

BOOK REVIEWS

Emanuela Timotin : Paroles protectrices, paroles guérisseuses. La tradition manuscrite des charmes roumains (XVII^e-XIX^e siècle), Paris, P.U.P.S., 2015 (collection Traditions et croyances), 385 p., 4 illustrations, 8 cartes.

Version remaniée de sa thèse soutenue à Grenoble en 2009, le livre d'E. Timotin se compose de huit chapitres qui obéissent grosso modo à une même structure : texte et traduction du / des charme(s), datation, signification du terme, commentaires et conclusions. L'introduction fait le point sur les recherches, souligne que les recettes médicales et les charmes manuscrits ont une fonction thérapeutique, qu'il est difficile de distinguer charmes (*descântec*) et prières car les premiers sont souvent appelés *molitvă*, *rugă[ciune]*¹, et une attention particulière est portée à la typologie des charmes. Mme Timotin conclut son introduction en notant : « En envisageant les charmes comme des véhicules d'un savoir traditionnel, la présente analyse se propose de circonscrire le savoir qu'ils transmettent et la manière dont ils se perpétuent au cours de la diffusion manuscrite. La construction des motifs textuels est examinée pour comprendre leur sémantisme et, implicitement, les raisons pour lesquelles ils sont devenus des *topoi* des textes magiques » (p. 18). Son analyse s'appuie sur soixante-dix charmes.

Dans l'ordre sont examinés :

- 1 Les charmes contre le *năjit*, *maladie dont la forme est une inflammation*².
- 2 Contre la *mătrice*.
- 3 Contre la fièvre, dont un témoin s'ouvre par les paroles de l'Évangile selon saint Jean, très utilisé en magie protectrice (p. 83)³.
- 4 Contre la *brâncă*, terme que l'on a rapproché du grec βράγχος « enrouement, angine diphtérique, érysipèle, étranguillon des chevaux, angine diphtérique des porcs et des chevaux, maladie des porcs », inflammation au cou ou à la tête (des chevaux et des porcs), ce qui donne une idée de la polysémie des termes utilisés dans les charmes ! On y relève un très ancien *adynaton* : « Ils la virent

¹ Cf. aussi Timotin, « Ieși, năjite, pricăjite... De la „molitvele minciunoase” la descântece” », *Limba română* 55 (2006), p. 72–83.

² Timotin, « The năjit between Prayers and Charms. A Study on the Romanian Manuscript Tradition », dans J. Kapalo, É. Pócs, W. F. Ryan (éd.), *The Power of Words. Studies on Charms and Charming in Europe*, Budapest-New York, CEU Press, 2012, p. 216–230.

³ Voir aussi Timotin, « Les noms de la fièvre en roumain ancien (XVI^e – XVIII^e siècles) », dans M. Iliescu, H. Siller-Runggaldier, P. Danler (Hrsg.), *Actes du XXV e Congrès International de Linguistique et de Philologie Romanes (3-8 septembre 2007, Innsbruck)*, t. VI, BerlinNew York, De Gruyter Verlag, 2010, p. 583–592.

sans yeux, ils la trouvèrent sans pieds, ils la prirent sans mains, ils la firent rôtir sans feu, ils la firent saler sans sel, ils la mangèrent sans bouche » (p. 134).

5 Contre le mauvais œil (*deochi*), charme qui comprend une formule introductive, un schéma d'expulsion de la maladie et la formule finale (p. 164).

6 Les exorcismes contre le diable des eaux (*Rugăciune de scoatere a dracului*), provocateurs d'intempéries. Là sont convoqués Jésus, Marie, les quatre Évangélistes, les seize prophètes...

7 Les charmes contre les fées (*Ielele, Dânsese, Ale Frumoase*) qui apportent la maladie par le biais d'un couteau.

8 Les charmes contre le maléfice (*fapt*) dans lesquels la Lune est invoquée⁴.

En bonne philologue, E. Timotin prête une attention soutenue aux termes qu'utilisent les scribes, souvent des prêtres ou des clercs, et définit les champs sémantiques avec précision. Elle se penche aussi sur les rituels qui accompagnent paroles guérisseuses et prières à la lune (p. 270-274).

La richesse de l'étude d'E. Timotin tient, entre autres choses, à son approche pluridisciplinaire car, outre la philologie, elle mobilise les ressources de l'anthropologie culturelle et ses réflexions construisent une histoire des mentalités qui ont produit ces charmes et ces exorcismes, voyez par exemple son développement sur les tempestaires (p. 213-225) ou ce qu'elle dit des nœuds et du liage (p. 119-121). À chaque fois, elle ouvre la perspective en rapprochant les textes roumains de textes latins du Moyen Âge. Dans son analyse du bestiaire magique (p. 292-295), avec le loup, le chat, la grenouille, le cheval, E. Timotin met au jour une évolution : plus on s'approche des temps modernes, plus nombreux sont les animaux évoqués.

In fine, on trouve une liste des abréviations utilisées, des annexes où sont cartographiées les occurrences du *năjit*, de la *mătrice*, de la *fièvre*, de la *brâncă*, du mauvais œil, du diable des eaux, des *Ielele* (des fées)⁵ et des maléfices. Une bibliographie qui montre l'ampleur des dépouillements de Mme Timotin qui a eu recours à de nombreux manuscrits dont elle donne la liste p. 371 sq. Suivent un index des passages bibliques et un index thématique qui permet une orientation rapide.

Les charmes roumains sont très différents de ceux recueillis en Europe occidentale et écrits dans diverses langues. Ils fournissent une autre image des procédés utilisés pour les guérisons et s'écartent notablement de ceux que

⁴ Cf. Timotin, « L'invocation à la lune dans les charmes roumains. Tradition manuscrite et tradition orale », dans A Branda, I. Cuceu (éd.), *Romania occidentalis – Romania orientalis. Volum omagial dedicat lui Ion Taloș*, Cluj, Editura Mega, 2009 (Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene), p. 651-660.

⁵ Timotin, « Un aspect méconnu des fées roumaines. Observations sur un texte magique manuscrit », *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 45 (2007), p. 433-443.

nous avons recensés dans les pays romans et germaniques⁶. Il semble exister une véritable césure entre les pays de religion orthodoxe et ceux de religion catholique. Si, par exemple, les charmes roumains ont recours au grec et au slavon pour accentuer le caractère magique des charmes, en Occident sont utilisés des signes appelés *charakteres* et des mots magiques inventés ou empruntés à l'arabe, l'hébreu, etc.

L'étude d'Emanuela Timotin fera sans nul doute date au sein des recherches sur la magie roumaines car elle met à la disposition des chercheurs un corpus inédit en grande partie et commenté avec une grande perspicacité. Les ponts qu'elle jette vers d'autres cultures, la dimension diachronique et chronologique des analyses et la rigueur de sa méthodologie font de son livre un exemple à suivre.

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⁶ C. Lecouteux, *Le livre des guérisons et des protections magiques. Deux mille ans de croyances*, Paris, Imago, 2016.

Jesús Suárez López, *Fórmulas mágicas de la tradición oral asturiana. Invocaciones, ensalmos, conjuros*, Gobierno del Principado de Asturias, Ediciones Trea, 2016, 701 p.

We are dealing here with a remarkable book, which will undoubtedly mark the future researches on the history of the verbal magical formulae and on the practices of charming. It focuses on the magical formulae which have been used in the province of Asturias up to nowadays, and presents an impressive inventory of 600 texts. An important part of this corpus had been published in scattered books and journals since the 19th century. The book also includes an important amount of 343 recently collected, unedited formulae: Jesús Suárez López has been collecting them since 1990, and his most recent field work which gave him the opportunity to collect magical formulae took place in 2014 (see p. 36, 170, 227, etc.). Xosé Antón Fernández Ambás and Ramsés Ilesies occasionally collaborated to this impressive work, and their contribution consists of magical formulae they collected after 2013, which are published here for the first time (p. 36).

The book has an important comparative dimension in so far as the Asturias texts are constantly compared to other similar texts, in Spanish and in other European language, which are used mainly in Spain, but also in other regions of Europe or in South America. The diachronic dimension of the analysis is also significant, and the author often brings into discussion ancient formulae (mainly Latin), medieval or 16th century texts in order to establish the tradition of the Asturias texts.

The book is divided into three parts: a short methodological introduction (p. 15-63), the anthology of texts (p. 63-670), and the bibliography (p. 671-695).

In the *Introduction*, the magical formulae are defined in opposition to other oral formulae in respect to three criteria: the performer's attitude, the attitude of the Church toward their use and their transmission. According to Jesús Suárez López, the magical formula, the performer of which aims to control and manipulate the nature, is opposed to the prayer (*oración*) and the supplication (*plegaria*), the performer of which shows an attitude of submission and reverence in agreement with the religious feeling. Moreover, prayers and supplications can be known by the whole community, their use for granting a certain grace or favour is accepted and even encouraged by the Church, while the verbal formula with a magical character is prohibited by the church, is usually secret and is transmitted from generation to generation, in the strictest familiar intimacy (p. 20).

The author establishes three main categories of magical formulae: invocations (*invocaciones*), conjurations (*conjuros*) and charms (*ensalmos*).

The invocations are defined as usually short requests, most of which are addressed to celestial bodies.

The conjurations are described as verbal formulae directed to a demonical or mythical character, a meteorological phenomenon, a harmful animal or a maleficent agent in order to counteract its negative influence or destructive power (p. 21); they are considered to be more complex than the invocations, they are imperative, and are usually accompanied by ritual acts charged with a basic symbolism (p. 22).

The verbal formulae oriented to a divine figure, a saint or a holy figure, in order to acquire the recovery of an illness or of a pain through supernatural meanings are labelled as charms (*ensalmos*). They have a curative function, their performance also includes the use of natural elements (of animal, mineral, or vegetal), and they must be performed repeatedly for a specific number of (consecutive) days. In opposition with the invocations and the conjurations, they have a more complex structure both in respect to verbal formulae and the execution of the ritual. Hence their typology is more varied, according to the variety of diseases meant to be healed (p. 22-23). Although the author organises the charms according to their function, in the *Introduction* he also lists eight categories of charms, established according with the typology of the verbal formulation and the *modus operandi* of the healing ritual: narrative charms (*ensalmos narrativos* or *historiolae*), imperative charms (*ensalmos imperativos*), supplicatory charms (*ensalmos rogativos*), sympathetic charms (*ensalmos simpateticos*), analogic charms (*ensalmos analogicos*), transfer charms (*ensalmos transferenciales*), enumerative charms (*ensalmos enumerativos*), figurative charms (*ensalmos figurativos*) (p. 24-28).

In the final part of the *Introduction*, the author focuses on the charmers, whose ages can vary from 12 (see p. 135: an invocation to a flute) to 94 (see p. 160: an invocation to find a lost needle), and on their narratives about the circumstances in which they learnt the magical formulae, about their functions and the decline of their use (p. 44-61).

The anthology of texts is the largest part of the book (p. 63-670). Each text is accompanied by information about the informant (name, age, origin), about the year it was collected and its editor(s), if any. Each group of texts with the same thematic is complemented by information about their function, the ritual context of their use, their geographic distribution, the earliest testimonies; the analysis also offers an important bibliography about other similar texts attested in other European regions.

The texts are organised according to the three categories delimited in the *Introduction*. Their variety is impressive, and the author's numerous comments help the reader to understand them, to perceive their originality, their inner

poetry and to connect them to other European charms. Many times however, a reader less experienced in reading this dialectal variety of Spanish might feel overwhelmed by the frequent alliterations and by the vocabulary of the texts, which either has regional features or displays a range array of new lexical creations.

Most of the invocations are organised in respect with the addressee. There are numerous invocations to stars (the sun, the (new) moon, the shooting star), but also to various animals (snails, ladybird, cricket, toad, turkey, hen, cuckoo, eagle, vulture, porcupine). Extremely interesting are the invocations addressed to musical instruments, such as the rustic flutes; in this case, the formulae are meant to ease the cut of the brunches of which these instruments are made, and to make the instruments sound good (p. 129-140).

Other formulae are used while seeding the hemp, or in order to find a lost needle or other small objects, to dry a wet sheet of paper. According to the author, most of this sub-category of texts are nowadays mere songs, but their comparison with similar ancient and modern texts proves their magical origin and function (p. 21).

Several texts similar to nursery rhymes are also considered to have a magical character and are included in the category of invocations. They are meant to attract swarms of bees, to induce refractory cows to give their milk, to make butter (p. 169-184).

The conjurations form a rich category (p. 185-368). They are meteorological (against tempest, lightning, heavy rain, fog, for wolfs not to attack the cattle, against whirlwinds which are considered to be malefic), or are meant to protect against harmful animals (rodents, vermin, serpents, weasels, wolves) and mythological beings (the spirits which produce nightmares, the devilish assaults). The formulae against evil eye have an important place in the Asturias tradition (p. 348-368).

The most important category of magical formulae have a curative function. Many of these charms (*ensalmos*) (p. 369-670) refer to children's illnesses (aphthae, pinworms, hernia, children's muteness), to skin diseases (e.g. erysipelas, herpes zoster, ulcers, chilblains, burns), to eye illnesses (macula, sty), dislocations, fistulae, mastitis, haemorrhage, toothache, etc. An important part of them is supposed to heal cattle illnesses (p. 611-670).

The Asturias rich tradition of verbal magical formulae, in particular, and the Spanish tradition of verbal magical formulae, in general, mostly ignored before, are brought to light by this impressive book. Jesús Suárez López's efforts to gather a vast number of variable texts, his interest in the relation of the Asturias tradition with other (Spanish) traditions make this volume a

significant contribution for the study of charms, for the history of religion and, last but not least, of the Romance languages.

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Jukka Saarinen, *Runolaulun poetiikka. Säe, syntaksi ja parallelismi Arhippa Perttusen runoissa*. Akateeminen väitöskirja. Helsinki 2018.- 417 lk.

Arhippa Iivananpoika Perttunen (Arhip Ivanov Pertujev 1762 Latvajärvi – 1841 Latvajärvi), the remarkable runosinger from White Sea Karelia who is believed to be the source of approximately a third or the runosongs in *Kalevala* as Jukka Saarinen (2013) has written based on his analysis.

During his spring collection tour in 1834, Elias Lönnrot, the author of *Kalevala*, paid a special visit to the renowned singer and spent three days writing down his songs. In his writings of the 80-year-old singer, Lönnrot has also referred to him as an expert in other types of folklore, admiring his excellent memory. F. J. Cajan and M. A. Castrén also collected songs from Arhippa – altogether 85 texts or 5,995 verses have been written down and comprise epic, lyric texts and incantations. A number of folklorists have written about Arhippa Perttunen and his songs, including Anna-Leena Siikala, Lotte Tarkka, Martti Haavio and others.

Jukka Saarinen's dissertation "Runolaulun poetiikka. Säe, syntaksi ja parallelismi Arhippa Perttusen runoissa" [The poetics of oral poetry: verse structure, syntax, and parallelism in the texts of Arhippa Perttunen], which he defended on 20 January 2018, is comprehensive (317 pages of the 417-page dissertation contains research and literature, the rest is divided between various annexes and analysis results) and thorough. Saarinen used all the songs written down from Arhippa Perttunen in an attempt to reconstruct the texts that had remained somewhat fragmented at the time they were written down. Saarinen's goal was to follow as closely as possible the poetic and linguistic aspect of the songs. The dissertation is characterised by thorough understanding and consideration of previous as well as the latest theoretical positions and approaches and by its remarkably meticulous consideration of matters of linguistics and form.

The material has been treated from the viewpoint of folkloristics and linguistics as a way to get an overview of how Perttunen used language. Saarinen makes use of the oral-formulaic theory and the studies of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord. The author admits that one single theoretical school only allows for partial treatment of Kalevalaic verses. He finds the concept of register as developed by linguist Roman Jakobson to be productive, and his syntax analysis is based on the theoretical approach of and the rules of runosongs phrased by Matti Kuusi. Particular rules restrict the choices made by singers and the verse process, but at the same time, established expressions can be used more than once, e.g. for expressing similar ideas. In terms of parallelism as a characteristic feature of Kalevalaic verses, the author observed the use of parallel verses in the creation of complex poetical imagery that is richer in semantic substance than single verses.

The formal features (metre, alliteration and parallelism) of Kalevalaic poetry function within the framework of a verse. Arhippa Perttunen takes these formal features into account, but his texts also contain secondary poetic features (unusual word order and archaic words). They function together to form a distinctive register.

Since Arhippa was known as a performer of narrative songs, Saarinen admits that his songs were structured in a stable form while diverging from the versions sung by other singers. Arhippa probably shaped them as he acquired them. His repertoire also included religious songs. He is known to have had a special relationship with religion. Although he was not a healer and considered incantation to be a sin he knew lengthy healing charms. Lyrical songs indicate that the singer was good at combining new texts using his existing knowledge and different types of texts, e.g. proverbs.

It is also clear that the singer performed the texts differently for different collectors, but by using closed verses *Ylitti tahon Jumalan* - 'against God's will' *Kyllä mie sukusi tiijän* - 'I should know your blood/decent'). For example, he performed lumbago charms for Lönnrot in the form of a historiola, making use of the epic song of the Great Oak (Saarinen 2018:127).

The singer was familiar with incantations such as charms related to healing and livelihood (hunting and cattle-breeding). Altogether 1,553-1,300 incantation verses and 1,022 incantation verse types have been recorded. The number of single line verses amounts to 836 or 64.0% of the entire repertoire, which is reminiscent of a similar dispersion in the list of plots of Russian incantations by V. Kljauš (1997). 186 verses occur most frequently, and most of them appear in the same incantation text (96, 51.6%). It is noteworthy that there are only seven verses which appear in more than two incantations.

It is interesting to see how the singer referred to himself: as a rune-singer, wise man or seer. There is no doubt that Saarinen's thorough overview of linguistic forms and syntax will assist anyone analysing Karelian-Finnish incantations in the future, although the main emphasis of his dissertation is on runosongs.

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Sorcery texts from Ancient Mesopotamia by Amar Annus Bibliotheca Antiqua.
Tallinn 2017: TLÜ Kirjastus.

tu-ur-rat amât-sa ana pî-šá lišân-šá qa-
in elî kiš-pi-šá lim-ha-su-ši ilimeš mu-ši ti

The spell of the sorceress is hateful;
let her word come back in her mouth,
let as-rat her tongue be tied!

Let the Gods of the Night overcome her spell! (<http://www.rosscaldwell.com/babylonian/MAQLURIT.pdf>)

Considering academic interest and the number of academic books published annually on the subject of witchcraft/witches, the translation into Estonian of Mesopotamian incantations is not exactly surprising, but unique nonetheless. Unlike the works referred to above, half of the volume of the publication in the Antiqua series is designated for famous original text, texts inhibiting the actualisation of witchcraft. Namely, the publication on the Mesopotamian incantation ceremony “Burning” with translations of a complete ceremony of roughly a hundred incantations and two curse texts contains relevant commentary and a longer essay on the topic written by Amar Annus.

The last century has been a success story for researchers of ancient history as evidenced by archaeological findings and the number of academic studies, but text corpora as well as translations of original texts made available online also serve as a guide to ancient culture. New opportunities for restoring texts – a large part of clay tablets has been found in fragments – and a general increase in awareness about cuneiform writing and the societies that used it has led to new publications employing textual criticism in addition to what has been published before. The ever-growing online sharing of Mesopotamian texts, translations and commentaries is also a gratifying source of information and gives cause to assume that the knowledge base of modern readers goes deeper than the Code of Hammurabi and the flood story in Gilgamesh. Although there have been no geographical restrictions on academic research over the last decades, scholars can work in every corner of the world and the number of public databases has increased, we still must admit that the bases for funding research are nefariously restrictive and do not favour in-depth research. For example, the funding period for “The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)” founded by the Faculty of Oriental studies at Oxford University lasted from 1997 to 2006, after which further funding was found for software updates in 2015. This text corpus contains Sumerian literature in all its forms, meaning that

it includes poetry, hymns, letters, songs, writing exercises, older mythological compositions and dialogues, examples of proverbs, riddles, etc. The project site provides access to four hundred Mesopotamian texts (with translations) which illustrate compositions from the third and second millennia BCE. A team of excellent researchers including Graham Cunningham, Eleanor Robson, Gabor Zolyomi, Miguel Civil, Bendt Alster, Joachim Krecher, Piotr Michalowski *et al.* have published shared approaches and separate academic writings, incl. on the subject of incantations. The database referred to above could be used as compulsory reading for students in humanities (especially folkloristics and literature). Preferably with references to additional literature. By now, there are also a number of environments providing generalised information (e.g. the site <https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Miscellaneous%20Babylonian%20Inscriptions> and many other sites are helpful in finding answers to various questions).

The compilers of ETCSL state that predictions, omens and a large body of incantation texts are not within their scope. According to various assessments, the number of texts related to omens and divination account for up to thirty per cent or more of all preserved texts. Predictions contain several practices still used today: divination based on animal organs, divination based on signs of nature and in the sky, dream interpretation, astrological omens, etc. as well as teachings on diagnostics.

The instructions in the writings indicate that the people were able to generalise processes and the phenomena relate thereto, making it easier to understand the achievements of Greek and other subsequent cultures and their connections with Babylonian and Egyptian cultures. The divination practices listed above were used until quite recently or are still used today and continue to be passed on in verbal tradition in many cultures. Sumerian texts also bear ontological importance – in order to explain human psychology and cognitive abilities, the stability of religious fantasies, the dialogue nature and variability of written and verbal ritual and text and many other issues still relevant in this day and age.

In addition to incantations, herbal therapy served an important role in healing. Texts of verbal charms and incantations from the period 2600-100 BCE can be found in writings, literary texts and other sources in the Sumerian and Akkadian languages, where they appear alongside personal life occurrences entwined with symptoms of illnesses, etiologies and diagnoses. There are also instructions on what to do in the event of suffering or upon becoming a victim of evil.

The form of the text has been perfected over millennia and the cycle “Burning” is considered to be the best example of this. Graham Cunningham’s incantation studies open up a world of verbal charms where incantations against

sorcerers and sorcery also make room for texts against curses, the repelling of bad omens, exorcism of demons, charms for silencing snakes and evil dogs, sauna and cleansing ceremony incantations, love charms for increasing potency, etc. As is characteristic of the geographical location, there are many incantations against agricultural pests, incl. locusts. The incantations are a reflection of the society where they were used and the environment in which the people involved in the culture lived.

Prayers and incantations belonging to therapies and healing rituals were either performed by the person himself/herself or he/she used the help of a professional incantator, e.g. when performing Maqlû. Maqlû was discovered during the height of archaeological studies in the Middle East in the 19th century. Anyone interested can find the original text along with its English translation on the Internet, but it is also possible to look up its core translations. *Knut L. Tallqvist's translation was published as early as 1895, Gerhard Meier's translation was published in 1937* and the most recent academic edition of the Maqlû was published in 2015. The last edition was put together by Tzvi Abusch, professor of Assyriology and Ancient Middle Eastern Religion at Harvard University and his "The Magical Ceremony Maqlû: A Critical Edition", Leiden: Brill is also the basis of Amar Annus' translation.

Maqlû tablets and the fragments thereof are preserved in numerous museums across Europe and America: in the British Museum, Berlin, Chicago, Pennsylvania, Oxford, Istanbul, etc., making it incredibly cumbersome to restore the text. In his treatment of the subject matter, Tzvi Abusch considers it important that the definitions of Mesopotamian magic and sorcery differ from biblical literature and several subsequent approaches. According to him, magic was a legitimate part of religion, corresponding to "the human needs, crises and wishes of individuals and the king". Sorcery in Mesopotamian context (*kišpû, ruḥû, rusû, upšāšû lemnûtu*) was not related to magical behaviour but hostile conduct, i.e. it was related to practices that served an anti-social and destructive purpose.

Maqlû incantations include instructions for the appropriate performance of the ritual. Incantations were originally performed during a single night in July or August – this was seen as a particularly dangerous time when spirits from the netherworld made people vulnerable to their sorcery. The ritual lasted from sunset to sunrise and began by burning figurines of sorcerers, drowning the figurines in black liquid, placing them face down on the ground and crushing them while reciting the texts on the first four clay tablets. Descriptions of this ritual and other rituals reveal the relationships between ceremonial practices and texts. Remarkably, many of the techniques from back then have parallels

in contemporary societies, starting from the practice of drawing a circle around the sick person.

The most renowned medical researchers of ancient Mesopotamia, including Markham Gelleri and Zack Kotzé, believe that the Maqlû ceremony was used for treating paranoid schizophrenia, although at that time the development of the condition was explained with the evil eye, bewitching and sorcery. Which brings us to an important part of the publication. The translator's tale of sorcery, facts, liberal parallels drawn with the traditions of the Livonians (the situation in the 1920s, based on the collection of texts by Oskar Loorits) and other arbitrary examples presented in the beautiful linguistic interpretation of Amar Annus. The placement of acts of sorcery in the territory of Livonian in the beginning of the 20th century, and the Komi people, in the beginning of the 21st century, somewhere in the vast fields of Russia, is reminiscent of the Viking tradition. Vikings placed one-eyed giants, dragons and other supernatural creatures on the Eastern Route – we do not have any, but they still dwell in the wilderness of the fringe areas. This explains the use of Art Leete's articles from the daily paper *Postimees* as sources, although similar servicing texts of sorcerers can be found in Estonian journals or advertisements in central Tartu – the person writing them has decided to position real sorcery further away in time and space.

If we exclude unexpectedly common references to autism, then it is a matter of taste whether the phenomenon of the evil eye should be explained by hyper-mentalism or whether we should stick with the explanations provided by psychologists and researchers of social relationships. The influence of ethnic explanations on the course of the illness and the sick person is an important aspect. At the initiative of Arthur Kleinmann and other researchers of ethno-psychiatric phenomena and due to the influence of popular cultural etiologies, they have found a place in the international nomenclature of the World Health Organisation (WHO) as ethno-psychiatric diagnoses which should be taken into account in ethnic communities.

The foreword in its current form is a separate (artistic) work and everyone is free to select an explanation on facts and the interpretation thereof. For example, in his descriptions of witch trials Annus rationalises and marginalises them, although the litigations were conducted in accordance with legal practices supported by contemporary mundane and religious authorities. The foreword repeatedly makes irritating references to the sempiternity of modern problems, not to mention magical practices. The source of the illness and sick persons are still constrained by drawing a circle around them. The practice of using a plough to draw a protective circle around villages facing the danger of a pandemic as was once customary in the heart of Europe is still very much alive as are many other practices. This indicates that magical thought and behaviour cannot be

easily rationalised and that old structural methods apply across different eras. During his lifetime, Plato admired the healing abilities of Greek incantations and the power of word over the body and mind of people. He found the texts at the time to be poetical and beautiful, which is undoubtedly also true of the Maqlû and Mesopotamian incantations that were perfected over millennia.

The conclusion made from the above is that we could use reading books, textbooks, academic anthologies and academic monographs about sorcery texts as well as about the variegated Mesopotamian literary tradition as such, regardless of the order of publication of such works. Scholars specialised on more particular fields have no issue with finding originals, translations and commentaries for their own personal use, but only Assyriologists could help clarify the broader cultural context, intellectual aspects and development of different categories of texts.

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