

COVID-19 –MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND
COMMUNICATION MODELS, ON-LINE SEMINAR I
ABSTRACTS

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Proverbs as Powerful Devices for Conveying Messages in Official and Vernacular Crisis Communication: The Case of Estonia

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Paremiat – that is, proverbs and sayings – are a staple of modern language both in their traditional forms but also as contemporary adaptations, for example, as proverb parodies or as entirely new forms. Their spread today is inarguably amplified in media channels. In the broad perspective of the COVID-19 crisis communication, the format of proverb (paremia) may be approached as a metalinguistic code which is used to convey a message in such a way that the meaning behind the message would be delivered more effectively to the communication partner. Communication during the COVID-19 crisis period in Estonia in spring 2020 revealed a verbatim reuse of already established proverbs; for example, proverbs were abundantly used for conveying instructions and cautions in official discourse, in which established proverbs were applied in fixed wording. Also, new proverbs, some serious and others more humorous, were coined on the example of the traditional proverb format. Proverbs were used in casual conversations, newspapers, politicians' speeches, the crisis instructions of local governments, advertisements, and social media posts, including those in the form of visual memes.

The aim of my paper is to analyse the use of proverbs in the official and vernacular communication of the coronavirus crisis and identify which specific proverbs were used and the contexts in which the already established proverbs appeared. From the aspect of folklore studies, what intrigues us most is which new proverbs were created and for what purpose they were adopted in use.

In our era of visual culture, especially compared to the previous pandemics, the pandemic lore was particularly image-based, whereas proverbs with their briefness and catchiness proved to be a good textual and verbal addition to the used image.

Sense and Sensibility in Estonian Corona Memes

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Digital pop culture is rich in blasts of crisis-related memes (Rintel 2013), often recycled for a new event. The 2020 pandemic crisis is by its nature different from a one-time catastrophe and neither has its folkloric representation remained untouched by this: meme creation follows the crisis as it evolves. The initial existential angst and accompanying buying panic has been replaced with material concerning different aspects of the ongoing crisis and finding possible solutions.

Estonian digital media circulates both global memes as well as material based on national cultural heritage and naturally also combinations of the two. Memes address both official guidelines as well as the crisis (and official guidelines) as seen by the average internet user. The paper will discuss memes circling in Estonia that feature international popular culture and how well-known memes have been adapted for the local setting.

Rintel, Sean 2013. Crisis memes: The importance of templatability to Internet culture and freedom of expression. *Australasian Journal of Popular Culture* 2,2, 253–271. doi:10.1386/ajpc.2.2.253_1

The General and His Fandom

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On February 24th the Bulgarian government announced the formation of the National Operational Headquarters to coordinate fight against the Covid-19 pandemic in Bulgaria. As the head of the new formation general Ventsislav Mutafchiyski, a military doctor and professor at the Military Medical Academy in Sofia, was appointed. The general started holding daily media briefings where he was presenting statistical updates and was answering questions about the crisis development. Quickly he became extremely popular as the public figure most strongly associated with the fight against the pandemic in the country.

My paper presents and discusses the media image of general Mutafchiyski and its readings and interpretations by the audience. I study the most distinctive features of his media persona shaped in the public imagination as a wartime hero. *The General*, as this new hero is usually called, inspired a large fan following and various manifestations of affect: from declarations of love to death threats. As a fictional character, he appeared in many forms of vernacular creativity: poems, songs, jokes, memes, material objects. In this way *The General* became the main character of Bulgarian pandemic folklore.

Media Representations of Alternative Medicine in the Time of COVID-19 Crisis

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Based on a 1 month (April 2020) observation of media content in three Estonian mainstream media sources (2 daily newspapers and 1 weekly women's magazine) along with some examples from earlier periods, the author analyses ways of representation of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the media (e.g. general tone and intention, vocabulary, metaphors, contrasting axis lines and focus points, choice of agents who mediate the

information, etc) and their role in expressing support to certain dominating ideologies and showing attitudes towards alternative approaches. The timing of collecting the research material had a relatively strong effect on its character and content. The analysis showed that the media presented CAM both in its generally accepted mainstream and less accepted fringe forms, and that pejorative as well as praising and attracting undertones were present but there was in most cases a connection built with COVID-19 crisis. The paper will show how CAM topics were described in the selection of media as methods for wellbeing and healing but also as entertaining, exotizing, warning and mystical-metaphorical allusions along with boundary-work especially with science and religion.

Resisting the glass cupboard

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From April 2020 the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum launched a small survey in Estonian on people's reaction and coping with the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of their health and health fears, health restrictions and nutrition "Keeping Your Health During the Corona Crisis" (link: <http://kratt.folklore.ee/ctrl/et/Kysitluskavad/andmed/22>).

This pandemic strongly affected also those who were not infected by the virus, but were confined within their homes, coping with possible health issues and isolation fears. Thus we wanted to know where people turned to in their various needs, what were their health issues and how they got the necessary help, what made them fear the most, what were the existing supplies at home and how this pandemic changed their health behaviour through several months.

My presentation will give some insight into the thoughts and coping mechanisms of mainly the elderly generation, based on the answers by the archive's correspondents. The answers arrived either via the archive's collecting module Kratt (2), e-mail (16) or by regular post (5) by the middle of August 2020. At this writing the survey is still open. In addition, I will be

using life stories (9) from the participants of a small biography-writing group functioning under the Estonian Folklore Archive.

This small collection represents yet another set of illness narratives (Kleinman 1988), having as a backdrop the global socio-cultural-economic context. These narratives often encompass the daily personal and family life, representing a fraction of a given biography intertwined by health accounts of oneself and the next of kin.

Pandemic-Driven Citizen Philanthropy

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The beginning of the 2020 pandemic will be remembered for its starburst of shared cultural life: virtual exhibition tours, online poem recitals, concerts, open-audience discussions led by critical thinkers and philosophers, e-schooling and other phenomena that could be summed under the umbrella of citizen philanthropy or investments in realizing the good. Another side of this investment is solidarity in opposing injustice and yet another side is actual, material help for those in need. However, where there are people in trouble, people taking action, there are stereotypes forming and censorship raising its head.

С COVID-19 и традиционная культура удмуртов / COVID-19 and Udmurt's Traditional Culture

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Сложная эпидемическая ситуация в мире в связи с коронавирусом COVID-19 поставила традиционную культуру народов в определенные условия: во многом

изменилась форма проведения национальных обычаев и обрядов, либо люди вынуждены были полностью отказаться от их проведения в этом году. С другой стороны, пандемия актуализировала архаические схемы и способы преодоления кризисной ситуации.

COVID-19 внес свои коррективы в общественно-культурную жизнь российских граждан, в том числе и удмуртов. В нашем докладе акцент делается на бытовании весенних обрядов удмуртов в условиях пандемии (обрядовый цикл *Быдзын нунал* «Великий день», *Акашка* «праздник плуга», знаменующие начало года по народному календарю и начало весенних полевых работ¹; православная Пасха; *тулыс кисьтон* «весенние поминки», а также летние моления удмуртов Башкортостана). Эти обряды и праздники совпали с периодом карантина в России. Необходимо отметить, что у некоторых информантов кризисная ситуация в стране вызвала крайнее беспокойство: коллективное соучастие и консолидация рода, сообщества находилась под угрозой в пользу индивидуализма, так как выше названные праздники предполагают участие большого количества людей, посещение домов родственников, священных мест, совместное общение и трапезу.

Запрет на массовые собрания людей вынудил к поиску альтернативных способов общения. Таковым выступил интернет. В связи с этим практическим материалом для анализа послужили интернет-посты, сведения информантов, статьи из районных газет и наблюдения авторов. Приведенные примеры показали различные влияния COVID-19 на традиционную обрядовую культуру удмуртов. Можно выделить несколько факторов, характеризующих поведение людей в этой ситуации: 1) соблюдение карантина и проведение ритуалов в кругу семьи или ограниченным числом людей; 2) активность в социальных сетях, посредством выкладывания фото, видео с подготовкой и проведением обряда, а также их обсуждения; 3) проведение традиционных обрядовых церемоний в обычном режиме в некоторых сельских местностях.

Надо сказать, что интернет публикации стали ценными источниками не только по поведению и занятиям населения в условиях самоизоляции, но и по исследованию современного состояния традиции и его бытования в кризисной ситуации.

¹ В настоящее время эти праздники приурочены ко дню празднования православной Пасхи. Обычно *Акашку* проводят на кануне Пасхи, а *Быдзын нунал* воспринимается как Пасха, поэтому и празднуют в воскресенье, в день Пасхи. В 2020 году Пасха отмечалась 19 апреля.

Приведенные материалы показали важность эмоционального общения людей, необходимость духовного единения в моменты празднования обрядов и праздников. На сегодня сложно говорить о серьезных влияниях коронавируса на традиционную культуру удмуртов, для этого требуется время и более продолжительное наблюдение. Однако данное исследование ценно тем, что оно зафиксировало сведения, факты и явления этого периода, а также комментарии людей по этому поводу. В дальнейшем все это позволит проследить возможные изменения, произошедшие во время пандемии, и последующее ее влияние на удмуртскую культуру.

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The difficult epidemic situation in the world in connection with the outburst of coronavirus disease – COVID-19 – has put the traditional culture of entire peoples in certain conditions: the form of national rituals and customs have changed in many ways or people were forced to completely abandon the idea to follow their rituals this year. On the other hand, the pandemic has actualized some archaic schemes and ways of overcoming the crisis.

COVID-19 introduced some adjustments to the social and cultural life of Russian citizens, including Udmurts. Our report makes an emphasis on Udmurt's spring rituals during the pandemic (the ritual cycle of *Budzyn nunal* – "the Great Day", *Akashka* – "the plough holiday", marking the beginning of the year according to the national calendar and the beginning of spring field works²; Orthodox Easter; *Tulys kis'ton* – "spring commemoration meeting", as well as summer prayers of Udmurts in Bashkortostan). These ceremonies and holidays coincided with the quarantine period in Russia. It should be noted that the crisis in the country caused extreme concerns among some informants: the collective engagement and consolidation of the clan, the community was threatened by individualism, since the above-

² Currently these holidays coincide with the celebration of Orthodox Easter. Usually, *Akashka* is being held on the eve of Easter, while *Budzyn nunal* is perceived as Easter holiday, therefore it is celebrated on Sunday. In 2020 Easter was celebrated on the 19th of April.

mentioned holidays involve a large number of people, visiting the houses of relatives, sacred places, communication, and a common meal.

The ban on gatherings of people forced them to search for alternative ways of communication. The Internet gave this possibility. In this regard, internet posts, data received from informants, articles from regional newspapers, and observations of the authors gave the practical material for the analysis. The given examples have shown the various impacts of COVID-19 on the traditional ritual culture of Udmurts. There are several factors that characterize the behavior of people in this situation: 1) compliance with quarantine requirements and carrying out rituals within the family or with a limited number of people; 2) activity on social networks: posting photos, videos with the preparation and the ceremony itself, as well as subsequent discussions; 3) conducting traditional ceremonies in the usual way in some rural areas.

It's worth noting that Internet posts have become not only valuable sources allowing to distinguish some behavioral schemes as well as occupations of the population in conditions of self-isolation, but they also give the chance to study the traditions' current state and their existence in a crisis.

The above materials showed the importance of emotional interaction between people, the need for spiritual unity during rituals and holiday celebrations. As of today, it is difficult to talk about the serious effects of the coronavirus on the traditional culture of Udmurts; this requires time and longer observation. However, this study is valuable since it registered information, facts, and phenomena of this period, as well as people's comments on this subject. In the future, all this will allow us to trace possible changes introduced by the pandemic and its subsequent impact on the Udmurt culture.

Пандемия и актуализация архаических схем преодоления кризисной ситуации / Pandemic and Actualization of Archaic Schemes for Overcoming a Crisis Situation

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В марте 2020 года, когда уровень распространения пандемии в Беларуси стал ощутимым и начали распространяться тревога, беспокойство и даже страх, заметно активизировались различные формы реакции людей, базирующиеся на целиком архаических моделях переживания опасности. Конечно, разные социальные слои общества реагировали и реагируют на это по-разному. Наблюдается значительная дифференциация в зависимости от включенности индивида в целый ряд более частных объединений, от религиозных до профессиональных. В данном случае речь пойдет о довольно любопытном и неординарном факте ритуального поведения горожан. 28 марта в г. Минске с по возможности максимальным следованием традиции был проведен обыденный ритуал.

“As a lifelong Slutsk fan of 8 days now, I can safely say this is not a fleeting love”: FK Slutsk Worldwide Facebook page between ironic and genuine football fandom

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As most national football leagues in the world announced cancellations due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Belarusian Premier league has remained the only European championship still playing, attracting attention from football lovers worldwide. On 23 March, a group of Australian football fans created the “FK Slutsk Worldwide” Facebook group, dedicated to the eponymous Belarusian club which has quickly transformed into a diverse and multi-faceted community.

At the initial stages of its functioning, the group demonstrated a lot of features of ironic football fandom. As many of its members recognized the peculiar circumstances behind the intense international focus on an otherwise unremarkable team, they have been producing a variety of image macros, jokes and other humorous forms playing around the exaggerated loyalty of fans to their new favourite club, the club's name and the very fact that Belarusian championship continues at the time of pandemic. The group has also attracted Belarusian users; some of them have been mimicking the online behaviour of international Slutsk fans, while others have been seeking to educate an international audience about Slutsk and Belarus. FC Slutsk management has also initiated a dialogue with their newly found worldwide fandom.

The group has gradually transformed into a community of FC Slutsk supporters, and the practices of ironic fandom began giving way to the attributes of a genuine fandom. Its functioning reveals the complex nature of online communication amid a global crisis. Mass entertainment is enduring massive transformations, vernacular responses to which illustrate how various agents pursue their own goals while seeking to maintain a community spirit and find positive aspects even in trying circumstances.

COVID-19 – Medical Anthropology Seminars in Moscow

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Выявленный в конце 2019 г. коронавирус привел к небывалым последствиям во всем мире. Изучение ситуации с его распространением, особенностями проявления и, главное, реакциями на происходящее со стороны ВОЗ, правительств разных стран, администраций на местах, особенно самих граждан, стало важнейшим для медицинских антропологов и других специалистов на ближайшие годы. В РФ этими проблемами занимаются не только антропологи и этнологи, но социологи, психологи, специалисты общественного здравоохранения, философы и даже фольклористы. Наблюдения ведутся в первую очередь в медиа-пространстве (в связи с запретами, вводимыми на передвижение и контакты), с помощью удаленных опросов, а консультативная работа проходит в системе онлайн-конференций и вебинаров; публикуются первые результаты исследований «по горячим следам».

Центр медицинской антропологии ИЭА РАН (<http://www.iea-ras.ru/index.php?go=Structure&in=view&id=28>) вместе с российской Ассоциацией медицинских антропологов (<http://www.amarussia.ru/>) – не единственные организации, ведущие такую работу в РФ. Наши специалисты работают каждый по своему направлению исследований. Для удобства общения регулярно проводятся международные вебинары, тематика которых зависит от степени готовности конкретного исследователя представить свои наработки. Информация о вебинарах представляется на сайтах ИЭА РАН, АМА, а также на специальной странице на FaceBook медицинских антропологов (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/435172736546732/>) – эта страницы была превращена в новостную для публикации основной информации по текущей ситуации.

Ради более широкого знакомства с результатами наблюдений и исследований было создано пространство для препринтных публикаций новейших данных на сайте научного и научно-образовательного журнала «Медицинская антропология и биоэтика» (www.medanthro.ru) – страница «COVID-19: жизнь в условиях пандемии» (http://www.medanthro.ru/?page_id=82), материалы которой авторы имеют право дорабатывать и издавать в полных номерах «МАиБ» и иных научных журналов или сборников. Вебинары и публикации посвящены событиям, происходящим в разных странах мира, И, естественно, основным проблемам, возникающим в связи с развитием пандемии.

Перечислю суммарно важнейшие проблемы, возникавшие в связи с развитием эпидемических ситуаций и объявления ВОЗ пандемии COVID-19, а также в связи с введением режимов ограничений различной степени, которые отражались на наших исследовательских площадках:

- ✓ Законодательные аспекты борьбы с пандемией (стратегия ВОЗ; работа государственных органов и передача полномочий региональным властям);
- ✓ Реакция населения на введение различных ограничений (идеи создания ситуации удобного управления населением под страхом заражения для каких-либо целей правительства или администраций);
- ✓ Отношение медицинских работников и населения к проблеме наличия коронавируса и степени его опасности (идеи ложной информации со стороны государств и «мирового заговора» с целью уничтожения части населения планеты);
- ✓ Защита людей от возможного заражения (дискуссии о ношении масок, перчаток, о соблюдении безопасного расстояния при контактах);
- ✓ Медицинская помощь зараженным COVID-19 (безопасность используемых лекарственных препаратов; распространение в интернете сведений о схемах лечения и опасности их самостоятельного использования);
- ✓ Подсчет смертности от COVID-19 (скандалы международного и внутригосударственного уровня с определением причины смерти и требованиями к проведению захоронений);
- ✓ Смертность врачей, работавших в «красной зоне» и в службе «скорой помощи», заразившихся COVID-19 (обеспечение спецсредствами защиты; социальные выплаты и зарплаты);

- ✓ Использование студентов медицинских университетов в борьбе с эпидемией;
- ✓ Работа службы волонтеров;
- ✓ Состояние здоровья (в т.ч. психического) людей, оказавшихся в карантине и в ситуации ограничения выхода из дома и передвижения;
- ✓ Проблемы выхода из эпидемической ситуации;
- ✓ Вопрос о создании вакцины и возможности ее применения.

Эти и другие проблемы рассматриваются в применении к российской ситуации и происходящему в разных странах мира (анализировались: Китай – как страна, показавшая пример быстрого выхода из тяжелой ситуации в т.ч. с применением методов ТКМ; Швеция – как страна, не вводившая строгие меры ограничения; Италия – как страна с постигшей ее трагедией быстрого распространения заболевания; Габон – как африканское государство, использовавшее в т.ч. традиционную медицину для профилактики и лечения легких форм течения болезни и др.)

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The coronavirus, detected at the end of 2019, caused unprecedented consequences all over the world. Coronavirus spreading, its manifestations, and, most importantly, the reactions on the part of WHO, governments of different countries, local administrations, and especially the citizens, become the most important object of studies for medical anthropologists and other specialists in the next years. In the Russian Federation, these problems are being studied not only by anthropologists and ethnologists but also by sociologists, psychologists, public health specialists, philosophers, and even folklorists. Observations are carried out primarily in the media space (in connection with the movement and interaction restrictions), using online polls, while consultative work is being conducted in the form of online conferences and webinars; the first research results are being published "while the trail is still hot".

Center for Medical Anthropology, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Science (<http://www.iea-ras.ru/index.php?go=Structure&in=view&id=28>) together with the Russian Association of Medical Anthropology (<http://www.amarussia.ru/>) are not the only organizations conducting such work in the Russian Federation. Each of our specialists works in his research area. We hold regular international webinars for the convenience of communication; the topics of the webinars depend on the readiness of a particular researcher to present his research results. Information about the webinars is given on the websites of the IEA RAS, AMA, as well as on a special Facebook page "Medical Anthropology in Russia" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/435172736546732/>). This page has been turned into a news page allowing us to publish updates on the current situation.

For the sake of a detailed acquaintance with the observations and researches results, a space allowing to make preprint publications of the latest data was created on the website of the

scientific and educational journal "Medical Anthropology and Bioethics" (www.medanthro.ru) in the form of the page "COVID-19: Life in pandemic conditions" (http://www.medanthro.ru/?page_id=82), the materials of which can be updated and published by their authors in full editions of "MA&B" and other scientific journals or essays collections.

Webinars and publications are dedicated to the events taking place in different countries all over the world, and, naturally, to the main problems arising in connection with the pandemic development.

I will summarize the most important problems that arose in connection with the epidemic outbreak and announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic by WHO, as well as in connection with the introduction of various level restrictions, which impacted our research sites:

- Legislative aspects of combating the pandemic (strategy applied by WHO; work of state bodies and powers transfer to regional authorities);
- The reaction of the population to the introduction of various restrictions (the ideas of creating a situation of easy population management on pain of getting infected for some hidden purposes of the government or administrations);
- The attitude of medical workers and the population to the problem of the coronavirus spreading and its hazard level (ideas about false information provided by various states and "global conspiracy" theories implying destroying a part of the world's population as the conspiracy target);
- Protecting people from possible infection (discussions about wearing masks, gloves, maintaining a safe distance during interaction);
- Medical assistance for those who got infected with COVID-19 (safety of the applied drugs; spreading online of the information about treatment regimens and the risks of self-treatment);
- COVID-19 death rates (international and domestic scandals connected with the definition of the deaths causes and the regulations imposed for burials);
- Death rates among doctors who worked in the "red zone" and in the ambulance service and got infected with COVID-19 (provision of special protective means; social benefits and salaries);
- Participation of medical students in the fight against the epidemic;
- The work of the volunteer's organizations;
- The state of health (including mental health) of people who found themselves in quarantine and with the movement restrictions prescribing to stay at home;
- The problems of ending the epidemic regimen;
- The problems of creating a vaccine and the possibility of its use.

These and other problems are being examined as applied to the Russian situation and events in different countries of the world (we analyzed: China as a country that represents an example of a quick resolution of a difficult situation, including use of TCM methods; Sweden as a country that did not introduce strict restrictive measures; Italy as a country with the tragedy of the disease rapid outbreak; Gabon as an African state that used, among other things, traditional medicine for the prevention and treatment of mild cases, etc.)

