

## CONFERENCE REPORT<sup>1</sup>

### VERBAL CHARMS AND NARRATIVE GENRES. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE (BUDAPEST, DECEMBER 8-10, 2017)

Having an established tradition of a regular conference on verbal magic is essential for the successful development of this research field. It is encouraging to see that such a forum happens again and again, providing the researchers of verbal charms with opportunities to report scholarly work, to tackle various problems, to communicate with colleagues, to establish continuity and to broaden the study horizons.

The most recent meeting of the scholars of verbal magic happened in Budapest, Hungary, in the hospitable and friendly atmosphere, provided by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Research Centre for the Humanities. The organizers were the International Society for Folk Narrative Research – Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming and Belief Narrative Network Committee, and the “East – West” Research Group – Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology. The conference lasted three days, intensely packed with presentations and discussions, both formal and informal. The conference was opened by Balázs Balogh (Director, Institute of Ethnology RCH HAS), Mirjam Mencej (President of the ISFNR BNN) and Éva Pócs (PI of the „East-West” research group). They all emphasized the importance of interdisciplinarity and of communication between scholars. The planning and publication of two volumes, and also of this current (eighth) issue of *Incantatio*, were presented as main goals of the organizers.

Altogether, there were thirty-eight presentations, distributed in eight sessions. In line with the previous conferences, there were representatives from all over the world, speaking on a variety of topics. The speakers came from scholarly institutions from Argentina, Australia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, The Netherlands and The United States. While some papers covered the verbal charming in these national traditions, others

<sup>1</sup> Editorial note: Originally, the task of writing this report was undertaken by our colleague Alexi Moine, who gladly volunteered for it. Unfortunately, he seems to disappear from the face of the earth, without submitting his contribution. All my numerous attempts to contact him turned out to be futile. I most sincerely hope that nothing bad happened to Alexi, and believe that our scholarly community shares my concern. Still being worried by this unforeseen and unfortunate turn of events, I decided to prepare the conference report myself, as much as my memories allow me.

discussed also Bulgarian, Ethiopian, Iranian, medieval Germanic, Old Norse, Welsh and Turkic verbal magic. A number of presentations were about case studies or specific problems - for example, the intriguing supernatural personages from Argentinian, Czech, Latvian, Lithuanian and Turkic charms; the role of charms in Iranian epic and Japanese mythology; the links between verbal charms and supernatural beings like elves, faeries, moras, saints, and the Devil.

Other papers focused on broader theoretical or methodological issues – for instance, the principles and practice of charms editions, the etiology of supernatural diseases, the interconnections between verbal charms and belief narratives, the links between charms, curses and saints' legends, the verbal magic in the contexts of witch-hunts and the importance of the witch trials as sources for verbal charms. While being concerned with larger frameworks, all speakers illustrated their points with a number of concrete examples.

At the conference, the scholars of verbal charms had the opportunity to become familiar with an important recent publication – the volume *The Sisinus legend in the folklore and handwritten traditions of Near East, Balkans and Eastern Europe*. This was one more occasion for discussion and planning of further research. The review of the book is available in this current issue of *Incantatio*.

Well-organized, well-attended and well-presented, the conference was closed with a summarizing talk on further research and on plans for future scholarly meetings. Next day, there was a wonderful excursion to the Pannonian cities, villages and religious monuments. It gave an opportunity for more informal collegial communication, and added a fine final touch to a very productive academic forum.

Svetlana Tsonkova