by some other factors. If it was an experience, what was the result for hierarchy of medical knowledge? b) How much was popular medicine impacted by religious aetiologic conception? c) What can we say about functional principles which were the necessary condition of effectiveness of used techniques (amulets, rituals, verbal formulas)? And can we say about the late medieval popular medicine that it was in some measure a rational system? The thesis is divided in six chapters, two compilatory (history of magic and medicine in medieval and renaissance period) and four dealing with certain manuscript's material.