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**EAST SLAVONIC PROVERBS WITH ETHNONYMS IN THE  
ELECTRONIC DICTIONARY OF CURRENT PROVERBS**

M. Yu. Kotova (a), V. V. Mushchinskaya (b), O. S. Sergienko (c)\*

\*Corresponding author

(a) Universitetskaya Emb., 11, St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia, m.kotova@spbu.ru

(b) Universitetskaya Emb., 11, St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia, v.mushinskaya@spbu.ru

(c) Universitetskaya Emb., 11, St. Petersburg, 199034, Russia, o.sergienko@spbu.ru

***Abstract***

This study is a part of a larger project to create an Electronic dictionary of current East Slavonic proverbs, that is the dictionary of Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belorussian proverbial parallels of the Russian paremiological minimum that are actively used by native speakers today. The project provides the opportunity to identify the East Slavonic paremiological core, reflecting one common segment of the Russian, Belarussian and Ukrainian proverbial representations of the world. The article describes the present-day actively used Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian proverbs containing ethnonyms for the purpose of properly reflecting them in the Electronic dictionary of the current East Slavonic proverbs. The derived proverbs allow to explore and compare the ethnic stereotypes that exist in the current East Slavonic representations of the world. On the example of the proverbs with ethnonyms the authors demonstrate the main principles of the proverbs' description in the future Electronic dictionary. The study focuses on the three proverbs from the Russian paremiological minimum of G. Permyakov (*An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar; Be patient, Cossack, you will be the ataman; A Russian man is wise after the event*), their possible parallels in Belorussian and Ukrainian, and the role of these paremias in the modern mass media.

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**Keywords:** Proverbs, paremiology, paremiography, cultural linguistics, East Slavonic paremiological core, paremiological minimum.



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## 1. Introduction

This study is carried out in the context of linguoculturology as a research structure for revealing the cultural elements of proverbs. Linguoculturology or cultural linguistics can serve as a basis for comparative analysis of proverbs of different languages, which can help paremiologists to deepen their understanding of proverbs.

Today cultural linguistics, that developed in the early nineteenth century in the works of the German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, uses an ethnolinguistic method of analysing verbal signs as carriers of cultural information. It is no accident that many paremiologists emphasize the high value of paremias from the standpoint of cultural linguistics (Dabbagh, 2016; Efremov, 2018; Kovshova, 2019; Lomakina & Mokienko, 2016; Raina & Shestakova-Stukun, 2019; Romanova, 2019 and others), in particular such components of paremia that capture national identity and may not have direct analogues in another language.

Proverbs with ethnonyms exist in all languages, since the names of nationalities have connotative varieties and act as carriers of ethnic stereotypes in any language. The reasons for the formation of these stereotypes, which have a positive or negative connotation, are extralinguistic in nature. They are related to the historical, political, religious, and psychological context, and to the history of relations between individual ethnic groups.

## 2. Problem Statement

This study is a part of a larger effort to create an Electronic dictionary of modern East Slavonic proverbs, that is the dictionary of Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belorussian proverbial parallels of the Russian paremiological minimum that are actively used by native speakers today. This dictionary will represent the Belorussian and Ukrainian proverbial reflection of the Russian paremiological minimum introduced in the end of the twentieth century by the famous Russian folklorist G. Permyakov that later inspired many talented paremiographers all over the world to explore the paremiological minima of their native languages. The Electronic dictionary of modern East Slavonic proverbs, including illustrative material, will reflect the most recent developments of G. Permyakov's idea of a minimum number of proverbs known by a language-speaker, as well as current trends in cultural perception of different peoples.

The "Russian-Slavonic Dictionary of Proverbs with English Parallels" by Kotova (2000), further – RSSPAS) became an important contribution to the comparative Slavonic paremiology. The author used 500 proverbs of Permyakov's Russian paremiological minimum as the basis of this dictionary to which parallels in seven Slavonic languages were picked out including 826 Ukrainian proverbs and 652 Belorussian proverbs.

The next fundamental scientific task of the research carried out by Prof. M. Yu. Kotova and her team is to identify the Slavonic paremiological core of the current actively used proverbs which is being accomplished for a number of years at the Department of Slavonic Philology of the St. Petersburg State University (Kotova & Sergienko, 2013; Kotova, Kolpakova, & Raina, 2013; Kotova, 2016; Kotova, Kotova, Raina, & Sergienko, 2017; Kotova, Sergienko, & Tararaeva, 2017; Kotova, 2019; Kotova & Boeva, 2019; Sergienko, 2016) by the means of additional sociolinguistic paremiological experiments as

well as an extensive Internet search of the use of these proverbs in modern discourse. The separation of the Russian-Belarussian-Ukrainian segment of the Slavonic paremiological core is part of this scientific research.

While the work on the Electronic dictionary of current actively used East Slavonic proverbs is under way, let us, using the example of proverbs with ethnonyms, demonstrate the main principles of the proverbs' description in this dictionary.

### **3. Research Questions**

With this study we strive to answer the following questions:

- Are ethnic stereotypes, once reflected in the old East Slavonic proverbs, still in use today?
- Do modern native speakers use these expressions or are they even familiar with them?
- What kind of illustration material should demonstrate the usage of these proverbs?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to determine the present-day actively used Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian proverbs containing ethnonyms for the purpose of properly reflecting them in the Electronic dictionary of the current East Slavonic proverbs. The derived proverbs will allow to explore and compare the ethnic stereotypes that exist in the current East Slavonic representations of the world. Ethnic stereotypes appear on various language levels, and this study is aimed at exploring them specifically on the paremiological level and conducting a comparative analysis of the lexicographically recorded proverbs with components-ethnonyms in Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian languages. This will allow to demonstrate proverbial parallels and lacunae in Ukrainian and Belorussian in relation to the proverbs of Russian paremiological minimum.

### **5. Research Methods**

The following research methods have been used in this study:

- method of sociolinguistic paremiological experiment (for collecting and processing of the material);
- method of proverb verification in the Internet (applied to identify the proverbs that are actively used in the modern language and the contexts in which they are used);
- method of comparative paremiological analysis (of proverbs in different languages);
- contextual method (in analysing usage of proverbs with ethnonyms in modern languages);
- descriptive methods of comparative cultural linguistics and contrastive paremiology.

### **6. Findings**

Since the Electronic dictionary of the current East Slavonic proverbs will be mainly based on the proverbs of the Russian paremiological minimum identified by G. Permyakov and its parallels in Ukrainian and Belorussian languages included in RSSPAS, the first step of this research was to collect all the proverbs

containing ethnonyms from this dictionary, prove their usage in modern Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian and collect illustration material. G. Permyakov included only three proverbs containing ethnonyms in his Russian paremiological minimum. These proverbs are also represented in RSPAS and provided with Ukrainian and Belorussian parallels.

### 6.1. An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar

The first proverb *Незванный гость хуже татарина* (Kotova, 2000, p. 44)/lit. *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar* – ‘About a person who comes without an invitation, and is not welcome’. This proverb is a reminder of the difficult times of the Tatar-Mongol yoke in Ancient Russia (SRP, 2008, p. 84). However, it is still very well known among the Russians, perhaps because everybody remembers A. S. Pushkin’s historical novel "The Captain’s Daughter" where this proverb was used as an epigraph to Chapter 8 "Uninvited guest". So, the proverb is actively used in all kinds of situations today. Here are some examples.

Several years ago the appearance of an advertising banner with this proverb caused a great resonance around Russia.

*Жириновский: Пословицу «Незванный гость — хуже татарина» нужно забыть.*

*«Мы не должны никого оскорблять и чернить. Вот простой пример. Сегодня из Набережных Челнов возмутились, что в Чите выставили баннер с русской пословицей «Незванный гость — хуже татарина». Вот зачем это делать? Эта поговорка, она есть в русском языке, её нужно забыть. (Zhirinovskiy: Poslovitsu «Nezvannyu gost'..., 2013, May 14).*

Translation from Russian: *Zhirinovskiy: We need to forget the proverb "An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar". We don't have a right to insult or denigrate anyone. Here's a simple example. Today, Naberezhnye Chelny residents were outraged that a banner with the Russian proverb "An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar" was put up in Chita. Why would you do this? This saying, it is in the Russian language, it must be forgotten.*

This old Russian proverb with an obvious negative connotation is also often used in a quite neutral figurative meaning without having anything to do with the actual Tatars. In the below article ‘aging’ is described as an unexpected and an uninvited guest in our lives.

Title: *Незванный гость хуже татарина?*

*События нашей жизни не происходят внезапно. Мы к ним готовимся. <...> Это касается и нашего физиологического состояния. Например, старения (Nezvannyu gost' khuzhe tatarina? 2017, April 23).*

Translation from Russian: *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar? The events of our life do not happen suddenly. We are preparing for them. <...> This also applies to our physiological state. For example, aging.*

High recognizability and frequency of this proverb is also proved by many examples of its transformations in modern language. The most frequent transformation method is substitution of the key component of the proverb ‘Tatar’ with a different word – often a proper name or another ethnonym.

Title: *Факультатив по истории. Незванный гость хуже Петра I.*

*Почему не стоит приглашать в дом императора и что делать, если государь все-таки собирается к вам с визитом, – рассказываем вместе с сообществом «Факультатив по истории» (Fakul'tativ..., 2017, January 25).*

Translation from Russian: *Elective history. An uninvited guest is worse than Peter I. Why you should not invite the Emperor to the house and what to do if the Emperor is still going to visit you – we tell together with the community "Elective history".*

RSSPAS lists the following parallels of this proverb in Belorussian and Ukrainian that are actually calques of the Russian proverb: Bel. **Няпрошаны госць горш за татарына** (Kotova, 2000, p. 44); Ukr. **Непроханий гість гірше татарина** (Kotova, 2000, p. 44).

The result of the sociolinguistic paremiological experiment undertaken on the Belorussian parallels to the Russian paremiological minimum was published in the "Handbooks of a Paremiographer, Issue 5" (Kotova & Bоеva, 2019). It shows that the Belorussian calque *Няпрошаны госць горш за татарына* was recognized by the 52 respondents (out of 100), native speakers of Belorussian language (Kotova & Bоеva, 2019, p. 189).

An extensive Internet search proves that it is not just recognized but is also actively used in Belorussian today.

*Нож у спіну.*

*Дзве жыхаркі вёскі Хлупін не ладзілі адна з другой даўно. Гэтыя непрязныя адносiны сталi прычынай панажожычыны. Падвыпіўшы адна з жанчын завітала на падворак да другой. <...> Ім і атрымала гаспадыня ўдар у спіну ад сваёй суперніцы. Нездарма ж кажуць, што няпрошаны госць горш татарына. Цяпер у гэтым разбіраюцца работнікі міліцыі. (Nozh u spinu, 2010, February 16).*

Translation from Belorussian: *A knife in the back. Two residents of the village of Hlupin did not get along for a long time. This hostile relationship caused the stabbing. Being drunk, one of the women came to the second. <...> The hostess was stabbed in the back by her rival. It is not for nothing that they say that **an uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar**. Now police officers are taking care of it.*

Active usage of the proverb *Непроханий гість гірше татарина* in modern Ukrainian is proved by extensive illustrative material found in the Internet.

Title: **Непроханий гість гірше татарина.**

*Нова стрічка Мати! скандально відомого режисера Даррена Аранофскі вийшла страшною, незвичною, динамічною і такою, що лише у фіналі стає остаточно зрозуміло, що усе це – про кохання (Neprokhanyu hist' hirshe tataryna, 2017, September 15).*

Translation from Ukrainian: *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar. The new film Mother! by the infamous director Darren Aronofsky turned out to be scary, unusual, dynamic, and only in the end it becomes finally clear that all this is about love.*

Other forms of this proverb with propositions 'за' and 'від' are more frequent: **Непрошений гість гірший за татарина** and **Непрошений гість гірший від татарина** with the form 'непрошений' that is more typical for the modern Ukrainian language:

*Кажуть, непрошений гість гірший за татарина* (Neproshenyu hist' – yak u horli kist'?, 2013, June 20).

*Translation from Ukrainian: They say that an uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar.*

Title: **Непрошений гість гірший від татарина**

*Пізно ввечері, коли Анатолій Бондаревський уже мав намір лягати спати, у двері хтось постукав.* (V"YUN NA HARYACHIIY SKOVORIDTSI, 2017, December 28).

*Translation from Ukrainian: An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar. Late in the evening, when Anatoly Bondarevsky was about to go to bed, someone knocked on the door.*

## 6.2. Be patient, Cossack, you will be the ataman

The second proverb *Терпи, казак, атаманом будешь* (Kotova, 2000, p. 68) /lit. *Be patient, Cossack, you will be the ataman*/ – ‘The one who endures all the hardships of the beginning of the path will reach great heights in the future’ – according to the Dictionary of Russian Proverbs (SRP, 2008), was borrowed in Russian from Ukrainian where it has several variants: *Терпи, козак, отоманом будеш; Терпи, козак, горе, будеш нити мед*. It dates back to the 14th and 17th centuries, when serfs and poor citizens fled and settled on the outskirts of the Russian state (in Russian ‘okraina’ or ‘ukraina’ hence the name Ukraine). These people, who did not wish to depend on anyone, were called Cossacks. Later, the free Cossacks became a special class group with their own self-government of elected persons – Atamans. The word Cossack (as well as ataman) is of Turkic origin, literally - "free man" (SRP, 2008, p. 132). The proverb became popular thanks to the novel "Taras Bulba" by N. V. Gogol where old Cossack Taras gives this advice son Andrei. The proverb also found its way into other Slavonic languages: Bel. *Цярні, казак, атаманам будзеи*; Pol. *Cierp kozacze, zostaniesz atamanem*; Slov. *Trp, kozák, atamanom budeš*; Cz. *Trp, kozáče, budeš atamanem!* (Kotova, 2000, p. 68).

The Cossacks has always been perceived as brave, independent, honest people and great warriors. This perception is still alive today. The proverb is widely used in Russian mainly in the contexts that refer to some Cossack activities or the life of Cossack communities.

Title: **Терпи, казак, - атаманом будешь!**

*Под таким неофициальным девизом в Железноводске на минувшей неделе прошли XVII краевые молодежные казачьи игры* (Терпи, казак, - атаманом будешь! 2014, September 23).

*Translation from Russian: Be patient, Cossack, you will be the ataman! Under such unofficial motto, the XVII regional youth Cossack games were held in Zheleznovodsk last week.*

Less often, the proverb refers to situations that have nothing to do with the Cossacks, when only the first part about patience is actualized in the context.

Title: **Терпи, казак, атаманом будешь?**

*43-летний водитель перенес инфаркт миокарда.* (Терпи, казак, атаманом будешь? (2017, November 28). Retrieved from <http://tm-courier.ru/archives/151791>)

*Translation from Russian: Be patient, Cossack, will you be the ataman? A 43-year-old driver suffered a heart attack.*

The proverb is often reduced to its first part ‘Be patient, Cossack’, for example, in the name of a brand for a bath and sauna cap called **"Be patient, Cossack!"** (Шапочка для бани и сауны "Терпи, казак!"

(2020, January 17). Retrieved from <https://xn--40-6kciozrsbrjm.xn--p1ai/catalog/pechi-dlya-ban-i-saun/aksessuary-bany/shapochka-dlya-bani-i-sauny-terpi-kazak-/>) as well as in other contexts:

RSSPAS lists the following Belorussian and Ukrainian parallels to this proverb:

Bel. *Цярні, казак, атаманом будзеш. Цярні, Грышка, карчма блізка* (Kotova, 2000 p. 68).

Ukr. *Терпи, хлопче, козаком будеш, а із козака попадеш в отамани. Терпи, козак, горе – будеш питу мед* (Kotova, 2000, p. 68).

According to the "Handbooks of a Paremiographer, Issue 5" the Belorussian proverb *Цярні, казак, атаманам будзеш (станеш)* was recognized by 47 (out of 100) respondents of the sociolinguistic experiment (Kotova & Boeva 2019, p. 277). Despite of its high level of recognizability, the proverb is very rarely used. The only available contexts included some extracts from fiction books.

Another parallel in Belorussian lacks the ethnonym 'Cossack', instead it contains a proper name *Цярні, Грышка, карчма блізка* /lit. *Be patient, Grishka, tavern is close*/ and creates a completely different image and associations. The proverb was recognized by 30 respondents (Kotova & Boeva, 2019, p. 277). No illustration examples of the current usage of this proverb have been detected.

Among Ukrainian variants of this proverb, just the following expression is rarely used in fiction:

*Хтось із козаків настролював на кінчик шаблі червону перчину і подавав новоприбулому зі словами: «Терпи, козак, горе, будеш питу мед»* (Vyshenko, 2014).

Translation from Ukrainian: *One of the Cossacks pinned a red pepper pod on the tip of his saber and handed it to the newcomer with the words: "Be patient, Cossack, you will drink honey."*

Despite of the fact that the proverb was borrowed from Ukrainian language, it is more widely known and used in Russian today, rather than in Ukrainian.

### 6.3. The Russian man is wise after the event

The third proverb *Русский человек задним умом крепок* /lit. *The Russian man is wise after the event*/ – 'The right ideas come to a mind too late when they cannot be applied' – proves that smart ideas come to the mind after everything is over, and they can no longer be applied. One of the reasons why this proverb is still actively used in many contexts may be that writer N. V. Gogol used it in his famous novel "Dead Souls", and mass media likes to quote the classics. This applies to all the three proverbs with ethnonyms from the Russian paremiological minimum. Examples below prove that 'being wise after the event' is still considered one of the most vivid features of the true Russian character.

*Но русский человек любит жизнь. Хотя в силу особенностей души предпочитает больше думать о пройденном, и меньше заглядывать в будущее. Недаром говорится, что русский человек задним умом крепок* (Wolf, 2015, December 15).

Translation from Russian: *Russian people love life. Although, due to the peculiarities of the soul, they prefer to think more about the past, and less to look into the future. It is justly believed that the Russian man is wise after the event.*

In its direct meaning, the proverb refers to the Russians, but not necessarily. The first component 'Russian' sometimes falls out, and the phrase becomes universal.

Старая пословица гласит: "**Человек задним умом крепок**". Намного легче проявить мудрость в отношении наших вчерашних ошибок, чем осознать ошибки, совершаемые нами сегодня (10 pravil schastlivogo cheloveka, (2003, November 3).

Translation from Russian: *An old proverb says: "A man is wise after the event." It is much easier to be wise about our yesterday's mistakes than to be aware of the mistakes we are making today.*

RSSPAS lists the following Belorussian and Ukrainian parallels to the proverb:

Bel. **Пасля бяды кожны разумны** (Kotova, 2000, p. 172).

Ukr. **Мудрий лях по шкодї** (Kotova, 2000, p. 172).

The Belorussian parallel **Пасля бяды кожны разумны** /lit. *Everyone is smart after the trouble*/ does not contain any ethnonym. Only two respondents of the Belorussian sociolinguistic experiment recognized this proverb (Kotova & Bоеva, 2019, p. 196), and no illustrations of the current usage of this expression have been found in the Internet.

The Ukrainian parallel **Мудрий лях по шкодї** /lit. *A Pole is wise after the trouble*/ has a very similar meaning to the Russian proverb, but refers to a Pole instead of a Russian; it also brings up the image of 'trouble' while the Russian parallel only implies it or hints at a possible trouble. The negative connotation seems to be stronger in the Ukrainian proverb.

## 7. Conclusion

In the course of this study, the Russian proverbs with ethnonyms from the Russian paremiological minimum and their Ukrainian and Belorussian proverbial parallels were carefully checked regarding their usage in the modern mass media and other forms of Internet communication.

The popularity of these proverbs in Russian can be partly explained by the fact that Russian mass media often quotes the classics, and all the three proverbs were used by famous Russian writers A. S. Pushkin and N. V. Gogol in their well-known novels, and perhaps ensured their long life. The proverb *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar* doesn't mean to offend the Tatars any longer, in most of occurrences it applies to general situations describing something unexpected and unpleasant. The proverb *Be patient, Cossack, you will be the ataman* has a positive connotation based on a stereotype of a Cossack as a free man, a brave soldier whose life could be full of hardships, but still there was a chance to become an ataman for everyone. The Cossacks still form a kind of sub-ethnic community, their self-identity is very strong. Hence the high usage of this proverb in the Internet both in its direct meaning as well as in general situations when somebody is asked to be patient.

The Electronic dictionary of current East Slavonic proverbs will include all the three Russian proverbs with ethnonyms from the Russian paremiological minimum since all the three of them are actively used in modern Russian. The three proverbs historically have parallels in Belorussian and Ukrainian languages. However only the parallels of the Russian proverb *Незванный гость хуже татарина* /lit. *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar*/ are actively used in modern Belorussian and Ukrainian which was proved by an extensive Internet search: Bel. *Няпрошаны госць горш за татарына* and Ukr. *Непроханий гість гірше татарина, Непрошений гість гірший за татарина* and *Непрошений гість гірший від татарина*.



The analysis of the current contexts in which the proverbs with ethnonyms are used proves that proverbs with negative connotations are used either with the purpose of accusing national insults (remember the reaction to the banner with the proverb *An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar*), or in a metaphorical way without referring to a certain nation. The proverbs with a neutral or positive connotation are used more widely in different contexts, mostly as vivid titles that are meant to capture the attention of an audience.

The Electronic dictionary of current proverbs must reflect diverse illustration material that would demonstrate as many current forms of the proverb usage as possible. It is important to record the direct usage of the proverb, metaphorical usage, different types of proverb variations and transformations meant to reach a certain effect on the audience. Proverb transformations more than anything else can prove its recognizability.

This study reveals the process of identification of the East Slavonic paremiological core for the purpose of creating an Electronic dictionary of the current East Slavonic proverbs which will in the future become an important part of the Slavonic paremiological core.

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