

INTRODUCTION

The first official meeting of the ISFNR's Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming took place in Pécs, Hungary, in 2007. But before this 'historical' meeting, there were two 'pre-historical' meetings of charms scholars held at the Warburg Institute in London, under the auspices of the [British] Folklore Society in 2003 and 2005. In organizing these events practically and financially, I had a great deal of help from Will Ryan, who at that time was both a committee member of the Folklore Society and Academic Librarian at the Warburg Institute. Indeed, without his support and advice, these events would not have taken place.

Late in 2023, we received the sad news of Will's death. And so it is that *Incantatio* has the honour of publishing his final article, a study of the Russian *Secret of Secrets*. Additionally, we publish his obituary in this issue. One of the authors of this obituary, Andrey Toporkov, appears in this number in another guise as the subject of an interview, the second in our series of interviews with charms scholars.

An issue of *Incantatio* usually finds the majority of its articles in contributions presented at the most recent conference of our committee. This issue has been a difficult one to assemble as due to the COVID situation and broader reasons, there was no full-scale meeting of charms scholars between that in Budapest in 2017 and that in Riga in 2022 (though we should not forget the interesting online charms sessions that took place 'in' Zagreb in 2021, as part of the large ISFNR Congress).

Nevertheless, we received an interesting and wide-ranging selection of papers. Eva Toulouze and Tatiana Vladykina discuss how the Udmurts (a Finno-Ugric people living in European Russia) address their God(s). Elsewhere, Alessandra Mastrengalo investigates a Swedish manuscript book of magic and Laura Jiga Iliescu examines taboo violation and charming initiation. The final article in the issue is that of Tuukka Karlsson on the identification of unnamed non-human agents in a specific kind of Finnish and Karelian charm. Happily, we are also able to publish Iiona Tuomi's review of Tuukka's recent thesis publication, and our issue closes with a report on the Riga 2022 conference by first-time attendee, James Deutsch, of the Smithsonian Institute.

I wish to close by expressing my gratitude to all the authors who have contributed with their papers to the successful completion of this issue. I am grateful to various members of the Committee, most especially to Emanuela Timotin for advice and discussions during the long process of compiling this issue, as well as to other scholars. Thanks to their co-operation, *Incantatio* remains a beacon in charms studies.

Jonathan Roper

University of Tartu, jonathan.roper@ut.ee