

the evil eye. Magical beliefs and practices were often in the focus of ethnologists' attention. This line of research has been continued by some recent publications on regional traditional healing practices (for instance, Marec 2011) and an encyclopaedia of traditional culture, recently published on the internet, that includes such entries as healers, healing/magic practices, healing herbs, and various kinds of sickness (Kiliánová 2011). The prevalence of research on folk/traditional medicine in the sphere of health / sickness has been determined by the initial orientation of ethnology on traditional culture. However, since the 1990s, magical practices related to illness have become an object of research in cognitive anthropology aimed at exploring the cognitive mechanisms involved in folk beliefs (for instance, Jerotijević 2011). This research is not necessarily concerned with traditional culture and might examine cultural models of health and sickness in the context of esoteric movements and alternative/spiritual medicine (Bužeková 2011).

Recent ethnological research in general has tended to be oriented more on contemporary society than traditional culture. Ethnologists have studied the topics of the human body and ageing (Herzánová 2007) or sport activities (Botíková 2005), which might be relevant for medical anthropology. Yet such vital questions as public health care or health education did not attract their attention. But then again these domains have become an important issue in related disciplines, such as in particular sociology and pedagogy (see, for instance, Matulník, Imrichovičová, Brukkerová 1999; Hegyi, Takáčová, Brukkerová 2004). Sociologists and pedagogues exploring the topics of public health care and health education have often used ethnographic research methods; their works might have inspired ethnologists and a new generation of anthropologists, but so far have not had any response. Their results might be helpful for future ethnological and anthropological research that would explore in detail the social conditions of public health care, cultural models of health and illness and mechanisms of their transmission, as well as processes of children's learning and adaptation to their environment.

It could be said that the discipline of medical anthropology in Slovakia does not exist. Yet some ethnological works, as well as results obtained in related social disciplines might motivate future research in this area. Publications on folk medicine describe representations of health and sickness in a broader cultural context and therefore might be useful for investigating cultural modes of healing. On the other hand, sociological and pedagogical works can provide ethnologists with initial data on public health care and health education.

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Tatiana Bužeková

dmtania@gmail.com

Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

Faculty of Arts

Comenius University in Bratislava

<http://www.fphil.uniba.sk>

Medical anthropology and related qualitative research in the Czech Republic

Ema Hrešanová

Czech social anthropologists do not seem to find research topics such as health, illness, healing or medicine particularly “hot”. In two out of the four main anthropological journals (*Český lid*; *Lidé města*¹), we find no study on these or any other issues related to medical anthropology scholarship; only a number of book reviews (e.g. Beranská 2011; Kotrlý 2008) slightly touch the topic. The journal *Český lid: Etnologický časopis (The Czech Nation: Ethnological journal)* includes only a single ethnographic study of the body in the school environment (Kaščák, Oberťová 2012); and in another journal *Lidé města (Urban People)* a research report by Sinecká (2003) on the community and integration of deaf people is the closest we get to the subject. During its history, the *Cargo* journal has published just one study by Zamykalová (2003) on new reproductive technologies (NRT), which is inspired by theoretical perspectives coming from the social studies of technology and science and sociological perspectives on health and illness. As far as the number of papers relevant to medical anthropology is concerned, the last journal, *Antropowebzin*, seems to be doing best, as it includes two studies by Czech anthropologists on traditional healing practices which are however based on fieldwork outside Europe.

An academic community of medical anthropologists simply seems to be missing in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, there are several individual researchers, including the guest editors of this special issue, who do engage in this field of anthropological research. Edit Szénássy (Charles University in Prague) conducted her dissertation fieldwork in Eastern Slovakia while investigating the intersections of reproductive decision-making, access to reproductive care and population politics in a poor Roma community (2010). My ethnographic study (Hrešanová 2008) of two Czech maternity hospitals provides insights into the cultures of these institutions, and describes how these cultures have shaped birth care and ways in which midwives and obstetricians approached different women giving birth and their babies. In a current project, I have been focussing on an investigation of the experience of women giving birth (Hrešanová 2011). I am especially interested in

1 See: http://eu.avcr.cz/Casopisy/cesky_lid/index.html, <http://lidemesta.cz/index.php?id=10>.

the perspectives and activities of those women who promote the idea of natural childbirth and struggle to enforce changes in the Czech birth care system within the wider natural childbirth movement.²

Another medical anthropologist and social epidemiologist Andrej Belák (Charles University in Prague) also addresses the issue of health among the Roma in Central Slovakia in his applied research project, while building on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Roma villages. His dissertation research project aims to improve medical professionals' cultural sensitivity to their Roma patients.³ Jaroslav Klepal (Charles University in Prague) is one of the few (if not the only) Czech medical anthropologist(s) whose fieldwork is situated in another part of the CEE region. He studies the politics and moralities of trauma related to post-traumatic stress disorder among war veterans in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in press; 2012 – see also the HIT conference report by E. King in this issue; 2011). In his previous research on Hare Krishna followers, he investigated their conception of the body and embodiment in relation to their subjectivity and spirituality (Klepal 2006).

There are also Czech anthropologists who investigate traditional medical and healing practices in different parts of the world. Their research interests predominantly focus on medical pluralism and local aetiologies. Miroslav Horák (2010) from the Charles University in Prague, conducted his fieldwork in a drug rehabilitation centre in Tarapoto, Peru. His study provides an insight into local aetiology and healing practices, especially those applying traditional indigenous medicine such as *ayahuasca*. Similarly, Kateřina Mildnerová (2008, 2010a, b) based at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, studied local conceptualizations and aetiology of illness in the Bantu-speaking region of Africa. Her dissertation (2010a) is based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Lusaka, Zambia, during which she studied local medical cultures and medical pluralism in this urban setting, while paying special attention to spiritual healing practices and the role of witchcraft. The issue of spirit possession is a crucial theme in the work of yet another Czech anthropologist doing research in Africa. Vendula Řezáčová (2011) from the Charles University, conducted research among the Venda in South Africa. In her dissertation, she demonstrates that “traditional” healing practices among the Venda have been a subject of numerous changes and the “tradition” they rely on has been constantly reshaped by wider socio-political changes. It is within this context that she investigates ancestor spirit possession as a means of recruiting traditional healers. Her study provides insights into current transformations of this cult, as

2 The project's full title is “Natural childbirth movement and feminist approaches to childbirth in the Czech Republic: Systems of social actions and thought”; and is funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR P404/11/P089). This contribution builds on this research project.

3 See also Belák's Academia webpage summarizing his research effort: <http://cuni.academia.edu/AndrejBelak>.

well as of the whole Venda society, while paying a special attention to changes in gender relations.

Besides these anthropologists, there is a growing number of other social scientists investigating the issues of health, illness or health care with the help of ethnographic and other qualitative methods. Many of them do not adhere to strict disciplinary boundaries between social/cultural anthropology and sociology, and publish in journals of various disciplinary backgrounds. Coming mostly from sociology, they draw inspiration from other fields, too, especially from social studies of technology and science, gender studies, sociology of health and illness, public health, cultural studies, etc. Jaroslava Hasmanová Marhánková (2008), a sociologist based at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, interviewed women with high risk pregnancies who decided to refuse prenatal testing. She analysed the role of such medical examinations in the construction of medical authority and knowledge. Lenka Zamykalová (2001, 2003) was one of the first Czech sociologists conducting qualitative research on practices related to assisted reproductive technologies. Lenka Slepíčková (2009) is another sociologist addressing the issue of infertility treatment. She conducted in-depth interviews with couples suffering from fertility problems, while focusing on their different coping strategies, experience and negotiations. Iva Šmídová (2008) also built on qualitative interviews with couples in her study of fatherhood and a newly emergent social norm determining that fathers should accompany their partners during childbirth. Eva Šlesingerová (2005, 2008) analysed popular representations of DNA and corporeality in their links to ethnicity in popular magazines. Her undergraduate course "Anthropology, body and biomedicine" which she teaches at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno, reflects her research interests in biomedical conceptualizations of embodiment and corporeality. In their current research Slepíčková, Šmídová and Šlesingerová study practices of reproductive medicine in the Czech Republic.⁴ Their recently published review essay provides the most up-to-date overview of Czech qualitative studies of biomedicine, especially those related to the concepts of biopower and biopolitics (Slepíčková, et al. 2012: 93-95). Concerning reproductive issues, Radka Dudová (2012) from the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences studied discourses surrounding abortion in a historical perspective, applying qualitative methodology informed by a Foucauldian perspective (see also the book review in this issue). Her colleague Tereza Stöckelová builds on social studies of technology and science (STS) in her research on politics surrounding GMO (Stöckelová 2008); she also addresses the issue of scientific expertise and knowledge in the course on the ethnography of biomedicine

4 Their research project "Childbirth, assisted reproduction, and embryo manipulation. A sociological analysis of current reproductive medicine in the CR" is funded by the Czech Science Foundation (GAP404/11/0621). All the three researchers are based at the Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno.

that she teaches at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities at the Charles University. Inspired by the STS perspective, too, Karel Čada (Charles University) studies drug policy/ politics and medical expertise in the Czech Republic in his dissertation. In another of his research projects related to health, he examined attitudes to air pollution and social strategies regarding health among people living in the city of Ostrava— one of the most polluted places in the country (Gabal, Čada, 2010). Jenda Paleček (2004) examined the construction of mental illness in the context of psychiatric care. Together with Zdeněk Konopásek (2006, 2010a,b), he focused on special types of experience such as hearing (spiritual) voices, and studied their different medical as well as pastoral interpretations. In contrast to previously mentioned sociologists, Kateřina Kolářová comes from the humanities and gender studies background. She conducts research of disabilities and disabled people from a feminist perspective (Kolářová 2010a, 2010b). In another of her current research projects, she investigates discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS and its prevention (Kolářová 2009, 2011).

But the Czech Republic is also an interesting research site for Western medical anthropologists. American medical anthropologist, Amy Speir (2010), conducted fieldwork in spas in a little town named Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad) in Western Bohemia. She focused on balneotherapy as a traditional form of therapy and studied how it was becoming increasingly incorporated into the health tourism industry. In her current research, she investigates reproductive tourism of American couples coming to the Czech Republic for treatment of their infertility issues (see her article in this issue). Heidi Bludau's research also relates to travelling, but in the opposite direction. She studied recruitment companies working in the Czech healthcare sector and explored how they actively "re-modelled" their "clients" equipping them with language skills and cultural competences in order to find them lucrative jobs abroad (Bludau 2010, 2011). Rosie Read (2007) also studied the profession of nursing based on her ethnographic research in a nursing home in Prague. She analysed tensions between nurses and nuns providing care who had very different understandings of their activities. She showed how these different conceptions of care were embedded in different socio-political and historical contexts. The socialist definition of nursing emphasized professionalism and related values of dispassionate, objective, clinical knowledge and has been severely challenged by a new market-driven ideology promoting the consumer choice of clients. In her current research, Read (2010) studies young hospital volunteers in a Moravian town.

Both local medical anthropologists and those from abroad who are involved in research situated in the Czech Republic and other countries of the CEE region had an opportunity to meet and discuss their work in person at the conference "Health in Transition: (Bio)Medicine as Culture in Post-Socialist Europe" organized by Edit Szénnássy from the Department of Ethnology, Charles University,

which was held in Prague in June 2011.⁵ The conference provided a platform for future collaboration especially among young researchers in the field of medical anthropology, and was successfully repeated in June 2012 in Bucharest, Romania,⁶ with a prospect of organizing the 3rd HIT conference in Warsaw. Perhaps it is this new conference tradition started in Prague that will help to nurture medical anthropology not only in the Czech Republic, but in the whole CEE region in the near future.

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5 www.antropo-info.cz/index.php?strana=konference&id=54

6 <http://hitconference.org>

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Ema Hrešanová

ehresano@kss.zcu.cz

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy and Arts

University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

<http://kss.zcu.cz/en>

An Outline of the Situation of the Subject of Medical Anthropology in Hungary

Anna Susánszky and Imre Lázár

In Hungary, medical historians and ethnographers started to systematically study healing, healers, and traditional folk treatments early in the twentieth century. From the beginning of the 1990s, when cultural anthropology was gaining ground, the subject of Medical Anthropology appeared as part of curriculum reform in the Semmelweis University, the largest medical school in the country, within courses offered in the frame of the medical humanities. At the Institute of Behavioral Sciences, founded by Maria Kopp, the Department of Medical Anthropology, led by Peter Molnár, was established in 1993.

In the early 1990s, ecological and evolutionary issues of bio-cultural adaptation played an important role in teaching medical anthropology, under the innovative direction of Professor Molnár who played a prominent role also in regulating bodies regarding complementary medicine in Hungary. During this period, staff-members at the Department of Medical Anthropology selected and translated Cecil Helman's comprehensive book, *Culture, Health, and Illness*, as textbook for the subject (2007).

Later on, under the direction of Béla Buda, aspects of social science and an interdisciplinary approach grew stronger; the leadership of Maria Újhelyi drew a greater attention to evolutionary anthropology and interethnic medicine. Although the planned medical anthropological MSc course is still a question of the future, there is a possibility to lead medical anthropological PhD studies and research in the Interdisciplinary Doctoral School of Semmelweis University, a possibility which is open for non-Hungarian PhD students too. After 2004, together with the established topics mentioned above, new themes came into prominence: medical pluralism, complementary medicine, the rites of passage of becoming a doctor, spiritual aspects of medical anthropology, and the medical anthropology of birth and death. Under the direction of Imre Lázár, the working group joined in the activities of the EASA, through convenor activity in EASA conferences and organizing international medical anthropology summer courses.

Two edited books have been presented, based on symposia at EASA Conferences in Copenhagen (2002) and in Vienna (2004) organized by Imre Lazar (Jo-