

Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum  
Estonian Institute of Folklore



## **Medica VIII**

# **Medical Pluralism in the Era of Digimodernism**

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**ABSTRACTS & SCHEDULE**

November 28, 2011  
Tartu

Medical Pluralism in the Era of Digimodernism

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Medica VIII

“Medical Pluralism in the Era of Digimodernism”

International Conference of Ethnomedicine and Medical Anthropology, November 28, 2011

The conference is organized by the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Folklore Institute.

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# Medical Pluralism in the Era of Digimodernism

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## **Medica VIII**

### **“Medical Pluralism in the Era of Digimodernism”**

The general aim of our annual meetings called Medica has been to analyse public and self-referential representations of health and illness in various contexts and to bring together local and international scholars in order to build up a sustainable network for future discussions and co-operation.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Medica conference concentrates on pluralism in medical context(s). This time we particularly look forward to papers dealing with pluralism issues, which actually was also the topic of EASA conference (Medical Pluralism: Techniques, Politics, Institutions, Rome 7-10 September 2011).

On the basis of our previous experience, we have chosen the following five themes for discussions:

- Ethnobotanics
- Healers and Healing
- Historical Perspectives

From a pre-medicinal facilitating behaviour, folk medicine has become a way of life, in which treatment and methods are incorporated or subjected to life style strategies, being also a certain component of medical pluralism. Some of the medical strategies have been transformed into the source of folklore, as well as the folklore itself. Many narratives have a high applicative value (themes and functions range from the case histories to the narrativity mediating the experience of rehabilitation and inscribing to a specific social group, such as, e.g. personal experience narratives of cancer patients, narratives of participants of the new religious movement in/after the healing ceremony, etc.).

We discuss different medical realms, practitioners, users, traditions, rituals, new and old artefacts in different therapeutic traditions describing the processes and dynamics in the field. Our proposal is that ethno- and biomedical techniques and artefacts are travelling by way of philosophy, also by practitioners and institutions, which are a part of the multi-layered medical practice in Europe.

Medica conferences: <http://www.folklore.ee/ri/fo/konve/medica/>

## **Shamanistic Healing from the Position of Transpersonal Anthropology**

Tatjana Bulgakova

*St. Peterburg, Herzen State Pedagogical University*

Transpersonal paradigm gives a totally new meaning to the shamanistic cure which gives a chance to view it as a whole psychological experience in the context of the traditional magic and mystics. The transpersonal approach gives a chance to view the shaman diseases and more widely all kinds of diseases as experiences of contacts with the layers of psychics (perinatal and transpersonal) that are inaccessible in a daily life. Such approach contrasts to the nature of (shaman and other) diseases as seen from the emic position. In view of the shaman tradition carriers, the reasons or cure of shaman diseases are not related to a humans contact with the hidden layers of the psychics but with the creatures (energies) remaining outside the human that can influence the psychics but exist regardless of the human. To my opinion, the description of the shamanistic cure from the viewpoint of the transpersonal anthropology, description of the phenomenology of diseases and the cure process are very close to the emic way of definition.

## **Is It Possible to Identify the Healing Instruments in the Archaeological Material?**

Kristiina Johanson

*Tartu University*

Archaeological material – in the current presentation I will touch on the examples from the Stone Age to the Late Iron Age – definitely must conceal healing and magical instruments. However, these are not easily identified, since the artefacts used in magi-

cal and healing practices might not stand out in the overall archaeological complexes. So, in order to identify these objects alternative sources might be looked for – folklore texts and written sources from antiquity to the medieval period (e.g. medieval lapidaries). In the presentation I will briefly discuss some of the healing materials used according to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century folklore texts and then, with plenty of examples, concentrate more thoroughly on the „common“ special objects, which might lead up to the identification of healing and magical instruments in archaeological material.

Supported by ESF grant 8956.

## **Russian (neo)Shamanism in the Last Quarter of XX Century: Religion, Creativity and Healing**

Valentina Kharitonova

*Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, RAS,*

*Head of the Group of Medical Anthropology*

In the lecture there will be presented materials that characterize the ongoing transformations, connected to (neo)shamanism, against a background of common changes in religious, cultural, and medical spheres in the Russian Federation.

Main topics of the lecture will be analysed in different contexts: (neo)shamanism in the context of religious question; folk healing in that of biomedicine, public health, alternative and complementary medicines, as well as of state and alternative education, and of scientific institutionalizations.

There will be especially touched upon the question of the specifics of (neo)shamans' personality (based on experimental interdisciplinary researches, conducted in the last decade under leadership of the author) in comparison, among others, with epic and lyroepic singers' personalities.

The presented materials have been gathered by the author on the territory of different Siberian regions, as well as in Moscow % in a megapolis that concentrates, reflects, and stimulates

many processes of (neo)shamanism, city-shamanism, borrowed from the West experiential shamanism, modern folk-healing, and of complementary medicine.

In order to make the presented materials more attractive and demonstrative, some materials gathered in the CIS states will be used.

## Unintentional Prevention of Diseases: Historical Study on Estonian Tea-plants

Raivo Kalle and Renata Sõukand  
*Estonian Literary Museum*  
*Estonian University of Life Science*

Tea is one most consumed drink in the world, second only to water. For modern person “tea” means a product made from the leaves and leaf buds of the plant *Camellia sinensis*, known by the names like green, oolong, black and red teas, depending of fermentation. Still many commercial herbal teas, which are a usually individual or polyherbal formulation made up of medicinal plant(s), are available worldwide. There is a considerable history of the research on chemical components and constituencies of specific herbal teas produced commercially in different regions of the world, as well as an ample quantity of studies on the use of wild plants for medical purposes. Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, there is no published research on the criterion for selection or on preferences of specific plants just for a drink, not for healing purposes.

Although tea and coffee were known on the territory of present Estonia already for several centuries, for most of Estonians, until quite recent times, the term tea was meaning a drink made of self-collected plants soaked in a boiled water. Estonian peasants took advantage of local plant diversity, utilizing for medical purposes during 1888%1994 about half a thousand plants. Along with the healing purposes, Estonians were using plants as a source for social beverages.



In our presentation we rely on records on the plant use from Estonian Folklore Archives, collected between 1888%1994, identifying the plants traditionally used for making herbal tea on the territory of present-day Estonia. The data allow concluding that Estonians were using for herbal teas the plants that already were in use for medical purposes and the selection is based on the taste and availability of the plant. We also argue that drinking of herbal teas as a supplement for food intake was a form of unintentional disease prevention.

## **Constructive Alternativism and the Healers**

Mare Kõiva  
*Estonian Literary Museum*

In the presentation I will describe (using George Kelly posited ‘constructive alternativism’) how different contemporary healers build up the self-presentation using different interpretations. Healing is often the collaborative practice, created within triangle: environment, self and culture.

Secondly I follow how the different healers design the supporting rituals and social interaction to balance the personality and to solve the health problems within the altered space and place, or within differentiated physical environment and altered mentality.

This paper presents also some common elements and features of rituals, adapted and reinvented rituals, and discusses the role of healers in the discourse of printed medical books.

The source material for the presentation are the materials from the archives of folk healers, and the Internet resources.

Supported by SF 0030181s08 “Narrative aspects of folklore. Power, personality and globalization” and ESF grant project ETF 8137 “Cultural processes in the Internet societies. Narratives, values and places”.

## About Keila Nursing Hospital, Caring and Palliative Care Services

Piret Paal

*Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich,  
clinic Großshadern, department of palliative medicine*

When the first story about Keila nursing hospital was displayed in Pealtnägija 2011 this spring, many friends and colleagues sent me messages in which they recommended me to get introduced to this story (ERR Uudised 2011). Keila hospital has been featured in a few stories in the media under the name of nursing hospital where there are people in a critical condition, who need continuous care and who principally have no hope to be cured but whose condition can still be improved or at least kept stable. In England such people are sent to a hospice or nursing home, in Finland to diaconia department, and in Germany to rehabilitation centres or other units where the patients are also offered the cure for spirit, psychosocial support and help in social and legal issues.

The former head of Keila hospital Doctor A. Peri claims in the analysed story that people are cured and not taken care of (sic!) in Keila nursing hospital and when a patient wishes to walk he/she must be taken over to the rehabilitation department. According to this doctor the family of this specific patient does not realise in “how deep shit” they are; which also means that the family members must help the patient to the toilet if she wishes it. When viewing the programme repeatedly, it quickly becomes obvious that the point is not the high fire risk in the hospital or shortage of doctors and nurses or single patients in need. The point is the attitude proving the lack of the term of palliative cure in the given context and on social level. As a follow-up of this story, the Estonian Patient Advocacy Association recommends to revise the whole care service system over all Estonia (EPE Uudised 2011).

In my poster report I discuss the importance of palliative medicine and care in the future medicine. I declare that in view of the cultural pluralism of the globalising world also the ethnologists, folklorists and medicine anthropologists will have an

important role to play in the interest of the patient and his/her family. Furthermore, I suggest that arising from the dynamics conditioned by the small size of Estonia, a well organised network of palliative services could be even one of Estonian Nokias which means that a high quality care service is offered to the citizens and their family members.

EPE Uudised 2001. Hooldustöötajad vajavad koolitust. [http://www.epey.ee/index.php?page=91&action=article&article\\_id=63](http://www.epey.ee/index.php?page=91&action=article&article_id=63)

ERR Uudised 2011. "Pealtnägija" uuris Keila haigla korralagedust, 04.05.2011 20:33 <http://uudised.err.ee/index.php?06228294>.

## **Medicine in Tartu before the Foundation of the University and during the *Academia Gustaviana* Period**

Kaarina Rein  
*Tartu University*

It is probable that the first doctors in the Baltic provinces were clergymen and monks in the 13th century. In the case of Tallinn, it has been presumed that up to the 1620s most of the doctors were clerics.

The history of medicine in Tartu also begins with medieval monastic medicine. There is data about an infirmary and an almshouse at the Church of Holy Ghost, which were probably founded in the middle of the 13th century. A hospital for leprous patients seems to have been founded at the same time. The first pharmacy in Tartu was founded between 1422 and 1430 by Johann Molner, a learned physician who arrived from Tallinn. Up to the beginning of the 17th century, the owners of the pharmacy were the only representatives of academic medicine in Tartu.

Academic medical education in Tartu had its beginnings with the academic gymnasium founded in 1630 and the university

founded in 1632. One of the three higher faculties at the University of Tartu at that time was the Faculty of Medicine.

The activities in the field of medicine in Tartu from 1630-1656 were influenced by three professors of medicine – Johannes Raicus (*ca* 1580-1632), Johann Below (1601-1668) and Sebastian Wirdig (1613 or 1615-1687). They all had studied in Germany. In Tartu they became part of the emerging circle of local intellectuals.

The paper tries to answer the question, whether there are any changes in Tartu in the field of medicine after the foundation of the university in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Last Man Standing? Charmers, Illnesses and Healing in Bulgarian Early Modern Daily Life**

Svetlana Tsonkova  
*Department of Medieval Studies,  
Central European University – Budapest*

The source materials for my paper are early modern Bulgarian charms and non-canonical prayers, written in Old Church Slavonic language and preserved in manuscripts. The majority of these words of power are exclusively dedicated to healing, to aversion of illnesses, and to restoration and preservation of health of humans and animals. My aim is to trace the specific features of the practitioners and users of charms, non-canonical prayers and other words of power. Is it possible to understand who are they? What is their role in a crisis situation? And in a crisis rite? How do they manage such serious critical condition as illnesses, traumas and other health problems? The practice of charming is a crossing-point, where magical and quotidian, Our World and the Other World meet. The charmer is the key figure in this complex network encompassing supernatural and human, life and death, text and ritual, power and magic. How much does the source material reveal about these practitioners? How reliable is

this information? How to connect it with information from later folklore sources?

My paper is focused on the charming as a daily life practice and as a daily life strategy to manage critical situations, affecting the health and life of humans and animals. I am also interested in the charmer and the user of words of power as an active and influential figure, who communicates with the supernatural, influences the reality and is powerful enough to avert danger and death. My aim is to look at the charms, the charmers and the crisis situations as cultural phenomena, and as subjects of interdisciplinary research.

## **The Academics and the Recording of Folk Medicine During the First Estonian Republic (1918–1940)**

Ave Tupits

*Estonian Literary Museum*

In my presentation that is based on several of my recent studies, I give an overview of Estonian folklorists' interest in folk medicine during the Estonian Republic at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the Estonian Folklore Archives were just established in 1927, much of the Archives work consisted of collecting folkloristic data. And although folk medicine was not a prominent goal in the questionnaires of that time, it was certainly not neglected either.

In the presentation I take a look at the folkloristic questionnaires compiled mostly in the 1920's and 1930's and directed towards the archives' correspondents, which entail questions about folk medicine and folk healing ways. The questionnaires give a good indication of the collecting interests of the folklorists (which topics and how thoroughly were expected to be collected) and collecting practices of that era. The Archives' director, Oskar Loorits (1900–1961), was especially interested in the folk medical terminology and two researchers, Richard Viidalepp (1904–

1986) and Herbert Tampere (1909–1975) put together several questionnaires important to our point of interest.

I also take a look at the other side of the coin – the interest of academic medical circles in the Estonian folk curing methods. Most of the attention here goes to MD Voldemar Sumberg (1893–1965), who already as a student organised folk medicine collecting along with the Medicine Section of the Estonian Students' Society and the Estonian National Museum in 1921. A few years onwards, Sumberg organised another collecting campaign as the director of the Estonian Museum of Hygiene. The Museum itself and its collections were destroyed in the WWII, but a small part of its folk medicine collection is still to be found in the Estonian State Archive.

Research into the activities of the Museum of Hygiene regarding collecting folk medicine data also opened up a broader picture. A look into popular medical articles and publications of proceedings of medical conventions of 1920s and 1930s gives an insight and overview of the general attitude of the academic medical circles toward folk medicine practices, as well as individual opinions, which are not always in unison. The number of folk healers in the aforementioned decades was around 300–400 and the gradually growing number of Estonian MDs in 1929 was around 900, so the concern of the medical professionals over the ever-popular folk healing is quite understandable.

The general attitude however was, that folk healing is degrading and medical professionals will prevail. The time has shown that although medical science has much evolved since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the less academic side of healing is certainly as strong as ever. With my look into past, I hope to bring together two somewhat different, but in some respect also similar partners in collecting and studying Estonian folk medicine.

Supported by SF0030180s08 Folklore and Folklore Collections in Cultural Changes: Ideologies, Adaptation and Application Context.

## List of Participants

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## Conference Timetable

### Monday, the 28th of November 2011

- 14.00 *Medicine in Tartu before the Foundation of the University and during the Academia Gustaviana Period*  
Kaarina Rein
- 14.30 *The Academics and the Recording of Folk Medicine. During the first Estonian Republic (1918-1940)*  
Ave Tupits
- 15.00 *Is It Possible to Identify the Healing Instruments in the Archaeological Material?*  
Kristiina Johanson
- 15.30 *Unintentional Prevention of Diseases: Historical Study on Estonian Tea-plants*  
Raivo Kalle and Renata Sõukand
- 16.00 *Last Man Standing? Charmers, Illnesses and Healing in Bulgarian Early Modern Daily Life*  
Svetlana Tsonkova
- 16.30 **coffee break**
- 16.50 *Russian (neo)Shamanism in the Last Quarter of XX Century: Religion, Creativity and Healing*  
Valentina Kharitonova
- 17.30 *Shamanistic Healing in the Transpersonal Anthropology*  
Tatjana Bulgakova
- 18.00 *Constructive Alternativism and the Healers*  
Mare Kõiva
- 18.30 *Experiences with Shamanistic Healers*  
Mihály Hoppál
- 19.00 *About Keila Nursing Hospital, Caring and Palliative Welfare Services*  
Piret Paal (poster)
- 19.30 **Open discussion**