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CHARMERS ON THE FOLK PRACTICE OF CHARMING IN SERBIA

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Based on field interviews and written sources on charming in Serbia, this paper examines the social, cultural and symbolic roles of traditional charmers. Charmers speak of their practice, receiving, passing on and protecting magical knowledge, their relation towards patients and official medicine, and their relation towards the tradition of charming. Charmers perceive their role as being very important and fear that charming will become lost in the modern world.

Keywords: charmers, charming in Serbia, context, discourse, folk healing, magical practice, social and ritual roles

INTRODUCTION

The article informs our understanding of how charming practices continue to be transmitted, valued and questioned in contemporary Serbia. The introductory section reviews the development of ethno-medicine, the collecting and study of charms in Serbia and goes on to explain the research methodology and terminological differences with reference to traditional beliefs on the origin and diagnostics of illnesses. Based on contemporary field material and literature, the main section examines some of the constant motifs in the narrative accounts of charmers which contribute to the shaping of their social and gender roles and identities, such as the acquisition, transmission and preservation of secret knowledge, the charmer's practice, their attitudes towards the tradition of charming in their work, and towards official medicine.

Various kinds of traditional healing rituals, charming and magical practices are widely present in Serbia to this day, co-existing with heterogeneous forms of contemporary alternative medicine. The oldest records of apocryphal prayers for healing, magical formulae, sooth-saying, fortune-telling and other astrological texts among the Serbs date to the 13th and 14th centuries. Up to the late 19th century, various medicinal collections were translated and compiled (The Hilandar Medical Codex, the Hodoch Code, Philip Monotropos' Dioptra,

John the Exarch's Hexaemeron) and *lekaruše* (books on folk medicine), which beside writings on practical medicine and pharmacotherapy, also contained prayers and other texts from religious medicine. The basis of Serbian medieval medicine were the teachings of Hippocrates, Galen, Aristides and other ancient Greek physicians, Byzantine and Western European writings from the Salerno-Montpellier school, supplemented by empirical experience and ethnomedicine. In medieval times, the transmission of medicinal knowledge was mainly through Serbian monks on Mt. Athos and physicians of Italian origin – later Greek and Turkish – working in Serbia. At the time of the Serbian medieval state, the places where medical knowledge was exchanged were the monastery hospitals at Studenica, Dečani, Hilandar on Mount Athos and St. John Prodrome in Constantinople, where a school of medicine was founded alongside the hospital (Katić 1990: 16–17).

The 19th century saw the emergence of Serbia as an independent state when the first medical institutions were established along with schools and a medical corps. From the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans in the mid-15th century until that time, however, officially recognised physicians were in short supply and not readily available. Parallel to this, there was a general reliance on traditional ways of treatment, dominated by an animist view of the world and the use of magical practices. Even in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, despite medical advances, the introduction of regulations and legal prosecution of quacks, sorcerers and charmers, it was less popular to visit an officially recognised practitioner in a medical institution than to consult a folk healer, herbalist or charmer, of whom there were vast numbers. This particularly applied in rural environments, but also among the poorer classes in towns and their outlying areas. The reasons were various. It was not only lack of education, information or money that led to this situation – sometimes expenditure on treatment and transport would be less than the cost to the family caused by the illness of a bread-winning member (Fabijanić 123). From the mid-20th century to today, with an ever-spreading network of medical institutions and the extension of health insurance to the agricultural population, attitudes towards officially recognised treatment have changed, and the number of folk doctors and charmers periodically waxes and wanes, depending on the political, social, economic and other circumstances. At the time of writing this article, the tendency is for many healers and charmers to maintain traditional forms of healing, while at the same time appropriating and compiling methods and ideas from contemporary alternative medicine, new-age beliefs and practices. At the centre of these fluctuations remains the figure of the practitioner – the charmer, conjurer, healer, who with his or her charisma and social cachet attracts the attention of patients and those who study them.

Collection and investigation of Serbian and South Slavic folk incantations began in the mid-19th century and continues to this day. Incantations were written down in all parts of Serbia, most importantly from a research point of view in the east and south, areas that are more open towards charms and where the taboo on magical texts has to a certain extent been lifted.[1] According to Radenković (1996), from the mid-19th to the late 20th century, ca. 2,650 charms were recorded along with several thousand descriptions of magical procedures. The number increases if we count contemporary field studies over the past two decades. In accordance with the goals of earlier research and the scientific methodology of that time, the emphasis was on collecting texts of charms, prayers, and other forms of folk medicine, and possibly on descriptions of the healing attributes of herbs. Information about practitioners and the context of performing is meagre and at times omitted altogether. The study of charms was primarily directed at analysing the texts of the charms. This was usually within a framework of folklore-directed language and literary-aesthetic research, or from the standpoint of structural linguistics, cultural anthropology and semiotics. In older literature, there are only a few articles on charmers and folk healers, and rare mention of specific practitioners as part of a general reference to folk medicine and charming in a certain region. Only over the past three decades has closer research begun into the context of charming, the discourse of charmers, the relation of the text to magical practice from various theoretical approaches and in an inter-disciplinary context. Although valuable individual contributions and material have been collected, there is still a need for a systematic study of the position and role of charmers, practitioners of traditional medicine and those who make use of their services. This needs to cover the broader cultural, historical and social context, since not enough attention has been paid to them in terms of daily life, behaviour, beliefs and rituals, gender ideology and attitudes towards health and the body. This would establish the demographic and social characteristics of charmers and practitioners of folk medicine (their number, age, occupation, education, degree of professionalism, income, cultural profile), and the legal, social and psychological aspects of their activity, thus providing a more reliable picture of the numerous aspects of their engagement and interaction with the people who use their services.

NOTES ON METHODOLOGY AND TERMINOLOGY

The focus of this article will be charming as a social and cultural practice. Depending on the degree of desacralization of the magical text in the particu-

lar ethno-cultural environment, the field interviews covered written records of charms and spells, the performance of rituals, their content, or the context in which the charming took place. In cases where charming was the topic of conversation, the description of ritual practice intermeshes with the life story of the charmer who explains, for instance, how she learned her craft, the illnesses she can cure, to whom she intends to pass on her knowledge etc. Conversations about charming are seen as a specific aspect of communication and psychological transfer with clients on one hand, and field researchers on the other.

Portions of the discourse of charmers presented in this article have been taken from field research and printed studies.[2] Several interviews have been chosen to illustrate how charmers see their own position and role in society, magical practice, their attitudes towards the medical profession, the Church and official medicine. Typical fragments have been included that cast light on the reception and results of charming from the standpoint of participants or observers of the healing rituals.

Our customary procedure when documenting practice in the field is to set up semi-structured interviews with the charmers without a strictly established questionnaire, which enables an active dialogue and spontaneous development of certain topics. As some incantations or descriptions of magical acts can be passed on by family members, witnesses or participants in the rituals, we intend to present folkloristic, ethno-linguistic and qualitative interviews with each type of source. The methodology enables researchers to gather the words of incantations and description of rituals, as well as providing autobiographical details and other information on relations within the society, behaviour, interactions, views, emotions and beliefs.

The use of terms referring to charmers and charming varies depending on the cultural and spoken context. Serbian has numerous appellations, but their meaning is similar and because of this they are sometimes wrongly taken as being identical. *Bajalica* or *basmara* – a charmer – is the term generally used to denote a woman who deals in charming for the purpose of healing and removing spells; for a man it is *bajač*, *basmar*. *Basma* – incantation – is the magical text which is spoken during charming. Both words originate from the Indo-European root *bha- meaning "to speak". Unlike charming, činjenje, vračanje, čaranje, madjijanje (conjuring) point to the infliction of evil, the casting of spells (čini) or evil magic (*madjije*), and are carried out by a conjurer or sorceress (*vračara* – Indo-European *ver- to turn around), činilica, madjosnica or *madjijarka, samovila*. The terms *bajanje* and *vračanje* are used both emically within the community and etically as categories in academic research. The charmers themselves differentiate between *vračanje* ("black magic") and *bajanje* or charming ("white magic"): "I don't know how to do black magic. I

know only how to charm. There's a big difference. Oooo!" (Radenković 1996: 15). The term *baba* (old woman, grandmother) is used synonymously for both charmer and sorceress, and is often added as an attribute to a personal name; also the diminutive *babica,* a midwife who helps women in childbirth.[3] In fairytales and legends, "old woman" is a common euphemism for a witch. The terms witch and warlock (*veštica* and *veštac*, *ved- to know, to possess secret knowledge) relate to a person who is "in cahoots with the devil and does evil, particularly to small children, possesses supernatural powers, turns into a bird or a butterfly, casts spells, performs tricks" (RMS). They also denote mythological beings. The practitioners of some specialised forms of magical practice have special appellations, e.g., diviners foretell the future by divining with seeds (of corn, beans, broad beans), cards etc.; herbalists use medicinal plants for healing. Finally, folk healers and curers may also include some aspects of magical practice. (For more detail on these terms see: Djordjević 1985 [1938]; Radenković 1996; Levkievskaya 1999; Conrad 1983).

The meanings of the terms given above can be more general, can change or be opaque in direct speech. For instance, the term *samovila* (a variant of the term *vila* – a fairy), which otherwise denotes a familiar Slavic mythological being, when used for charmers points to their special connection with them. There are numerous records of charmers from southern Serbia and Kosovo who claimed to have received the gift of healing from the fairies and regularly turned to them for help (Djordjević 1985; Vukanović 1986). Or the term *gatanje* – divination, soothsaying, which is used not only to denote prediction of the future, but also for extinguishing hot coals when the cause of the sickness is sought in this way. In one record from Dubočica,[4] the respondent uses the term *gatara* for a woman who extinguished coal so as to heal a cow from an evil eye (*urok*, *zle oči*), and for a charmer who had caused his parents to bear male children and later advised them to pass the children through a wolf's yawn (*vučji zev*, the jaw of a wolf, the skin around the mouth) so that they would be healthy and magically protected.[5]

In some cases even the mere mention of the conjurer or witch is taboo, so that descriptive or euphemistic terms are used. In one record from the Banat, the conjurers are marked as "those who do it":

> That happened with us [for the women to ride the spindle],[6] and the people run. You know her, A…'s wife, what's her name… The people see her, and she threatens them: if you betray me, harm will come to the house. And then he wouldn't tell. And so, *those that did it*, none of them prospered. With all of them the household went – phtt, collapsed (Pavković & Matić 2009: 601).

In translation, shift and overlap in meaning may occur with the terms *charmer* and *conjurer* (see different terms in: Kerewsky-Halpern 1983; Vivod 2007; Ilić 2007). Additional explanations are necessary, therefore, to specify their characteristics and areas of activity. The typologies of practitioners of traditional medicine (Baer 1982; Davies 1998; Horsley 1979; Lovelace 2011; Popovkina 2008; Dobrovolskaya 2011) recognise similar measures for systematization, among which the most important are: the professionalism of the charmer, the range of activities (the illnesses they heal) and the frequency of their practice. In this paper I have used conversations with charmers who heal only their own or neighbourhood children (some are close to the term *cunning folk*, see Thomas 1973; Davies 1998; Magliocco 2004), but also with professional charmers who are known outside their village.

UNDERSTANDING AND DIAGNOSING ILLNESS

In clarifying the discourse and terminology distinguishing between charmers and conjurers, we should, if we are to avoid vagueness, also consider the term "illness"[7] and how doctors, healers and patients approach it. According to Kleinman, disease is culturally constructed and shaped by cultural factors, so that there are numerous causes and approaches. Patients and doctors have differing, insufficient views of illness,[8] and traditional healers turn out to be more successful since they are "principally concerned with illness, that is, with treating the human experience of sickness ... Healers seek to provide a meaningful explanation for illness and to respond to the personal, family, and community issues surrounding illness" (Kleinman et al. 1978: 2). In the case of charming, the success of the charmer and the healing of the sick person depend on the diagnosis of the illness, finding its cause or sender, and the manner of treatment. Understanding the illness, ritual procedure and the texts of the charms are marked by a religious syncretism characteristic of Serbian folk religion.[9] According to traditional notions of the Slavs and many others, illnesses come from demonic beings (evil spirits), whether by entering the body or by inadvertently coming in touch with them; from sorceresses who inflict them by conjuring (through worms, snakes or spiders which they send downwind), or from certain people with demonic characteristics (the curse, the evil eye). Such illnesses occur suddenly, mysteriously and incomprehensibly and are treated by charming, whereas illnesses occurring from visible consequences (cuts, broken bones, a bullet etc.) are not charmed away (Petrović 1948: 352).

Parallel with these notions, it was also believed that illnesses came from God and the saints as atonement for sin, or that man was predestined to illness, so

that healing implied prayers and the leaving of endowments to churches and monasteries. The prognosis depended on the will of God which gave rise to sayings such as: "if there is life there is also a cure", "it was fated so", "thus God giveth". Therefore it is not unusual that Christian attributes and symbolic acts (icons, frankincense, perfuming with incense, sending the sick person to visit churches, prayers) are mixed with the typical requisites of the charmer (a knife, basil, a broom, various funereal objects, stone, animal parts etc.), amulets and periapts which she or he prepares for protection and healing. However, it turns out that the interdependence between the cause of the illness and the use of Christian symbols and attributes varies, since the piety of the charmers and their belief in the sacral nature of their work also determine some elements of the treatment. It has been recorded, for instance, that some charmers in the vicinity of Knjaževac insisted on the fact that their "patient" be baptized in the church, while others did not raise the question (Kostić 1998: 142). Trust in the charmer is of enormous significance for attitude towards the illness and success of the healing. It has long been noticed that charmers like to say that they have "a light hand" given to them by God, that they rely on His help, "and if the sick person thinks the same, then he is already on the way to being healed" (Pavlović 1921: 138).

Charmers diagnose the illness by regarding the visible symptoms or by extinguishing coals (*gašenje ugljevlja*), melting lead (*salivanje strave*) in water and many other techniques. The diagnosis itself is arbitrary, a matter of how the charmer judges the position of the object in the water: an eastward or westward movement means that the illness is serious or less serious; whether the coal floats or sinks, the heating (hissing) of the coal, or the figures formed by melted lead or tin are divined. If the position of the item in the water is ambiguous, the answer of the charmer may be likewise, so it is recommended that some follow-up sign be shown (Djordjević 1985 [1938]). For instance, in a record from Dubočica (central Serbia), the charmer gave a charm and a cure to return the milk to a cow ("You go home and run your left hand down her back, saying three times: The left hand has no cross, my cow – what was her name? Balja – has no cure… And pour water on it") but she allowed that the illness could be physical, not from a curse: "If she is naturally sensitive, she will not give [milk] anymore, but if someone has put a [curse] on her, then she will allow herself to be milked." The respondent's commentary shows that he distances himself from the charmer and the healing, seeing that it was unsuccessful:

> She did not give [milk] anymore, I sold her. Those are all stories. I'm not convinced that I believe, or that I don't believe. This is the first time that I made use of this, the wife says: Go, go. I went. How much there is in it, how much there isn't...

DISCOURSE OF CHARMERS

There is much to be discovered in the discourse[10] of charmers such as ritual practice and magical texts along with the constants which make up the programme: the repertoire of illnesses to be healed, the manner in which charmers act and behave (so-called *opposite behaviour* compared to the usual), the props they use and the temporal, spatial and other symbolic forms they adhere to when performing the charm. Frequent motifs and commonplace items recounted by charmers include how and from whom they received the secret knowledge or magical texts, what motivates them to charm and heal, while some also mention those who come to them for help, their degree of success in healing, where their clients come from, how they charge for their services, their understanding of the job, their attitude towards formal medicine, the church and God. In some interviews, charmers also talk about what happens behind the scenes within their own families, particularly when the family does not approve of what they do.

The openness of the charmer and how the narration develops in the interview depends on various factors. In itself a sensitive and specific practice, the charming is not equally taboo in every environment, and the distance or reserve of the charmer points to significant changes in traditional culture and the destabilization of magical practice. The attitude, official or otherwise, of the local community and institutions (public opinion, church, the authorities) towards charming, affects how charmers work and determines their power, both symbolic and in society. The condemnation of magical practice as backward and harmful directly reflects on the reputation of the charmers and relegates them to the margins. As always in field research, the way in which charmers conceive and present their narratives and the extent to which auto-censorship is present are determined by subjective and contextual factors: how they interact with the researcher, the researcher's status and approach, the specific circumstances in which the recording takes place and the possible presence of an audience – the charmer's family, other clients, etc.

Charmers' roles and expressiveness

Charmers can be conscious of the performativeness of magical ritual, the importance of their own role and the needs of the clients, and this awareness – sometimes a subconscious feeling – influences how they shape their performance. As Goffman writes, the individual may sincerely believe in his performance or he may be cynical about it. Between these two extremes are transitional forms, maintained by the force of a kind of self-illusion:

We find that the individual may attempt to induce the audience to judge him and the situation in a particular way, and he may seek this judgement as an ultimate end in itself, and yet he may not completely believe that he deserves the valuation of self which he asks for or that the impression of reality which he fosters is valid. (Goffman 1956: 12–13).

With some shamans, as Kroeber cites, this self-illusion, whether it be a consequence of suppression or not, borders on delusion. "Field ethnographers seem quite generally convinced that even shamans who know that they add fraud nevertheless also believe in their powers, and especially in those of other shamans: they consult them when they themselves or their children are ill" (Kroeber 1952: 311).

Some charmers express sincerity and belief in magical practice. One famous charmer, Velja from Ošljane (eastern Serbia), healed people suffering from *crveni vetar* ("red wind", erysipelas or St. Anthony's fire) which affects the soft parts of the body, including the genitals, and manifests itself in a red rash with blisters filled with yellow fluid. The procedure requires that the patient be naked, as the affected area is circled by a hen's feather dipped in red paint; the sign of the cross is made and the charm recited. According to Velja's words: "The one who applies this procedure has to be interested, but also careful and civilized, since he is working with naked persons, he has to guarantee discretion ('not to give anyone away or gossip')" (Krstić 2001: 198).

The ritual and social roles of the charmer are mutually connected, but are also ambivalent. As the Bulgarian folklorist Todorova-Pirgova (2015) points out, the social status of the charmer is connected to the social hierarchy (the charmer is an old woman/man, a widow/widower, which implies a high position), but also to the ritual status (ritual purity is required, sexual inactivity, the menstrual cycle must have ended). The charmer has reached the highest degree of socialization in the company of the living and ascended to the last step towards the world of the dead, the world of the ancestors. The situation is due to the special gift and dedication of the charmer, which enables her to make contact with the other world and places her as the mediator. Because of this ability she has an ambivalent role in the community. As charmers can both heal and inflict harm, the community acknowledges their powers but also fears them. Therefore, in social terms, charmers are both the chosen ones and the impure, both sought out and avoided, as Pirgova writes (2015: 59–60). Their social and ritual role implies that they constantly approach and

distance themselves from "their own" and "the other", which makes their position a borderline one – they are present both "here" and "there" (in this world and the next), and on the social and spatial-ritual borderline.

Charmers from the aspect of gender

In order better to understand the gender aspects of the charming practice and various power-related discourses in folk religion reflected in both social and ritual roles, it should be borne in mind that in traditional Serbian culture, notions about women are ambivalent. They stem from the idea that a woman is in some situations dangerous and powerful, that her touch or proximity can endanger males, but also that in other situations she is susceptible to the curse and therefore in danger (e.g. during pregnancy or at a wedding). A number of restrictions and bans existed on female movement and behaviour, on contacts with certain categories of people and animals, participation in male work, rituals and entertainments. In traditional culture, the female space is separated from the male. When a woman moves into the male space and performs male work, she appropriates the role of a man with its rights and social status. Therefore society uses various taboos to defend itself from such "aggression" (Bandić 2008: 166). The symbolical power and ritual status of the woman are constructed on the grounds of notions about her body (menstrual blood, pregnancy, giving birth), and also her ability to communicate with the other world, or with God.

Religion maintains that women are ritually impure, which leads to society also construing them as inferior (Radulović 2009: 187). Some scholars interpret this as a means of justifying misogyny and the submissive position of women in a traditional patriarchal society (Blagojević 2002). The patriarchal model considerably influenced the shaping of discourse on social and ritual roles and the religious status of women. Since in the patriarchate patrilineality, patrilocality, the principle of men's dominance over women and of old over young were characteristic, the position of women was unfavourable, women's roles were strictly determined and accompanied by various gender prejudices. In Serbia the patriarchal model held sway for a long time and was reflected in virtually all spheres of life. A characteristic form of the patriarchate was the clan commune (*zadruga*), "the basic form of a complex family organisation and the foundation of all aspects of social life" (Tripković 2007: 390), where women's duties were to bear children (only male heirs were valued, female children were marginalized), to raise them and take care of the family, perform domestic tasks and some of the agricultural work, to please her husband and submit to him, to behave in accordance with traditional customary and moral norms and thus

represent the family with honour. Since property and work in the commune were collective, women were economically dependent and disempowered. In traditional Serbian society only mothers, girls (virgins) and good housewives were shown as positive female roles, while a negative status was ascribed to barren women, those who bore only female children or women whose behaviour in some way disturbed the patriarchal order.

The social role of a charmer is connected to gender, implying certain gender and cultural stereotypes. In the Slavic context, men usually recite charms for snake bites, issue *zapis*, a charm periapt, or act as herbalists and healers (here we will not go into their connection with various kinds of cattle, calendar magic or magic associated with specific pursuits such as hunting and fishing). Women are the bearers and transmitters of the charm tradition, and it is customary, if not obligatory, for the knowledge to be handed down through the female line. The connection of women with magic, and in some cases the designation of evil magic as the exclusive purlieu of women, are part of the broadly accepted discourse and have virtually become commonplace without sufficient argument to back the assumptions. Anthropological research shows that gender magic is treated as "a feminine instrument in constructing the social reality of gender relations" (Radulović 2009: 237). In societies where patriarchal cultural models dominate, evil magic, as lower and subordinate, is associated with the female domain and negative principles as opposed to the male principle, which has positive value connotations. Feminist anthropologists consider gender magic a strategy of symbolic power which plays a significant part in determining role and power in gender relations. The mystical powers of the female charmer are connected here to authority. Mary Douglas (2001) points out, however, that the nature of the authority differs depending on whether the powers of the charmer are unconscious and uncontrolled, as in witchcraft and prophetic visions, or if they are controlled, conscious and approved, when certain authorities possess the power to bless or curse. According to Serbian anthropologist Lidija Radulović (2009: 250), the community or authorities who accuse charmers of witchcraft wish to make symbolic use of the informal power of the woman, or to restrict it, thus protecting the social conventions on the roles of women and men, very prominent in the patriarchal South Slavic context. This author cites many examples showing that "folk religion was used as a powerful ideological and symbolical means to diminish the significance of women in the sacral sphere or assign them second-rate importance" (2009: 352), as the type of power and the treatment of women and men who communicated with the supernatural differed. As the exponents of God or a supernatural power, prophetic and healing powers are ascribed to men, or the religious office of a priest. Unlike male power which is controlled, feminine power is described as uncontrolled, as in

the case of the Rusalja of eastern Serbia – women who fall into trances to communicate with the dead and utter prophecies.

> "The Rusalja are enabled to encroach into the male 'professionalised' sphere due to the special status of women in the cult of the dead, based on which the Rusalja receive prophetic powers in communication with the spirits of the deceased. In the case of an epidemic, sickness or misfortune, a need for communication with the dead or foretelling the future, there is recourse to female magic or other forms in which women are the religious functionaries and even exponents of God in the discourse of folk concepts... Power may manifest itself in various forms and dimensions, and women, even though they do not have political or economic authority, may be 'permitted' a moment of spiritual supremacy in the community or group. In this case, the gender category is also understood as multidimensional and variable; in other words, there are different levels in the gender category. In these terms, it is easier to understand the various ritual and religious statuses of women, as for example pregnant women, witches, nuns, prophetesses – Rusalje, charmers, mothers" (Radulović 2009: 354).

Acquiring, transmitting and guarding the secret knowledge

Interviews with charmers in Serbia together with the voluminous literature show that the charmer begins to separate herself from the community by the very act of acquiring magical knowledge or the power of charming (Radenković 1996; Ilić 2005; the same may also be observed in other traditions, see eg: Kõiva 1996; Passalis 2001). The knowledge is usually received from a mother, grandmother or husband's mother, more rarely from distant relatives; it may also come along a male-to-female line. Knowledge may be passed on by a neighbour from the same community or learned from foreigners of the same or different faith (in the present material there are examples of receiving secret knowledge from Russians, Vlachs/Romanians and Turks). A charm can also be stolen by being overheard and memorised without the possessor of the sacral knowledge being aware. Knowledge may be received in a dream, a borderline state such as a trance, or when the neophyte is caught by the wind or struck by some misfortune or illness. Knowledge is also received from God, the Virgin Mary, St. Petka (Parasceve) and other saints or from the fairies (in this case, the charmer is in a trance for several days when speaking with the fairies, who instruct her how to cure the sick). Special birthmarks on the body may mean that a child is predestined to have magical abilities.

In an example from eastern Serbia, a charmer from Ranovac (eastern Serbia) received her magical knowledge in early childhood as a song, and learned magical actions in the family, where the knowledge was passed on "since ancient times."

> – From whom did you learn [charming]?
>
> – From an old man. He taught it to us. We had a summer cattle pasture in the mountains. And when he came, we fed them all [the cattle], and then we all went out there in the shade. Come, children, he says, sit by me a little, and granddad will sing you a pretty song. He talks, talks this, talks that. There were various [songs].
>
> …..
>
> – Was there anyone else in your family who [read the future in seeds]?
>
> – Yes, both my great grandmother and my father. I too [learned] this, not from the one who taught me how to cast charms, but from my family, since the old days. That is from the old days, I know how to [read the future in] seeds. And the charms which one man taught me, well I was, who can tell, second, third grade when we learnt it. He [spoke] to all of us, but only I remembered. Well there you have it.[11]

The receiving of magical knowledge in some cases requires a special ritual, a so-called "marriage" with the incantation. A female charmer from the village of Vidrovac (eastern Serbia) describes it as follows:

> – Oh, I know a lot of that, I know a lot of those songs. But, you know, you need to keep them in your mind. My grandmother stepped on my foot, but it will not work for everyone.
>
> – Aha, what do you mean?
>
> – When you go to church to get married…, and [you should] think at the wedding [of the incantation], [for otherwise] it will not work; if you know how to weave charms, but when you didn't think of it at the wedding in church. And my grandmother stepped on me in the church, at the wedding, when I got married… for me to remember it, the incantations. (Ćirković 2007: 163)

> A ritual has also been recorded in which a small girl or boy is prepared to receive a charm. Together with the charmer who will transfer it, they go to a meadow and look for a young, grafted fruit tree. There they hold the twig on one side, the charmer on the other. The charmer recites the charm aloud and they repeat it (Radovanović 1997: 12, 44).

The power of charming may be received in a dream from God, the Virgin Mary and the saints.

> – Who did you learn it from?
>
> – God gave it to me, a gift from God. I didn't inherit it, I didn't buy it, I didn't steal it, this work of mine. I was sick and it was God who gave it to me. I give help to others, because there is no way back.
>
> – Did somebody come to you in a dream to show you?
>
> – It is God's will. God's will, I am not allowed to tell anything. And I work, I work, child. It's been twenty and eight years that I've been doing this job. (Ilić 2007: 151)

In this manner, knowledge is received not only by charmers and herbalists but also clairvoyants and church persons.[12] Thus the sacral nature of the knowledge is emphasised, now characterised as a gift from God, and the charmer must follow the instructions she/he receives in the dream. Charmers who have received knowledge in this manner are usually extremely pious and include Christian prayers in their healing. A famous clairvoyant healer, Kata Gorinka (southern Serbia), "made a great number of her 'patients' vow to take a round loaf on St. Paul's day to the Turekovac church," and sometimes she herself would take them to have a prayer of St. Basil read over them; the healer, Old Mother Mita from Vlasotince, instructed her grateful patients to donate money for the building of a church in Vlasotince (Djordjević 1985: 147, 152).

When magical knowledge is not received from within the family, it can be preceded by the testing of the neophyte. The charmer who passes on the knowledge judges whether the recipient is worthy of receiving knowledge. A charmer from the vicinity of Užice (western Serbia) tells how she received the knowledge unexpectedly, when the giver decided that she had been selected by fate for this gift:

> – An old woman from Bukovik told me here … And I said to her: Well I don't know whether I will be able to bring happiness to someone … And

> she says: You will, you will, you have some kind of *novaka* [fatal predetermination] in you. I saw it. You have some *novaka* in you and you will bring happiness. And you believe in God and you will bring happiness. And really, just as she told me, whoever came to me I saved him. Well, four of them I didn't save, I said what it was, but the doctor saved them, they are all alive. …
>
> – How old were you when she passed on that knowledge to you?
>
> – She passed it on to me… well, now it'll be forty-seven or eight years that I've been doing this. There. When that sister-in-law's little son came, we took him to her and then she showed it to me. There.
>
> – So, this is not some gift from God, you learned it from…
>
> – She wrote it down for me. She wrote everything down… and told me so and so, this and that, you will do this like this and then she told me this: – I will come to your home and I will show you medicine for the cattle. And she showed me some incantations for the cattle. I stick to it to this day, for the cattle also. And that is how I do it, there. And for making cheese, for brewing, the old woman showed me all this.[13]

The passing on of magical knowledge is linked to the belief that afterwards, the previous possessor loses his or her powers. If an incantation is told to someone else, then it will no longer have the power to heal. Also, once the knowledge has been passed on, the novice will not have success until the older one ceases working (Ilić 2005). Some people believe that charmers pass on their knowledge before they die in order to have an easier death (since those who practice magic, especially maleficent, are considered impure and sinful, being in contact with the evil spirits), and that this explains their donating to churches (Tucakov & Knežević 1960: 90).

Some charmers do not wish to recite charms, not because they are afraid they will be ineffective, but because they are protecting family knowledge passed on from their ancestors. This knowledge is protectively guarded even when the charmers do not understand the text of the charm. Thus, Velja from Ošljane learned charms from his grandfather, the text of which he does not understand (probably because the charms are in Romanian), since the grandfather learned them in Wallachia where he worked as a guest worker (Krstić 2001: 198-199).

Participating in the charming tradition

In contrast to concealing the text of a charm on the pretext of its being a family heirloom, in another case it was a wish to preserve tradition that was the incentive for the charm to be written down and handed to the researcher. Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern shares accounts of her experience with Branko from Orašac (central Serbia) who received from his cousin, Baba Vida, a healing charm for snakebite. Vida's daughters lived away from the village in the town while Branko remained, so she explained her decision thus: "They don't need the charm. They are no longer peasants." At the point when he received it, however, Branko was not open towards charming: "Branko confided at that time that he did not feel comfortable with 'these female things'" (Kerewsky-Halpern 1983: 312). When she asked about the charm, Branko was not sure that he would continue in the tradition and was distant in his attitude towards magical healing. At the time, it appears, he did not understand the charm as a component of healing but more as evidence of olden times which should be archived:

> He tore a page from his son's copybook and wrote down the charm, explaining, '... I wrote it down so that these old things would be preserved.' Part of his reason for writing it, I feel, was to relieve him of some of the responsibility he had inherited." (Kerewsky-Halpern 1983: 313)

However, an about-turn followed quickly, since Kerewsky-Halpern reports that by the following year, villagers from Ora**šac** and the surrounding villages of Stojnik and Vrbica were trustingly bringing their afflicted cows to Branko, so it may be assumed that with the acceptance of his new role, Branko's experience of the text of the charm had also changed.

In this case, the growth of trust in the effectiveness of charming may be viewed as a process. Trust is acquired through repeating the rituals of charming and implies that positive results are sufficiently predictable and consistent, and that the practice is judged to be beneficial. With charmers who practise only occasionally within a small circle, there may be doubt of success. There is the interesting example of Milena, whose attitude towards charming varied with her level of confidence in the process and her own abilities, where conflicting emotions swung between acceptance of charming and admiration for the old mother charmer on the one hand, and shame and fear of punishment and social exclusion on the other. As a girl, she received from her grandmother a charm for curing styes and at the same time the power of healing, acquired by touching a snail at a certain time of year:

> Listen, in the spring when you see before [the feast of] Cosmas and Damian, when you see a snail naked, the one that carries its house on its back, you are to use your finger to return them when he puts out his two horns, and afterwards I will tell you the charm, you will succeed in this, since this silly [daughter] of mine and my two silly daughters-in-law do not believe, and it is a pity not to help the people.[14]

Healing procedure envisages the charmer using the same finger to touch the painful spot and say three times: "Left hand has no cross and there is no place for pain [illness] there, retreat, pain!"[15] With the help of the snail, styes and cataracts on the eyes are cured, and the snail is sown into a hat to protect the owner from the evil eye. The symbolism of the snail among the Serbs has positive connotations since, according to legend, it was created from the spittle of Christ or the Virgin Mary, or from a piece of the host which was scattered around the church during a marauding attack by the Turks (Djordjević 1958/II: 206).

Milena, as she says, from a young age observed the work of her grandmother. On one occasion, while castrating a pig, worms appeared. The grandmother worked a charm with the help of a small stake which she stuck into the ground backwards, chanting the charm, after which the girl saw that the worms had exited one by one, leaving a trail. Milena also cites other cases of successful healing (her grandmother cured hernia, styes, stomach ache and other illnesses). She herself was probably already deeply convinced of the successfulness of charming at that time. However, she also noticed suspicion and obstruction within the family, and with persons who for her represented authority:

> And she [the grandmother] again [takes] that little stake, always so, backwards [she turns it], and my mother and aunt do not believe, and so they dig up all these stakes of my grandmother, and then she scolds them and puts them back again. For… if this happens, then they have to come again.

Growing up surrounded by this contradictory attitude of her family towards charming, Milena doubted that the charm which she received would be effective. She was only persuaded when she succeeded in helping a friend, but at the same time felt shame and fear of rejection. Because of this, she did not tell anyone what she knew. In later years, after she got a job as a teacher, she continued to hide her magical knowledge. Still, she worked charms for some acquaintances and cured their styes, but was hesitant each time, ashamed and afraid she might lose her job. She asked them not to reveal her secret. Since the charm proved effective, after several successful healings Milena gradually rid herself

of fear and shame and accepted her sporadic role of charmer. In conversation, with each new example of healing her self-confidence grows and a certain satisfaction is felt with her success, since helping others has enabled her to live in accordance with her ego ideal. Uneasiness is replaced by a benevolent and slightly amused attitude towards her own role in healing a female neighbour.

> My neighbour the priest's wife came, she did not know that I knew how to charm. She came, the woman could not see out of one eye. She says: I have to go to the doctor tomorrow. She came, since my daughter is a doctor, she came to complain to her. And I take her by the hand. – Never mind the doctor, I say, you come to another doctor who will fix it for you, cure it…. Let me charm it for you, but don't go away now and talk about it: she recited a charm for me and it went away. – Well, says [the priest's wife], save me. I work the charm for her, and so in the same way she got rid of it.

Summing up her experience, Milena returns to the discourse of giving presents modelled on a form of reciprocity: a gift from God (the knowledge of charming) should be repaid by curing the ill, where the charmer is the intermediary of the received power:

> I know, to my grandmother they used to bring from the village. Sugar, coffee, but she never took money. Is it that she must not take it, is it perhaps God who has given you the gift and how are you to charge someone for it.[16]

According to widespread custom, charmers do not take money for their healing and so emphasise their role as intermediary and at the same time the sacral nature of the secret knowledge.

In some places, the custom still survives of placing gifts brought by clients on the ground (Ilić 2007: 154), thus symbolically purchasing the favor of chthonic beings whose representative on earth is believed to be the charmer.

Charmers' opinions of their practice and the official medicine

In self-representation and when forming their role in society, it is typical for charmers to generalise and idealise some of their characteristics, thus constructing an ideal-typical form with a set of desirable features. Such widespread stereotypes include the emphasising of the charmer's special nature. He or she should have good fortune and be destined by fate, but should also believe

in God and go to church. Besides, it is necessary to be of moral character and not to reject professional medicine but rather to cooperate with the doctors.

> – You know, child, not everyone can do it. This has to be embraced by a person who believes in everything: both in faith, and in the doctors, and in all that [is] possible. The second thing, the work is done by a woman who is really honest, well-known, and like the elders say, a respectable woman. … This has to enter into your soul, you have to love doing this work, and then you begin doing it. You have to do it wholeheartedly, it's not a problem about money but rather to help people; yes, really, for people to thank you, for you to really help people, for them to recover their health, for the people to move forward.[17]

Many charmers make a clear distinction between their area of healing and the domain of official medicine. Charmer Vera from Vrbovac in the Serbian enclave Vitina in Kosovo enumerates:

> – I can't cure leukaemia, cancer, the kidneys, the heart – these are not mine – diabetes. Those five diseases are not mine, those are the doctor's. (Ilić 2007: 150)

Charmers frequently point out their successes in healing and present themselves as a moral, humane person, graced by God. Typical motifs are that the charmer wants to help and unselfishly makes sacrifices, healing people even on a holiday or her own patron saint's day, and also waving aside the importance of financial compensation for her services.

> – And can [you work] every day?

> – Well let me tell you something, I avoid major holidays, but when a patient comes to me, I can't turn him back, even though it is a holiday… I pray to God three times on the holiday to forgive me. For I work for God, or I ask the holiday to forgive me. (Djordjević 2011: 185–186)

Formulas of sincere gratitude to the charmer develop, where her professional and social roles are elevated to the maximum. A typical procedure is the citing of places from which the clients come, and so the towns and villages of her own and foreign countries enter the map of "her own" symbolically-drawn social space. This renown of the charmer is explained by both her missionary role and the benefit she brings to people:

> – Here, you see, everyone I did [healing] to, it helped everyone, everyone thanked me and everyone appreciates me, and here the word about me has been, as the old women say, spread to the ends of the earth almost, the word has spread. Here, they come now, for instance, from Niš, from Belgrade, from Novi Sad, from Vršac. And I won't even mention the surrounding area… You see, there isn't a single village that hasn't heard of me! I swear to you, my child. Not a single, not a single village! Yes. And I mean, that if it, if it was not successful, if it was not beneficial for the people, I believe that no one would have approached you. All the people come, no matter who and what they are, daughter…. looking for salvation. No matter what religion. They came … even those from Germany, from Switzerland… our people who are there.[18]
>
> …
>
> – They used to come from America to me, looking for help. I gave to everyone, I didn't spare my soul. But I was rewarded. When I help them, they reward me, afterwards. Yes. (Ilić 2007: 162)

The charmer is thanked not only by happily cured clients of all ages and religions, she is also given recognition by doctors and other representatives in important state positions.

> – But in this [charming] I have really, it helped everyone: both children, and the old, and the small. Doctors came, for instance medical nurses, policemen, from the municipality, from the court … from all sides the people came, and as they say, also those who work in medicine, and in all. I mean everyone who came, couldn't… couldn't find any remedy for those frights and for that ransom [from the deceased], for example, and for that intention (spell).[19]

In the stories about the gratitude of doctors, typical motifs are that the patient had sought a cure for a long time and that the doctors had written him off, or had even advised him to contact a charmer. In a short time, however, the charmer succeeds in completely curing the patient:

> – A woman came to me, she was from Switzerland. And she was ill, and then that Kraut, the doctor, said in their kind [= in their language]: You have a great fear inside of you! And you should seek a cure from that fear, but we can't help you, we have no medicines for that. And then she came here, and I melt that fear of hers, and I make a ransom and that

> fear – she had both, and here she is to this day healthy as a ducat! She has no problems at all![20]

In some examples there is a tendency to make out the role of the charmer as superior and unassailable in relation to the doctors of official medicine. Such self-elevation not only has the pragmatic function of establishing the charmer's own status, but also plays a magical role in preserving her healing powers:

> – And I used to get people out of hospital who… couldn't ever be healed. And that doctor cannot find anything, and he [the patient] is not well. I do water casting [tin casting] and the child leaves the hospital, finishes with it… And the doctor in Belgrade says: – Well you are, he says, a bigger doctor than… She, that woman, is a bigger doctor than we are. (Djordjević 2011: 183)

Apart from proving herself as a professional healer, the charmer has to maintain her everyday roles of wife, mother, grandmother, neighbour etc. in her normal environment, which is often traditional, patriarchal and parochial. In the case of Vera from Vrbovac, her healing practice "could have undermined the dignity of her husband who would have normally been supposed to be the bread-winner in the family", as Ilić noted (2007: 148). However, since Vera received her healing powers as a gift from God ("I was ill and it was God who gave it to me"), the higher power interfered on Vera's behalf like a supernatural helper in fairy tales, and the husband was punished.

> – Is it true that it is considered a sin to prevent a gifted person from helping others?
>
> – I was forbidden to do it by my husband. Once he went to the grocery, and people told him, it was a long time ago, and he said: "Woman, people are laughing at me. They say: His wife conjures to put food on the table. They have a horde of children, her husband is a drunk, so she lies to people to support the family". And my husband stopped me doing it. I cried and cried and said: "Please, don't stand in my way, I beg you, I have to work. It's my duty to work." But no, no way. I was forbidden to conjure for six months by my husband. But then I swore to him: "God will send you a disease and it will make you sick. The time will come for me to cure you and then you will let me work." And that's how it was. (Ilić 2007: 148)

In one recording, the motif of marginalization and persecution of charmers is tinged by humour and turned into the subject of an anecdote.

> – Well, the police come to me, I do water casting for the police, and their children, two police cars parked here at my [place]. Now I had done casting for one boy and his children once before, well, well he came again and brought his colleague. And my neighbours say, they say: – Look, the police have come, they say, maybe they will lock Ivanka up for, they say, well, doing those things. And I laugh, I went out before them there, I say: – If you have come to arrest me, I say, I will not resist, arrest me. – He says: – We haven't come to arrest you, but rather we have come for your help if you are willing. – This one says: – You have helped my children, he says, now help his children, and my family were frightened again. (Djordjević 2011: 184–185)

As the bearer of magical knowledge, the charmer is conscious of her role as the guardian of tradition. Knowledge is worth passing on since its origin is perceived as divine, and the knowledge itself as being old, i.e. ancestral, unique and irreplaceable. So, charmer Milunka points out that the knowledge she received from her mother-in-law is a hundred years old, and that it had reached her mother-in-law when it was at least two hundred years old. It is valuable in itself and has always served for the healing of certain illnesses which the doctors cannot cure. Therefore she does not want it to be lost:

> – But the doctors could never, even before, heal fright, ransom, *namera* [intention spells, illness that one comes across accidentally] it has always been old-wives. There, the bathing of children, for instance, the incantations for red wind, the charm for snake bite, well, there that fright, this little ransom, the big one, it had to be done… only old-wives' [medications were used to cure]. For I, we do not work like the sorceresses, making witchcraft… causing conflicts between people and that. This is healing just like it would be according to the doctors; the doctor finds a cure for this illness, we so we have found a cure... There, that's it, my child, very good, it is successful and I would not like it to be lost.[21]

CONCLUSION

Analysis of interviews with charmers, besides confirming and expanding knowledge about magical practice, also offers insights into the social and cultural

context of charming, the psychological dimension of healing, the gender position of charmers and their share in the distribution of social power. The figure of the traditional charmer at the beginning of the 21st century in Serbia, as presented in this paper, still survives even against stiff competition from numerous practitioners of alternative medicine and new age religion. Contributing to this are the dualistic metaphors and symbolical role of the charmer which, in feminist interpretations, bring her close to the character of the "mythic Great Mother, embodying the polar forces of evil and good" (Kerewsky-Halpern 1989: 120). On the other hand, interpretations directed towards an anthropological analysis of the discourse, such as research by Lidija Radulović on the construction of gender in the folk religion of the Serbs, point out that the "area of the holy is an area of redistribution of religious power, situational and changeable", and so the "connection of religion with the male domain and magic exclusively with the female field of action is a theoretical construction" such as "does not exist in social reality" (2009: 137). Ambivalent ideas about women are interpreted in this sense – they are imagined as being in connection with both the sacral and the demonic, as being dangerous and endangered, as embodying the life principle and death, whereby the various meanings are construed in various discourses and contexts. Similarly, we can understand the ambivalent roles of the charmer to heal and to inflict evil, since they possess various kinds of magical and other powers through which they communicate with the other world or with God.

It may be concluded that not only rituals and incantations contribute to the living practice of charming, but the entire discourse and narratives of charmers, with their established motifs and structure, starting from the receiving of knowledge and training, through pointing out their exceptional role, to stories of experiences and successful healing. Such narratives confirm the social status of the charmer, represent their various roles, and enable their magical practice to continue.

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NOTES

[1] Since the second half of the 19th century to this day, about a thousand charms have been recorded in eastern and southern Serbia. This fact and the published research show that traditional ways of healing and various kinds of sooth-saying and fortune telling in these parts were widespread in villages and towns, in both Serbian and Vlach environments, while some reputable charmers enjoyed respect. A multitude of factors led to the gradual discovery of parts of the charmers' practice and the desacralisation of the magical text, so the changing relationship of charmers to the text may be discussed only with reservations. This varies considerably even in the same area, including the form of the magical text (eg. the text is spoken in the ritual, or is dictated to the researcher, or he/she is given it in writing, cf. Djordjević 2011). Further, the degree of desacralisation of the magical text is closely connected to its purpose (protection of the individual or community) and the type of illness. The texts of some charms, such as those for healing minor skin diseases, childish illnesses and the like, is felt to be partially desacralised due to their frequent use in domestic conditions and researchers commonly encounter them in the field. Changing attitudes towards magical healing and its accompanying texts are also affected by a vanishing belief in demonic beings as the cause of illness and a preference for institutional medical treatment. Different individual reasons contribute to the charmers' changing attitudes towards magical texts, such as the type of knowledge (active or passive) and practice (professional or amateur), the degree of respect for tradition and in particular the relationship established between charmer and researcher when recording an interview. The broader social, economic and cultural context also plays a significant role, including level of education and degree of modernisation, the type of community, its ethical and religious make-up, compactness, ethos, accessibility of medical assistance etc.

[2] Apart from my own field material, I shall refer to material recorded over the past ten years by some of my students at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade. Records by students contain certain shortcomings related to subject coverage and interview technique, but also certain advantages. Students occasionally made use of family members or acquaintances which enabled more direct contact with the respondents.

[3] *Old woman, bloody midwife,* was the term for a woman who illegally performed abortions. For people who heal inexpertly and illegally the term *fušeri* (from the German *Pfuscher*) is also used (Tucakov & Knežević 1960).

[4] Personal archive, audio recording, interview with a man from Dubočica (24. 8. 2012).

[5] Passing through the wolf's yawn in charming is also used when the children are sick because of the *babice* (*babice* or *navi* are demonic beings, witches, who attack young mothers forty days after childbirth), or if they cry a lot (Vukanović 1986: 489, Radovanović 1997: 17, Radenković 1996: 81). The wolf's yawn is also mentioned in a charm "of every ailment" from Kragujevačka Jasenica: "The wolf has four legs, two ears, a tail and a yawn. The wolf has a terrible yawn, he will swallow the sickness. Retreat and run away!" (Pavlović 1921: 144).

[6] In folk beliefs the spindle has magical power and is used in various apotropaic rituals, rituals for giving birth and gaining fertility, as well as in black magic. A widely-held belief among the South Slavs is that the witch takes the crops from other people's

fields and the milk from their cows on St. George's Day or St. John's Eve by riding naked on a spindle around the neighbours' land.

[7] In the Serbian language the same word is used for illness and disease – *bolest*. For survey of some Serbian and South Slavic traditional diseases see Djordjević 1965.

[8] "For patients, illness problems – the difficulties in living resulting from sickness – are usually viewed as constituting the entire disorder. Conversely, doctors often disregard illness problems because they look upon the disease as the disorder. Both views are insufficient" (Kleinman et al. 1978: 2).

[9] Study of the few sources on Slavic pagan systems of belief and the relatively limited penetration of Christianity among the people has shown that Serbian folk religion is syncretic: "It is at the same time monistic and dualistic, both manistic and theistic, Christian monotheistic and polytheistic, and above all richly permeated by magic" (Filipović 1986: 10). This syncretism is the product of cultural, historic, political and economic factors, among which occurrences of bi-confessionalism and multi-confessionalism among the Serbs and other Balkan peoples are of particular interest. The heterogeneous and frequently contradictory elements in the system of beliefs are the natural result of acculturation, contamination and the mixing of animist, Christian and oriental ideas and customs. In this complex and long-term process, certain beliefs changed, merged or disappeared.

[10] From numerous definitions of discourse, we have opted for a broad understanding of the term which includes aspects of language and identity (discourse as a way of speaking and as a means of forming opinions and identity): "A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light" (Burr 2003: 64).

[11] Folklore Archive, Faculty of Philology, audio recording (14. 12. 2013), interview with a charmer from Ranovac by Bojana Milosavljević.

[12] A church person (*crkvar*), according to Sinani (2007: 148), represents "key religious functionary in a community, where he/she, besides communicating with the other world, healing, and foreseeing the future, also organizes religious life and offers religious, moral and ethical sermons, which play an important role in the community through the foundation and maintenance of important places of cult. Church persons are upwardly socially mobile, in terms of economy and status."

[13] Folklore Archive, Faculty of Philology, audio recording (16. 11. 2013), interview with a charmer from Stapari by Mladen Stanić.

[14] Folklore Archive, Faculty of Philology, audio recording (31. 7. 2015), interview with a charmer from Valjevo by Jelena Arsenijević.

[15] Ibid. Djordjević (1958/II: 207) cites a variant text: "Retreat! Retreat! This finger has no cross and there is no place for pain there!".

[16] Folklore Archive, Faculty of Philology, audio recording (31. 7. 2015), interview with a charmer from Valjevo by Jelena Arsenijević.

[17] Folklore Archive, Faculty of Philology, audio recording (15. 5. 2011), interview with a charmer from Ravni by Nataša Djuričić.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

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