

# CHANGES OF THE CHAIN LETTERS IN THE MODERN COMMUNICATION

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## Summary

In the focus of the present article there is collection of a chain mail, accumulated by the author in 2002–2004. These letters have been written by literate adults. While examining this material, the author attempts to grasp the modern tendencies of the genre development. He concludes these creations to be of cosmopolitan nature, often of a literary origin, so far displaying no national features whatsoever. As belief in the magical power of these letters weakens, the genre gravitates towards didactics and entertainment. Courteous appeals not to break the chain replace the formerly strict code of the magical etiquette. Recommendations to spread the received letter further become the main differential feature of the chain mail.

The textual structure of the letters also changes: e.g., the main text expands at the expense of the former magical one, stories describing negative consequences of the wrong treatment of the letters gradually disappear. Prohibitions against changing the text also disappear; therefore the letters grow more varying, incorporating numerous authorized texts as well as injections from various folklore genres. Appeals to mutual understanding and friendship are very popular, therefore some letters should be called “friendship” letters rather than “good fortune” ones.

The above-mentioned changes are anything but idiosyncratic ones in the general perspective of the modern internet lore; they illustrate universal patterns of creativity in the emerging post-folkloric tradition.