

CONFERENCE REPORT

CHARMS, CHARMERS AND CHARMING. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AT THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY (BUCHAREST, JUNE, 24–25, 2010)

The international conference *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, organised by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming and by two institutes of the Romanian Academy (the Institute of Linguistics “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” and the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “Constantin Brăiloiu”), followed on from a series of conferences held in London (2003, 2005), Pécs (2007), Tartu (2008) and Athens (2009). By organizing this conference, the two Romanian institutes above mentioned wanted to pay homage to the Romanian folklorists and philologists, such as Sim. Fl. Marian, A. Gorovei, O. Densusianu, Al. Rosetti, who made significant contributions in the study of charms, charm-ers and charming, and to reiterate the intention to carry on this research tradition. Their efforts seem to have been fruitful, judging upon the important number of participants, which came from numerous countries (Canada, England, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Russia, and USA).

The first day of the conference, held in the headquarters of the Romanian Academy, took the form of four sessions. Tatyana A. Mikhailova (Russia) and Larissa Naiditch (Israel) discussed on the language and the structure of charms, in the papers entitled respectively “On the Function of Name in Oral and Written Charm’s Tradition” and “Enumerations and Repetitions in German Charms”.

The second section, “Powerful Words, Powerful Figures. Antiquity and Middle Ages”, united four papers: “How Chameleonic Can a Demon Be? Lix Tetrax from Ephesia Grammata to The Testament of Solomon” (Ștefan Colceriu, Romania), “Les charmes de Byzance : quelle parole pour la figure du mage ? (VIIIe – fin du XIe siècle)” (Stéphanie Vlavianos-Tomaszyk, France), “The ‘Three Good Brothers’ Charm: Some Historical Points” (Lea T. Olsan, UK), “Multilingual Charms from Western Europe” (Jacqueline Borsje, Netherlands).

The relation between charms and rites was discussed by Éva Pócs (Hungary, “Hungarian Rite-Based Charms: the Relation between Rite and Text”), Sanda Golopenția (USA, “Flying Fatemen”); Daiva Vaitkevičienė (Lithuania, “Saying the Words in a Breath: the Charm Technique in Lithuania”); Sabina Ispas (Romania, “The Wordless ‘Charm’. *Căluș*”).

Three sections of the conference were dedicated to the relation between charms and other literary genres. One concerned the connections between charms and tales and it gathered three papers: “Charms in Tales” (Jonathan Roper, Estonia); “Boundaries of the Latvian Magical Spell Genre: Similarities in Fairy Tales and Folk Legends” (Aigars Lielbardišs, Latvia); “The One Who Handles the Book” (Laura Jiga Iliescu, Romania).

The second day of the conference, hosted by the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore “Constantin Brăiloiu”, began with two sections dedicated to the relation between charms and apocrypha. Two papers focused on the **Flum Jordan** charm type: “**Flum Jordan** et le rite baptismal dans les charmes roumains” (Ioana Repciuc, Romania); “Latvian Types of *Flum Jordan* Charm” (Toms Ķencis, Latvia). Four other papers were presented by William F. Ryan (UK, “Ivan the Terrible’s Malady and a Charm to Cure It”); Mare Kõiva (Estonia, “Code Switching in Incantations”); Svetlana Tsonkova (Hungary, “Practical Texts in Practical Situations? Bulgarian Medieval Charms as Apocrypha”); Emanuela Timotin (Romania, “Reshuffled Structures and Wandering Motifs. The Apocryphal Writing *The Legend of Saint Sisinnios* in Romanian Manuscript Charms (18th – 19th Centuries)”).

The use of charms, the presence of charmers and the phenomenon of charming in South-Eastern Europe represented recurrent themes during the conference. Bogdan Neagota (Romania), James A. Kapalo (Ireland), Haralampos Passalis (Greece) and Cătălina Vătăşescu (Romania) focused on such topics in a specific section and they presented the papers entitled respectively “Ecstatic Illnesses and Magical Therapies in Contemporary Rural Romania: *Căderea între Milostive, Căderea Rusaliilor, Căderea /Luatul din Căluş*”; “Authority, Narrative and Performance in Charm and Prayer”; “Genres and Categories of Verbal Magic: towards a Holistic Approach”; “Termes albanais pour ‘incantation’”.

Several papers focused on the use of charms and the presence of charmers in specific communities: “The Quest for Fertility: Triggers and Opponents in a Balanced Story” (Ileana Benga, Romania); “Immaterial Medicine: Charmers and their Communities in Newfoundland” (Martin Lovelace, Canada); “Harmful Magic in a Transylvanian Village (Cluj County, Romania)” (Tünde Komáromi, Romania); “Love and Fate Charms” (Antoaneta Olteanu, Romania). The problem of digitalizing charms was approached by Vladimir Klyaus (Russia), in his paper entitled “Multimedia Videolibrary of Incantation”.

An important part in the success of the conference was the screening of films at the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, which took place at the end of the first day of the conference. The evening ended with a Wine Reception sponsored by the Folklore Society.

After the conference, most of the participants took part in a trip outside Bucharest, to Sinaia, where they could visit the Sinaia Monastery and the Peleş Castle, and to Bran, where they visited the Bran Castle, more famous worldwide as ‘Dracula’s Castle’.

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ISNFR Committee on Charms, Charmers and
Charming

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

Issue 1

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Guest Editor For This Issue: Jonathan Roper

Tartu 2011

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Supported by and affiliated to projects SF0030181s08, SF0180139s08 and EKKM09-159 of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence in CECT).

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ISSN 2228-1355

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of *Incantatio*. This peer-reviewed journal is the natural outcome of the recent upsurge in charms studies, as illustrated, for example, by the activities of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's Committee on Charms, Charmers, and Charming (<http://www.isfnr.org>). It is intended that *Incantatio* will be a lively forum for charms studies from a wide variety of traditions and scholarly approaches rather in the manner that *Proverbium* fulfills this role in paremological studies. Some of the range we hope to cover will be indicated by the contents of this our first issue, where we have articles on both medieval and (near-)contemporary charms, both European and North American material, and both close readings and theoretical interventions. Alongside such articles, we intend to published reports of conferences (or conference sessions) and reviews of books which touch on charms, charmers and charming.

The general editor of *Incantatio* is Mare Kõiva (mare@folklore.ee), who is also editor of the *Electronic Journal of Folklore* (<http://www.folklore.ee/folklore>). In addition, each issue will have a guest editor. For this first issue this role is being played by Jonathan Roper. We look forward to informative and productive developments in charms studies appearing the pages of *Incantatio*.

Mare Kõiva and Jonathan Roper