

UDC 39

DOI: 10.33876/2311-0546/2026-1/263-271

Original article

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FOLK MEDICINE PRACTICES AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS DISABILITY IN THE ARKHANGELSK NORTH

The author drew on extensive fieldwork conducted in the villages of Arkhangelsk Region in 2005–2024, as well as materials from the Mezen Museum of Local Lore. The research of the previous years was developed within the framework of Disability Studies. The article analyzes the phenomenon of disability in a traditional society using the example of peasant communities in the Arkhangelsk Northern Region. Over the course of centuries of development in the region, the North Russian population has formed a certain perception of disability based primarily on religious, moral, and social concepts. The author highlights the relatively understudied phenomenon of the stigmatization of disabled people. The article pays considerable attention to folk medical and ritual practices within the Northern Russian population and the phenomena of “those who know” or “wisemen” and herbalists. It describes the most popular herbs, which the locals believe to have exceptional healing abilities. The author compares the times at which medicinal plants are collected in different regions of Arkhangelsk, highlighting its northern part where the landmark date of 7 July, the annual Midsummer Day holiday, is still preserved. The author concludes that along with the continued importance of folk knowledge in the tradition of collecting herbs and treatment methods, there are various traditional ideas about people with disabilities among the Northern Russian population, and a tendency to isolate and stigmatize them. Faith in witchcraft and healing by magical means remains strong in northern villages. The phenomenon of the wiseman, having undergone certain transformations, remains stable and has local specifics.

Keywords: *Arkhangelsk North, disability, stigma, herbs*

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For citation: Frolova, A. V. 2026. Folk Medicine Practices and Attitudes Towards Disability in the Arkhangelsk North. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 1: 263–271.

Funding: The study was supported by the Russian Science Foundation, grant №. 23-18-00214 «Digital Technologies and Quality of Life of People with Disabilities: Comparative Experience of the Post-Soviet Countries and the State of Israel».

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