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CUANDO TU ESTUVE A TU LADO
TENÍAS PELO Y DINERO,
PERO AHORA QUE ESTÁS
PELADO
PARA QUÉ DIABLOS TE
QUIERO

AUNQUE MUY COLOCHAS
SOS
Y YO PELÓN, PELONETE,
LAS CALACAS COMO VOS
A MÍ ME PELAN...
LOS DIENTES



TRADICIONES D GUATEMALA

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Essays

THE FOUR POPULAR DISEASES WITH THE HIGHEST INCIDENCE IN GUATEMALA

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0. INTRODUCTION

The present study is the result of the ethnographic research in-situ, carried out in San Benito, Petén, in December 1981.

The objective of this study is to deepen, analyze and disseminate the beliefs, practices and popular medical resources of this community.

As conditioning factors of the research carried out two factors should be mentioned above all:

1) The Petenera area has been little or not investigated at all in the field of ethnomedicine.

2) The study of traditional medicine is an extensive, multidisciplinary field and in our environment, almost virgin.

Because of these and other factors, it was decided to focus the research was focused on the existing beliefs and medical practices related to the most common popular diseases in Guatemala: **mal de ojo (evil eye), susto or loss of the soul, mollera caída (fallen fontanela) and bagging of worms.**

In dealing with popular illnesses, we have taken as a basis the concept elaborated by Arthur Rubel:

popular disease is one that the members of a particular group claim to suffer and for which their culture provides etiology, diagnosis, treatment and western measures, and which are not within the competence of western medicine.

1.Arthur Rubel. "The epidemiology of a folk illnest Susto In Hispante America"

Ethnology 3: 268-283. (1968)

To justify that the previously mentioned are the most common popular diseases in Guatemala, the author of this study was interested in investigating the validity of beliefs about the diseases in question, using open interviews held with people from different populations of the country and belonging to different socio-economic levels.

In addition, some studies carried out in various regions of Mesoamerica and, although on a smaller scale, in the highlands of Guatemala have been consulted. Therefore, it can be affirmed that these beliefs are present in the Guatemalan population.

On the other hand, this research has required an in-depth study of the historical aspect of the beliefs about the previously mentioned diseases, which reveals that these beliefs have very ancient roots.

1. Most common popular diseases in Guatemala

1.1 Popular Concepts of Anatomy and Physiology

In order to reach a better understanding of the origin, diagnosis and treatment of the “popular diseases” that will be studied in this study, it is necessary to refer to popular knowledge of human anatomy and physiology.

There are very particular beliefs about the location and functioning of some of the organs that make up the different systems of the human body. This belief system has been called Ethnoanatomy and Ethnophysiology, because it is knowledge inherited from ancient generations, accepted and shared by a certain social or ethnic group. Generally, this belief system is not part of the medical-academic scheme.

Undoubtedly, this popular knowledge is derived from the observations made on the morphology of animals sacrificed for food, medicinal and/or ritual purposes.

It is important to focus on these conceptions since they are part of the field of traditional medicine. many of the “popular diseases” revolve around the knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the human body.

Richard N. Adams, in a study conducted in a community in the highlands of Guatemala, mentions the existing beliefs regarding the anatomical structure of the human body. He reveals that the belief system in this community is generalized to other Mayan villages in the area, located at different distances from each other.

Among the best known organs that play an important role are: the stomach, liver, heart, lungs and kidneys.

The location of the organs that are popularly known is not precise. However, there is a general idea of their actual area of anatomical location. The stomach is considered as a bag, at the beginning of which is located the so-called mouth of the stomach. This is the part that receives the food immediately after ingestion. In the middle part of the pouch are the intestines (guts), and at the end is the bladder. It is in this bag that children are conceived.”

In studies conducted in Santa María Cauqué, it has been discovered that, according to the beliefs of the women of this village, the bag where the child is conceived and lodged is called the mother or womb, and is located near the stomach.

In the popular beliefs of Guatemala, blood is assigned a primordial importance, since it is related to essential functions for health. It is qualified qualitatively and quantitatively; in terms of quality, it is considered strong or weak and these characteristics, besides having a congenital character, are intimately related to the behavior of the person. An individual who is born with strong blood, manifests it by his good physical constitution; he is courageous, little susceptible to diseases of the magical type (fright, fear, etc.). susceptible to diseases of the magical type (fright) or of the organic type; is generally irritable and impatient and it is believed that it is not easy to live with him.

An individual who is born with weak blood has a different physical complexion and behavior complexion and behavior different from the previous one.

2.Richard N. Adams. Un análisis de las creencias y prácticas médicas en un pueblo Indígena de Guatemala. (Guatemala: Editorial del Ministerio de Educacion Publica. 19521. p. 13.

3.Richard N. Adams, Ibid.

4.Berta Garcia et-al. "Creencias y conocimientos sobre Biología de la Reproducción" en Guatemala Indígena. Guatemala, 1, I. N. 12(1-2): 63. (1977)

The quantitative aspect of blood is linked to susceptibility to disease. A person who has little or no blood tends to get sick frequently. Blood that is lost by accident or any other reason is believed to be unrecoverable.

The author of the present study had the opportunity to directly observe this type of belief in the population of Santa María Cauqué, department of Sacatepéquez, where she was part of a working team of the Instituto de Nutrición de Centro. America and Panama (INCAP), in 1968, 1969 and 1972. In this community, the majority of the inhabitants belong to the Cackchiquel ethnic group.

When it became necessary, on the part of the medical authorities, to obtain blood samples for diagnostic purposes, they often encountered stubborn resistance. People generally argued that, being sick, they had little blood and that any blood they lost could not be recovered. This was equated with slow recovery or non-recovery.

This same reaction was observed in the population of Chiquimulilla, department of Chiquimulilla, department of Santa Rosa and in the village of El Coco, municipality of Jalpatagua, department of Jutiapa; in these communities INCAP carried out special studies in 1969 to determine whether the disease had caused the death of more than 10,000 Guatemalans. In these same communities, where a "ladino" population of low socio-economic status was also studied, it was easy to observe that many of the beliefs and medical practices that emerge from the rural indigenous, appear syncretized in some practices of urban popular medicine. A clear example is the use of "Mejoral" * "Alka-Seltzer" * and other pharmaceutical drugs of popular use. It was noteworthy that, in the three communities, the reaction was the same when it was difficult to locate or canalize a vein. The reason given by the subjects was that the blood did not flow instantly because there was not enough blood in the body.

5. Leonardo Mata y Elba Villatoro, "Umbilical Cord Inmunoglobulins and Fetal Maturitu:, Neonates In a Guatemalan Indian Village." Mainutrition and Inmune Response (New York: Raven Press, Pub., 1977)., pp. 201-203.

6. Leonardo Mata et-al, "Epidemia de Oisenteria Shiga en Centro América. Investigaciones Etológicas en Guatemala, 1969", Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana. 71. 93-107 (1971).

According to Castillo de Lucas, very similar conceptions to those mentioned above are common in different populations in Spain. "Strong blood: violent and very healthy individuals. Weak blood: people predisposed to get sick and very shy. Low blood: very sick people.

1.2 Causal agents of the disease

It is necessary to deepen a little more the knowledge about the beliefs related to the etiology, since the symptomatology, the diagnosis and the treatment are oriented according to the origin of the disease.

W.H. Rivers elaborated a model that can be applied in part to the medical belief systems of the different cultural groups already mentioned.

These causal agents of disease are of three types: human, supernatural and natural. As for the first, human intention and action play an important role: for example, diseases caused by injuries or wounds, caused from one person to another.

Supernatural agents include magical diseases. Treatment is effected through magical ritual acts. - The human element as an agent of disease, can cause it, within the supernatural scheme. That is to say, in the action there can be intention: the bewitchment of one person to another. The diseases caused by supernatural-spiritual agents of religious type, are those to the divine will. The treatment consists of prayers, offerings, penitences, etc."

The scientific and tenological development has made it possible to know different agents that give rise to various types of diseases. These are part of the scientific medical scheme. Among these include diseases caused by natural agents. Biological: viruses, bacteria, fungi, etc. Chemical agents: intoxication by chemical elements, lead, nickel, etc. Physical agents; atmospheric electrical discharge, etc.

7. Antonio Castillo de Lucas. Folkmedicina. Madrid: Editorial Dossat, S. A.. 1958, p. 283.

8. Ctr. W.H. R. Rivers, *Medicine, magic and religion*. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1924) pp. 7-12 Y Antonio 9. Castillo de Lucas, *Op-cit*, pp. 10-12

Castillo de Lucas, *Op. cit*, p.10

10. Juan José Murtado, *Curso de Antropología Médica, Apuntes de clase* (Guatemala.

Universidad Francisco Marroquín, 1981)

Supernatural diseases of a magical order are those that occupy the first place in the history of man's illnesses. Man, without being able to explain physical phenomena, attributed supernatural powers to them.

Religious thought arose later. Man believed he had established a relationship with the stars, some animals, various types of trees and plants and worshipped them to implore relief from illnesses.¹¹

In popular beliefs, the causal agents of the disease are not isolated from each other. A certain interrelation or fusion is observed, mainly in magical and/or religious diseases.

In Guatemala, especially in indigenous groups, illnesses caused by magical agents (witchcraft) are called "Mal Malo", and those caused by religious agents are called "Mal Bueno".¹²

1.3 Most common popular diseases in Guatemala

It is necessary to refer to a group of popular diseases according to the criteria of the different authors who have carried out studies on the subject.

Based on Rubel's concept of popular disease, the author points out that "it refers to the syndrome (set of symptoms of a disease), which members of a particular group claim to suffer from, and for which their culture provides etiology, diagnosis, preventive measures and curative methods. Moreover, this disease is neither understood nor within the purview of orthodox Western medicine"¹³.

In Guatemala there are a large number of diseases that fit perfectly with Rubel's conceptualization. It should be taken into account that Guatemala, culturally, is integrated by different ethnic groups, and that each one preserves its own identifying and differentiating features.

Thus, with regard to the field of traditional medicine, it can be observed from the research already carried out

11 Gordon Childe, *Orígenes de la Civilización*, (México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1974) P. 56

12 Richard N. Adams, *Op. alt*, p. 40

13 Arthur Rubel, "The Epidemiology of & Folk Illnes: Susto In Hispanic America" *Ethnology* 3: 268-283 (1964)

that there is similarity in terms of beliefs related to etiology, symptomatology and therapeutic techniques or procedures, but not in terms of the resources used to prevent and cure diseases, in which some differences can be observed.

Prevention and treatment resources depend to a great extent on the basic cultural elements of the region and on what the ecological environment (flora and fauna) can offer.¹⁴ An example of this is the great variety of medicinal plants used for the treatment of the same disease. The use of plants is often accompanied by magical and/or religious rites.

Among the most frequent popular diseases in Guatemala are the following:

Evil Eye

Fright or Soul Loss

Fallen Fontanelle

Worm Infestation

The order cited does not imply greater or lesser prevalence.

1.3.1 Evil Eye

According to Foster, the Evil Eye (non-physical), is widely known in Spain since the 15th century. Its origin is unknown, but the beliefs related to this disease are possibly due to the contact with the Arab people or to the influence of some Mediterranean peoples.¹⁵

Lis Quiben refers to it as a disease of the popular sectors of the province of Galicia, Spain. He affirms that the Evil Eye is the result of the approach of evil spirits to certain people. The indicated treatment consists of rubbing the patient's body with medicinal plants and, at the same time, pronouncing Christian prayers.

Castillo de Lucas mentions Evil Eye as a disease

14 Juan José Hurtado, "El ojo" creencias y prácticas médicas populares en Guatemala".

En Tradiciones de Guatemala, Centro de Estudios Folklóricos, USAC N. 1 (1968)

p. 21

15. George Foster, "Relationships between Spanish and Spanish-América Folk Medicine", Journal of American Folklore, 66:1 201-217 (1953)

16 Victor Lis Quiben, Medicina Popular en Galicia (Galicia, Ed. Pontevedra, 1949), p. 59

very well known in the various regions of Spain, indicates that it is caused by a "bad look". Its main symptomatology consists of loss of appetite, irritability, sadness. If it is not treated in due time it can be cause of death. The appropriate treatment consists of ingesting infusions of plants, but these must have magical characteristics; among the best known plants are rue (*Ruta chalepensis*), the good herb (*Mentha spicata*) and basil (*Ocimum minimom*)¹⁷.

As a preventive measure for this disease, amulets are used (a figure, medal or any other object to which supernatural virtue is attributed to ward off harm or danger).

It is also frequent the use of printed prayers, scapulars, medals or crosses. Most of these objects are covered with red, yellow or blue cloth, with red being the most commonly used color.

18 Lis Quiben and Castillo de Lucas do not specify the age of the people susceptible to the Evil Eye. It can be interpreted that children and adults are susceptible to this ailment. J.J.

Hurtado, Guatemalan physician and anthropologist, conducted a research in 16 populations located in different geographical areas of Guatemala, in a total of 238 cases, grouped as follows:

"Ladinos, indigenous and ladinized indigenous". This research was aimed at knowing the beliefs and medical practices related to the Evil Eye.

The results show, first of all, that it is a childhood disease: the younger the age, the greater the risk of suffering from it. They may be exempt from suffering it after the age of two years. Secondly, the similarity of beliefs in relation to its etiology and symptomatology can be appreciated, but not in relation to therapeutic techniques and resources.

In relation to its etiology, the eye is caused by invisible forces emanating from people who possess a **very strong gaze, strong or very strong blood, or strong humor**.

There is also the belief that there are people possessed of invisible but transitory forces. Among such people are people in a state of acute alcoholism (drunks, drunkards), people in a post-alcoholic state (hangover), pregnant women,

17 Antonio Castillo de Lucas, Op. cit, p. 52

18 Antonio Castillo de Lucas Ibid

19Juan José Hurtado, Op. cil, p. 20

women during menstruation, people who have been exposed to the sun for a long time (sunbathing, overheated) 20.

Regarding the symptoms, the most frequent manifestations are: loss of activity, crying and irritability, vomiting, diarrhea and loss of appetite.

Medical resources and treatment techniques vary, according to the causative agent of the disease. Thus the agent could be a person with a strong look, or any of those mentioned above. -The most commonly used medical remedies are: rubbing of the body with one or more eggs (they must be fertilized), branches of rue and aguardiente, at the same time that Christian prayers are pronounced.

Red objects are used as a preventive or protective measure; the object itself depends on the region and the ethnic or social group

. Martinez and his collaborators studied this same disease in a community in California, with a group of Mexican Americans and Mexicans with many years of residence in the United States...'. The results of this research allow us to observe similarities, in terms of etiology, symptomatology and treatment of the disease, with the results obtained from Hurtado's study. As far as differences are concerned, these are not significant.

Foster believes that the evil eye is a disease that is part of the popular medical belief system in all Latin American countries. 22

1.3.2 Fright or Soul Loss

The disease popularly known as The Fright has been given different names, depending on the geographic region and the ethnic or social group where it is known. The best known names are: Fright, Loss of the soul, Loss of the shadow and Specter.

For practical purposes it will be referred to only by the name of **fright and/or loss of the soul**.

20 Ibid. p. 19

21 Cervando

Martinez and Harry W. Martin. Folk Diseases Among Urban Mexican-American, J. Am. Med Ass. (april): 161-164. (1966)

22 George Foster. Loc. elt. p. 208

In the bibliography that I was able to consult and that deals with popular diseases in Spain, this ailment does not appear. According to Foster, fright is absent from the popular beliefs of that European country. He indicates that it is considered typical of America since the Columbian era. 23

Rubel states that fright is a popular disease that can be present at any time of life, in "indigenous and non-indigenous, men and women, rich and poor, peasants and city dwellers." 24

His statement undoubtedly obeys the results obtained from studies conducted by him and other researchers in different populations of the United States (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, California)

One of the basic and most important aspects of this disease lies in the popular belief, widespread in Latin America, that every individual is formed of body (physical-biological) and soul (spiritual-supernatural), but at any time of life these two elements can be separated, which is why the pathological picture is presented.

The causes of this evil can be, for example, facing an unexpected and disturbing experience, or because a person voluntarily or involuntarily disturbs the guardian spirits of the earth, rivers, forests or animals. The fright can also originate from an accident or an unexpected encounter with an animal. Children and adults are susceptible to this disease.

When an individual has suffered from any of the above-mentioned causes, the important thing is to recover the "lost soul" that has been trapped by the spirits. The most generalizing symptoms of this malady are: loss of appetite and interest in all things around him, whether work or social activities, agitation while sleeping, strange dreams. If the disease is not treated in due time, it can be a cause of death.

The treatment consists of performing ritual acts, which have particular characteristics according to the cultural patterns of the region. The basic elements are to invoke the spirits that have

23 Ibid, p. 203

24 Arthur J* Rubel, Loc. elt, p. 460

25 John Gulliin, "El Espanto Mágico", en Cultura Indígena de Guatemala. Guatemala, S.I.G.S. (1959), p. 164

taken the soul. These rogations are accompanied by prayers and massages with specific plants for this purpose. This ceremony or ritual must be performed in the place where the loss of the soul is believed to have occurred.

The treatment is attributed to a healer or zahorin, specialized in curing this type of illness, who is accompanied by relatives or friends of the sick person. It is considered necessary that they be strong people (spiritually): otherwise they would be subject to contracting the disease.

Guillin, in the study carried out on a case of fright in an indigenous woman from San Luis Jilotepeque (Chimaltenango), observed the importance given to this disease and to the fact of selecting the healer, since the effectiveness of the treatment depends on this. 26

For anyone who believes in the disease of fright, it is very important that the patient who suffers from it recovers; otherwise, he or she may die without a soul, and the soul will wander eternally without rest.

Guillin alludes to dialogues with the healer, who told him that he had had cases when the person suffering from fright did not survive, but that before his death he had succeeded in returning the soul to his body.²⁷

1.3.3 Fallen Fontanelle

In the popular beliefs of Spain it is common to find diseases produced by removal or displacement of organs of the human body. Hurtado calls them "Diseases caused by the rupture of the mechanical equilibrium of the body " In Spain the most widespread are: "fall of the stomach", "fall of the shoulder blade" or "fallen spine" The fallen fontanelle consists of the removal of the cartilage where the bone called sternum (xiphoid) ends, as a result of violent movements or accidents. Tall and thin people are prone to this disease, so it is popularly said that people with "long spine are lazy at work, mainly in agricultural work. 29

26 John Guillin, Ibid, pp. 166-183

27 Ibid, p.

28 Juan José Hurtado. "Algunas Ideas para un modelo estructural de las creencias en relación con la enfermedad an el Altiplano de Guatemala", Guatemala, Guatemala, Guatemala

Indigena I.I.N. 8(1-2):16. 1973

29 Antonio Castillo de Lucas, Op. cit. p. 178.

Diagnosis consists of "stretching the arms, bringing the hands together and checking that the fingers of the hands coincide exactly". Treatment is based on bandaging and immobilizing the patient.

According to Foster, the belief in the removal of organs from the body is the same principle applied to some diseases in Spanish America. Mention is made, in northern Argentina, of "caída de la paletilla"; in Colombia, of "caída del estómago o descuajamiento"; in Guatemala and Mexico of "mollera caída", "barillas caídas", "cuajo caído" etc.³⁰

In Guatemala, fallen fontanel is the name given to the sinking or depression of the fontanel (part of the infant's skull that is not ossified). It is recognized as a disease, consequence of violent movements when the mother carries the child in her arms or on her back, or by an accidental fall. Vomiting, diarrhea, fever and irritability are present. The treatment consists of various techniques; the best known are: inserting a finger in the child's mouth and pressing on the soft palate; placing the child in an upright position with the head down and patting the soles of the feet; sucking the sunken part with the mouth; using a poultice of plants or herbs on the "fontanel". It is the midwives who regularly apply the treatment. ³¹

Martínez and collaborators report the disease popularly called "Fallen fontanelle" in populations integrated by Mexican-Americans, in different states of the south of the United States of America. Beliefs regarding the origin, symptomatology and treatment are similar to those found in different populations of Mexico and Guatemala. The differences are not significant.

2. Parasitic diseases

According to the studies of Castillo de Lucas, in the popular conception of many places in Spain, parasitic diseases are caused by three types of parasites: a) the popularly called worms; these are small, they lodge in the anus, which causes itching. The author points out that they are the pinworms. b) The more or less large worms which are expelled with the feces;

³⁰ George Foster, *Loe. elt*, 211

³¹ Juan José. Hurtado, "La Mollera Caída" *Antropología Americana México* 41 (50): 139-148, 1979

Sometimes they come out alone and can also be expelled through the mouth. For Castillo de Lucas these are the *ascaris lumbricoides*; c) The tapeworm. Its form is rounded, has a white color and is typical of adults. It is the *tania solium*. The other two types are very frequent in Children 32

These parasites are contracted by eating street food and candies. There is also the belief that the infestation can be produced by the devil, "who makes these bugs breed"

The most frequent symptoms are: itching in the nose, teeth grinding, when sleeping, restless sleep (i.e. with many shocks) and, of course, weight loss: "For worms eat the substance of all food" 33

Treatment varies according to the region, but the most commonly used are: a) natural resources: the infusion of plants and roots. Also frequent is the use of enemas (clyster) of water with chimney soot or pomegranate tree bark. Among the magical and/or religious resources is the "conjunction of the worms, this is done on the day of the child's baptism". To this is added that the priest is asked to pray for the child to be free of this disease. The author points out that the priest refuses this practice, arguing that it is a false belief. 34

Lis Quiben, for his part, points out that in Galicia there is a practice or modality of treatment that consists of psalms in which certain numbers appear in each stanza. The psalm goes like this:

If you have twenty worms, may God turn them into nineteen; if you have nineteen worms, may God turn them into eighteen, and so on until you are left with only one, always leaving one because there is the belief that God put it in the organism.

Both authors point out that among the most frequent preventive measures is the use of garlic necklace.

As for the popular beliefs in Guatemala, in relation to these diseases, it is common to find the so-called "worm fuss". It generally occurs in children. The belief is that the worms are animals that live in a bag that

32Antonio Castilla de Lucas, Op. cit, p. 314

33 • Ibid, p. 315

34 Ibid, p. 316

35 Victor Lis Quiben, Op. cit, p. 116

is in the stomach. They are recognized according to the age of the child. The infant has "milk worms, then meat worms, fruit worms or according to the food that the child ingests". They are present in the body "By the will of God". like the other organs of the body: the eyes, ears, nose, etc. 36

The disease occurs when the worms go on a rampage or want to get out of the bag. The causes can be: a) by not giving the child the food to which the worms are used to; b) when there are high fevers; c) by the noise produced by the thunder that precedes the rains, mainly at the beginning of the rainy season. 37

The main symptoms are: lack of appetite, "itching" (pruritus) in the eyes and nose, nausea, vomiting, "eyes wide open and grinding of the teeth when the child is asleep"; in addition, irritability and decay.

The important thing in the treatment is to make the worms return to their bag ("**bag them**"). For this, massages are done in the abdominal region, with different oils and infusions of herbs or medicinal plants are given to the child. It is important to mention that the most commonly used plant in rural areas is called apazote (**Chenopodium ambrosoides**); in popular urban areas, the pharmaceutical product called **apazote oil** is used

. The "worm fuss" is due to the lack of ingestion of meat or some other food, which the child has not eaten for several days. The treatment consists of providing the food in question, the lack of which produced the "fuss". 38

If it is considered that the worms are many, "drastic purgatives are used, in this way the excess comes out and the rest of them return quietly to their pouch. 39

3. Ethnographic description in Guatemala about the Evil Eye; Fallen Fontanelle, Worm Infestation and Fright or Soul Loss. Popular Diseases.

36 Cir. Juan Jose Hurtado, "Algunas ideas para un modelo estructural de las creencias en relación con la enfermedad en el Altiplano de Guatemala" Loc, cit, p. 21 Lidia Rosales y colaboradores, *Epidemiología popular en enfermedades prevalentes-en el medio rural de Guatemala", en Guatemala Pediátrica, 4(2):61 1964.

37 Lidia Rosales, Idem

38 Lidia Rosales y colaboradores, Loc. cit. p. 62

39 Loc. CIL, p. 63

Interested in personally obtaining information about the beliefs, procedures and resources used to treat the diseases studied, a two-week exploratory trip was made (December 5-18, 1981) to the municipalities of Santa Elena, San Benito, San Miguel, San Andrés and San José, in the department of Petén.

We had the opportunity to interview four healers, and one woman who, although not dedicated to treating these diseases, has extensive knowledge of folk medicine in the region, and occasionally applies it. These women live in the municipality of San Benito.

The four healers do not dedicate all of their time to their profession; however, they are in great demand. It was found that they are trusted by the population because of their accurate diagnosis and treatment, which is why their services are highly valued.

For a better understanding of the diseases studied, each of them is explained according to the information gathered in the field.

In the present study, the information provided by Mrs. M.R. was taken as the basis, since she was considered the person with the most in-depth knowledge of these diseases. The informant has a higher cultural level than the others, and communication with her was significantly more open and spontaneous than with the others. The names of the informants are not given at their request.

The order of the diseases described does not imply greater or lesser prevalence. It only indicates that they are the most known among the population.

3.1 Evil Eye

Mrs. M. R. reported that the evil eye is frequent in children from birth to the first year of life. After that it is occasional until about three or four years of age. After this age, they are no longer exposed to it.

The disease may be caused: a) by the children being admired by adult women, mainly if they have no children; b) if they are seen by a woman who is in her menstrual period (on these occasions "the woman's blood is very strong"); c) if they are seen by a man or woman who has worked hard and is sweating (they are "hot-blooded");

d) if they are seen by a man “who is drunk, who is alcoholic”, i.e. in an alcoholic state.

The symptoms are: a) “the child becomes very tearful”; b) the child tilts its head backwards with some frequency; c) vomiting and diarrhea occur.

The treatment is as follows: a) the child is undressed and the body is rubbed with one or two eggs, preferably black hen eggs, since it is easier to cure the disease with these; b) prayers are said (the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed); c) the child's body is rubbed with rue and coarse pepper, both a little “crushed” (trituated)

The disease is cured with three treatments, i.e. one daily. If the disease persists, more cures are done. A child who is not treated in time may die.

Mrs. M.R. reported that to prevent the disease, children should wear red objects in their wardrobe: “this keeps the disease away”. This lady is a midwife and she puts a red cap, sash or sweater on newborns.

The J.S. Ch. ladies, when referring to the cause, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and preventive measures for this disease, manifested much similarity in the practical medical belief.

Only one of them advised, in addition to the aforementioned, baths with a little holy water: this reflects closeness with religious elements.

Many women interviewed indirectly stated that the evil eye, if not treated in time, can cause death. They also stated that it is an easy treatment to do, but that the healers have a gift and know how to do it well; that is why they go to them.

Earlier mention was made of an informant with extensive knowledge of traditional medicine, but who is not dedicated to curing by this system. This is due to very special circumstances, which are not mentioned. However, this does not prevent her from performing treatments based on popular medical practice on certain occasions. This person is Mrs. V. M., who provided important information, which, because of its variance with the above descriptions, is described below.

According to Mrs. V.M., the evil eye occurs especially in children

almost always in children under three years of age. The main causes are: a) the child is seen, but not carried (taken in arms), by a woman in the period of her menstruation; b) the child is admired by a woman who has not had children; c) the child is seen by a drunken man.

The most frequent symptoms are: irritability, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite and consequent weight loss.

The treatment to combat the disease is described below. Crush with the teeth "novacu pepper" or fat pepper; in the same way crush tender branches of rue and mix the two things until a mass is formed. With this dough a fresh chicken egg is wrapped and rubbed on the child's body, in such a way that the remains of both the rue and the pepper remain all over the body. Next, the lady takes to her mouth a little of the preparation made of rue and pepper and some aguardiente; she lifts the child upwards, so that the lady has his arms fully stretched out. Holding him in this position, she blows him, then the child is laid down and his body is rubbed again with the rest of the prepared mass. This is done about three or four times.

Preventive measures consist of placing in the child's wardrobe some object of red color and/or some medal with the representation of a Catholic saint, preferably a virgin.

As can be seen, all the treatment mentioned by V. M., is original and differs from what has been previously described. On the other hand, nothing similar was found in the literature consulted.

3.2 Fallen Fontanelle

According to Mrs. M. R., a fallen fontanelle is frequent in children under one year of age. The reason is "because the head has not closed properly"

The causes are: a) violent movements; and b) sitting or stopping child prematurely (before three months of age)

The main manifestation is the "sinking" or depression of the soft part of the skull (fontanelle). Accompanied by this phenomenon, presents vomiting, diarrhea, lack of appetite and irritability. The treatment for "lifting the fontanelle" consists of. the following procedure: "Wrap the index finger with cotton or a piece of thin cloth (soft cloth), wet it in oil of food, put it in the child's mouth and make pressure upwards, in the sky of the mouth".

(palate). Then she is given to take a teaspoonful of oil to eat, . with some grains of salt (the salt is fresh and helps the child's digestion). She also gives him to drink "agua de hierba buena" (good herb water)

The informant J. S. Ch. cures the fallen fontanelle in the same way as Mrs. M. R., but in addition she places the child in an upright position, with the head downwards and gives several pats on the soles of the feet.

The other two curanderas did not offer any modalities regarding the cause, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of the disease. Likewise, Mrs. V. M.'s information did not offer significant differences.

3.3 Worm infestation

About this disease, Mrs. M. R. explained, first of all, that it is a very frequent disease in children. There are several causes of worm fussiness, but the best known are:

- a) "worms are in a bag in the stomach, when there are too many and they no longer fit, they fuss and look for a way to get out, that is why they come out through the mouth or with the feces;"
- b) "when the child gets very bad fever" (high fever);
- c) "because the worms do not have the food they need"; i.e., there are milk, meat or fruit worms; and
- d) when children eat dirt.

The symptoms are: a) expulsion of the worms through the mouth and in the feces; b) grinding of the teeth when the child sleeps; c) the child does not close his eyes properly when asleep, but keeps them slightly open; and, d) frequent diarrhea and vomiting.

The treatment consists of giving to take the herb of apazote cooked in plenty of water. In the stomach are placed leaves of apazote and purslane (*Chenopodium Imbrozoides*, *Portulaca oleracea*); then several cloves of garlic are crushed, with which a kind of " dough " is made, and it is given to smell it. The stomach is also rubbed with this mass. This is done so that the worms "feel" the smell, which, being unpleasant, makes them return to their place, that is to say, to the bag.

This lady reported that in the past, children used to wear a garlic necklace around their necks. "Now they don't do it anymore.

-She added, "because they are a little embarrassed, that's why they better rub it.

This informant points out that she does not know how to prevent this disease, "because at the least thought moment, the worms go on a rampage." However, she indicates that doctors have told her that one way to prevent it is to wash her hands before eating.

The information from the other healers is very similar, which is why is not described.

For her side, Mrs. V. M. affirms that the worm infestation is frequent in children. The symptomatology is the same as that detailed by Mrs. M.R., but not the treatment, which is described as follows: a) "in enough water boil the apazote root, and give this water to the child to drink, fasting for several days"; b) with the leaves of the apazote, French bread and brandy, prepare a poultice or "conforte" and place it on the lower part of the abdomen.

This is done so that the worms feel the smell and "conforte" (calm down) and return to their pouch. If there are too many worms, they will come out through the feces.

3.4 Fright or loss of the Soul

Regarding the fright or loss of the soul, the information provided by Mrs. M. R. was quite incomplete.

She argued that the names of the herbs used for treatment were only known to her in the "Mayan language". Although subtly insisted that she provide them, the informant refused.

Following Mrs. M. R.'s data, the causes of the illness were grouped as follows:

1. general causes: a) receiving a very great anger; b) unexpected encounter with an unwelcome person; c) being attacked by an animal.

2. Particular or specific causes. These depend on the place where the individual resides or works :

2.1 In the mountain (people who work in the process of the elaboration of the gum)

2.2 The people who live in the town Among the people who live in the mountain, the fright can occur : a) to find unexpectedly an animal (snake or any other typical of the region ;) : b) to hear something similar to a whistle,

cry or cry produced by the duende, the llorona or the Ixtabay. 40

For people who live in populated places, the causes can be :

- a) unexpectedly encountering a dog and it threatens to bite ;
- b) Unexpectedly encountering a car. Children and adults are prone to all of the above.

The symptoms presented in children are : a) restless sleep; b) and / or screaming or crying while sleeping; c) loss of appetite ; d) "strong fever" (high fever)

In adults : a) restless sleep; b) loss of appetite ; c) loss of interest in work ; and d) ladies who have small children and who are breastfeeding "lose their milk".

The fright results in the loss of the soul to spirit: "the treatment must be prompt so that said spirit or soul returns to its owner, since a person cannot live well without his own spirit and the spirit should not be wandering either.

No description of the treatment is given here because, as mentioned, the informant M. R. did not offer any data.

Mrs. J. S. Ch. was also interviewed. The information provided does not differ from what Mrs. M. R. said regarding the causal agents and the prognosis of the fright. She also stated that fright can be suffered by children and adults. As for the treatment, both children and adults: a) should be given another fright: "b) if you know the place where the person was frightened, in the same place you should pray three times the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Creed and then you should mention the name of that person three times; c) take the person to the river or lake, and take him/her for a ride in a "cayuco or canoe" (small boat guided by a canaleta) and drop flower petals, especially white roses, but not necessarily. In these moments the patient is patted on the back and the soul is asked to return to its body; d) once in the patient's house, the treatment is finished, for this, rue leaves are chewed and the saliva of the healer is blown at a certain distance from the patient's face.

This treatment should be done several times, until the person has recovered.(She did not specify the number of times.)

40 Norma Baldizón de Castro Conde. Guatemala, Ed. José de Pineda Ibarra, 1972, pp. 41-42

Mrs. C. Ch., when interviewed, did not give information. Her answer was "I do not cure this disease"; she did not want to give her reasons.

The informant F.C., in her account, did not offer significant variations. Mrs. V.M. presented a variant regarding the treatment for the adult, which consists of putting some aguardiente in her mouth and spraying it on the patient's face, but when the patient is distracted, i.e., blowing it unexpectedly.

This confirms what Mrs. J. S. Ch. said: "a fright cures another fright. In the information collected about this last disease popular, several aspects can be observed:

1st. The causative agent can be any external element that induces an emotional shock. Such agents are present at any moment of man's daily life.

In the spiritual aspect, magical thinking plays an important role. It can be observed that beliefs about characters such as the goblin, the weeping woman and the Ixtabay are deeply rooted in the inhabitants of the communities visited. Therefore, it is a fairly common agent, responsible for the disease of fright.

2nd. In terms of prognosis, considerable attention is given to the person claiming to be the victim of the scare. As mentioned above, no individual should be separated soul-body.

3rd. In the treatment there is an interrelation or fusion of magical-religious elements.

It is noteworthy that the information provided regarding this treatment was not sufficiently broad; that is, there are certain gaps due to the secrecy of the informants.

It is deduced that in this important phase of the treatment, there are deep supernatural factors, which are kept in great reserve.

It is recognized that the research time was short.

It is also considered that this disease has been little studied in Guatemala and deserves more research to know and analyze the psycho-bio-socio-cultural factors that are more profoundly

interrelated in this disease.

Although the information is limited, it offers elements that partly corroborate the research already carried out in Guatemala.