

listed. The total number of sources examined is about 650 (450 Russian, 150 Ukrainian, 50 Belarusian), giving a total number of charms about 30,000.

There is, alas, no index, but the structure of the book perhaps makes this less necessary than usual.

William F. Ryan

CONFERENCE REPORT

CHARMS SESSIONS AT THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIEVAL CONGRESS (JULY 7–10, 2014, LEEDS, UNITED KINGDOM)

The International Medieval Congress in Leeds is a unique event: a prominent scholarly forum with productive and inspiring atmosphere. It gathers thousands of researchers and artists together to present and discuss their studies and artwork. While its focus is on the Middle Ages, its papers, debates and performances reach far beyond the medieval period. In short, participating in such an excellent and rich academic event as the International Medieval Congress in Leeds is a wonderful and fulfilling experience.

This year the atmosphere was even better and richer, because the program contained two sessions on verbal magic. These sessions were sponsored by “Charms, Charmers & Charming” Section, International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), and were efficiently organized by Jonathan Roper (Department of Estonian & Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu). Although he could not be present in person, his energetic efforts were visible and gave excellent results. All in all, the sessions on verbal magic were among the most interesting and productive at the entire congress.

The first session was entitled *Medieval Charms, Charmers and Charming, I: Charms in the Middle Ages and After*. It was chaired by Jacqueline Borsje and contained three presentations. The focus here was on the complex development of verbal charms – as texts and practices, but also on the meaning and usage of terminology.

Ciaran Arthur (Centre for Medieval & Early Modern Studies, University of Kent) gave a paper entitled *Reconsidering the Meaning of G(e)aldor in Old English: Condemned Pagan Practice or Christian Ritual?* He discussed the Old English term “g(e)aldor” and the development of its meanings. It was demonstrated that in the context of the Old English corpus, the majority of appearances of ‘g(e)aldor’ are condemnatory but these are always presented in compound form, and the term never appears in isolation as a condemned practice. When it does appear on its own, the contexts surrounding the word indicate that it signified divine insight of Christian mysteries. In the light of this evidence, it becomes clear that the Anglo-Saxons endorsed these rituals for their Christian

words of wisdom. Given also that most of the rituals do not identify themselves as ‘g(e)aldor’, the genre of ‘charms’ is exposed as a twentieth-century construct according to editors’ selective criteria of what constitutes a ‘charm’.

Iiona Tuomi (Department of Early & Medieval Irish, University College Cork/ University of Helsinki) presented a paper entitled *Caput Christi and ‘Heaven and long life and riches to him who will sing it’– The Written Environment and the Textual Transmission of an Irish Charm*. She analyzed a healing charm against headache, written in Latin and followed by instructions in Old Irish. The text is to be found on a page of Irish origin and apparently ninth-century date, included in St. Gall MS 1395, a collection of fragments from various periods. The same charm also appears in highly diverse contexts in the Hiberno-Saxon document ‘Book of Nunnaminster’ (London, British Library, MS Harley 2965), and in two considerably later manuscripts (Dublin, Trinity College, MS 1336 and London, British Library, Add. 30512). A close study of these manuscripts provided a basis for theorizing about ancient Irish magical practices on the one hand and about their written transmission on the other. By highlighting the investigation of the characteristics of the text, and the cultural settings of compilation, the presentation elucidated the parameters of scribal strategies. Questions of mise-en-page performance, as well as the broader relationship of the charm and the surrounding text, were addressed in order to understand the written environment of magical language as well as the transmission of such language over nine centuries.

Éva Pócs (Department of Ethnology & Cultural Anthropology, University of Pécs) presented a paper entitled *In Search of Lost Medieval Hungarian Charms through Their Traces in 16th- and 17th-Century Texts*. She discussed the fact that as far as medieval verbal charms in Hungary are concerned, there are no direct sources, nor are there any indirect relics from which remnants could be reconstructed. The only known exception is a ring with an inscription which King Kálmán used as an amulet against podagra at the turn of the 10th–11th centuries. Charm texts start appearing from 1488 onwards in codices with religious content and as marginalia of various MS and printed books. The existence of dozens of different types of 15th–16th century charms of varied content, used for a vast range of practical purposes and serving the needs of clerics and lay people, nobility, peasants and soldiers alike, testify to very widespread usage. The paper drew conclusions from 16th–17th century textual remnants about the previous centuries both as regards the specific types of charms and their use and users. The presentation also touched upon some more general questions of reconstruction: how far and in what way can we ask questions about the culture of an age which vanished without traces, what sort of results are we to expect and what limitation to accept? And how can we apply all of this

to a textual genre in which the most remarkable characteristic is the exact stability of the text, through centuries?

On the side of the audience, there were a number of questions and comments. The possible etymological and theological connections of “g(e)aldor” were very much discussed. The details in scribal techniques were brought up in relations to the details in the texts, inside and outside of the Old Irish context. The transmission and surviving of verbal charms were connected to dissemination and transmission of manuscripts. The medieval remnants in the early-modern Hungarian verbal magic were compared to parallel cases in other traditions, like Scandinavian and South Slavic.

The second session was entitled *Medieval Charms, Charmers and Charming, II: The Various Uses of Verbal Magic*. It was chaired by Éva Pócs and contained three papers. The focus of this session was on the practical applications of the charms, which can be very specialized, but is also very much interconnected with questions of form and variation.

Eleonora Cianci (Dipartimento di Lingue, Letterature e Culture moderne, Università degli studi ‘G. d’Annunzio’ Chieti e Pescara) presented a paper entitled *The Oldest German Theft Charm and Its Cultural Context*. She presented an Old German charm against theft: *De Furto* (Clm. 536 Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München, f. 89v). This charm is written in the same 12th century manuscript containing the famous *Prüller Herbal* and *Prüller Lapidary*, as well as a MHG worm charm. The MHG theft charm can be probably dated to the 13th century. The text includes directions for the performance and the use of a *Zaubersieb* in order to discover the thief. This mantic tool is well attested in later German medieval folklore and literature, and this text might provide the very first written evidence for it. The presentation also discussed to what degree the charm’s rhyme is a result of language specifics and/or of the special ritual significance of the sieve. The Old German charm was placed in the broader context of the divination through a sieve, which is a well-established practice in the antiquity, especially in Ancient Greece.

Jacqueline Borsje (School of Irish Language & Literature, University of Ulster / Art, Religion & Culture Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam) presented a paper entitled *Impotence Magic from Medieval Ireland*. She presented and analyzed a medieval Irish charm for rendering a man impotent, preserved in a manuscript. The paper demonstrated different interpretation of the charm: as aggressive, curative, repelling or apotropaic words of power. The mysterious unintelligible words in the text of the charm were analyzed and interpreted in the context of invocations of supernatural beings. In this connection, the medieval Irish charm was related to other medieval examples, and also to late antique charms for protection, healing and cursing. The paper also discussed

methodological issues, mainly the question of comparison between historical parallels, and convincingly demonstrated the relevance of such comparisons.

Svetlana Tsonkova (Central European University – Budapest/University of Pécs) presented a paper entitled *Magical Management: Medieval Bulgarian Verbal Amulets as Part of a Coping Strategy*. Her focus was on the relations between the medieval and the early modern sources on verbal magic, on the methodological interdependence between them and on the problematic points of their analysis. So far, medieval Bulgarian verbal magic has been examined and “reconstructed” mainly on the basis of manuscripts from the seventeenth century. In the paper, it was emphasized that there are Bulgarian verbal charms (preserved on amulets) from the medieval period, and that they are crucial for the study and the understanding of the verbal magic from the Middle Ages up to today’s Bulgaria. At the same time, it is important to see and analyze the continuity from the earlier amulets to the later manuscripts. The medieval verbal charms preserved on amulets, which are largely unknown outside Bulgaria, were presented in detail. The paper also analyzed and discussed the role of the apotropaic daily life side of the medieval amulets.

In this session too, there was a number of questions and comments from the audience. Etymology, especially German and Latin ones, were discussed. Another comment touched on the relations between ritual texts, ritual objects and ritual practices in Slavic and British context. Several questions were asked about the physical and epigraphic characteristics and details of the medieval Bulgarian amulets. Here, as in the other session too, a number of historical parallels were suggested for each example, presented in the papers. These, in their turn, brought up again questions of the relevance of the historical-comparative method.

Both sessions were very well-attended, and all the papers were, I found, well-presented, interesting and convincing. Coming from various different scholarly backgrounds, the members of the audience actively engaged in the dialogue during the sessions. Of course, verbal magic and verbal charms were in the focus of formal and informal discussions and talks long before and after the charms sessions.

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Tatiana Panina. *Slovo i ritual v narodnoi meditsine udmurtov* [Word and Ritual in Udmurt Folk Medicine]. Izhevsk: Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature, 2014. 238 pp. ISBN 978-5-7659-0795-5 (Mare Kõiva)

Rita Balkutė (ed.). *Galia užburti: kenkimo magija 1982–2012 metų užrašuose* [The Power of Magic: Harmful Magic in Recordings from 1982–2012]. Vilnius: R. Balkutės fondas, 2013. 752 pp. ISBN 978-609-95585-0-9 (Maria Zavyalova)

T. A. Agapkina, A. L. Toporkov, *Vostochnoslavijskie zagovory: Materialy k funkcional'nomu ukazatelju suzhetov i motivov. Annotirovannaja bibliografija* [East Slavic Charms: Materials for a Functional Index of Plot Structures and Motifs. An Annotated Bibliography]. Moscow: Indrik, 2014, 320 pp. ISBN 978-5-91674-322-7 (Will Ryan)

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Charms Sessions at the International Medieval Congress (July 7-10, 2014, Leeds, United Kingdom) (Svetlana Tsonkova)

INTRODUCTION

The fourth issue of the journal *Incantatio* continues publication of the research articles based on the presentations at the Charms Symposium of the 16th Congress of the ISFNR (in Vilnius, June 25–30, 2013), supplementing them with other research articles. The main topics of the current issue include oral and written charming tradition, transmission of charms and their social functioning, as well as social and ethno-medical aspects of charms. The issue starts with papers dealing with the Baltic region and analyzing materials from Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. In her article, Åsa Ljungström discusses charms' manuscripts compiled in Sandvik Manor, Sweden, during the eighteenth century Sweden, together with the life stories of the manuscripts' owners; the article reveals the biographical and social background to the written charms. The article by Daiva Vaitkevičienė is focused on the social functioning of verbal healing charms and presents the results of the fieldwork carried out by the author in 2010–2012 in the Lithuanian community of Gervėčiai, Belarus. The regional problematic is further dealt with by Tatsiana Volodzina, who has, upon special request from *Incantatio*, submitted a paper on the unique disease *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*), which is well-known across the cultural area comprising Lithuania, Belarus, and Poland. The article is amply illustrated by authentic narratives recorded by the author during her fieldwork and which describe the curing of this disease by charming practice in contemporary Belarus. Aigars Lielbārdis in his turn introduces two sides of the Latvian charming tradition: the oral and the written, giving special attention to the written books of the Latvian charms *Debesu grāmatas* (“Books of Heaven”) and tracing the route of their spread in Latvia. Continuing the theme of written charms, Laura Jiga Iliescu introduces the Central European analogue of the Latvian ‘Books of Heaven’ as they exist in Romania; her article focuses on the apocryphal “Legend of Sunday”, also known as “The Epistle Fallen from Heaven”, one copy of which was carried along by a soldier during the First World War. Last but not least among the research publications of this issue is a broad and exhaustive study by Haralampos Passalis dealing with “The Sisinnios Prayer” and discussing oral and written aspects of this interesting narrative in the Greek tradition with special attention paid to the oral tradition.