

# “THIS CHILD HERE WON’T SHED TEARS OF DREADFUL FRIGHT, ’CAUSE HE’S NOT CAUGHT BY DEVIL’S MIGHT” CHANGE AND STABILITY OF CHARMS AGAINST FRIGHT ILLNESS: A HUNGARIAN PERSPECTIVE

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This article presents the initial stages and the planned further developments of a research on Hungarian curative charms against fright illness. Based on a rich and interesting database of healing and curative folk beliefs, rituals and texts, the research aims at exploring the charms and the charming rituals from the perspective of medical anthropology. The analysis is focused on the phenomenon of fright-illness (*ijedtség*) and its verbal magical treatment, on the basis of emic perceptions. While this research will develop and progress, the current article gives a general introduction to the Hungarian terminology on fright-illness in comparison to similar culture-bound syndromes in Central Europe, and also introduces the most prominent of the charms, in Hungarian with English translation.

**Key words:** fright-illness, popular medicine, culture-bound syndromes, curative charms, charming practices, healing ritual, Central Europe, Hungary.

## INTRODUCTION: THE FRIGHT-ILLNESS

In their 1984 monograph on the Mexican folk illness called *susto*, i.e. fright, Rubel, O’Neill and Collado-Ardón make a clear distinction between disease, illness and sickness in order to point at the different approaches of allopathic medicine and cultural anthropology in terms of health issues (Rubel, O’Neill, Collado-Ardón 1984: 245). In the authors’ interpretation ‘disease’ designates the etic perspective of the medical register, as it considers pathological processes and objective indications of changing health status. By the application of the term ‘illness’, however, the focus is shifted to the individual’s, that is the victim’s, perceptions and descriptions of discomfort. According to an earlier study by Arthur Rubel illness is not only a medical but a cultural and social phenomenon as well, since it means a complex of “syndromes from which their

culture provides an aetiology, a diagnosis, preventive measures, and regimens of healing” (Rubel 1964: 268). Finally, the notion ‘sickness’ refers to the social group’s acknowledgements and responses to one of its member getting ill. In this respect both latter categories represent the emic perspective of health concerns within a social group, what is more, they even shed light on the relationships between health understandings and values, beliefs and social norms of the given culture.

It is obvious that fright is not a single culture-bound condition, on the contrary, similar syndromes have been reported of and described among several cultural groups throughout the world, such as Latin America (Costa Rica, Haiti, the Dominican Commonwealth, Peru), the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Iran, and, last but not least Europe. However, in her more recent essay on *sésisma* (fright-illness) in Dominica, Marsha Quinlan stresses that variegated interpretations of the syndromes have been created by various cultural and social environments (Quinlan 2010). In this respect she refers to the glossary of culturally specific illness expressions compiled by Simons and Hughes (1986), which is based on the comparable aetiology and symptoms of the illnesses. They consider fright as a separate taxon, which incorporates ‘diagnostic entities’ (Simons 2001) from various cultures, however, these are all common in blaming the illness on a traumatic experience of shock. Accordingly, fright-illness (emic, individual) or fright-sickness (emic, group) is an ethnomedical category that describes certain psychiatric syndromes of persistent distress.

The detailed title of the present paper indicates that I have also adopted the distinctive approach by medical anthropology, and call fright an illness or sickness, because I do intent to produce a later analysis of the phenomenon on the bases of emic perceptions. From this point, I will refer to fright-illness or fright-sickness simply by fright, which is equivalent to the most widespread Hungarian term ‘*ijedtség*’. Nevertheless, so far medical anthropological description of the syndrome has been incomplete due to several factors.

The present analysis is based on a 959-item corpus on the healing methods of fright-illness in the Folk-Belief Archive (FBA) of the Ethnographical Institute of the Hungarian Academy Sciences. The Archive consists of publications and yet unpublished collections of folk belief from the Hungarian-speaking areas in the Carpathian Basin between the late 1870s and 2005. It is currently being processed digitally and arranged into indexes of belief motifs and catalogues of belief narratives by a research team lead by Professor Éva Pócs, and deposited at the Department of European Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of Pécs University (Hungary). In the archive belief narratives are arranged into various thematic groups, and fright illness, along with the evil eye, are the two

major sub-groups of supernatural illnesses. Due to the extreme heterogeneity of my data in terms of length, narrative genres, quality (which is mostly determined by the collector's attitude), the present study cannot aim a complex medical-anthropological introduction of fright-illness in Hungary. The scarcity of contemporary, empirically collected data is insufficient to grasp the entire range of the various understandings, interpretations and even explanatory models along with the social context from a synchronic perspective. However, the broad timespan of 125 years, also the extremely detailed coverage of the entire Carpathian Basin proved to be particularly suitable for a typological examination of healing methods including verbal magic, and studying fright-illness from geographical, comparative and historical (diachronic) perspectives.

## TERMINOLOGY AND SEMANTIC FIELDS

Drawing from the chart of the emic terminology (Table 1) it is obvious that *ijedtség* and its dialectal variants far exceed those, which refer to epilepsy and other related psychiatric syndromes. Nevertheless, it is hard to decide, whether this outstanding terminological homogeneity is due the uniform questionnaires used by the three nationwide surveys to collect various data on folk life during

Table 1. Hungarian (emic) terminology.

Hungarian (emic)	English equivalent ('literal')	Number of Cases
<i>ijedtség / ijedés / ihedség / jettség; félés</i>	fright; fear	938
<i>frász</i>	epilepsy / cramps (from the German 'fraisen')	4
<i>nehézség</i>	epilepsy ('heavy weight')	4
<i>hideglelés</i>	chills	4
<i>rossz betegség</i>	epilepsy ('bad illness')	2
<i>rossz lapulás</i>	fright ('bad cower')	2
<i>nyavalya / ~törés</i>	epilepsy / epileptic seizure ('malaise' / 'grinded by malaise')	2
<i>szívbjaj</i>	fright ('heart disease')	1
<i>epilepszia</i>	epilepsy	1
<i>meg van verődve</i>	evil eye ('beaten')	1

the 1960s and 1970s in Hungary and in Hungarian speaking areas in the Carpathian Basin. These included enquiries about the most common folk-illnesses, thus informants often reported about fright, too. Despite the unifying effect of the questionnaires, we may draw some conclusions. In the first instance, a slight interrelation of the semantic fields of fright, epilepsy and the evil eye is observed as these concepts are occasionally reversed in emic context. Secondly, Hungarian emic terminology for fright suggests that these syndromes are sometimes associated to disorders of the human heart. It is worth noting that in contemporary colloquial use the most common expressions of getting frightened or shocked still evolve this tendency: fright is *szívdobogás* (= 'heartbeat'), the one who is shocked *szívdobogást kap* (=one's heart is beating faster), or *megáll a szívverése* (his / her heart stops beating). It suggests that fright-illness is located in the human heart in certain emic interpretations.

## HEALING METHODS AND PRACTICES

On the basis of statistical overview it is apparent that the 40 main thematic groups encompass the entire range of all possible healing methods in folk medicine (Table 2). The great variety of healing practices reflects that fright must have been, and it still is, one of the most widespread folk-illnesses in the past 150 years. Despite the relative heterogeneity some remarkable trends of healing fright-illness can be established. It is striking that out of the 155 different curing methods, those, where water (or other liquid substance) is applied are dominant. The shocked person is either given a drink of cold water, or his / her face is washed, or sometimes he / she is sprinkled with it. Among the various baths we find a few with herbs, such as thyme (*Thymus genus*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), elderberry flowers (*Sambucus nigra flos*), spurge (*Euphorbia genus*), and betony (*Betonica officinalis*). Baths containing nine solid components (e.g. nine pieces of iron, nine chips of wood, nine different kinds of plants), or the blends of nine springs (wells) were also common. However, the most widespread of "watery" curing methods is a particular divinatory-healing practice, the so-called *lekanomantia* (that is divination by lead) or *ceromantia* (that is divination by wax), which has ancient roots. During the process molten lead / tin / wax is spilled into a bowl of cold water. The shapes of the solidified metal or wax pieces reveal the circumstances of the shocking event and / or the features of the very person who is possible to put the blame of causing fright. A less common version of the previous method operates with egg-white instead of metal or wax. In this case, the figures created by the egg-white mixing with water convey the required information.<sup>1</sup> There is another procedure, which

follows a somewhat similar logic: three / seven / nine pieces of ember (that is hot charcoal) are casted one by one into a glass or small bowl of water. Before dropping each piece, a list of potential fright-causing agents (human, animal, object, occasion) is enumerated by the healing person. After whichever name the piece of ember sinks, that one is in charge for the shock. It is worth noting, that the same diagnostic procedure has been recently, and in remote areas it still is, the most common way to diagnose and heal the evil eye all over in Central and Southern Europe, along with the entire Circum-Mediterranean and the Middle East, as is pointed out by Éva Pócs (Pócs 2004: 419–422). It makes clear that the overlap between fright and the evil eye syndromes appears not only at the semantic level but in terms of their healing practices as well. Although here I do not intent to discuss the whole range of healing methods in detail, there are two aspects I would like to highlight. Besides a universal wet-dry / life-death opposition considered by Dundes and later by Pócs (Dundes 1981: 257–312, Pócs 2004: 423), I would also relate the dominance of “wet” or “watery” practices to the ancient Greek humoral pathology by Hippocrates.<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, the humoral system still belongs to one of the most relevant approaches in causation even in contemporary in folk medicine.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the role of water in curing fright can be interpreted on a more general, symbolic level, which implies the universal purificatory aspect of water. There are several cases, when the healing ritual, which involves washing and drinking accompanied by the repetition of long incantations, resembles to the Christian baptismal ceremonies.<sup>4</sup> This fact implies two further emic explanations of fright-illness, namely soul-loss, and possession. The former has already been propounded by Wikan (1989) while the latter was suggested by Komáromi (2001).

*Table 2. Healing methods (main thematic categories) in Hungarian and English.*

Hungarian	English
ón / ólom / viasz / tojásfehérje öntés	casting tin / lead / wax
rostaforgatás	turning the sieve
víz itatása	water to drink
fürdő, lemosás	Bathing
meghintés vízzel	sprinkling with water
szenes víz készítés	casting ember (evil eye)
füstölés	smoking
vízmérés	measuring water
vörös színű folyadék itatása	drinking red liquid
vizelethajtás	using a diuretic agent

emberi koponya alkalmazása	using a human skull
állati szervek alkalmazása	applying animal organs
egyéb külső gyógymódok	other external methods
vissza-ijesztés	counter-shocking
beteg főzése	cooking the patient
lakóház tartozékainak használata	using parts of the dwelling (roof, etc.)
vér tisztítását szolgáló eljárások	methods of purifying the patient's blood
beteg szájába tett tárgy	object held in the mouth
etetés	food / feeding
beteg átbújtatása	ducking the patient under something
beteg be- / letakarása	covering the patient
amulett	amulets
beteg ruhadarabjainak használata	using the patient's robes
szómagia (kizárólag)	verbal magic (exclusive)
betegség átvitele (állatra, növényre)	transferring the illness to an animal / plant
beteg megnyugtatósa	calming the patient
ijedtség "kihordása"	"carrying fright out"
köpés	spitting
mérés	measuring
szentelmények használata	consecrated paraphernalia
földre fevés	lying on the ground
lenyalás	licking
letörlés	wiping
beteg körbejárása	walking around the patient
keresztvetés	making the sign of the cross

*Table 3. Healing with water.*

Healing with water	Number of cases
Casting wax / lead / egg white into water	443
Casting ember / charcoal into water	71
(Cold) water to drink	59
Red coloured drink	6
Bath	43
Measuring water	3
Sprinkling with water	3

Table 4. *Healing with verbal magic.*

Healing with verbal magic	Number of cases
Church benediction / exorcism (Roman Catholic or Orthodox)	7
Shouting fright out	1
Patient named by a stranger	1
Unknown charm / prayer	7
Canonised / church prayer	22
Charming	9

### 3. THE ROLE OF VERBAL MAGIC IN THE HEALING PROCEDURE

The fifty pieces of data about the exclusive use of charming in the healing process suggest that the role of verbal magic is crucial, either the application of canonised church prayers or the use of incantations is concerned. (The most prominent examples are included in Appendix 2.) In 41 cases, that is 82% of the total amount of data, prayers of the former group are mentioned, including the most common Catholic and Protestant prayers, such as The Lords' Prayer, Hail Mary, Glory Be, The Apostles' Creed and the Angelus. It is remarkable that several informants emphasise the intentionally improper way of uttering the canonized texts during the healing process. It is not uncommon that the closing 'Amen' is omitted, or the prayer is said backwards. The collectors' field-notes and comments are usually silent about the reasons for this practice, except for a single case. It has been recorded among Hungarian settlers from Moldova (now Romania) in 1960, by Vilmos Diószegi, the Hungarian folklorist and ethnologist. Here the informant refers to the curate's opinion about the importance of distinguishing between proper (that is Christian) and superstitious ways of praying and acting in general: "The curate said that it was allowed to cast lead, but we should not pray neither cross ourselves meanwhile." Lábnik (Vladnic, Bacau County, Moldova), Romania, (Diószegi 1960: 84–92.) Of course, this attitude has entirely changed when a legitimate religious figure, namely a Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox priest, carries out a healing ritual, very often in the form of church benediction, as revealed by the 7 cases in the database.<sup>5</sup>

Out of the 9 data, which provide us the more or less full texts of verbal magical activity, we learn of 6 more or less complete incantations (Appendix A/1–3; 5–7.) and an apotropaic curse-formula (Appendix A/4). There is one case, when a mother wants to get rid of the fright-illness by carrying her sick baby to nine

houses in the village, and telling there the people that her “child is suffering from heavy illness” (Menyhe, Nyitra County, Mechenice, Slovakia, FBA 645). Finally, a narrative tells that the frightened baby is held above a well while the mother is counting backwards from nine to one (Putnok, Heves county, FBA 764). Curative methods applying water are reflected in the charm texts, too, for either evolving the motif of drinking (holy water or even Christ’s blood) (see Appendix A/2, 3, 5), or in the use of incantations that usually belong to the “evil eye text-repertoire” (see Appendix A/6).

The overlap between the evil eye and fright is indicated by the shared use of *Encountering the evil B – The baby Jesus has been injured by the evil eye, and then he is healed* charm-type<sup>6</sup> (see Appendix A/1) on the one hand. On the other hand, further associations between the two phenomena can be detected, when an updated version of a particular historiola, which characterizes mostly the evil eye charms, turns up in charm texts against fright. It recalls Mary healing the baby Jesus with the assistance of a saint (usually Saint John the Baptist), who brings water (see Appendix A/3).

Charming as part of a complex healing and divining ritual, namely casting wax or lead, is far more common than the exclusive use of verbal magic. Drawing on the entire 443 pieces of data, we may conclude that this particular diagnostic procedure accompanied by charming is the healing method par excellence for fright-illness.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the general lack of charm texts in the collections is remarkable. It must be due to the collectors’ attitude, since most of them report only of the act of charming within the healing ritual, and they neglect to specify the prayer or incantation. Furthermore, the relative small amount of recorded charm texts may reflect the widespread belief that the charm would completely lose its magical power by revealing it in public.

The archive includes altogether 24 data regarding lead / tin / wax pouring rituals where the texts of charms were also recorded. Most of the epic charms (6 examples) belong to the various categories of the *Encountering the evil*-type, either with Jesus, the Virgin Mary, Saint Peter, Saint Margaret of Antioch or the sick person as main protagonists. They meet three white woman (Appendix B/14), three Jewish maidens (Appendix B/3), Satan (Appendix B/11), dragons (Appendix B/5), a huge serpent (Appendix B/6). These charm texts and a further two cases, when even the informants call the particular charm as “the prayer used for healing the evil eye” reflects again the intersection of the two complexes, namely of that of fright-illness and the evil eye.<sup>8</sup> However, considering all the 24 charms, none of them could be assigned to fright exclusively, as a characteristic charm-type applied in the healing process of this particular illness. In my opinion it suggests, that fright-illness, as a separate taxon of psychiatric syndromes could have appeared only recently, that is in



the past 150 years. It is a relatively young phenomenon in contrast to the evil eye, where healing methods involve a rich variety of specific charms, which I consider as a definitive proof of temporal priority.

## CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

Although the first step by establishing the database has already been taken, the present paper is still rudimentary. For the time being data-evaluation has enabled a general introduction of the phenomenon (fright-illness), a somewhat more detailed description of verbal magic applied during the healing ritual, and, finally, the careful formulation of some hypotheses that assign the directions of future research.

## APPENDIX: CHARMS IN THE HEALING PRACTICE OF FRIGHT-ILLNESS (HUNGARIAN TEXTS WITH THEIR RAW ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS)

### APPENDIX A. Exclusive use of prayers / charms

1. Szamosbecs (Szatmár County; North Eastern Hungary), collected by Pál Debreceni for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 507

*The woman [the healer] laid her hands upon the child's head, or upon her / his bonnet [if the child was not present], and this way she recited the secret prayer. The charm could be repeated even two or three times. It was forbidden to disclose the prayer to strangers, since it [the prayer] would lose its power. Yet, I have managed to learn one of these prayers.*

Elindula asszonyunk Mária Jeruzsálem kertjébe,  
vivé a kis Jézuskát az ölében.

Elő találának három apró szentek.

Ölelék, csókolják, a miféle vízben.

*Our Lady Mary started off to the Garden of Jerusalem  
carrying baby Jesus in her lap.*

*They met three of the Innocents,*

*They were hugging and kissing him all over, in whatever water.*

2. Tiszapalkonya (Borsod County North Hungary), collected by Géza Csorba for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 544

*The following prayer is recited three times [that is nine times during the entire healing procedure], along with The Lord's Prayer.*

Uram és Istenem, segíts engem az én munkámban,  
igaz az Isten szava, igaz az ő mondása, annak kell bételjesedni.  
Ébredj (nevén szólítja a gyermeket),  
vegyél szentlelket, igyál vért, maradj meg az igaz hitben,  
mint a Jézus Krisztus megmaradt a magas keresztfán. Ámen.

*My Lord and God, support me in my work,  
God's word is true, his saying is true, and that should come true.*

*Wake up [the child is called by her / his name], take the Holy Spirit,  
drink blood and keep the true faith,  
like Christ kept [hanging] on the high cross. Amen.*

### 3. Mezőkeresztes (Borsod County, North Hungary) – FBA 544

*[...] the following prayer had to be said while laying a hand upon the child's heart.*

Uram Jézus Krisztusom  
Egy (X) nevű nő, Néked szól  
Igyál szentelt vizet, maradj meg az igaz hitben,  
mint Krisztus urunk is megmaradt a keresztfán az igazaknak haláláért.

Jeruzsálem kapuja, kijöve rajta asszonyunk szép szűz Mária  
karján a kised Jézussal,  
egyet lépett, kettőt lépett,  
a harmadik lépésben megijedt,  
szívében, szíve gyökerében, ezer tetemében,  
jer jer Keresztelő szent János, kapd az arany csészét  
öntsd a Jordán vizébe, melyből az ijedtség kimenjen,  
mint az Atya Ur / Isten is megparancsolta.

*My Lord Jesus Christ,  
A woman called X is calling You,  
Drink holy water, remain in the true faith,  
like Our Lord Christ remained on the cross for the death of the True.  
Our Beautiful Lady Virgin Mary stepped out the gate of Jerusalem  
holding baby Jesus in her arms.  
She stepped one, she stepped two.  
In her third step she got frightened  
in her heart, in the root of her heart, in her thousand particles.  
Come, come Saint John the Baptist, grab a golden cup,*

*pour it out into the Jordan, let the fright go out of it  
as the Father Lord God commanded.*

*Then The Lord's Prayer should be said three times without any 'Amen'.  
Closing prayer: "Christ my Lord, come to me, come to help your mortal  
daughter." This prayer should be told three times on three subsequent  
evenings after the child fell asleep.*

4. Bodajk (Fejér County, Central Transdanubian Area, Hungary) collected by  
Béla Temesvári for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 747

*Távozz innen gonosz lélek, hadd legyen tiszta!  
Get away from here evil spirit, let her / him be pure!*

5. Abádszalók (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, Central Eastern Hungary)

*Kilencszer ráimádkozni:  
Uram Jézus Krisztus, szánd meg ezt a Rozit,  
Kelj fel Rozi, állj az Úr elébe.  
Igyál szent vizet, maradj meg az igaz hitbe,  
mint Jézus Krisztus megmaradt a keresztfán.  
Ámen.*

*Pray it nine times:  
Jesus, my Lord, pity this Rosie.  
Wake up Rosie, and stand in front of the Lord.  
Drink holy water, and keep the true faith,  
as Jesus Christ kept himself on the cross.  
Amen.*

6. Andrásfalva, Bukovina (now Mănești, Romania) (settlers, now living in  
Kakasd, Tolna County, Southern Transdanubian Area, Hungary), collected  
by Sándor Bosnyák, FBA 844 (Bosnyák 1984).

*Ptü, kék szem,  
ptü, fekete szem,  
ptü, zód szem,  
szem megverte,  
szü megszerette.  
Szentlélek Úristen vigasztalja meg!  
Ptü [=spitting] blue eye  
Ptü black eye  
Ptü green eye,  
Beaten by eye,*

*Loved by heart,  
Be comforted by the Holy Spirit God!*

7. Csanádpalota (Csanád County, South Eastern Hungary) collected by Kálmán Asztalos P. for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 963

Ilyen gyerek nem fél, nem sír,  
mert evvel az ördög sem bír.  
Légy hát erős, csontos, velős,  
Ne félj a csúf állatoktól, se tűztől, se a pokoltól.  
*This child here won't shed tears of dreadful fright,  
'cause he's not caught by Devil's might.  
Be strong, with bones and marrow,  
do not be afraid of ugly animals, neither fire, nor Hell.*

## **APPENDIX B. Divination by casting lead / wax accompanied by charm**

1. Iregszemcse (Tolna County, Southern Transdanubian Area, Hungary) collected by Benjámín Székely for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 465

*The child is mentioned by his / her first name.*

Uram és Istenem segéld meg a Jézusom érdeméért.  
Kezdetben Ige vala és az Ige Istennél vala és az Ige Isten vala.  
Eképpen Zsuzsinak szívéen igen nagy félelem és rettegés van,  
de az ezen nem maradhat,  
mert Krisztus parancsolatjával,  
Szent Péter és Szent Pál a te erős parancsolatodból mondom,  
édes jó Istenem, úgy legyen.

*My Lord and God, help her / him for the merits of my Jesus!  
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the  
Word was God.\**

*There is great fear and dread upon Suzie's heart  
but they must not remain there!  
I tell this along with Christ's command,  
along with Saint Peter's and Saint Paul's strong commands!  
Let it be, my good God.*

*It is said three times. Then the following prayer is told while laying a  
hand upon the [patient's] heart:*

Uram Jézusom vidd el a félelem és rettegés tengerét (Zsuzsiról),  
add vissza erejét és egészségét,

Szentháromság nagy Isten  
könyörülj rajta Jézus Krisztus nagy nevébe. Amen.

*Jesus my Lord, carry the sea of fright and dread away from Suzie,  
Give her strength and health back,  
Great God Holy Trinity  
have mercy on her,  
in the great name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

2. Szatmárcseke (Szatmár County, North Eastern Hungary) collected by Pál Szalay for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 655

Elindula asszonyunk szép szűz Máriával [sic!],  
ím ő édesanyjával a jeruzsálemi [...]  
Kézbe véve Jézust ölelték, csókolták,  
Vivék az Jordán vizéhez,  
ott megmossák őt,  
öntik azt a piros márványkőre,  
és mondá (a gyermek nevét)  
Úgy használjon neki ez a ráolvasás,  
mint a Jézusnak a Jordán vizében való megmosása.

Férfi látta süvegében,  
asszony kontyában,  
leány pártájában,  
szem látta,  
szívből szerette.

Uram Jézus, könyörülj rajtuk.

*Our Beautiful Lady Virgin Mary,  
set off to the Jerusalem [...]*

*They handed over Jesus,  
hugged him, kissed him.*

*He was taken to the river Jordan.*

*They washed him there,  
and poured it [e.g. the water] upon a red marble stone, (here she says  
the child's name)*

*Let this charm help him / her,  
like Jesus was helped by being washed in the water of the Jordan.*

*A man in his hat looked at him / her,*

*A woman in her bun [looked at him / her],*

*A maiden in her headdress [looked at him / her],*

*the eye looked at him / her*

*the heart loved him / her.*

*My Lord Christ, mercy us!*

*This text is uttered in a low voice. It must not be prayed out loud otherwise it would not be useful.*

3. Tápé (Csongrád County, South Eastern Hungary), collected by Zoltán Polner, FBA 814 (Polner 2002: 111).

Uram Isten, segíts meg!

Felült Jézus a márványkőre.

Arra ment három zsidó lány.

Az egyik azt mondja: Olyan fényes, mint a holdvilág.

A másik azt mondja: Úgy tündöklök, mint a fényes nap.

A harmadik azt mondja: Úgy ragyog, mint a ragyogó csillag.

Urunk Jézus megigézte a három zsidó lányt. [sic! K-HJ.]

Elment Szűzanyánk a Jordán vizére,

Vizet vitt.

Megfüröszttötte az ő szentséges szent fiát.

Kőre öntötte, nem használt.

Mégegyszer elment Szűzanyánk Mária.

Másodszor fekete kőre öntötte.

Fekete lett a föld, ahogy leitta Urunk Jézus igéző vizét.

Úgy igya le ennek a kicsinek is

Az igéző vizét az én imádságom által.

Ember verte, kalap alá,

Lány verte párta alá. (814)

*Three Jewish maidens came there.*

*One of them says 'He is shining like the moonlight.'*

*The other one says 'He is blazing like the bright sun.'*

*The third one says 'He is glittering like a shiny star.'*

*Our Lord Jesus cast the evil eye on the three Jewish maidens. [sic! K-HJ.]*

*Our Virgin Mother went to the River Jordan.*

*She brought some water.*

*She bathed his holy son.*

*She poured it out upon a stone, it did not help.*

*Our Virgin Mother Mary went once again.*

*A second time she poured it on a black stone.*

*The soil turned black as it absorbed the evil eye water of Our Lord Jesus.*

*May it do the same with the evil eye water of this little one here due to my prayer.*

*A man beat him / her [= cast the evil eye on him], let it return under a hat,*

*A maiden beat him / her, let it return under a headpiece.*

*God My Lord help me!*

*Jesus set upon the marble stone.*

4. Istensegíts, Bukovina (Țibeni, Romania), (recorded from a settler living in Halásztelek, Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County, Central Hungary), collected by Sándor Bosnyák, BNA 836 (Bosnyák 1984: 38.)

*Tin should be cast at the time of the new moon, and on the three subsequent new moons, and tin should be melted nine times on each occasion. It should be cast into the water nine times, and nine prayers should be said.*

Kék szem  
zöld szem,  
fekete szem  
megnezte,  
szí megszerette.  
Szentlélek Úristen,  
Hozd vissza a lelket beléje!

*Blue eye,  
green eye,  
black eye  
looked at him / her  
heart loved him / her,  
Holy Spirit God  
bring the soul back into him / her!*

5. Gajcsána, Moldova (Găiceana, Romania), (recorded from a settler living in Egyházaskozár, Baranya County, Southern Transdanubian Area, Hungary), collected by Vilmos Diószegi, FBA 878 (Diószegi 1960: 82.)

*While casting tin a cross is made upon the water by the spoon [in which the tin is carried]: 'In the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.' While she is melting tin she is praying Our Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria along with the following words:*

Elindult a beteg az útra,  
Megtalálkozott a sárkánnyal.  
A sárkány a színt elvette,

Ő nagyon megrettent.  
Ő – kiabált – hová?  
Akkor boldogságos szűz Máriát felkérte,  
Hova is menjek?  
Én ezzel az ólomval  
Megolvasztlak és megsütlek,  
A sollóval megszurkállak  
S úgy elmenjél tizenhét országon keresztül,  
Hol kutyaugatást nem hallasz,  
Hol kakasszót nem hallasz,  
Úgy eltávozzál.  
Maradjon meg tisztán,  
Mint Jézus Krisztus  
Ki szülte szűz Mária,  
Megmaradjon tisztán,  
Mint Jézus Krisztus született Szűz Máriától.

*The sick person started up the road,  
and met the dragon.*

*The dragon took the blush away from his / her face.*

*He / she got scared.*

*He / she cried out 'where?'*

*Then he / she asked the Blessed Virgin Mary: 'Where should I go?'*

*With this lead*

*I am melting and burning you,*

*I am pricking you with a sickle,*

*Go across seventeen countries,*

*where the dogs barking is not heard,*

*the cocks crowing is not heard,*

*get out of here!*

*Let him / her be pure*

*Like Jesus Christ*

*Born by the Virgin Mary.*

6. Gajcsána, Moldova (Găiceana, Romania) (recorded from a settler woman living in Egyházaskozár, Baranya County, Southern Transdanubian Area, Hungary; she learned it from a Romanian woman), FBA 878 (Diószegi 1960: 82–83).

Hétfőn reggel felkelt Kati,  
Elindult egy úton,



Egy gyalog úton,  
Megtalálkozott  
Egy nagy kígyóval.  
Fejét elbolondította,  
Arcát megsárgította.  
Rokojtott nagy szájával  
Nem hallta meg senki  
Csak a szűz Mária  
Hallotta az égből.  
Meghallta az ég alján,  
Leereszkedett  
Jobb kezivel elvette Katit,  
Jobb kezivel felvitte az égbe.  
Számka,  
Szemmel verés,  
Számka betegség,  
Számka álmából,  
Számka apámtól,  
Számka anyámtól,  
Számka lótól,  
Számka kutyától,  
Számka farkastól,  
Számka  
Kilencvenkilenc féle számka,  
számka menj ki a fejéből,  
számka menj ki a májából,  
számka menj ki a veséjéből,  
Én a szájamval babonázom,  
A nyelvemmel elfújom,  
Én a tűzzel elégetlek,  
Sallóval megszúrlak.  
Elmész oda,  
Ahol a fekete kutya nem ugat,  
Ahol a fekete kakas nem szól,  
Ott élj,  
Vissza se gondolj,  
Ott maradj tisztán,  
Világosan,  
Mint szűz Mária hagyta  
A tiszta ezüstöt.

*Katie woke up on Monday,  
she started off a road,  
she started off a path,  
she met a great big snake,  
it disturbed her head,  
it turned her face yellow,  
it screamed at her with its huge mouth,  
no one heard that  
but the Virgin Mary up in the skies,  
she descended from the edge of the skies,  
and with her right hand she grabbed Kati,  
and with her right hand she took her up to the skies.  
Fright ['samca' is the Romanian term for fright-illness]  
Evil eye,  
fright illness,  
fright in a dream,  
fright of my father,  
fright of my mother,  
fright of a dog,  
fright of a horse,  
fright of a wolf,  
fright.  
Ninety nine kinds of fright,  
get out of her head,  
get out of her liver,  
get out of her kidney.  
I am charming it by my mouth,  
I am blowing it away by my tongue.  
I am burning you with fire,  
I am pricking you with a sickle.  
Go [there] where the black dog does not bark,  
where the black cock does not crow,  
and live there!  
Do not even remember,  
Stay pure  
stay bright  
like shiny silver  
cleaned by the Virgin Mary.*

7. Szőlősgyula, Ugocsa County (Дюла / Diula, Ukraine) collected by Gyula Nagy, Ethnological Archives of the Museum of Ethnography 2643, BNA 973

Pohárba vizet öntenek és háromszor számolnak: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Közben tojást törnek, és a beteg feje fölött vízbe eresztik. Megitatják a tojásos vízből, majd az ereszt “csepegőjébe” öntik.

*They pour water into a glass and count three times from nine to one. Meanwhile an egg is broken, and poured into a glass of water held above the sick person's head. The patient is given a drink of the water-egg mixture and the rest of it is poured at the “eavesdrip”.*

8. Porcsalma (Szatmár County, North Eastern Hungary), by an unknown collector for the Hungarian Folk Belief Topography FBA 974 (EP).

Ne félj, ne rettegj,  
Jézus Krisztus sem rettegett a kereszt alatt.  
*Don't be scared, don't get frightened,  
as Jesus Christ was not scared under the cross.*

9. Galgamácsa (Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County, Central Hungary), collected by Julis Dudás, Ethnological Archives of the Museum of Ethnography 1574, FBA 975

Az ólomöntéssel foglalkozó gyógyítóasszony egy tányér vízbe öntötte a forró ólmot, amire előzőleg két szál seprúcirkot tett keresztbe. Háromszor imádkozott rá, miközben háromszor öntött.

Istenem, Atyám  
uram Jézus Krisztuskám,  
boldogságos Szűz Mária  
adjatok szerencsés órát kezdeni,  
szerencsésebbet végezni,  
ennek, aki meg van szentelve, Bözsinek  
jó hasznára lenni.  
Nem csinálom ezt a magam erejéből,  
hanem az uram Jézus Krisztusom segítségével,  
kihajtom ennek, aki meg van szentelve  
és keresztelve, Bözsinek  
fejéből, szívéből, lábából  
hetven ijedtséget  
hetven nyovolyát,  
hetven fenét,

hetven nehézséget  
szent Szalvattal és szent Valentével.  
Fölajánlom ezen imádságot  
szent Szalvattal, szent Valentének hét fájdalma,  
megijedt anyának, boldogságos Szűz Máriának,  
hatodik szent sebére uram Jézus Krisztusnak,  
melyek az ő drága vállain voltak.

*The old woman, who used to deal with casting lead, spilled the heated lead into a plate of water, upon which she had previously laid two sorghum twigs (from a sweeper) in cross-shape. She prayed three times and she did the spilling three times meanwhile.*

*My God, my father  
my sweet Lord Jesus Christ,  
blessed Virgin Mary,  
give me a lucky hour to start,  
and an even more lucky one to finish.  
Let me help this consecrated one here,  
this Bözsi [=Betty, i.e. a nickname for Elisabeth].  
I am not doing this by the power of my own,  
but by the help of my Lord Jesus Christ.  
Out of this baptised and consecrated one here, this Bözsi,  
out of her head, out of her heart, out of her feet,*

*I am chasing  
seventy frights,  
seventy maladies,  
seventy fene [= boils, also appears in the compound word 'lépfene',  
which means anthrax]*

*seventy heavy diseases ['heavy disease' = epilepsy],  
with Saint Salvator and Saint Valente.*

*I offer this prayer to Saint Salvator and Saint Valente,  
to the seven sorrows of the scared mother, the blessed Virgin Mary,  
to the sixth wounds of my Lord Jesus Christ,  
which were on his dear shoulders.*

*It [that is the whole procedure, J. K.-H.] can be repeated over several  
days above different parts of the body.*

10. Hajdúnánás, (Hajdú County, Eastern Hungary), by unknown collector for the Hungarian Folk-Belief Topography, FBA 976

*Someone laid his / her hand on the frightened child's head in order to take off the illness. Then he / she said:*

Elindulván Krisztus urunk  
negyven maltikumokkal,  
ötven angyalával,  
megtalált egy zsidó lányt,  
tőle megijede,  
tőle megrettene.  
„Eridj Keresztelő Szent János a Jordán vizére,  
hozz tüzet,  
hozz vizet,  
hogy öntsük ónját erre a Lajos fiúra,  
hogy ennek szivibe,  
sem szive gyökerébe  
semmiféle ijedtség  
meg ne találtassék.

*Our Lord Christ set forth,  
with forty martyrs,  
with his fifty angels.  
He met a Jewish maiden.  
He got frightened of her.  
He got scared of her.  
Go, Saint John the Baptist, to the river Jordan,  
bring fire,  
bring water,  
let us cast tin for this Lajos boy here,  
that no fright will be found  
in his heart,  
in the root of his heart.*

*After praying tin was casted above the heart of the child, whose face was covered. A plate filled with water was placed into a sieve and the sieve was held over the child's body. Hot tin was poured into the plate, and the solidified pieces revealed what had made the child frightened.*

11. Gajcsána, Moldova (Găiceana, Romania), recorded from a settler living in Egyházaskozár (Baranya County, collected by Mária Vámos in 1961, FBA 977.

*The patient says the following prayer three times in the evening, meanwhile a piece of garlic is hidden under his / her head:*

Elindult a nagy Sátán hetvenhét fiával,

hetvenhét lányával  
hetvenhét onokájával.  
S akkó menyen bé ennek a fejin  
s menyen ki talpán  
a csontját-bontját issza,  
piros vérit hervassza.  
“Tér meg, tér meg te nagy Sátán,  
hetvenhét fiadval,  
hetvenhét leányodval,  
hetvenhét onokádval,  
menj el a kűsziklákba,  
kűsziklába vannak tündérlányok,  
menj bé fejiken,  
s menj ki talpikon,  
s csontja-bontját hánya,  
piros vérit igyad,  
színyit hervaszd.  
S ezt a Rózsát hagyd tisztán,  
mind az anyja szülte e világra,  
boldogságos Szűz Mária hagyta.

*The great Satan set forth with seventy-seven sons,  
with his seventy-seven daughters,  
with his seventy-seven grandchildren.  
Then they entered through this person's head,  
and left through his / her toes,  
threw about his / her bones,  
drunk his / her red blood,  
made his / her face withered.  
Return, you great Satan,  
with your seventy-seven sons,  
with your seventy-seven daughters,  
with your seventy-seven grandchildren,  
go to the high cliffs,  
where the fairies dwell!  
Enter through their heads,  
and leave through their toes,  
throw their bones about,  
drink their red blood,  
make their face withered.  
Let this Rózsa (= Rosie) be so pure,*

*like she was born by her mother,  
as it was commanded by the blessed Virgin Mary.*

12. Lábnik, Moldova (Vladnic, Romania), FBA 981 (Diószegi 1960: 85–89).

[...] Miatyánkot, Üdvözlégyet, Hiszekegyet imádkoztak, aztán ajánlást:  
Én ajánlom a Krisztus urunk tisztelettyire,  
Krisztus urunk milyen tisztán született,  
Boldogságos szép szűz Mária  
Milyen tisztán kiszülte,  
Erre a világra hozta,  
Hát könnyörögjön az ő áldott szent fiának,  
Könnyörögjön az áldott úristennek  
Hogy vegye ki az ő nagy fájásait,  
Nagy nyilalásait.

Ezután öntik az ónt a vízbe. Az ónt kilencszer megolvasztják, ezt az ajánlást is kilencszer elmondják. Ha az ón likatos, [a betegnek] nagy betegsége van, nem húzza sokáig, dagadások vannak a gyomrában.

[...] *They prayed Our Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Creed, then the following offertory:*

*I offer this for our Lord Christ's honour,  
as pure our Christ was born,  
as pure he was born by the beautiful Virgin Mary,  
let she beseech to her blessed holy son,  
let she beseech to the blessed Lord  
that he may take his great pains,  
his soaring pangs.*

*Then tin is spilled into the water. The tin is molten nine times, and this offertory prayer is prayed nine times, too. If the [surface of the solidified] tin is covered with holes, he [the sick one] is very sick, he / she does not live long, [because] there are tumours in his / her stomach.*

13. Pusztina, Moldva (Pustiana, Romania), FBA 889 (Diószegi 1960: 84–89)

Levestálba önt kezdetlen vizet, nem beszél senkivel, úgy hozza bé. Kilencszer csorrant belé a tálba. Elmongya az Üdvözlégyet, a Miatyánkot és keresztet vet reá. Az ember le van feküdvé az ágyba és fehérvel le van takarva a szeme egészen. Ha megvan jedve nagyon az ember, akkor megy széjjel [az ólom]. Hogy ne égesse el a kezit, testit, azért van letakarva;

mert nagyon szökdösik. Előbb Miatyánk, Üdvözlégy, aztán elajánlás szűz Máriának, szent lélek úristennek:

Vigasztaló szent lélek úristen  
S a boldogságos szűz Mária  
Ezt a beteget,  
Vegye ki  
A szüviből  
A karjaiból  
A bábuiból,  
Az egész csontocskából,  
Aggyon neki egésséget  
Vigasztalja meg Júzsit.

[...] Öntötték a feje tetejire, jobb fülire, balra, nyakcsigájára, szívire – háromcorig – hátán a farkeresztyire, térgyire, két lábafejire. Ezzel végez. *She fills a soup-bowl with un-started [that is pure, freshly brought, intact] water. She does not talk to anyone while she is carrying it home. She spills out of the water nine times [into the bowl]. Then she prays Hail Mary, Our Father and makes the sign of the cross above [the bowl of water]. The [sick] man is lying on the bed his eyes covered with a white sheet. If one is very frightened, the [molten] lead will spread rapidly. He is covered in order to prevent his hands, his body of the splattering lead. First [comes] Our Lord's and Hail Mary, then an offertory to the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit God:*

*Holy Spirit God, our Comforter,  
and Blessed Virgin Mary,*

[...]

*Let them taken this [illness]*

*out of his heart,*

*out of his her arms,*

*out of his her limbs,*

*out of his her bones.*

*Give him good health,*

*Comfort him!*

[...] *It [molten lead] was spilt over the top of his head, his right ear, then the left one, his neck, his heart, his backbone, his pelvis, his knees, and finally his angles, three times each.*

14. Lábnik, Moldva (Vladnic, Romania) FNA 884 (Diószegi 1960: 83–91)

Elindula Krisztus urunk szent Péterrel,  
Megtalálkoztak három fehér asszonval.



Három fehér asszon megnézte,  
Szűből megszerette,  
Vígasztaló szentlélek úristen  
Vígasztald meg.  
Térj meg, térj meg  
Hetvenhétféle betegség,  
Fejiből,  
Füleiből,  
Hátából,  
Mejjiből  
Szíviből,  
Derekából,  
Hasából,  
Lábujjiből,  
Minden hét izig való csontjából,  
Menjen el fekete tenger fenekibe,  
Magos kőszikla tetejibe,  
Ott legyen helyik,  
Nyugodalmik  
Betegségeknek.

Háromszor mondja, háromszor önti a kanálból az ónt, összesen kilencszer.

*Our Lord Jesus Christ set forth with Saint Peter,  
they met three white women.  
The three white women gazed at him,  
they loved him from their heart,  
Comforting Holy Spirit God,  
comfort him!  
Get out, get out  
you seventy-seven kinds of illnesses,  
from his head,  
from his ears,  
from his back,  
from his chest,  
from his heart,  
from his waist,  
from his stomach,  
from his toes,  
from his bones up to its the seventh tiniest parts,  
Go to the bottom of the black sea,*

*to the top of the high rock,  
let them find their place there,  
let them find their rest there,  
these illnesses.*

*He says is three times, and casts tin three times by each praying, that is altogether nine times.*

15. Áldomás pataka, Gyimes region (Ghimeș-Făget, Romania) FBA 932 (Antalné Tankó 2003: 72–73)

Én es szoktam szükség esetén önt önteni és egy erőst régi imát szoktam mondani, amit az én nagyanyámtól tanoltam és nagyanyám pedig az ő nagyjától. Leírta nekem egy papírra és megtanultam és amikor önt öntök elmondom: Istennek szent fia, ki szálltál Az emberiség váltságára, és ott te Fődi létedbe semmitől se féltél, És nem remegtél. /73/ Ezen te szógád vaj szógálód (nevet kell mondani) akire rea olvasunk, semmitől se féjen, ne remegjen, ámen.

*I also used to cast tin, when needed, and I am praying a very very old prayer that I learned from my grandmother and she had learned it from her grandmother. She has written it down for me, and then I learned it, and when I cast tin, I pray like this: Holy Son of Holy God, who descended for our salvation, and in your earthly life you were not scared of anything, you were not trembling, may this servant or servant maid of yours (here the name should be said) be not scared and trembling of anything.*

16. Áldomás pataka, Gyimes region (Ghimeș-Făget, Romania) FBA 933 (Antalné Tankó 2003: 72–73)

[...] Istennek szent háromsága,  
a te nevedbe hívom,  
Mutasd meg, hogy mitől jedett meg a gyermekem.

Utána el kell mondani három Miatyánkot. Addig kell önteni az önt, amíg szű alak ki nem öntődik.

[...] *Holy Trinity God,  
I am calling it in your name,  
Show me, what has made my child frightened.*

*Then The Lord's Prayers should be prayed three times. Tin is spilled until the shape of a heart is formed.*

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Some early modern Hungarian examples of the same divinatory procedure have already been observed in witch-trial documents. Apart from healing fright illness this method was more often used to divine about lost property, hidden treasure or lost people, see Kis-Halas 2004: 286–289, Láng and Tóth G. 2009: 30.
- <sup>2</sup> The same conclusion has been drawn by several studies discussing fright illness in Latin American, South European (Sicilian), Yemen and North Balinese communities, see Farmer 1988, Napoli 2008, Quinlan 2010, Meneley 2003, Wikan 1989.
- <sup>3</sup> While Dundes combines the universal wet-dry / life-death scheme with the idea of 'limited goods' in his interpretation of the evil eye phenomenon, Pócs is more careful about any absolute explanations in her analysis 20 years later. She regards the evil eye as one of the several interpretative systems applied either for personal calamities or social disasters in early modern societies and later in smaller peasant communities (Pócs 2004: 426–427). In my opinion fright seems to be very similar to the evil eye in terms of function, too, and I tend to regard it as another explanatory system for misfortunes. My argument is largely supported by the comprehensive and fully detailed survey on folk-healing practices in Békés County in the post-war period by Andor Oláh (1986).
- <sup>4</sup> The motif of drinking holy water or Christ's blood, as found in few charm texts, amplifies the baptismal association even more (Appendix A/2, 3.) A rather rare, but not uncommon practice of giving a reddish-drink, sometimes prepared from the dried blood of an animal's heart, to the frightened one might also be linked to the blood-motif. See FBA 279 Orosháza, Békés county, collected by Gyula Nagy for the Hungarian Ethnographical Atlas in 1959.
- <sup>5</sup> Roman Catholic priests are mentioned in 4 cases, while Orthodox praxis is reported about in 3 cases, the latter are from Easter Hungary and Romania.
- <sup>6</sup> According to Éva Pócs's typology on Hungarian epic charms. The major sub-types are listed in Pócs 1985 II: 470–476. Hungarian charms applied for healing the evil-eye are thoroughly analysed by Pócs (2004).
- <sup>7</sup> A detailed comparative analysis of the divinatory method encompassing Central Europe, along with its most recent applications is provided by Kis-Halas 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Lábnik, Moldva (Vladnic, Romania) FBA 892; Beregújfalu, Bereg County (*Берегуйфалу* / Berehujfalu, Ukraine) FBA 940.

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