

ARCHIVE SOURCES

LTR – Lithuanian Folklore Archives at Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, manuscripts

LTRF – Lithuanian Folklore Archives, sound recordings

About the author

Daiva Vaitkevičienė, PhD, is a Senior Researcher at the Department of Folk Narrative in the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. Her research field covers Baltic mythology, folk beliefs and narratives, verbal charms, and ethnomedicine.

Since 1999 Daiva Vaitkevičienė has been investigating charms and has drawn up a typological system of Lithuanian charms. She has compiled and edited a typological folklore publication *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* (2008).

PLICA POLONICA IN BELARUSIAN BELIEFS AND INCANTATIONS

Tatsiana Valodzina

Apparently, there is no disease that attracts so much attention from researchers (both medical doctors and ethnographers) as *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*, the Polish plait). However, to this day there is no generally accepted solution regarding the etiology and history of the disease, which manifests itself in entangled hair and is accompanied by rheumatic pains, sores, rash, crooked nails, blurred vision, as well as attacks of nerves, spasms and increased heart rate. This article will feature Belarusian materials that represent the eastern extent of the area of beliefs related to *Plica Polonica*. The article is based on the folklore and ethnographic data collected by the author over the past 20 years, and aims to analyse the ontology of the disease named *kautun*, its involvement in human communication both with the body and with non-human beings. The article also provides comments on the historical evolution of beliefs and magical practices associated with the *Plica*.

Key words: Belarusian ethnomedicine, healing ritual, *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*), incantations, contemporary beliefs, ethnographic fieldwork.

CAUSES OF PLICA POLONICA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Apparently, there is no disease that attracts so much attention from researchers (both medical doctors and ethnographers) as *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*, the Polish plait). By the mid-nineteenth century over 900 (!) research articles had been published and their number increased steadily. In 1843 Beschorner, director of the first asylum in Poland, published a large population-based study. However, to this day there is no generally accepted solution regarding the etiology and history of the disease, which manifests itself in entangled hair and is accompanied by rheumatic pains, sores, rash, crooked nails, blurred vision, as well as attacks of nerves, spasms and increased heart rate. One of the first researchers of the disease, Kajetan Kowakewski, wrote in 1839: “The plica is almost entirely confined to certain countries. It occurs in Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Hungary, Silesia, Transylvania, and Prussia. It is also occasionally met with in different parts of Germany; along the Rhine, Switzerland, in Holland and Paris” (Morewitz 2007). This article will feature Belarusian materials that represent the eastern extent of the area of beliefs related to *Plica Polonica*.

This article aims to analyse the ontology of the disease named *Plica (kautun)*, its involvement in human communication both with the body and with non-human beings. It also provides comments on the historical evolution of beliefs and magical practices associated with the *Plica*. The folklore and ethnographic data from across Belarus were collected by the author over the past 20 years and represent the boundaries of research covering the traditional Belarusian medicine.

In his notes on his journey through the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the 18th century, Englishman William Coxe provides information on the disease:

In our progress through this country we observed several persons with matted or clotted hair which arises from a disorder called Plica Polonica: it receives that denomination, because it is considered as peculiar to Poland; although it is not infrequent in Hungary, Tartary, and several adjacent nations, and instances of it are occasionally found in other countries. According to the observations of Dr. Vieat, an ingenious Swiss physician long resident in Poland, who has published a treatise on this subject; the Plica Polonica proceeds from an acrid viscous humour, penetrating into the hairs: it then exudes from its sides or extremities, and clots the whole together, either in separate folds, or in one undistinguished mass. The symptoms, more or less violent, according to the constitution of the patient, or malignity of the disease, are itching, swellings, eruptions, ulcers, intermitting fevers, pains in the head, languor, lowness of spirits, rheumatism, gout; sometimes convulsions, palsy, and madness. The Plica Polonica appears to be a contagious distemper, which, like the leprosy, still prevails among a people ignorant in medicine, and inattentive to check its progress; but is rarely known in those countries where due precautions are taken to prevent its propagation. Its contagion is probably prevented from spreading among the Russians by the use of the vapour bath.¹

Nineteenth century ethnographers associated the disease with a characteristic climate and life in the marshes, a lack of proper hygiene combined with hard work, fright, and the evil eye, among other causes. “The Polish plait is generated by poverty, damp and poorly constructed dwellings, wearing a warm hat on unbrushed hair, both in winter and in summer, as well as general uncleanness” (Толстой 1983: 6); “Marshes are a true curse of this region (Polesye), having an extremely negative impact on the health of its inhabitants. All sorts of diseases, terrible fever, typhoid, tuberculosis are common among the miasma of the swamp. Besides, a terrible disease unknown elsewhere has built its

nest here – plica. Plica is the result of an acute unthriftiness suffered by many Belarusians. Every hair on the human head is filled with pus, and they all are entangled into a hideous mass, which can be neither touched nor scratched or washed, and has to be worn wrapped in a linen bag. Plica is accompanied by aches, sores, rash, crooked fingernails and an ingrown eyelid” (СНО 1904: 5).

Educated Europeans were actively involved in the fight against the Polish plait, viewing it as superstition and a result of uncleanness. William Davidson (1583–1669), the physician to the Polish King John Casimir after 1651, mercilessly cut plaits, telling the patients to wash their hair and use a comb. The court physician of King John III Sobieski, Irishman Bernard O’Connor (1666–1698), and a Jewish physician Tobias Cohen (1652–1729), also treated their patients by removing the neglected hair. In Galicia, *Plica Polonica* became less visible after Dr. Józef Dietl spread rumours that wearing a Polish plait would be taxed (Gaḡol, Herman). Yet, the statement that “the plica disappeared after in the second half of the 19th century the last doctors who believed in it had died”² (Gaḡol, Herman) seems somewhat presumptuous, especially taking into account the huge number of folk expedition records of recent decades in Belarus (Валодзіна 2007: 410–432, Володина 2008). The rich mass of data related to Polish traditions were analysed in a work by Marczewska (2012: 113–149).

PLICA POLONICA AND THE PRACTICE OF MAGIC

Obviously, the Polish plait is not only a phenomenon of a purely medical nature, but also a whole complex of mythological beliefs. Irreversibly entangled hair was also associated with causes of a supernatural nature, often manifested in the context of imitative magic: the *Plica* was correlated with spinning at Christmas (Богданович 1895: 89), hair washing to commemorate the beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a bat getting into one’s hair (Никифоровский 1897: 188), lost hair being picked up by a bird or a mouse and bedeviling crops in the fields with the magic rite of *zalom*³. The crop and vegetable allusions of the *Plica* are most obvious, especially against the background of mythological and poetic comparisons of hair with vegetation in general. Related texts starting with *zalom* strongly refer to crops, which can serve as a reason for the *Plica*:

Залом дзелалі на полі, тады і на галаве будзе, скруціцца і нічым яго не расчэшаш.
А то расчэшаш і памрэш. Чараўніца як робіць залом, тваё імя скажа. Той кусок не чапалі. А як зачэпіць, стане галава балець. У каго каўтун, дык ей гаворуць: мусіць, залом зжала.

Zalom was made in the field, and then it will be in the hair, too, it will be entangled and it can never be brushed. And if you brush it, then you will

die. When the sorceress is doing zalom, she says your name. That part was not touched. If it is touched, then you will have a headache. Whoever has kautun, she is told: you have probably reaped a zalom.

In Sluck district, *kautun* (the *Plica*) is the name for *zalom* in the field:

Завілі жыта, эта ж мне зрабілі ўрэд, каб каўтун быў. Каўтун. Эта жыта, дык я яго дажа не хачу жаць, а кругом абажну і хай яно стаіць. Патаму што будзе каўтун. Валасы так о скруцяцца, хай Бог прашчае, што я пакажу, скруцяцца, і цэлы год. І галава баліць, усе. Эта ж кажуць, каўтун у яе звіўса. Эта, кажуць, каўтун нехта завіў на полі. Эта каб у хазяйкі завіўся каўтун. Не зжыналі гэты каўтун, так ён і стаіць, і стаіць.

*They have entangled rye, they did it to harm me so that I had kautun. Kautun. This is rye, then I do not want to even reap it and I will reap around it and let it stand. Because I will have kautun. My hair will be entangled just about like this, God forgive me that I will show how, it will be entangled for the whole year. And your head aches, that's it. For they say, "she has kautun". They say someone has twisted kautun in the field. This is done to make kautun on the lady's head. They would not reap this kautun, so it remained standing.*⁵

Moreover, *Plica* therapy is correlated with crop-related manipulations:

– А які час выбіралі, каб зняць каўтун?

– Як жыто стоіць на полю, стропы, тоді можна знімаці. Зжато да стропы стаяць.

– *And what time was chosen to remove kautun?*

– *As the crops are standing in the field, harvested, then it can be reaped. Reaped and the stubble is standing.*⁶

Коўтун нада год вынаўсць. Если год вынасила, и нада ити ў поле, када зажынають жыта, и нажатъ первый сноп и посадить с тыми валасами бабу и ўже можна знімати.

*Kautun should be worn for a year. If you can wear it for a year, then you should go to the field when rye is starting to be harvested and reap the first sheaf and put the woman with the hair there and then you can remove it.*⁷

In the western part of the European area of distribution of *Plica*-related beliefs the disease is clearly correlated with an intervention of a demonic character, including terminology and etiologic identification. A demon provokes a mat, which is named after the demon: the Slovak *škrat*, *škratek*, ‘spirit bringing wealth’, and *škratec* (*Plica*) (Hoffmann-Krayer, Bächtold-Stäubli 1935/1936:

1286), the Czech *skřítek* (*skřrotek*, *koltun*) (Vyhlídal 1900: 192); the Silesian and Moravian *mamunik* (Bartoš 1906: 191). The Kashubian word *pikas* has two meanings, ‘*Plica*’ and ‘evil spirit’: *zadac komus pikusa*, “instil a disease and the evil spirit in a person” (Sychta 1970: 271), see also the Lithuanian *pūkys* (“in some regions (for example the Klaipėda region) Aitvaras bears the name *pūkys*” (Грэймас 2003: 70)), which is probably linked to the German name for a household demon *Puck*. Bezlaj does not rule out the Serbo-Croatian name for *Plica*, *vilovina*, which is derived from *vila* “witch” (Bezljaj 1982: 317).

Particularly evident is the correlation of *Plica* Polonica with demons in the German tradition, where hair entanglement is attributed to almost all mythological chthonic characters, their names suggesting the names for the disease: cf. as synonymous *Alp-*, *Druden-*, *Hexen-*, *Hollen-*, *Mahr-*, *Schrätelns-*, *Trollenzopf*, *Alpklatte*, *Alpschwanz*, *Bilwistzote*, *Haarschrötel*, *Hollerkopf*, *Mahrfluchte*, *-klatte*, *-locke*, *-zotte*, the English *Elflock*, the Swedish *Martofva* (Höfler 1899: 901). The Balts attribute the functions of a pathogenic demon to a spirit named *Aitvaras* who brings wealth, see Greimas (Грэймас 2003: 78–80), as well as a quote from Rozenbaum’s report: “The Lithuanian night spirit *Aitvaras*, the Polish *wieszczka* or the white *Pani* (mermaid) and the night spirits *Koltki*, *Skrzot* have in folk beliefs an occupation of tangling hair, and since *Wieszczycze*, *Koltki*, *Koltun* were also used to name a disease, which as a result of a demon’s wrath could not be cured medically, according to the beliefs accepted at the time” (Rosenbaum 1838: 550).

The magic and demonic nature of the Polish plait is visible in the causes related to the intentional actions of sorcerers:

Эта насыльная. Эта людзі насылаюць, і калтун завіваецца. І яго віражай не віражай, а ён усіраўно будзя зывівацца. Эта нада малітву чытаць, каб удаліўся. *It's a jinx. This is said by people and kautun is spun. And if you try to cut it or not, it will be spun anyway. You should say a prayer to remove it.*⁸

Гаварілі, што яна ўмеець паддзелаваць, дык у яе вырас такі каўтун. У яе такі рог баў, як падвяжаць хусткай. Так і хадзіла. Платок завязаць, а ён як рог тарчыць. *They said she could do magic, then kautun grew on her head. She had such a horn when she wore a kerchief. So she was walking around like this. She wore a kerchief, and it stuck out like a horn*”), with “the evil wind blowing over the head.”⁹

– А калтун? Ці чулі вы такое?

– А я насіла. Віхор падкруціў. Вот я сена грабіла і віхор закруціў. І так во сена было перада мной, і схваціў гэта сена і чуць не са мной. І я яшчэ тая ж дура была – маладая саўсем. Яшчэ пайшла гэта сена пазбірала і назаўтра захварэла.

Круціла мяне, вярцела мяне ўсяк, усе косці вярцела, тады ўжо дажа хадзіла, як сарока скакала. Павязлі мяне ў Докшыцы да дзеда. Дзед нада мной пачытаў і сказаў не расчосвацца і запусціць калтун.

– *And what about kautun? Have you heard about it?*

– *Well, I wore one. A whirlwind twirled it. I was raking hay and the whirlwind twisted it. And so the hay was in front of me, and it grabbed the hay just near me. And I was still silly – quite young. I came back to rake the hay and the next day I was ill. It twisted me and spun me as it is, every bone was twisted, then I could still walk, jumped like a magpie. They took me to an old man in Dokshytsy. The man whispered a spell above me and told me not to brush my hair and let kautun grow.*¹⁰

Thus, the European perspective is dominated by understanding the Plica as a result of malicious actions by demons and sorcerers.

INTERNAL PLICA

In the Belarusian tradition, however, there are only a few cases of the Polish plait being caused by the intervention of evil forces. In most records, it is attributed to the eruption of an inner substance (inherent in every human being) under the influence of a number of factors:

У любога чалавека ёсь каўтун, толькі яго нада ўстрывожыць, узнервіць, устаўчы. З бальных нерваў, з бальшого іспуга.

*Every person has kautun, it only should be woken up, flurried, squeezed. Because of nerves, huge fright.*¹¹

Каўтун пры кождому чоловікові есь: пры кому – плачам, пры кому – сном, пры кому – песнями. Не трэба трогати.

Kautun is in every man: in crying, in sleep, in songs. It must not be touched. (Страхов 2005: 194)

Каўтун? Эта ж ён – да сарака год яго няма, а пасяля сарака ён у кождага. Эта ж тыя самыя нервы. У аднаго яны такія, а ў другога такія. Хто сільна растроіцца, тады каўтун выб’ецца наверх, тады яму і лягчэй.

*Kautun? This is, you do not have it until you are forty, and after forty everyone has it. This is the very nerves. They can differ. Whoever is really worried, then kautun will rise up, and then he feels easier.*¹²

Such representations were known to the Poles, who argued that every person from birth had a *goścca* (internal Plica), which is localised in the blood or

bones, and makes itself felt through different pains (Biegeleisen 1929: 263–271, Marczevska 2012: 115).

Such an understanding of the phenomenon as a pathological manifestation (eruption) of vital potency and forces inherent in human beings is confirmed by contemporary records from the beginning of the century when uncleanness or self-neglect are not factors to be considered. It is essential that *Plica Polonica*, perceived as a human counterpart, is therefore described in human terms. However, it bears the opposite sign and is perceived as a dead being, called *nezhyts* (‘lifeless’, ‘dead’):

Бывае чаго-та захоча зьесь, а яму не дасі, бывае і каўтун, бывае і сухата. Помню я: пашла з пакойнай мамкай у Лоеў, а чалавек прадаваў мед. “Мамачка, меду хочу! Мамачка, купі стаканчык меду”. А за што было купіць той маці? А купіла, я тут на месьце яго і зьела. Значыць, мне трэба было. Значыць, нежыць у чалавека трэбуе. У чалавека е што-та такое, што трэбуецца яму, і з’есць, і выпіць, і ўсё.

*Sometimes you want to eat something, and you don’t, then there is kautun and tuberculosis. I remember I was in Loyeў with my late mother, and there was a man selling honey. “Mommy, I want some honey! Mommy, buy me a glass of honey.” And for what could that mother buy it? And she bought it, and I ate it right there. So I needed it. So the nezhyts’ troubles the man. The man has something that requires it, to eat and to drink, and everything.*¹³

Notably, the Polish plait in a person could cause a desire for food, or, conversely, a ‘protest’ against certain food products. There are many records of *Plica Polonica* accompanied by food abnormalities, when certain foods aggravate the disease and others, on the contrary, alleviate its symptoms.

Каўтун у каго – якую яду любіць ці ня любіць, гэта ня ён, а каўтун ні прымаіць. *Whoever has kautun – what kind of food he likes or dislikes, it is not him but kautun that would not take it.*¹⁴

Яна захацела чаго-та зьесьці і не зьела таго. Есьлі чалавек захацеў што-та... Ён у кождага чалавека ёсь, калтун. Толька не ва ўсех ён выяўляецца. Панімаеця, не ва ўсех. Есьлі чалавек што-та захацеў, нада хоць раз у рот уклаць, хлібнуць, і то ўсё будзецц нармальна. Вот. А тая жэншчына... У яе такі вырас калтун, хай Бог мілуець. Нада прасіць, каб вышаў: Калтун, калтуночак, родненькі браточак, выхадзі, калтун, на пяскі, на каменьне, на сухое кареньне. Тут табе ня быць, не хадзіць, (імя) рецвіога серца не знабіць. Не сам аж я сабою, Госпадам Богам, Прячистая Матушка на помашч. Вот так трі раза нада прагуваріваць.

– А як адрэжаш?

– Нельзя яго резаць. Ён дужа гняўлівы, ён магець даць і на серца ці на глаза, ці на галаву. Яго адгуваріваеш. Ён сам па сабе даўжон адхадзіць, паціхоньку, паціхонечку. А патом касу эту нельзя кідаць дзе зря. Яго нада браць у беленькі платочак, заварачаваць і кідаць пад Пасху, як Усенашная, на речку, па речку штоб пашоў. Лі жа занасіць на чердак. Адна перекладзіна, як рясэтнік во, вы панімаеця? Другая, і за трэцюю перекладзінку яго лажыць. І хай там ляжыць. А дзе ён дзенецца, адзін Бог знаець.

– *She wanted something to eat and did not eat it. If a man wanted something... Every man has it, kautun. Only not everyone has it opened. You see, not everyone. If a man wanted something, he must at least once put something in his mouth, swallow it, and then everything will be fine. That's it. And that woman... She grew such kautun, God have mercy. You have to ask it to leave: kautun, little kautun, dear brother, come out, kautun, on sand, on the rocks, on dry roots. You will not be here, you will not walk here, will not shiver the heart of the proud (name). Not by myself, in Christ's name, Virgin Mary, help. That's how you should repeat it three times.*

– *And if you cut it off?*

– *You cannot cut it. It can be very angry, it can cause pain in your heart and eyes, or the head. You talk it out. It should leave itself, bit by bit. And then kautun should not be thrown out. It should be taken in a little white handkerchief, wrapped and thrown out at Easter, during the vigil, to the river, so that it could leave in the river. Or take it to the attic. One spoke, where the lattice is, you see? The second, and put it behind the third spoke. And let it lie there. And where it will go, only God knows.¹⁵*

In contemporary context, there exist numerous explanations of the phenomenon as a result of a nervous breakdown:

– Эта нежыць, нежыць, эта цяпер кажуць “нервы”, а то нежыць. Нежыць – што-та есь такое ў жываце. Залатнік-нежыць падходзіць пад грудзі. А каўтун – на галаву выходзіці. Тожа ат нервеннай гэтай сісьцемай. Эта ўсё – нада спакойна сябе весь, только каб не плакаць, а то раструбіць голаву, уб’еш серца.

– А тая нежыць у кождага чалавека?

– У кождага чалавека, у кождага.

– *This is a nezhyts', nezhyts', you now say “nerves” and it's a nezhyts'. The nezhyts', it is something in your stomach. Zalatnik-nezhyts' goes to the chest. Kautun comes out of your head. It's also because of the nervous system. This is all, you should be quiet, only not to cry, or then you worry your head and kill your heart.*

– *And that nezhyts' is in every person?*

– *In every person, in everyone.¹⁶*

These views help understand the motives of verbal charms aimed at taming the *Plica*-demon and returning it to the proper place in the body: “Я ж цябе прашу, табе смачна есці даю, мякку пасцель сцялю, цябе, каўтуна, спаць кладу... Стаць, табе, каўтунок, угадзіць, абнаравіць на сваём месечку, на залатом крэслечку” (“I beg you, I give you tasty food, lay you a soft bed, put you, *kautun*, to sleep... May you be, little *kautun*, please you, tame you on your place, on a chair of gold”) (Барташэвіч 1992: 244). Probably, in accordance with such ideas, after the person's death, the *Plica* must re-join him or her in order to restore the ‘original’ integrity:

Паложуць дзе за іконку каўтун, як знімуць, а як памру, дык і ў гроб мне ўкладуць.

They will put kautun somewhere behind the icon, after they cut it, and when I die, then they will put it to my coffin.¹⁷

Ну, она умэрала, йон узяў одрызаў ей того куўтуна. Одрізаў да кажэ: Я ў садочку закопаў. А она ему сныцца да сныцца: Сынок, прыняси ты мні голоўу мою, зняў да куда ты дэў. Прыняси мне назад. И кажэ, мусіў выкопваты и нэсты на могицы закопваты матэры. И тоўды нэ стало сныцца.

Well, she was dying, he cut that kautun. He cut it off and said: I've buried it in the garden. And he keeps seeing her in his dreams: 'Son, bring me my head, you took it and put it somewhere. Bring it back to me.' And he said he had to dig it out and took it to the cemetery to dig it next to his mother. And then he stopped seeing her in his dreams.¹⁸

Incantations against *Plica Polonica* predominantly address it as an animate being accentuating expressions of relationship:

Каўтун-каўтунічка, мая родная сястрычка, не б’емса мы, не сварэмса мы, да за ручкі палярэмса мы, да хадзем мы ў чыстае полечка, там столічкі пазасыціланы, кубачкі паналіваны. Сіняе і зялёнае віно мы расьпівалі, каўтуна і каўтуніцу разганялі і на чыстую воду пускалі.

Kautun, little [female] kautun, my dear sister, we do not fight, we do not argue, we will join our hands, we go to the field, there the tables are laid and the cups are full. We drank blue and green wine, we chased kautun and little [female] kautun and put it in clear water.¹⁹

The texts of incantations against the *Plica* imply that it, like other diseases, has been personified, including a certain family hierarchy:

Гаспадару Богу памалюсь, старшаму каўтуну пакланюсь. Старшы каўтун, унімай сваіх прыслуг: дняўных, начных, вадзяных, ветраных...

I will pray to Dear God, I will greet the eldest kautun. "Eldest kautun, tame your servants: day ones, night ones, water ones, wind ones..." (Барташэвіч 1992: 245)

Many texts are based on addressing the disease as a character, often with a clear desire to calm, please or persuade it: "Каўтун, каўтуночак, мой мілы дружочак, а ты ў гэтай галовачцы не сядзі, не ляжы...", ("Kautun, little kautun, my dear little friend, do not be in this little head, do not sit and do not lie..."). *Kautun* (he-*kautun*) and *kautunikha* (she-*kautun*) are sometimes treated as brother and sister, or as a young couple: "Kautun, kautunitsa, boy and girl, you are not many, only two" (Барташэвіч 1992: 246).

Another interesting fact is that *Plica Polonica* in the popular imagination is endowed with the capacity for independent living, even outside the human body.

Прыхадзіла дзядзіна, дык яна казала, што ей зьнялі ды ня воўрамя. Дык нада браць хустачку сьвежую, з магазіна мацерыялу ці хустачку-высыпаначку, зьвязаць эта і на гару занесла і дзе дзьверы адчыняюцца ў сенцах там з крохвінай. А тады прашло сколькі ўрэмя, нешта ей задумалася, яна палезла. Аж ён вырас, ажно ў хусту ня лез. Сам па сабе. Патаму што не дарос тут. А есьлі б яны абрэзалі не правільна, магла б памерці ці паралізаваць. І яшчэ адна баба, у яе дзьве касы было. Што-та ей цяне галаву. Цяне, дак яна адрэзала косы і прывезла к бацькам, тут бацькі жылі. Яна прывезла, пагладзіла косы свае і палажыла ў шуфляду і кажа: "Мае красавіцы, аддыхайця і мая галава хоць аддыхне". Ну і ўсё. Яна па восені абрэзала, а вясной адкрыла шуфляду ў шкапу, паляджу, дзе мае красавіцы. Аж там такі во камяк ляжыць, зьбіў каўтун у камяк, зьбіў. Эта ў Лянёўцы было. Яна атрэзала, што каўтун астаўся тут, у косах. Адчыніла, а там каўтун, камяк. Закапавалі абычна па межах. Паліць іх нельзя.

My uncle's wife came, so she said that they took it off but not in good time. So you should take a fresh kerchief, a cloth from the store or a printed shawl, wrap it and take it to the attic and where the doors open into the hall there with a rafter. And then some time passed, she began to think about it and climbed there. It had grown, it was bigger than a kerchief. By itself. Because it had no time to grow here. And if they had cut it wrong, she could have died or be paralysed. And another woman, she had two braids. Something was annoying her head. So she cut the braids and brought them to the parents, her parents used to live here. She brought them, brushed her braids and put them in a drawer and says: "My beauty, have rest and let my head rest." Well, that's it. She cut them in the autumn and in spring she opened the drawer in the closet to see where her beauty was. And there was such a ball, a mat of hair made by a kautun. This was in Lianioŭka. She cut it and kautun stayed here, in the braids. She

*opened it and there was kautun, a ball. They would usually bury them at the end of the field. You cannot burn them.*²⁰

Perception of *Plica Polonica* in terms of human categories is to some extent influenced by the gender differences in types of *kautuns* although it is the shape of entangled hair that serves as a visual motivation to determine whether it is male or female, a *kautun* or *kautunitsa*: "Есьлі самка – усю галаву круціць, есьлі самец – можа і да пола атрасьці"²¹, ("If it's female, all your head is twisted, if a male it may grow to the floor."), "Каўтуница зьвівае ўсі валасы. Усі, саб'е во так во, да лба. А каўтун атдзельна. Ён робіцца атдзельна, во такая во паласа"²², ("Kautunitsa entangles all your hair. All of it; mats it like this, up to your forehead. And kautun is apart. It is separated, such a band.")

The identification of the Plica as a part or substance of the body, which is present in each person and which for some reason receives outward manifestations and causes a morbid condition, underlies the ritual practices and incantation motives aimed at establishing equal relations with the disease.

ARTIFICIAL FORMATION OF *PLICA POLONICA*

Ethnographers, although not doctors, drew attention to the fact that *kautun* is not always a disease: "this felted hair was not matted by itself from some poison, germs or dirt, but is the creation of human hands" (Грынблат 1928: 134). A special mat of hair can be used as a remedy for a number of vaguely defined diseases that do not have names in the folk nomenclature and cannot be treated with home remedies. The emergence of a mat of hair can often be seen as a good sign and was not removed at once in order to get rid of internal diseases. Others purposefully attempted to plait a mat so that the disease became external, came out of the person's body and thus eased his or her pain:

У чалавека, прымерна вот у жэншчыны, ломіць цела, галава баліць, усе суставы баляць. Нада запусьціць голаў і не часаць. Мая падруга запусьціла галаву, ён і зьвіўся такі, як рэшата. Яна і год насіла. Ён атышоў, нескалька валасоў толькі дзіржалася. Перад Пасхай атрэзалі тыя валасы.

*A man, for example a woman says her body's aching, her head aching, all joints aching. You need to neglect your hair and stop brushing it. A friend of mine stopped brushing her hair, and it grew as big as a sieve. She wore it for a year. It was then separated, only a few hairs remained. Before Easter they cut that hair off.*²³

Я іспытала сама. З падзіўка бывае, хто завідае. У мяне такое было, што забалела нага, і так мяне палажыла, што я два года лежала. Врачы што не рабілі, нічога

не зьдзелалі. Сказалі – паспрабуйце па бабках. Завезьлі мяне к бабцы. Я ў яе была дзевяць дней. Яна ўтрам і вечарам мне выгаваравала. Нож такі балшы і перад іконай гаварыла. Як яна выгаварала, сказала: не чашы галаву, запусьці. Сьпераду яно адрастала, а сюды сыходзіў. Сюда спаўзаў. І вот перад Пасхай я к ёй паехала, яна яго зьняла і нада ня перадам, а задам кінучь яго ў печ і спаліць. Каб яно ўсё згарэла. Я так і зьдзелала і ўсё – пашла нармальна.

*I have experienced it myself. It happens from an evil eye, when someone envies you. I had it when my leg was aching, and it was so bad that I was lying for two years. The doctors could not do anything. They told me to try a wise woman. They took me to a wise woman. I was there for nine days. She whispered above me in the morning and in the evening. Such a large knife and she whispered before the icon. As she was whispering she said: don't comb your hair, let it grow. It was growing on the front, and here it went off. It crawled down here. And before Easter I went to her, she took it off and you should not face it but with your back to it, throw it in the oven and burn it. So that it should be burnt. So I did this and that's all – I was fine.*²⁴

It is curious that one of the earliest reports of *Plica Polonica* indicates that neglecting one's hair is not a disease in the strict sense, but the cure. A letter written by Staringelius, the rector of the Zamojski Academy, to professors of Padua in 1599 says that, “common people are treated by neglecting a mat, which after removal relieves the patient from his infirmity” (Biegeleisen 1929: 256).

A number of ritual practices are aimed at externalising the internal or ‘hidden’ *Plica Polonica*. In order to form a mat, the patient's hair was greased with sticky substances – resin, honey and even “mouse fat”, or a piece of wool from a lamb sheared for the first time was placed inside (Federowski 1897: 390). Objects and plants associated with the idea of spinning or rotation, including lines used to weave fences, could be used, or the hair could be washed with hemp nettle and *vinca* (*Vinca minor*, L.). Items with a high sacral status were also widely used: threads that tied the wedding loaf, or gimp yarn from church vestments.

Removing the *Plica* was strictly prohibited, either on purpose or outside a ritual, as it may result in serious consequences, including the death of the patient:

У мамы быў калтун. З пуду. У вайну, прыдуць з вінтоўкай, мы малыя, і тату к сьцяне стаўлялі. Збіваецца, робіцца, як валенак, звалены з воўны. Сядзім над мамай, расчэшам, расчэшам, разьбяром, ня пройдзець мінут дзесяць, а ў яе ўзноў зьвіўся калтун. Саб'ецца, мы ўзноў. Дык ей тады адбіраець рукі, ногі, як станем разбіраць, у галаву колець, неважможна. “Не, дзеці, не нада. А то

нічога не вазьму ў рукі”. Тры гады насіла. А тады ён адрас, стаў з'езджаць ужо на плечы, гэты вайлак, яна сама адрэзала. Яна Богу малілася”.

*My Mom had kautun. Because of frights. During the war we were small, soldiers would come with rifles, put Dad against the wall. It was matted, becoming like a felt boot. We were sitting above our Mom, brushing and combing her hair, and in less than ten minutes she would have kautun again. When it matted, we start again. She had her arms and legs paralysed as we started undoing it, her head would ache unbearably. “No, children, do not do it. Or I will not be able to hold anything”. She wore it for three years. And then it grew big and began to go down her shoulders, this felt, she cut it off herself. She prayed to God.*²⁵

The *Plica* should be first of all looked after, worn for a certain time, whispered to with special spells and then removed.

Thus, the folk medicine complex is characterised by a differentiation between the external *kautun* and the internal *kautun*. Moreover, the entangled hair on the head in some cases was understood as forcing the disease outside and was accompanied by a set of specific magical procedures.

HEALING RITUALS AND INCANTATIONS

A wide range of ways to cure *Plica Polonica* exist including such traditional means as fumigation or pouring wax over the patient's head (Демидович 1896: 126), which is also widely known in the treatment of other diseases. However, the *Plica* should be removed under strict spatio-temporal conditions. The actor (performer) of the rite is a charmer, a wise woman, or in relation to a child, his or her mother, or a person vested in popular beliefs with ritual purity and as a result with a special sacred power: “як чэсная дзяўчына сніміць і пусціць на раку дак не будзець”²⁶, (‘if an honest girl takes it off and lets it float down the river, then it will be over’). Recent fieldwork records provide more frequent cases of a patient or relative removing *Plica Polonica*. Noteworthy is the case of a woman's *Plica* being removed by her deceased relative who appears in a dream and promises to take the mat together with the scalp:

– Коўтуны такія як пальцы, а коўтуница як гэта шепка. У водном месці золле ўсі косы і ўсё.

– А як адразалі?

– Нэльзя рэзаті. У якую пору запусьтыш, носіты. У тебе можа булі? Не? От слухай. У яку пору запусьтыш... У мене зноў зарэ буде. Воны злемчуца. Просто голову одрывае. Пошла в магазін, а там: “Бабушка, дай я тебе отрэжу.

Отрежу тебе і помою, нагрэю воды”. Кажу: “Не дуры ты мне света, голову і жопу. Што ты хочэш, каб я скалічыла? У яку пору запусціла, до такей і буду носіць. Я запусціла перэд Трійцай, до Трійцы буду носіць”. От так. Сныцца мне моя сэструха троюродна, а вона вмерша, вона мне сныцца: “Ты отрезала коўтуныцу? Ты отрезала коўтуныцу свою?” Я кажу: “Не”. А я ж знаю, што вона ўмэрла. А то гаворыць зо мной. Кажу: “Зося, як жэ ты прышла?” – “А я просто прышла за тобою, коўтуныцу отрэзаті тобі”. А я: “Ты шчо, здуріла?” А вона: “Істінный Господь, праўда, шчо з тілом одрыжу тобі”. А вона вмерша. Я як налякалася. Я памятаю, шо з гэтаго бока я одрызала ножэм. А боліло так, шо понатягала, шо тыждень голова боліла. Різала ножэм. Яна мне налякала, я гэту сторону отрызала.

Я пошла к сэстрэ. “Манько!” – “Шо такэ?” Кажу: “Бачыш, одін бік одрызаны”. – “А хто ж тобі?” – “Зося прыснілася, шо одрыжа со скурою. ‘Я тобі со скурою отріжу. Бачыш, што вона робыць, шляпу носыць на голове’. ‘Зосечко, мылэнька, сэстрынонько, дэ ты’, – кажу, – ‘осмэртла, там ты зопачывай. Господь з тобою, дай тобі, Божэ, дэ осмэртла, там і зопачывай, з усімі святымі’. Кажу: ‘я отріжу, Зосечко, нэ іді’. ‘А то со шкурой отрежу’, – кажэ. Істінный Господь!”

Я кажу: “Валечко, ратуй. Одріж мне, кажу, коўтуныцу. Зося прыснілася. А я різала – натягла. І, – кажу, – зарэ голова болыць”. Тут племяннік прышоў до еі. Прышоў да кажэ: “Шо тут баба, – кажэ, – мутыць?” – “Прышла коўтуныцу одрызуваць”. – “Дай, – кажэ, – я одрыжу”. Я кажу: “Нехай Валя. Ну бяры, рыж”.

– А дзе яго дзяваць?

– Дэ ёго подыті? Я раней одрызувала да пуд стропіла заткну, а чы іх вороны круцяць, воны і зноў круцяцца. Кажуць, няможна, куда ж мне подеть. Кажэ: у грубу ўкынь да згорыць да і всэ.

– Вы яго так і спалілі?

– Так і спаліла.

– *Kautuns are like fingers and kautunitsa is like a hat. All the plaits will run into one another and that's it.*

– *And how did you cut them?*

– *You can't cut them. In whichever season it appears, you should wear it. You haven't had it? No? Here, listen. Which season it appears... I will have them again. They will be felted. Nearly tear your head off. I went to a store, and there, “Grandma, let me cut it off. I'll cut it off and wash it, boil some water.” I said, “You do not fool me, my head and my ass. Do you want to maim me? Whichever season it started in, until the same season I will wear it. It started before Whitsun, so I will wear it until Whitsun.” That's it. I saw a dream about my second cousin and she was dead by then, so I saw her in my dream: “Have you cut your kautunitsa? Have you cut your kautunitsa?” I say, “No”. And I knew she was dead. And now she*

is speaking to me. I say, “Zosia, how did you come here?” – “I just came for you, to cut your kautunitsa.” And I said, “Are you crazy?” And she: “In God's name, I tell you the truth, I will cut it together with your body.” And she was dead. I was scared to death. I remember that I cut it with a knife from this side. And it ached so much that I was having a headache for a week. It cut me like with a knife. She scared me and I cut that side off with a knife.

I went to my sister. “Manko!” – “What's the matter?” I said, “You see, one side is cut off.” – “And who did that to you?” – “I saw Zosia in a dream, she said she would cut it together with the scalp. ‘I will cut it together with the scalp. See what she is doing, she wears a hat on her head’. ‘Zosia, my dear, my sister, where you are’, I said, ‘all dead, there you should rest, together with all the saints’. I say, ‘Don't come, Zosia, I'll cut it myself. And she said she would then cut it off together with the scalp. In God's name!’

I say, “Valia, save me. Cut my kautunitsa. I saw Zosia in my dream. I tried to cut, but it was bad. And, I say, I have a headache now.” Then her nephew came to her. He came to say, “What is this woman stirring up here?” he said. – “She came to cut her kautunitsa off.” – “Let me cut it,” he said. I said, “Let Valia do it. Well, take it and cut it off.”

– *And where do you put it?*

– *Where do you put it? I used to cut it off and put under the rafter, and when crows twist it, it starts spinning again. They say you can't, where can I put it? They say, put it the stove and it will burn and that's it.*

– *So you burned it like this?*

– *Yes, I burned it.*²⁷

Naturally, the first step in getting rid of the *Plica* was the cutting of the matted hair, which is ritually significant and well developed. Among the more popular were the following actions: burning with hot iron or a hot knife: “a healer took two stones, he put one on *kautun*, and cut it off with the other one²⁸; “You can take it off either with a silver wire, burning each hair, or cutting it off with a stone, not once, but some 20 hairs a day” (Никифоровский 1897: 265); “*Kautun* can only be removed by cutting the plaits with a flint and carefully burning it with a Candlemas candle hair by hair” (Сержпутьоўскі 1998: 209). All these actions can be classified by their “fiery”, stony nature, as the *Plica*, as a manifestation of the chthonic, otherworldly forces, was removed only with a *natural* tool – fire, stone, or iron. Sometimes a natural origin is underlined, for example, *kautun* can be cut off with “wild stone” (дзікім камнем):

Наша матка, бывала, лечыць і зніма, лечыць і зніма, а тады гэтыя косы нейкім камнем патаўчэ, дзікім камнем адсякае. Адсякае, на комін параскладае і спаліць, нікагда на вадку не насіла. (Барташэвіч 1992: 509)

Our mother used to treat and remove it, treat and remove, and then she would pound those braids with a stone, cut it with a wild stone. She would cut them, put them on the stove and burn them, she never took them to the water.

Teeth are included in the category of the “natural” as well:

Як у дыты ковтун, яго маты должна одгрысты зубамі. Як одкусыла, не беры рукамі – а толькі плюнь. Тоды ковтун загыбае.

*If a child has kautun, then his mother should bite it off with her teeth. When she bites it off, do not touch it – but only spit it out. Then kautun dies.*²⁹

Such tools as scissors or even a simple knife are not represented in healing practices; they appear only as a result of forgetting tradition. In any case, the ban on using an ordinary knife to cut *kautun* is consistently maintained.

The removed *Plica* should be properly disposed of or destroyed. The burning of the mat was a ritual action: “яго нада занесці спаліць на ростанькі”³⁰, (“It should be taken to a crossroads and burnt”); “на комін каўтун параскладае і спаліць”, (“She would put them on the stove and burn them”) (Барташэвіч 1992: 509); “Баба отрізала у Чысты чытвір ковтуна, спалыла в печы: ‘Нехай ідэ не з огнем, з дымом’ Голову чысто свяцоной водою помыла і дякуй Богу, ныц нэма”³¹ (“A woman cut *kautun* off on Maundy Thursday and burned it in the oven: ‘Let it leave not with the fire, but with the smoke’. She washed her hair with clean holy water and, thank God, all was gone”). Apart from burning, the prescription to send the cut hair downstream on flowing water or to bury it was also popular: they take it to a crossroads and bury it, “закопуюць у тэ місто, де капае з стріхі”³² (“bury it in a place where water is dripping from the roof”) or “закапаць у мурашнік”³³, (“bury it in an ant hill”):

– Ці чулі вы пра калтун?

– Дачушка, я і сама яго насіла.

– А з чаго ён робіцца?

– З пуду, з растройства. Яго нада загавараваць. Бабка мне кніжку на галоўку палажыла, пачытала, а тады коску сплела мне пасярод галавы, маленькую коску, а тады ён як стаў складацца і зрабіўся шапкай такой. Насіла, ездзіла. Знімалі. Зразала, сказала мне: Прывязеш дамоў, спалі яго, кажаць, у вядрэ, а тады, кажаць, у палатняную трапачку, не ў крамную, а ў саматканую чысценькую завярці і закапай на старане, на захад сонца. Папялок той. Я гэдак і зробіла.

– *Have you heard about kautun?*

– *Daughter, I myself wore one.*

– *And why does it appear?*

– *Because of fright, because of nerves. It should be spelled. A wise woman put a book on my head, whispered a bit, and then she wove a plait in the middle of the head, a small pigtail, and then it began to grow and became like a hat. I wore it, walked with it. She cut it off and told me, “You bring it home, burn it,” she says, “in a bucket,” and then, she says, in a linen cloth, not in a cloth from the shop, but in a homemade, neat cloth and dig it at the end of the field, at sunset. Those ashes. That’s what I did.*³⁴

Especially important is an instruction to bury the removed *Plica* deep in dry soil, otherwise “the matted hair will come again”. Equally illustrative are recommendations to bury the matted hair under an aspen tree³⁵ or “under the crane”, the place where the pole falls from the well³⁶.

Sending the *Plica* downriver water, burying or burning it are semantically equal in the intention to send it to the other world and thus to prevent a relapse. The semantics of leaving the *Plica* in the otherworldly space are suggested by such conditions of the ritual as a prohibition on looking back:

Зняты каўтун трэ занесці на растанцы, закапаць у зямлю, трэйко плюнуць і не азіраючыся хутко йсці да гасподы. А калі хто сустрэнецца да загаворыць, та яму не можна нічога адказваць, бо каўтун зноў вернецца да ўзсядзе на таго чалавека, што насіў закапаць каўтун.

The removed kautun should be taken to a crossroads, buried, then you spit at it three times and quickly walk back home without looking back. And if you meet anyone and he talks to you, you cannot answer anything, because kautun will return and sit on the man who took it to bury. (Сержпутоўскі 1998: 209)

The location of the removed *kautun* in the house is fixed at opposite ends of the home’s vertical axis, meaning that it was either carried to the attic, plugged under the top edge of the door, in order to walk under it, or buried under the threshold:

Тады яго нада заткнуць у парога, дзе ходзіш, дзе ходзяць усе людзі. Як уваход, дзе ля дзвярэй, уверсе. Так яго хорашэнька зрабіць, у пакецік і палажыць. У парозе каб ён быў.

*Then it must be plugged at the threshold, where you walk, where all people walk. At the entrance where the door is, at the top. So cut it well, put it in a bag and leave it there. So that it was at the doorstep.*³⁷

У мяне ў самой быў. Я ездзіла ў Гарадок. Там адзін чалавек быў. Даваў вады, а тады сказаў зрэзаць і занесці на канюшню, дзе коні стаяць, і пад крокву на канюшню.

*I myself had one. I went to Haradok. There was one person. He gave me some water, and then he told to cut it and take it to the stables where the horses are, and put it under the rafters in the stables.*³⁸

Спужаўса да коўтун. Тыдзень не расчэшаш і яно зьвіваецца, плёткамі покруціцца, а там усю голову зробіць як горшка. І ходзіш год, а посьле на Усеночнэ отрэзаюць некаторыя да отрэжуць того коўтуна і кідаюць на воду каторыя, а каторыя застрэкаюць дзе дзьверы гэтыя, ото дзе ходзяць, над дзьверамі.

*I was so scared, and I had kautun. If you don't comb it for a week, then it's woven, twist with loops, and there it will make the entire head as a pot. And you wear it for a year, and then during a vigil someone cuts this kautun and throws it into the water, and others put it where the door is, where they walk, over the door.*³⁹

The transparent liminality of the *loci* (crossroads, water, chimney) is continued in the “critical”, boundary characteristic of time. Using the system of the *lunar* cycle: “at old moon *kautun* is cut off”; the *day*: “they take it off at midnight” (Federowski 1897: 390); and the *year*:

У Чыстый чэтвор мэюцца до сходу сонца, коўтунчыкы одбываюць камэньем, у новы платок звязываюць і на бэгучую воду, дэ вода бэжыць, упускаюць тыя коўтуны.

On Holy Thursday you should wash before sunset, kautun should be washed with stones, wrapped in a new kerchief and taken to the flowing water, where the water is flowing, and dropped this kautun there. (Толстой 1983: 146)

До Всеночной носять, а на Всеночной ішчуть такіх людей, каторі зрезваць умеюць, да на воду пускаюць.

*You should wear it until the vigil, and at vigil you look for such people who can cut it off, and send it down the river.*⁴⁰

As it can be seen from the calendar system, the most appropriate time for removing the matted hair is the Easter complex, and, above all, Maundy Thursday, as well as the day of baking Easter bread “Здымалы, як пасху пэклы ў пэчы, послі кідалы ў огонь, коб згорыв, пасля булкі ў піч”⁴¹, (“They would take it off when Easter bread was baked, then they would throw it in fire so that it was burned in the stove, after the bread.”)

Interestingly, the beliefs regarding *Plica Polonica* have striking west-east Slavic parallels, including on the very border of the *Plica* area. In particular, in a small area in eastern Belarus the word *kautun* is used to name all sorts of wounds, furunculi and purulent rashes. The Czechs call such skin diseases *koltún mokrý*, while the Poles believe that the *Plica* can manifest itself as a rash and blotches (Marczewska 2012: 115). Both traditions indicate wounds that take a long time to heal and require magic treatment:

Мокра на галаве, такой корачкай забіраецца, апяць кісьнець. Хто чаго захацеў... Вот я захацела яблыка, а мне не прішлося зьесь, вот і калтун. А есьлі зьясі, то ён быстра схадзіў.

*It's wet on the head, it's covered with such a crust, festers again. It depends on what you want... Me, I wanted an apple, and I did not get it, so I had kautun. And if you eat it, then it came off quickly.*⁴²

– А каўтун – бываець на галаве, дзе ўгодна адкладываецца, эта проста мякнець, эта такія болькі. Есьлі не залюбіў. Захацеў чаго-та калавек, дапусьцім, захацела я сахару, а яго не было, вот мне і прікінулася.

– Дык гэты каўтун жывець у чалавеку?

– Жывець, жывець. Вот яму як нечым не ўгадзіш, і ён начынаець сваю эту реакцыю. І тады так во чэшаш галаву і гавораш: “Было на галаве дзвінаццаць калтуноў, стала адзінаццаць, была адзінаццаць, стала дзесяць, была дзесяць, стала дзевяць, была дзевяць, стала восем, была восем, стала сем, была сем, стала шэсь, была шэсь, стала пяць, была пяць, стала чатыры, была чатыры, стала трі, была трі, стала два, была два, стаў адзін, быў адзін, не стала ні аднаго. Ты калтун-калтунішча, сабаку ў хвост укачайся і на маю галаву забывайся. Амін, амін, амін.” Ён можаць у любым месці быць.

– *And kautun, it can be on the head, it can appear anywhere, it's just soft sores. Someone wanted something, let's say I wanted some sugar, and there was no sugar, and that's why I got it.*

– *So this kautun lives in a person?*

– *It lives, it does. If you don't please him somehow it begins its reaction. And then you comb your hair like this and say, “There were twelve kautuns on my head, then there were eleven, there were eleven, then there were ten, there were ten, then there were nine, there were nine, then there were eight, there were eight, then there were seven, there were seven, then there were six, there were six, then there were five, there were five, then there were four, there were four, then there were three, there were three, then there were two, there were two, then there was one, there was one, then there was none. You kautun, big kautun, go to a dog's tail and forget about my head. Amen, amen, amen.” It can be anywhere.*⁴³

The ritual magical healing and removal of the *Plica* are generally in line with the general idea of sending the hostile substance (disease) to the otherworldly loci and the restoration of disturbed bodily harmony.

CONCLUSIONS

The folk beliefs and narratives concerning *Plica Polonica* in Belarus is a logical continuation of the 'classical' European tradition. However, the Belarusian material recorded over the past 20 years enables the researcher to shift the emphasis from the external to the internal causes of the disease. The etiology of the disease is dominated the body's response to the influence of demonological intervention or, more often, disharmony inside the body itself.

The cultural complex of *Plica Polonica* represents a friend – foe dichotomy, which can be displayed on two axes: man – external world (*kautun* as a result of demonic interventions), and man – internal world (*kautun* as part of the human body). In terms of folk anatomy and folk medicine, friends and foes surround a person outside and complement the human being inside. However, the two elements are not opposed within the body, but, by complementing each other, appear as parts of the whole, as the two ends of a single semantic axis with numerous transitional and mutually neutralising zones. Perceptions of *kautun* illustrate the idea that the internal otherworldliness is a necessary part of the microcosm. It is not the negatively marked element, the removal of which people should crave, but a necessary and organically inherent inner 'strange' world, which requires specific regulations and harmony.

Translated from Belarusian by Kanstantsin Staradubets.

NOTES

¹ Вільям Кокс, *Вандроўкі па Вялікім Княстве*. <http://hetman.by/vandroyki-pa-vyalikim-knyastve-vilyam-koks.html>.

² Gałol, J., Herman, G. *O buskich wodach, pewnym rymie i francuskiej chorobie*, <http://geoportal.pgi.gov.pl/portal/page/portal/pgi-os/wiedza/O%20Buskich%20wodach>.

³ *Zalom* is a sheaf of twisted, broken or knotted rye (or other corn) in a field made by malevolent people in order to bring disease or even death to the owner of the field.

⁴ 2001, Dashkaŭka village, Mahiloŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (H.H., b. 1919).

⁵ 2010, Yatchava village, Sluck district, Minsk region (S.S., b. 1926).

⁶ 2007, Balandzitchy village, Ivanava district, Brest region (K.F., b. 1923).

⁷ Malyia Aŭciuki village, Kalinkavitchy district, Homiel region. AP.

⁸ 2011, Usochskaia Buda village, Dobrush district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1935).

⁹ 2011, Vialikaia Leshtchanka village, Mscislaŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (P.T., b. 1926).

¹⁰ 2007, Bui village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (C.V., b. 1922).

¹¹ 2010, Falitchy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (U.T., b. 1932).

¹² 2010, Lavy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (L.M., b. 1939).

¹³ 2011, Mochava village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1933).

¹⁴ 2007, Hadziŭla village Lepel district, Viciebsk region (Y.E, b. 1937).

¹⁵ 2012, Trascino village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (A.M., b. 1927).

¹⁶ 2011, Mochava village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1933).

¹⁷ 1999, Yushki village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (M.M, b. 1935).

¹⁸ 1985, Lapacin village, Pinsk district, Brest region (S.S., b. 1911). AP.

¹⁹ 2010, Shtchytavitchy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (S.F., b. 1924).

²⁰ 2013, Virkau village, Klitchaŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (K.N., b. 1937).

²¹ 2010, Prusy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (S.V., b. 1934).

²² 2010, Kryvanosy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (P.Y., b. 1926).

²³ 2008, Novaia Hrebla village, Brahlin district, Homiel region (P.N., b. 1927).

²⁴ 2011, Malinaŭka village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (G.F., 1934).

²⁵ 2006, Bayary village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (H.M., b. 1926).

²⁶ Sviadzica village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (P.V., b. 1912). AP.

²⁷ 2007, Strelna village Ivanava district, Brest region (L.K, b. 1929).

²⁸ 1996, Susha village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (S.M., b. 1910).

²⁹ 2007, Psyahchava village, Ivanava district, Brest region (M.K., b. 1932).

³⁰ Slabada, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (T.A.Y., b. 1924)

³¹ 2004, Zabuzhki village, Kobryn district, Brest region (I.T., b. 1920).

³² Radtchyck village, Stolin district, Brest region (D.N., b. 1914). AP.

³³ 2001, Okana village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (K.V., b. 1921).

³⁴ 2006, Shklancy village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (K.K., b. 1915).

³⁵ Zhabchitsa village, Pinsk district, Brest region. AP.

- ³⁶ 2007, Tyshkavitchy village, Ivanava district, Brest region.
- ³⁷ 2010, Lavy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (L.M., b. 1939).
- ³⁸ 2006, Pola village, Ushatchy district, Viciebsk region (P.V., b. 1936).
- ³⁹ 2011, Dubrova village, Leltchycy district, Homiel region (A.A., b. 1931).
- ⁴⁰ Vierchniya Zhary village, Brahın district, Homiel region. AP.
- ⁴¹ 2004, Padlesse village, Zhabinka district, Brest region (E.G., b. 1922).
- ⁴² 2012, Lipovk village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (M.M., b. 1946).
- ⁴³ 2012, Vietka village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (Z.N., b. 1949).

ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Polesie archive of the Department of Ethnolinguistics and Folklore, Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

REFERENCES

- Bartoš, F. 1906. *Dialektický slovník moravský*. Praga: Nákladem České akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění.
- Beschorner, F. 1843. *Der Weichselzopf. Nach statistischen und physiologischen Beziehungen dargestellt*. Breslau: F. Hirt. http://www2.psykl.med.tum.de/varia_alternate_takes/Texte/dreadlocks_foerstl_elliger_95.doc
- Bezljaj, F. 1982. *Etimoloski slovar slovenskega jezika: druga knjiga*, K-O. Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga.
- Biegeleisen, H. 1929. *Lecznictwo ludu polskiego*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności.
- Federowski, M. 1897. *Lud Białoruski na Rusi Litewskiej. Materiały do etnografii słowiańskiej zgromadzone w latach 1877–1905: w 8 t. T. 1: Wiara, wierzenia i przesady ludu z okolic Wołkowyska, Słonima, Lidy i Sokółki*. Kraków: W-wo Komisji Antropologicznej Akademii Umiejętności.
- Hoffmann-Krayer, E. & Bächtold-Stäubli, H. (ed.) 1935–1936. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens VII, 1935–1936*. Berlin und Leipzig: Verlag Walter de Gruyter.
- Höfler, M. 1899. *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch*. München: Verlag von Piloty.
- Marczewska, M. 2012. *Ja cię zamawiam, ja cię wypędzam...: choroba : studium językowo-kulturowe*. Kielce: Instytut Filologii Polskiej UJK.
- Morewitz, Harry A. 2007. A Brief History of Plica Polonica. In: *Nontoxic Head Lice Treatment*. <http://nuvoforheadlice.com/Plica.htm>
- Rosenbaum, M. 1838. Medizin. In: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. Bd. 3, No 220, pp. 545–550.
- Sychta, B. 1970. *Słownik gwar kaszubskich na tle kultury ludowej IV. P-R*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.
- Vyhliđal, J. 1900. Skřítek (skřotek, koltun) ve vlasech po názoru lidu českého ve Slezsku. In: *Český lid* 9, 192.
- Барташэвіч, Г. А. (склад) 1992. *Замавы*. Уклад., сістэм. тэкстаў, уступ арт. і камент. Г. А. Барташэвіч; Рэдкал.: А. С. Фядосік (гал. рэд.) і інш. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка.
- Богданович, А. Е. 1895. *Пережитки древнего мирозерцания у белорусов: Этнографический очерк*. Гродно: Губернская типография.
- Валодзіна, Т. В. 2007. *Народная медыцына: рытуальна-магічная практыка*. Уклад., прадм. і паказ. Т. В. Валодзінай. Мінск: Беларуская навука.
- Володина, Т. В. 2008. Колтун у беларусов (по современным записям). In: *Palaeoslavica XVI/1*. Cambridge, pp. 165–182.
- Грынблат, М. Я. 1928. Этнаграфічнае вивучэнне каўтуна. Інстытут беларускае культуры. *Запіскі аддзелу гуманітарных навук*. Кн. 4. Працы катэдры этнографіі. Т. 1. Сш. 1. Менск, pp. 127–153.
- Грэймас, А. Ю. 2003. *Пра багоў і людзей. У пошуках этнічнай памяці*. Пер. з літоўскай С.Шупы. Мінск: “Энцыклапедыкс”.
- Демидович, А. 1896. Из области верований и сказаний белоруссов. *Этнографическое обозрение*, No. 2–3, pp. 107–145.
- Никифоровский, Н. Я. 1897. *Простонародные приметы и поверья, суеверные обряды и обычаи, легендарные сказания о лицах и местах*. Витебск: Витебская губернская типография.
- Сержпутоўскі, А. К. 1998. *Прымхі і забабоны беларусаў-палешукоў*. Мінск: Універсітэцкае.
- Сно, Э. 1904. *В болотах Полесья. Белорусы*. Санкт-Петербург: Типография О. Н. Попова.
- Страхов, А. Б. 2005. Полесские фольклорно-этнографические материалы в современных записях: 2. Заговоры и народная медицина. Публикация и комментарии А.Б. Страхова. In: *Palaeoslavica XII/2*. Cambridge, pp. 163–204.
- Толстой, Н. И. (ред.) 1983. *Полесский этнолингвистический сборник: Материалы и исследования*. Москва: Наука.

About the author

Tatsiana Valodzina, Ph.D., is head of the department of folklore and culture of the Slavs at the Research Center of Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature in the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Her sphere of scientific activity is connected with the representation of the body and the traditional medicine of the Belarusians, folklore narratives, and the traditional agricultural calendar. She is the sole, or co-author, of 7 books, including *Human body: Words, Myth, Ritual* (2009) and *Folk medicine: ritual and magic practice* (2007).

ISNFR Committee on Charms, Charmers and
Charming

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

Issue 4

General Editor: Mare Kõiva

Guest Editor for this Issue: Daiva Vaitkevičienė

Tartu 2014

General Editor: Mare Kõiva
Guest Editor for this Issue: Daiva Vaitkevičienė
Language editor: Jonathan Roper
Layout: Liisa Vesik

Editorial board:
Alaric Hall
Claude Lecouteux
Lea Olsan
Éva Pócs
Jonathan Roper
Emanuela Timotin
Andrey Toporkov
Daiva Vaitkevičienė
William F. Ryan

Editorial contacts:
<http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio>
incantatio@folklore.ee
Vanemuise 42, Tartu 51003, Estonia

Supported by and affiliated to projects IRG 22-5 and
EKKM14-344 of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research,
and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund
(Centre of Excellence in CECT).

Indexed by the MLA International Bibliography.

All rights reserved.

Copyright 2014 the authors and
the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming

ISSN 2228-1355

Contents

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014

Introduction Daiva Vaitkevičienė doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Introduction	7
Material Artefacts in Oral Tradition: Notes and Family Lore on the Owners of the Sandvik Manor Magic Art Manuscripts Åsa Ljungström doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Ljungstrom	9
Charmers and Charming in Gervėčiai Lithuanian Community in Belarus Daiva Vaitkevičienė doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Vaitkeviciene	34
<i>Plica Polonica</i> in Belarusian Beliefs and Incantations Tatsiana Valodzina doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Valodzina	59
The Oral and Written Traditions of Latvian Charms Aigars Lielbārdis doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Lielbardis	82
The Golden Characters of the Letter Fallen from Heaven: A Study Case from the First World War Laura Jiga Iliescu doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Iliescu	95
From Written to Oral Tradition. Survival and Transformation of St. Sisinnios Prayer in Oral Greek Charms Haralampos Passalis doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Passalis	111

BOOK REVIEWS

139

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_BookReview

Tatiana Panina. *Slovo i ritual v narodnoi meditsine udmurtov* [Word and Ritual in Udmurt Folk Medicine]. Izhevsk: Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature, 2014. 238 pp. ISBN 978-5-7659-0795-5 (Mare Kõiva)

Rita Balkutė (ed.). *Galia užburti: kenkimo magija 1982–2012 metų užrašuose* [The Power of Magic: Harmful Magic in Recordings from 1982–2012]. Vilnius: R. Balkutės fondas, 2013. 752 pp. ISBN 978-609-95585-0-9 (Maria Zavyalova)

T. A. Agapkina, A. L. Toporkov, *Vostochnoslavijskie zagovory: Materialy k funkcional'nomu ukazatelju suzhetov i motivov. Annotirovannaja bibliografija* [East Slavic Charms: Materials for a Functional Index of Plot Structures and Motifs. An Annotated Bibliography]. Moscow: Indrik, 2014, 320 pp. ISBN 978-5-91674-322-7 (Will Ryan)

CONFERENCE REPORT

145

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Reports

Charms Sessions at the International Medieval Congress (July 7-10, 2014, Leeds, United Kingdom) (Svetlana Tsonkova)

INTRODUCTION

The fourth issue of the journal *Incantatio* continues publication of the research articles based on the presentations at the Charms Symposium of the 16th Congress of the ISFNR (in Vilnius, June 25–30, 2013), supplementing them with other research articles. The main topics of the current issue include oral and written charming tradition, transmission of charms and their social functioning, as well as social and ethno-medical aspects of charms. The issue starts with papers dealing with the Baltic region and analyzing materials from Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. In her article, Åsa Ljungström discusses charms' manuscripts compiled in Sandvik Manor, Sweden, during the eighteenth century Sweden, together with the life stories of the manuscripts' owners; the article reveals the biographical and social background to the written charms. The article by Daiva Vaitkevičienė is focused on the social functioning of verbal healing charms and presents the results of the fieldwork carried out by the author in 2010–2012 in the Lithuanian community of Gervėčiai, Belarus. The regional problematic is further dealt with by Tatsiana Volodzina, who has, upon special request from *Incantatio*, submitted a paper on the unique disease *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*), which is well-known across the cultural area comprising Lithuania, Belarus, and Poland. The article is amply illustrated by authentic narratives recorded by the author during her fieldwork and which describe the curing of this disease by charming practice in contemporary Belarus. Aigars Lielbārdis in his turn introduces two sides of the Latvian charming tradition: the oral and the written, giving special attention to the written books of the Latvian charms *Debesu grāmatas* (“Books of Heaven”) and tracing the route of their spread in Latvia. Continuing the theme of written charms, Laura Jiga Iliescu introduces the Central European analogue of the Latvian ‘Books of Heaven’ as they exist in Romania; her article focuses on the apocryphal “Legend of Sunday”, also known as “The Epistle Fallen from Heaven”, one copy of which was carried along by a soldier during the First World War. Last but not least among the research publications of this issue is a broad and exhaustive study by Haralampos Passalis dealing with “The Sisinnios Prayer” and discussing oral and written aspects of this interesting narrative in the Greek tradition with special attention paid to the oral tradition.