

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

<http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio>

Print version

Issue 4

2014

ISNFR Committee on Charms, Charmers and
Charming

Incantatio

An International Journal on
Charms, Charmers and Charming

Issue 4

General Editor: Mare Kõiva

Guest Editor for this Issue: Daiva Vaitkevičienė

Tartu 2014

General Editor: Mare Kõiva
Guest Editor for this Issue: Daiva Vaitkevičienė
Language editor: Jonathan Roper
Layout: Liisa Vesik

Editorial board:
Alaric Hall
Claude Lecouteux
Lea Olsan
Éva Pócs
Jonathan Roper
Emanuela Timotin
Andrey Toporkov
Daiva Vaitkevičienė
William F. Ryan

Editorial contacts:
<http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio>
incantatio@folklore.ee
Vanemuise 42, Tartu 51003, Estonia

Supported by and affiliated to projects IRG 22-5 and
EKKM14-344 of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research,
and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund
(Centre of Excellence in CECT).

Indexed by the MLA International Bibliography.

All rights reserved.

Copyright 2014 the authors and
the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming

ISSN 2228-1355

Contents

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014

| | |
|--|-----|
| Introduction Daiva Vaitkevičienė doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Introduction | 7 |
| Material Artefacts in Oral Tradition: Notes and Family Lore on the Owners of the Sandvik Manor Magic Art Manuscripts Åsa Ljungström doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Ljungstrom | 9 |
| Charmers and Charming in Gervėčiai Lithuanian Community in Belarus Daiva Vaitkevičienė doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Vaitkeviciene | 34 |
| <i>Plica Polonica</i> in Belarusian Beliefs and Incantations Tatsiana Valodzina doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Valodzina | 59 |
| The Oral and Written Traditions of Latvian Charms Aigars Lielbārdis doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Lielbardis | 82 |
| The Golden Characters of the Letter Fallen from Heaven: A Study Case from the First World War Laura Jiga Iliescu doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Iliescu | 95 |
| From Written to Oral Tradition. Survival and Transformation of St. Sisinnios Prayer in Oral Greek Charms Haralampos Passalis doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Passalis | 111 |

BOOK REVIEWS 139

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_BookReview

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

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

CONFERENCE REPORT 145

doi:10.7592/Incantatio2014_Reports

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

INTRODUCTION

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

Finally, some reviews of recent charms studies are presented, and the sessions on charms organized by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming during the International Medieval Congress in Leeds described.

I wish to give cordial thanks to all the authors of the research articles, with whom I was corresponding since the spring of the 2014; your goodwill and your adherence to the deadlines made the editing of this wonderful issue possible. I am also immensely grateful to the reviewers of the articles and to the editorial board of the journal for wise suggestions and pointed comments. Special thanks to Jonathan Roper for his advice on editing the journal.

This issue of *Incantatio* will hopefully reveal the broad scope of research presented at the symposia organized by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming as well as its perspectives, while enriching the readers with new knowledge and giving them share joy of discovery.

Daiva Vaitkevičienė, *guest editor*

MATERIAL ARTEFACTS IN ORAL TRADITION: NOTES AND FAMILY LORE ON THE OWNERS OF THE SANDVIK MANOR MAGIC ART MANUSCRIPTS

Åsa Ljungström

This article aims to provide an overview of the owners of (and other persons who have handled) three eighteenth century magic manuscripts over the course of nearly three hundred years. The presumed writer, a learned vicar with a library founded by his father, kept secret the magic part of his studies and writings in the forests of southwest Sweden. His son, however, the local doctor, became known as “a great sorcerer”. During the periods of the succeeding owners, the manuscripts were kept secret, forgotten, lent out to be copied, hidden away, and reappeared. The manuscripts are from Sandvik Manor in the joint parish of Burseryd-Sandvik in the forest of southwest Sweden. The original of one of these manuscripts, the so-called Black Book, BB, is in the University Library of Lund, the original of another, the so-called Red Book, RB, is in the Cultural History Museum in Lund, while a copy of the third, the Sandvik Notebook, SN, is in the Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet (Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research), Uppsala.

Key words: narratives, biographical notes, oral history, sorcerer, books/manuscripts on magic art, clergyman, doctor, healer, freemason

This article aims to establish the context of our chosen texts by tracing the owners of three 18th century magic art manuscripts originating from Sandvik Manor, county Småland, Sweden. The purpose is to survey a history encompassing the (possible) writers and other people handling the manuscripts, their families, homes and environments, and thus to recreate the history of the manuscripts over a period of nearly three hundred years. An overview is given of the manuscripts and their various fates and the traces that can be found of the personal conditions are followed. Having studied the vicissitudes of two extant manuscripts on magic, and having found a third, related to the first two (Ljungstrom 2014a-b), I find myself in the position to survey biographical notes, oral tradition and family lore of the presumed writers, their family stories, lives and livelihoods, and likewise of the succeeding owners’ and other people dealing with the manuscripts – partly in secrecy. It is a cultural heritage.

Two of the manuscripts are well known to the field of research: the original manuscript of the so-called 'Svarta boken' (The Black Book', BB from here onwards) and the so-called 'Röda boken' (The Red Book, RB from here onwards). (Any bound manuscript with a cover is called a 'book' in Swedish.) Their names refer to the colours of the covers, dyed with coal and lingonberries or cranberries, respectively. The third manuscript is a group of papers lacking a cover, but partly sewn together, called 'Sandvikshäftet' (The Sandvik Notebook', SN from here onwards). The SN was inherited in 1967 from Sandvik Manor, county Småland in southwest Sweden, by my mother-in-law, Margareta (1905–1999), keeper of the family tradition and my key informant (Ljungström 2014a; Ljungström 2014b).

The theme of, and narratives generated about, artefacts lost and reappearing – whether in the distant past or while stored in a museum – have recently been analysed by Lotten Gustafsson Reinius (2013). The missing artefacts have agency in the interplay of materiality and narrativity: they are active in their absence (Gustafsson Reinius 2013: 137). At this point, the role of theory is to open an analytical entrance into the story of the original authors and owners of the manuscripts, the Revs. Gasslander. The sociologist of science John Law argues that the vacuum left by something missing requires recognition. What is missing belongs in context, and could be included in the concept of materiality (Law 2004: 157; Damsholt 2013: 73).

The perspective presented here is inspired by studies of narrativity applied to the family lore and the oral tradition of the local parish, codified in print, of materiality regarding the relations between man and artefacts in chains of agency – even the void, in what might be referred to as an 'agnotology', a study of unwanted knowledge, i.e. the suppression of the manuscripts. From the wider perspective of how knowledge is created or lost, the historian of science Robert Proctor raises the questions of how knowledge is suppressed or allowed to disappear by launching the concept of *agnotology* (2008). Knowledge kept secret, censorship and suppression are possible modalities in a history of manuscripts on magic. Proctor supposes that there may be traces left of narratives that we no longer have, and that they might be reconstructed. The idea provides the potential to analyse the consistency between the family lore of magic, missing manuscripts on magic art, overlooked and forgotten manuscripts and their suppressed narratives, a kind of knowledge recurring within the framework made by new generations during the 20th century.

The folklorist Amy Shuman analyses the process of family narratives saying that certain memories are honed into 'tellable' narratives, starting with the available narratives. Beyond what is available we may imagine a set of narratives that we do not have. In addition, there will be untellable narratives,

those that it is impossible to tell without causing damage. In order to make the small story interesting outside the world of the family, there has to be a link to the larger context, i.e. a master narrative. For whatever narrative is told, the prerequisite to understand it will be the shared experience (Shuman 2006: 149–162). The narrative of magic art curing sickness or bad luck has constantly followed human beings through the archives and museums into the Internet of today. Once in a while most people dream of a miracle of magic beyond real life.

Sources – apart from the three manuscripts on magic art – are the family Bible of Rev. Petrus Gasslander (1680–1758), with family notations and other notes included when restored in 1953, and a series of small day books 1756–1791, kept by his son and successor as a vicar, Johannes Gasslander (1718–1793). The funeral sermons of both Reverends seem to be partly built on the autobiographies in this Bible. Furthermore, there is a local oral tradition published by a local historian (Carlsson 1901) concerning the subsequent generation, Johannes' son Sven Peter Gasslander (1754–1833), a wealthy local doctor who in 1812 bought Sandvik estate, as well as the subsequent owners of Sandvik, among whom is my key informant (with her family traditions pivoting on grandmother Lundeberg and Sandvik Manor). Grandmother Lundeberg's first husband, Petter Lindgren, appears in a short story (1892) by the writer, doctor and folklorist August Bondeson (1854–1906). Members of the Gasslander family also figure in the novels of local writer Anna Lorentz (1906–1988), who used to listen to her grandfather, born in 1826.

As part of the 19th century national romanticism movement, folklore scholars were intrigued by the suggestion that a clergyman might have worked on the manuscripts in question, that the BB and the RB might be written by the clergymen Gasslander, father and son. The manuscripts themselves were located and borrowed from Sandvik Manor in 1874 by an eager collector of old books, Ludvig Palmgren (1844–1915), another clergyman, identified by Nils-Arvid Bringéus (1967). In time, Palmgren became a vicar and in 1878 a corresponding member of the Royal Academy of Antiquities, History and Literature. The Revs. Gasslander were already known to the scholarly sphere of the romantic movement for an early folk life description (1774) and a handwritten glossary of the local dialect, dated 1766 – a century ahead of the boom for dialectology studies. The BB and RB were borrowed by Palmgren to be copied by one of the leading folklorists of the time, the gentleman scholar Nils Gabriel Djurklou (1829–1904). He returned them to the broker Palmgren in 1876. They then disappeared, the BB until 1924 and the RB until 1991. As they could not be found, a joint selection from the copy was published, *Salomoniska magiska konster: utdrag ur en Westboprests svartkonstböcker* (The Solomonic Magical Arts: Excerpts of a Clergyman of Westbo) 1918 (Bringéus 1967).

Nils-Arvid Bringéus identifies the writer of *Salomoniska magiska konster* (1918) – containing both the BB and RB – as vicar Johannes Gasslander, thus establishing the connection to Sandvik through four local informants who supplied prescriptions for the RB. Bringéus finds one of these informants, Måns Månsson, in the church register of inhabitants, he having moved to the parish in 1793, the same year when the vicar Johannes Gasslander passed away, indicating that this informant Måns talked to the vicar's son Sven Peter (1967). But I find this same Måns Månsson on the payroll of Johannes Gasslander in 1788 (Gasslander daybook 1788). I also recognise the place name of the domicile of a second smallholder informant, Johannes from Nordgårde in Sandvik parish, in the daybook of grandmother Lundeberg from 1892 (DFU 40059).

THE MANUSCRIPTS

The nature of the BB's content is hidden behind the uninformative title *Diiverse Saker* (Various Things) in reversed mirror script. The RB is entitled *Salamoniska magiska konster* (The Salamonian Magical Arts). In the introduction of the joint 1918 publication the manuscripts are characterised as natural magic as well as black magic to heal and destroy man and beast (Salomoniska 1918: V). Both the BB and RB seem to be copied from one or more previous manuscripts, sometimes with local additions, especially in the RB. There is no organisation system as the prescriptions seem to have been collected one after the other over time. The handwriting of two or more people can be discerned.

The BB

The BB consists of 168 pages of 361 paragraphs and signatures in black (brown) ink on handmade paper in 4:0 format bound in a black paper cover with a leather spine. Pagination, some titles and underlining's were made in red ink. There is a register over six pages of "all the animals, birds, insects and herbs and oils notated in the book". There is also an alphabetical register of twelve pages, a printed runic calendar for 1755, a Hebrew alphabet and a key to some of the symbols used in the text. The text is printed in the German style with numerous so-called *Wittenberg* letters.

Bringéus shows that many of the BB prescriptions were copied from continental books of magic and housekeeping, of the *Kunst- und Wunderbuch* type, most of them from a 17th century book called *Wolfgang Hildebrandi Magia Naturalis...* first published in 1610, and in Sweden in 1650.¹ These publications were copied and spread in Germany and Sweden over the centuries, and thus partly included in local folklore. Bringéus mentions one Cabalistic formula

along with several medieval incantations, numerous allusions to the Virgin Mary, Pater Noster and one Latin invocation of Apollonia to cure toothache. Bringéus correlates the BB with the Swedish surveys of superstition collected in the 18th and 19th centuries by Leonard Fredrik Rääf and Johan Nordin (Rääf & Wikman 1957; Nordin 1946). Bringéus recognises the handwriting of the clergyman Johannes Gasslander. He makes it clear that the prescriptions of the BB corresponded in only a small range to the folk beliefs of the district where the Revs. Gasslander studiously worked in the vicarage (Bringéus 1967). Thus it cannot be regarded as a source of Nordic folk magic. In my opinion this goes for the RB as well. Notwithstanding this, the RB requires more study, to which I hope to return.

The RB

The title of the original RB manuscript, *Salamoniska magiska konster*, is the only title that mentions magic. As previously mentioned, the RB was not available between 1876 and 1991. The RB consists of 70 pages, with 92 paragraphs, some of them repeated. The hard paper cover was originally red, dyed by lingonberries or cranberries with a leather spine. It is smaller than the BB, probably later as well, no older than the first half of the 18th century according to Djurklou, who personally copied the text between 1874 and 1876 as well as the emblem of the Skull and Crossbones of the title page (Salomoniska 1918: XIV; Bringéus 1967: 20). This emblem is followed by a circle divided into twelve sections. The next page has two columns of twelve numbered parts. Number 5 has the text "*Mefistophile befall* (command) and an illegible word, *Kraft* (power) or *Präst* (clergyman) (?)." On every page there is a thin line framing the text. Pagination is made on the upper outer corners. Small pictures and *Wittenberg* letters are drawn in the margins or horizontally over the page. The text is densely written in German style, often underlined (Ljungström 2014a). Two or three different handwritings can be discerned.

The content is in part of the same kind as the BB, in part more diabolic, relating to black magic. On presenting his finding Bringéus concludes that the person who originally made the selection of the solomonic magic art must have been male. In addition, he finds it comprehensibly that the BB and RB were spirited away, that Nils Gabriel Djurklou never disclosed their owner (1991: 91). Thus suppressed, it is what Robert Proctor would name a piece of 'unwanted' knowledge (2008). Any such talk would harm the good name of the owner, master sergeant and country squire P. W. Lundeberg (cf. Shuman 2006) – but for the man who was already known as a drunkard, of whom more below, i.e. the family scoundrel Petter Lindgren who frittered away the wealth and the

forests of the estate by drinking and gambling – once with the local healer ‘Wise Bölen’ (<http://runeberg.org/bondeson/4/0273.html> Kloke Bölen).

Prescriptions for hunting, fishing, shooting, toothache and snakebite mingle with prescriptions for how to bed a woman, win any fight, at court of justice or in the back yard, become invisible, get rich, be loved, win the confidence of mighty men, get a career or free oneself from the sword or from rats and how to keep bees. In the middle of the manuscript there is a passage named “*Om den naturliga svartkonsten och dess beskaffenhet*” (On the True Nature of the Natural Black Magic) (RB: 45–58). This part especially seems to be copied from a previous manuscript on how to win a magic helper, a spirit, and what he can do for his master in 16 numbered paragraphs. In a previous article I touch upon the connection to the western Scandinavian and German tradition of Clergymen educated in the Devil’s Black School in Wittenberg (Ljungström 2014a; Gunnell 1998).

I believe that Johannes wrote most or part of the RB as well as the SN and that his son completed these manuscripts (Ljungström 2014a). Thus, Sandvik Manor is the uniting bridge backward to the writer Johannes and forwards to the succeeding owner families. My mother-in-law inherited the aforementioned notebook, the SN, from her uncle Ernst Lundeberg (1879–1967) born at Sandvik Manor (Ljungström 2014).

The SN

When the RB is neatly written up, the prescriptions of the SN seem to be taken down one by one over time when the chance presented itself. It is written on the same kind of paper and in the same format as the BB (but not the RB), although there is no binding or cover. The sheets are folded in 4:0 format and partly sewn together. One sheet is separate, filled with stars, seals, codes, signs and *Wittenberg* letters. There is no black magic in the SN, rather there are means to cure man and beast and prevent any harm to cows, horses and human beings. There are remedies against consumption, falling sickness, toothache, snakebite, fever, scurvy, and burn injuries. Safeguarding rifles is important. Hunting birds and foxes seems to be of great interest, whereas fishing is not. There is a charm to find coins or treasure buried in the ground, and a way to cure an alcoholic by means of a snake in the bottle. Interwoven with traditional folklore there are remedies from the pharmacy and descriptions of how to catch foxes and extirpate wolves.

The most complete incantation is referred to in the article “The Missing Books of Magic from Sandvik” (Ljungström 2014a). Gout is mentioned, and was thought to be caused by ‘the little ones’ underground. They were ‘the wetta’, a supernatural collective being that could cause several diseases, among them

rickets. The means to fight the wetta was to cut a grass turf and place it on top of the head of the sick person, reading the Pater Noster and spitting three times.

At Läsa bort Wetta

Du lea stygga Nitta, som lofte den, N.N: at /han hon/ intet skulle få bättre än / han hon/ har, men nu har /han hon/ fått jorden på sig och Vatten unders,

Så spottas 3ne gr. N.D.: Pat fil et. Spzant. (?) Detta läses 3nee gångr.

En torfva skiäres up med en knif, Denna uptages och lägges på bart . hufvud, under Läsningen, Sedan den liggat på hufvudet sättes den på en gärdesgs Stafver at torkas

Af Måns Måns Son i Lida

är = gickt

To Drive Away The Wetta

You mean and nasty gout, who promised nomen nescio /that he/she would not prosper than he/she has, but now he/she has got the soil over him/her and the water under

So spit 3 times. N.D.: Pat fil et. Spzant. [Spiritus Sanctus]

This is to be read 3 times.

A turf is to be cut by knife. It is lifted up and placed on the bare head, during charm reading. After being laid on the head it is to be placed on a fence-pole to dry

By Måns Måns Son in Lida

is = gout (“The Sandvik Notebook”, no. 46, my enumeration)

The formula appears twice in the SN with reference to an identified informant, Måns Månsson in Lida. I believe that Johannes took it down both times. In addition, it was copied into the RB towards the end, probably by his son Sven Peter. (Ljungström 2014a: 77; 2014b).

THE LIVES AND STUDIES OF THE REVS. GASSLANDER IN BURSERYD VICARAGE IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Johannes Gasslander was born in 1718 in the vicarage of Burseryd and Sandvik as the eldest son of vicar Petrus Gasslander, from his second marriage to Regina Christina Roos af Hjelmsäter. Petrus was himself a learned man, known for his library and his writings, according to his funeral sermon (Likpredikan, vol. 4: 264ff).

In 1774 Johannes had a book published in the name of his father Petrus Gasslander, *Beskrifning, om allmogens sinnelag, seder, /.../* (Description of the

Peasant Mentality, Customs...in Jönköping County and Västbo Hundred by the Reverend Gaslander in Burseryd). Ever since then there have been questions about who actually wrote the book. Did Johannes edit his father's manuscript or was he the author, or were they both the authors? Would the name of the deceased father be of less risk to the author? Johannes was reproached by the bishop (Ljungström 2014a: 75). This uncertainty is a good reason to start with the father, Petrus.

Petrus Gasslander 1680–1758

Petrus Gasslander, born in 1680, was the son of an elderly couple from the farm of Gasslanda Norrregård, county Småland, southern inland Sweden. The father was almost 70 and the mother 50, the reference to Sara in the Bible is clearly spelled out in Petrus' autobiography in the family Bible and his presumed funeral oration. The son Petrus was originally destined to become a clergyman, but when the father died and the mother remarried, she could no longer support his studies. He therefore took up a position as a private tutor to the sons of better-off families, such as the foreman Sigfrid Gahm's four sons in Växjö, professor J. B. Munster in Turku 1704 and for five years the assessor (deputy judge) Joakim Riddercrantz in Turku. Petrus is described as a charming, intelligent person. Between 1705 and 1710 he had a scholarship at Academia Aboensis, the first university in Finland.² He was examined in 1707, 1708 and 1709 and confirmed a magister in 1712 in his absence. In May 1710, during the Great Nordic War, an approaching Russian attack forced him to leave Turku (Gaslander, Ms 4:o 542: 24–44).

Back in his old school town, Växjö in Småland, he was ordained in December 1712, and in January 1713 took up the post of curate in the western outskirts of Småland, in the joint parishes of Burseryd and Sandvik. Today the parishes are mostly forest. Sandvik has few inhabitants except in summertime. Burseryd did get a railway and some industry long after the time of the Gasslanders, father and son. There were farms in their time (Burseryd 1981; 2012). The topography being dramatic, with ranges, rifts and ravines with streams at the bottom, the area seems better for breeding livestock than growing crops. Breeding draught animals, i.e. oxen, might have been profitable as the need for oxen was great in the southern landscapes. Trading oxen from Småland to Scania used to be a profitable business before the motorised era. Just some fifty years before Petrus Gasslander arrived after the Great Nordic War, the southern landscapes belonged to Denmark. The narrow stripe, Halland county, between Sandvik and the sea was Danish until 1645, Scania county until 1658. Sandvik parish was at the very frontier with constant raids back and forth over a local

stream long into the 19th century. This frontier had been defended since the Middle Ages by the nobility of Sandvik estate (Burseryd 1981; Sandvik 1987).

In the old days the clergymen had to earn their living as farmers. They were also expected to, if need be, marry the widow or the daughter of their predecessor – so-called 'conservation'. Thus Petrus did marry the daughter, a widow with four young children. Two more daughters were born, but in less than two years his wife died. He also had to live through the loss of the cow barn and a year's crops in a fire after the harvest seemed to be secured (Gaslander, Ms 4:o 542: 24–44; Carlsson 1901).

Petrus remarried, this time to Regina Christina Roos af Hjelmsäter, born in Stettin (1694–1773), a noblewoman living modestly with her mother. Being a widow her mother had been forced to leave her estate for a smaller place. Attached to them is the narrative legend that the father and his friend escaped from a Turkish prison and rode across the continent with king Charles XII from Bender to Stralsund in 1712. If one of them was killed the other was to sell the horse and saddle and bring the money to the widow. This legend is widespread around the army of Charles XII but has no bearing on this mother and daughter, although it may refer to Regina's uncle. Her father died from the plague 1711 (Lindmark no date).

There were eight children in this second marriage, and six from the first wife. Johannes was the second eldest. The family grew fairly wealthy. Petrus owned at least six farms when he passed away. The church was built anew in his time and he himself paid for its embellishment. He composed a hymn beautifully written by his own hand in the family Bible and there is a note of his interest in the spiritualist theology of Emanuel Swedenborg. His handwriting is fluent, elegant, easily recognised. His health was weak: he was consumptive and inclined to fainting. The household grew even more extensive as one daughter was widowed and moved back home with four children and her mother-in-law. Another daughter died giving birth and her son was raised by the grandparents and by Johannes, who paid for his studies in law in Uppsala and Stockholm (Likpredikan; Day-book of Johannes 1756–1791). All together, nineteen children were raised in the vicarage.

Johannes Gasslander 1718–1793

Johannes began his studies at the university of Lund in 1738, was ordained a clergyman 1744 but returned to Lund in 1747 to defend his dissertation. He became a curate for his father and succeeded him as vicar. Although in good health, from 1788 onwards he used to have a curate, his biographer remarks, seemingly somewhat astonished (Lundell 1892: 319; Virdestam 1931). He is

said to have become a very wealthy man, owning most of the parish (Wieselgren 1845). So what did he do? Perhaps learned studies, writing, attending the farms he owned all over the parish, doing business, lending money, buying books, visiting Scania county for the University of Lund or attending the Masonic lodge in Kristianstad, another small town in the southern landscape (Gasslander day books 1756–1791). These are a few suggestions coming up when surveying twenty five tiny notebooks, day books kept by Johannes Gasslander 1756 – 1791, in Gothenburg University Library (Signum H 1957/13, Heh 8:o 19.).

The day books have the character of the work journal of a farmer with only a few clerical missions, like burying a colleague in a neighbouring parish or attending a special church service. There is never a remark on the ordinary church services, never a sermon mentioned. There is no allusion whatsoever to any intellectual activity, no relation to the magical books or the glossary of the old local dialect by his hand that is known for sure (1766). Once there is a clue to his worldview when he makes a small ‘freemasonry’ drawing of the pair of compasses and the setsquare and notes the distance of the sun from the earth in the year 9520, the diameters (sic!) of the square and flat earth from every corner 1200 Swedish miles (Day book 1756, last page, H 1957/13, Heh 8:o 19). This is a reminder of the worldview and the chronology of the earth – before the theory of evolution.

During the first two years of the day books, he is curate for his father, Petrus, still alive. He gets his letter of attorney half a year after the death of his father. That same year there is a remark that Peter has a pain in his chest. It need not refer to the father but to a young son. Two sons were born. They are not mentioned again until he pays for their studies and lodging at university.

Every notebook starts with the costs of postage for correspondence, quite substantial costs. He sends something to distant recipients – letters, books, money? The last page of every book is for the salaries of farmhands and maids. There is usually a comment on the weather – grey, misty. The daily work of the two farmhands and two maids are noted. He keeps track of three cows and their calves, one he calls “mother’s cow”. In spring he marks the return of the migratory birds. Once, in May he catches 20 eels. In other summer months only one or two eels were caught. Fishing is never mentioned, although the big lake in the joint parish Sandvik is known to render a good income from fish. Instead, Johannes makes a note of selling oxen for 56 Rd (Riksdaler, old coinage unit) at the market in the nearest town Varberg on the coast some 70–80 kilometres to the west (Day book).

There is a list from 1758 of what was sold at Varberg market: 5 red hens, draught oxen, oxen to be slaughtered, 2 cows, a mare. In Varberg he orders a wig of silk that costs 12 Rd. Another one from Scania county costs him 15 Rd.

The journey to Scania is only 6 Rd and he also sells oxen, cows and two salmon (Day book).

From the day book of 1777 it seems certain that he lends money for promissory notes and charges interest. To his son, Sven Peter, studying in Lund, he sends 1000 Silver Rd. Three years later he sends 50 Rd specie and 3 Silver Rd to his second son, Harald, studying in Lund. He makes a note of which books he can order from a bookseller in Gothenburg and buys *Swea Rikes Statskunskap* (Political Science of the Swedish Kingdom) by Swen Lagerbring upon publication in 1784. In addition, he buys spices and medicine from Gothenburg. That same year he makes notes of what can be had from the bookseller in Stockholm: portraits of the Royals, calendars, a book on the treatment of gout, another on the honest art of lying and the address of a doctor of medicine in Marstrand (Day book). Potatoes were new in 1787. Two kinds seem to have been available, imported by Kongl. Vetenskapsakademien (Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences) in Stockholm. He will try to get them in Gothenburg intending to plant them (Day book).

The day books give the impression of the activities and all-round interests of a man who wants to keep up with what is going on in society. They show that he seems to be busy as a private banker, lending money at interest. There is no mention of learned studies or of writing manuscripts, but his editing of the father’s manuscripts is known from other documents in Vaxjö Stiftsbibliotek (Forssanders samling, Gaslander, Ms 4:o 542: 24–44).

SECRET KNOWLEDGE

The genre of farmers’ day books is that of a journal of work, manifesting facts. Even if Johannes had kept a more private romantic diary there would hardly be a clue about any work with solomonic magic wisdom. Solomonic means that it is supposed to be secret. As mentioned above, the bishop severely disapproved of the publishing of *Beskrifning, om allmogens sinnelag, seder /... /* (1895/1774) (Description of The Peasant Mentality, Customs...in Jönköping County and Västbo Hundred) in 1774. Books of magic art would have been worse. The parishioners talked for two centuries of Johannes collecting copies and burning them. The book became rare, a case of censorship and suppression (Proctor 2008; Carlsson 1901; Ljungström 2014a: 75). People must have talked of the books and the writings in the vicarage. The bishop would not approve of any support to the narrative tradition of the Devil’s Black School in Wittenberg. This west Scandinavian and German tradition was known in the area, just across the previously Danish border, eighty kilometres from the coast. The Wittenberg students, educated to become clergymen, were each given a book of black

magic by the Devil. As late as 1928 a woman told the old story of a clergyman in Burseryd parish who restored stolen goods in Sandvik church (Ljungström 2014a: 76; VFA 1801: 14–16; Edsman 1962; Gunnell 1998).

In the 16th and 17th centuries science would be the key to gain knowledge of the secret agency of nature, *Magia Naturalis*, that would unveil the wisdom of God according to the sixth and seventh books of Moses, believed to be lost. The clerics were able to translate books of wisdom written in Latin and Greek. In the 16th and 17th centuries there was still little difference between wisdom and secret magic (Bringéus 1967: 26; Edsman 1962: 88). Nature's wonder would be no problem to clergymen, but invoking the Devil's magic art seems more problematic (Oja 2005). This was, however, done in the RB, probably of more recent date than the BB. Since the Middle Ages the peasants had turned to the vicar and his wife with their domestic or medical problems. If they could not help, people would turn to the wise men and women. Clerical and medical learning – including the secrets of nature where magic belonged – seems to be reason enough for comprehensive studies, part of which the BB and RB seem to be. However, there is no answer to how it was possible for men of the cloth to deal with the diabolic part of the RB.

Quite a few of the spells and instructions of RB can be recognised from other vernacular collections. They might have been in use, at least people used to think about these things. For a few incantations there are references to informants by name in the parish. There are commonly known spells of how to keep the horse lively, make the newly bought cattle happy at home, even how to keep the bees, to get good shooting, catch fish by hand and protect the gun from evil magic by enemies. There are many devices to unveil a thief and bring back stolen property, one of them is the incantation of Sator-Arepo-Tenet-Rotas.

Not so commonly known are the incantations to damage the field so that the corn will not grow, to ruin the crops of corn and flax, or how to spoil the gun of an enemy. All the devils and angels should be invoked if you want to make a horse lame by forging a copper nail on a Thursday morning before sunrise. Worse, if you want to hurt the thief, blow out his eye, even kill him by making an idol to be hurt by an awl in the body, followed by a magic copper nail.

There are hardly any Christian spells of blessing in RB, the invocations of the Devil, Belsebub, Lucifer and Belial are so many more. Also there are incantations using the secret Wittenberg letters and signs to be spoken out loudly or written. Things for magic use are to be loaded with power on the altar for three days, like the gold bladder of a frog, or for thirty days, a water mouse.

The spells with Wittenberg incantations seem to be copied from a previous source or tradition. This is the impression of certain sequences of RB instructing the reader on how to obtain a helping spirit by use of a small round stone.

The Devil's presence is obvious in the RB as is his crew, the assisting spirits in the afore-mentioned "The True Nature of Black Magic". The spirit would enable his master to become invisible, to walk on water, or to be carried home instantly from any distant place. Terry Gunnell writes about these motifs of the Scandinavian and German tradition (Gunnell 1998; Ljungström 2014a). Furthermore, the RB teaches: If you want to fight by sword or sable you will always win. The sable can be taught to make ever so deep wounds. You will win any fight on the ground or a law suit in court, never be arrested. A gambler will win any game, be wise and beautiful and get good shooting, catch the fish with his bare hands and have a virgin as a friend at night. No witness will ever say anything against you at court. No man will ever win a dispute over you, No one will ever say no if you demand anything. RB is not a collection of good will but of black magic in order to promote the owner while hurting the other. This could be a plausible reason to keep the RB secret, so protecting the good name of the owner.

As suggested in the article "The Missing Books of Magic from Sandvik", the mere imagination of the black books of Wittenberg might have led someone to create such a book. Like Linda Dégh analyses the mummery of Halloween ghosts, sorcery can be used in earnest to obtain something but it also possible to play with other people's beliefs, tease and deceit, make fun of people (Dégh & Vászonyi 1983). Be the ghost – or the book of magic – ostensibly created, in earnest or deceitfully, such an ostensive book would have to be diabolic to be accepted as the authentic work of the Devil (Ljungström 2014: 78).

The Revs. Gasslander probably collected their sources from elsewhere, but it is quite possible that one or both of the vicars copied Hildebrand's book of wisdom, *Magia Naturalis* .., first published in 1610 in Darmstadt, Germany, and in Swedish in 1650, as mentioned above. The vicars were learned men, having a substantial library.³ Nils-Arvid Bringéus recognises the handwriting of Johannes in the BB. As for the RB, Johannes clearly wrote the last part, although I am less certain of the first part. Towards the end there is even an addition in a younger hand, which might be by the son Sven Peter. At times I believed that Sven Peter rewrote all of the RB, but following Johannes' handwriting over time makes me think that he wrote most of the BB and SN, during various periods of his life. The first part of the RB was probably copied from a previous work – but by whom I could not tell (Ljungström 2014b).

The handwriting of Johannes varied during his life. At twenty it is small and elegant, with initials elaborated when he signs his name in a book, for example a hymnbook from his teacher Johannes Baas. The day books are written in small handwriting, growing bigger as the author gets older. It is often somewhat crowded, as in the glossary of local dialect words from 1766 (UUB R593). In the

SN it gets bigger and becomes tremulous. Before studying the day books, which cover twenty-five years, I believed that there could be up to four hands in the SN, although I no longer believe this: Johannes wrote most of the SN and his son Sven Peter added a few rational prescriptions using pharmacy ingredients.

THE LOCAL HISTORY AND FAMILY LORE OF SANDVIK MANOR IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Johannes Gasslander passed away in 1793. It is said that he owned most of the parish but not the estate Sandvik, which was on the former border with Denmark. Not until 1812 did his son Sven Peter (1754–1833) buy the estate that lends its name to, and unites, the BB, RB and SN manuscripts. Sven Peter Gasslander studied medicine at the university of Lund. Curiously, while this medical doctor was excised and forgotten in the family lore, he was cast in the lead role in the local community tradition about manuscripts and magic arts. There are layers of interviews, narratives, written annotations and records from the 18th century to the 1980s in books of local history. Sven Peter was known as a local doctor, healer and inventor of mechanical devices, like a system of wooden plumbing from the fountain spa on the hill, a sawmill, a machine for generating electricity. In addition, he kept a pharmaceutical garden and produced his own medicines. People seem to have been sure that he was a freemason. In a local history book from 1901 the site where his mansion was situated was called the Hill of Ghosts, on which a murdered child was seen (cf. Shuman 2006 for tellable and not tellable stories).

The whole legend complex of freemasonry seems to revolve around this Sven Peter, like another form of belief in magic arts (cf. af Klintberg 2010). He was known as a clairvoyant, and for prophecy. People knew for sure that he had books on black art, although they were not sure of the kind of magic nor would they use the words of magic, but called them ‘stenkolsböcker’ (books of coal, of jet) (Carlsson 1901). For his own funeral – in 1833 – he had prophesied lightning and a terrible thunderstorm, and so it happened. According to legend, it caused his widow to collect his freemasons’ insignia and his books of magic art in a chest, which was sunk in the lake outside the church. This story was to be read in the local sear-print on the history of Småland county at Christmas 1901 (Carlsson 1901; Rosengren 1914), which was widely spread through the parishes. The author was the vicar C.O. Carlsson, who most certainly talked to the owner Lundeberg of Sandvik at the time, the grandparents of my key informant, born in 1905. The same story appears in a family chronicle (Lindmark n.d.)

The sinking in the lake of the sorcery utensils would have taken place in 1833. The son of the deceased freemason kept up the pharmaceutical garden

producing medicines for sick people. There is no telling of him using sorcery. He married that same year 1833, and died in 1841. The wife Petronella became known in the family tradition as well as in the local legends as the ‘evil lady’ of Sandvik. She and her husband appear as minor characters in a novel by the local writer Anna Lorentz (1975). As a child, the writer Anna Lorentz used to listen to her grandfather, born 1826, and to the neighbours’ gossip around the coffee tables. As a writer, Lorentz is free to construct the character Petronella along the lines of legends about ‘the evil lady’: mean, lazy, full of self-importance, a poor housewife, harsh towards the maids; and she has an affair with the farmhand Petter Lindgren (Lorentz 1975). Petronella did remarry the farmhand Petter Lindgren. In the family lore, he is given the role of the scoundrel who squandered the resources of the estate, gambling away large tracts of forest during nights of drinking (Lindmark n.d.; Schéle n.d.; Carlsson 1901; cf. Proctor 2008; cf. Shuman 2006). Actually, among the family notes I found the receipt of the sale of the forest.

The reputation for drinking followed Petter Lindgren. He appears in one of the folklife books by a renowned folklorist writer, August Bondeson, in which the main character, a healer by the name of *Bölen*, having lost his own book of magic, is incapable of sorcery but is told that there is a black book of magic art at Sandvik. He goes there, meets Petter Lindgren, is allowed to read the book when they are drinking together. This book of magic – BB? – was left at Sandvik after the old doctor Gasslander died, the folklorist writer August Bondeson tells us (<http://runeberg.org/bondeson/4/> Kloke Bölen). This Bondeson story was first published 1892, when Petter Lindgren had been dead for twenty years and the old doctor, Sven Peter Gasslander, for sixty years. The reputation of the doctor and his books still prospered.

Oral tradition leads its own life. Parts of local history, i.e. the old doctor and freemason Sven Peter Gasslander, stay with the local place while family lore, i.e. the vicars Gasslander, follows the memory keepers. In Sandvik manor the familiar Gasslander faces of the portraits were material reminders on the walls of the dining room. When later the estate was sold the portraits were brought along to new homes. As there is no portrait of the grandson Sven Peter his memory is eradicated in the family. Instead he is remembered where he belongs as the local spokesman, old doctor Gasslander. Both the family lore and the local history are codified in print by a local historian. The doctor certainly was a remarkable man: the local spokesman, surrounded by legends (Carlsson 1901). The farmhand Petter Lindgren, of whom more below, lead a life in which he rose and fell. His father was Måns Månsson (according to the family Bible of Petter Lindgren), who, as mentioned above, recited the charm against the wetta to cure gout. Petter Lindgren’s life was spectacular enough to drive narratives,

and with no heirs to protect his name, his reputation suffered. He left behind no one but his second wife, the housekeeper, Clara Schéle (i.e. grandmother Lundeberg, of whom more below). Her son in law pronounced Petter Lindgren the family scoundrel. This was all the family knew of Petter Lindgren. The story told by August Bondeson about the healer Bölen and his visit to Sandvik would not have been found, if not for the Internet in 2014. The writer August Bondeson collected the story, not known to the family, which had moved out of the province in the 20th century.

The Lundeberg family began moving in the 1880s to the military drill ground where grandfather Lundeberg took up a post. The furniture and the family portraits were moved, but there was no portrait of doctor Sven Peter, so he was not included in their daily life. As a fourth cousin he was hardly regarded a relative and was forgotten outside his home parish (cf. Proctor 2008; Shuman 2006).

A chain of inheritance – ending up with the Lundeberg family leaving Sandvik

Petronella, the wife of the last Gasslander of Sandvik, died in 1863 leaving the estate to her second husband, Petter Lindgren, who remarried the housekeeper, Clara Schéle (1837–1914). In her second marriage, to P.W. Lundeberg – after Petter Lindgren had died – Clara Schéle Lundeberg had three children and became the grandmother of my key informant, Margareta. Her darling son, Ernst, told Margareta that the first marriage was never consummated, a stipulation made by Lindgren on his death bed to prevent Sandvik from being taken over by Petronella's family. Margareta was not pleased when I found out that they had been married for five years. Through this marriage, the housekeeper Clara Schéle, from Värnamo, a small town nearby, inherited the Sandvik estate. She in turn remarried, to Per Wilhelm Lundeberg (1840–1906), who was a vicar's son, actually a descendant of Petrus Gasslander's daughter. He was known to be nice rather than bright. At school, all of his marks were below the pass standard (Ljungström collection). In time he became a country squire and master sergeant in the regiment of Jönköping. The family moved to a local drill ground, Skillingaryd, where they built a copy of the new manor house at Sandvik, which they had had built in 1878. They carried on farming up to 1892, when Sandvik was sold to the state. In August 1892 the Lundeberg family gave a farewell party for their neighbours, staff and the crofters from the estate (DFU 40059, Lundeberg day book 1892). Ernst Lundeberg, then around thirteen years of age, left the party to climb the cherry trees at the old house on Ghost Hill. There he saw a woman in an old-fashioned dress. Scared, he ran to his mother who answered that this was the late servant, Beata. In 1947

he related his personal experience narrative to his niece, Margareta, and her young children on an picnic to Ghost Hill. When finished, he and Margareta turned and saw a woman pass in an old-fashioned dress. Margareta, my mother in law, was always a bit startled when talking about this sight. Her son refuses to accept it as a supernatural experience, but she seemed to be consoled when I found the name Beata (1811–1879, deaf) among the old servants (Gasslander Family Bible; Sandvik 1987: 239). It is still a personal experience narrative that follows the family, but not the place (cf. Shuman 2006).

In 1904, the Lundeberg daughter, Sigrid, married an energetic master sergeant, Carl Gustaf Lindmark. Lindmark would become a lieutenant in time and it was he who settled the role of scoundrel on Petter Lindgren. However unpopular Petter was for ruining the resources of the estate, he was the first husband of grandmother Clara Lundeberg. Without him the family would not have had the estate. As the son-in-law he could hardly blame his father-in-law, so it is only consistent that Petter Lindgren is blamed, more distant in time and relation, lower in rank and status. The epithet 'farmhand' is never left out. On the other hand, the children were never told the local gossip that Petter Lindgren was found drunk and drowned in the lake at Sandvik (personal communication, Svante Ljungcrantz 3-10-2012). That would have been an untellable narrative that would have hurt the reputation of the family (cf. Shuman 2006).

INVENTORIES OF THE 1870S ROMANTIC MOVEMENT – THE FAMILY MOVES OUT OF THE PROVINCE

In the 1870s the romantic movement inspired inventories of the life of the peasants, local history and of old books were undertaken. Ludvig Palmgren, a young clergyman and an eager collector of old books, found out that in Sandvik there were two manuscripts of magic arts, although they were not easily accessible. However, Palmgren wrote to the folklorist Nils Gabriel Djurklou hinting that he would find a way to acquire them (Bringéus 1967). He courted the sister of P.W. Lundeberg, now the owner of Sandvik, marrying her in 1878 (Lindmark n.d.: 5; Rosengren 1914: 1060). In 1874 he brokered the loan to Djurklou of two "manuscripts" of magical art from *Sandvik*, The Black Book and The Red Book. Djurklou copied and returned them to Palmgren, although Palmgren never returned them to Sandvik (Bringéus 1967). They disappeared, and could not be located when there were plans to publish them. Eventually, a joint copy was published (1918). As a brother-in-law Palmgren was at liberty to visit the library of Sandvik, loading a carriage full of books. "Plain theft', my father said", said Margareta. "My father considered that Palmgren a real villain" (28-9-1984).

As for the missing BB manuscript, requested by a professor in 1895 (letter from J.A. Lundell to P.W. Lundeberg 22-11-1895), grandfather Lundeberg knew that Palmgren never returned them. This extraordinary event, a professor asking for the manuscripts and a portrait, caused an intermittent talk of frustration between parents and grandparents during Margareta's childhood (Lundeberg to Lundell 2-12-1895; Ljungström 2014a; Ljungström 2014b). Without the inquiry of the professor I doubt that the void would have caused any talk of the books (cf. Gustafsson Reinius 2013). It might have been forgotten. The professor asked for just one book, the BB. It is possible that the RB was already made to slip away quietly.

In the house, there were four oil portraits of Petrus Gasslander, his wife Regina Christina, the son Johannes and a grandson. The paintings were incorporated as manifest parts of the family life. In 1911, at the age of six, my mother-in-law grabbed the poker from the fire, climbed on a chair and hit the lady in the face because she looked unkind (cf. Gustafsson Reinius 2013). The repair is visible but there was no punishment. The portraits and the talk of the missing book were essential during the 20th century to keep up the family memory of the past, of Sandvik and of Margareta's childhood. There were no active memories of the Revs. Gasslander as they lived too long ago. The stories were read in the chronicles and the published local history, once told by the grandparents Lundeberg around 1900 (Lindgren n.d.; Schéle n.d.; Carlsson 1901).

Per Wilhelm Lundeberg died in 1906. Two of the children died young, leaving only one son, Ernst (1879–1967). The eldest son died in 1905 at thirty, the daughter died in childbirth, leaving three young children in 1913. Grandmother Clara Lundeberg died in 1914. Moving house several times, Ernst Lundeberg preserved the remaining utensils, such as pewter dishes, engraved glasses, silver tankards, books and papers. When in need of money he would open a chest of beautiful things to sell, for instance take out a silver rococo coffee jug, as a lady who used to know him as a child remembered. He was employed as a clerk at his father's firm (personal communication with Gunnel Langkilde, Värnamo 11-9-1985).

After the death of her uncle Ernst Lundeberg, Margareta returned home with the SN, a bunch of folded sheets of handmade paper, sewn together but possible to rearrange sheet by sheet. It contains some 70 prescriptions to cure livestock and human beings, some rational, some magical according to modern thinking. As described above, there are a few charms, twice the one 'Against the Wetta', others on how to become invisible, how to collect a treasure buried under ground. There are many more to cure medical and domestic problems, and especially for safeguarding rifles. The ones using ingredients to be bought

at the pharmacy seem to be written by doctor Sven Petter Gasslander, but the for the rest the author may well have been her father Johannes (Ljungström 2014b). The family viewed the papers as a curiosity, read a few headlines and folded them away in an envelope. I was not ready to take on the interpretation. When the writer Anna Lorenz visited Margareta I was happy to take notes of the conversations for future work.

OUT OF OBLIVION

Nils-Arvid Bringéus established the connection between Sandvik and the Gasslander manuscripts of magical arts. The BB was bought for the University Library in Lund in 1924 at a book auction. It can be traced back to the vicar Ludvig Palmgren (Bringéus 1967b: 19ff). In 1955 the RB was donated to the Museum of Cultural History in Lund, by a son of Ludvig Palmgren. It was recognised as the missing manuscript, although in those days researchers' interests lay elsewhere (Bringéus 1991). The neat binding with a cover was more interesting as an artefact of magical art to be shown in exhibitions (cf. Gustafsson Reinius 2013). In 1991 Bringéus found the original RB in museum storage (1991), although then ethnologists in Sweden were still occupied with quite different fields of research.

Not knowing the accession number of the RB I went to the museum asking for 'The Red Book'; however, I did not get the original manuscript bound in a red cover. Instead, on mentioning Ludvig Palmgren, I was given a handwritten copy of the RB in modern language as regards spelling and choice of words. It had been acquired for the university library in 1925, most likely at the same book auction as the original BB. Up to this visit in 2009 the Palmgren copy was unknown to the sphere of research (Ljungström 2014a: 74).

How did he think, Ludvig Palmgren? What were his intentions? His love for old books and manuscripts is a known fact (Virdestam 1934: 354; Pleijel 1968). He sold a great collection of old books to the town library of Gothenburg, later to become the library of Gothenburg University (Pleijel 1968). However, he kept the BB and RB manuscripts. The BB might have been difficult to transcribe, while the RB was shorter. Did he intend it for publishing? Such an intention can be traced in his letters to Djurklou. He writes that the two manuscripts of magic had been used by a great sorcerer, i.e. Sven Peter Gasslander, the grandson of the renowned Petrus Gasslander (Palmgren to Djurklou 1-2-1874, after Bringéus 1967: 16f). There was still an extensive library at Sandvik Manor. Later on Palmgren used to visit his brother in law Lundeberg to collect books by horse and carriage, which might have served to preserve the books, certainly his hands upon the BB and RB served this purpose, whatever his intentions

were. Apart from Palmgren's love for old books and manuscripts, Bringéus points out that Palmgren planned writings of his own (1967: 15).

As a vicar, Ludvig Palmgren became known as a great joker. His biographer describes him as an "*Ulspegel*", the main character in many narratives (Virdestam 1930). Palmgren had a desire to be known as a sorcerer who could restore stolen property – among other talents (Salomoniska 1918: XV; 300f; Pleijel 1968: 10). He did not seem to fear an allegation of using witchcraft, an allegation that was levelled at his predecessors, the Revs. Gasslander, who worked secretly. Eventually, he was charged with sorcery before the cathedral chapter by some farmers and suffered persecution by his parishioners. With his academic correspondents he simply ignored the matter (Salomoniska 1918: VX; Virdestam 1934: 354). This desire to make himself known as a sorcerer may be part of the answer to my question of why he kept the BB and RB to himself, even making a personal copy of the RB in modern language, perhaps learning it by heart.

CONCLUSION

The perspective started from the control of knowledge manifested in the master narrative of books of magic. As manuscripts went missing, the vacuum may be acknowledged as belonging to the context, conceptualised as part of materiality pointing to relations of artefacts in the hands of learned men and localised to Sandvik Manor, the place that bridges time back to the life of the Revs. in Burseryd vicarage. The missing manuscripts – and the familiar faces in the portraits – made the owners tell the available family lore, sometimes reconstructing untellable narratives.

There is reason to believe that the original BB and RB manuscripts were written up in the vicarage of Burseryd parish, in the middle of nowhere in southwest Sweden where today the forests are vast on ridges and in rifts. In 1967 N.-A. Bringéus identified the BB as mostly a copy of *Hildebrandi Magia Naturalis*. It is not known if the origin of the BB, *Magia Naturalis*, was brought from Academia Aboensis in Turku by Petrus Gasslander, or from the University of Lund by his son, Johannes Gasslander, nor is it known from where the original material for the RB was collected. In the vicarage in Burseryd parish, Småland, the two men of the cloth, father and son Gasslander, seem to have kept up their propensity for study. The father, Petrus, is particularly known for his books and his writing. The son Johannes kept track of what books he could buy from Stockholm and Gothenburg, eager to take part in the innovations of politics and agriculture and maintaining a wide correspondence with substantial costs in postage. His handwriting is the main testimony of who

held the pen when writing most of the BB and at least one part of the RB, as well as the majority of the SN, three manuscripts of magic art united by their connection to Sandvik Manor.

In 1812 Sven Peter Gasslander, the son of Johannes, bought Sandvik estate. He worked as a local doctor, an inventor and a local inspector of taxes. In addition to his inventions, rumour had it that he was 'a great sorcerer'. People knew for sure that he was a freemason and had black books of magic art. A note with more modern handwriting in the RB may be by his hand. He is likely to have added some prescriptions to the SN. When his son died in 1841, there followed a chain of remarriages and deaths, with the estate being willed to new owners. The Sandvik story can be summed up thus: Harald Gasslander, son of the sorcerer Sven Peter, married Petronella who remarried the farmhand, who remarried the housekeeper Clara, who remarried P.W. Lundeberg, who moved out and sold Sandvik to the State. The SN followed the Lundeberg family as no one cared about a collection of scribbled notes. In 1967 it ended up with my mother-in-law, grandchild of the former housekeeper and owner of Sandvik, Clara Lundeberg. The BB and RB were borrowed from Sandvik in 1874 by Ludvig Palmgren and never returned. After they were copied by the gentleman scholar N.G. Djurklou, Ludvig Palmgren kept them to himself, making a modern copy of the RB. In a book auction after he died, the BB was bought by the library of the University of Lund, and the Palmgren copy of the RB by the Museum of History and Culture, in Lund. In 1955 the original of the RB was donated by a son of Palmgren to the museum, and recognized by N.-A. Bringéus in 1991.

In research collections of folklore studies can be revisited. It brings back into circulation the works of the predecessors in fields that seemed to be complete, closed to problematising approaches. The unexpected appearance of the manuscript SN and my access to the family Bible and its notes, family portraits and lore, is rendering an opportunity to return to the field of sorcery studies, expanding it to the people handling the manuscripts, their family life and the environment. The establishment that the BB, RB and SN emanate from Sandvik Manor allows further tracing to the vicarage in Burseryd so recreating the history of the manuscripts. In his daybooks, the main writer Johannes Gasslander gives an impression of the environment of a wealthy farming clergyman with scholarly interest but there is no hint whatsoever of the manuscripts of magic – must not be.

The manuscripts were kept secret but people seem to have known anyway, at least during the time of his son, Sven Peter, the doctor. There were more periods of suppression and rumours of untellable stories, eventually published as local history. The scholars' frustration around 1900 at missing manuscripts,

the BB and RB, highlights their search for the learned clergymen working on secret manuscripts in the faraway forest during the 18th century. The magic may well have been part of a larger picture of clerical and medical learning that included the secrets of nature. We will never know to what extent the farming people actually believed in or practised the incantations but we may deduce their worries from the incantations, because the hope for a miracle is in the human mind. However, what really matters about a book of magic, of sorcery, is that people believe that there is one, that they believe in the possibility of a miracle.

NOTES

¹ I. Collijn, Sveriges bibliografi 1600-talet. Bidrag till en bibliografisk förteckning I (1942–44) sp. 385 f. After Bringéus 1967.

² Until 1809 Finland and Sweden were the same country.



Figure 1. Painting of Gasslander. Photo by C. V. Angert, 2015.

³ A list of some 237 books in Swedish was preserved after the death of Sven Peter Gasslander in 1833 as well as a few books bearing their signatures, a hymnbook, a book of the law and a book in German of exotic travel, all of them privately owned (Ljungström collection).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions. Thanks are due to The Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy for Swedish Folk Culture for encouragement and support by a grant for the study of manuscripts of magic art.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- Family Bible of Petrus Gasslander, Gunilla Persson collection. Förslöv.
 Family Bible of Petter Lindgren, Anne Marie Berggren collection. Stockholm.
Försök til en ordabok på the uti Jönkjöpings Lähn Wässbo Härad brukelige Ord och Talesätt, som mer eller mindre gå ifrån then wedertagna Swenskan, Upsändt 1766.
 J. G. Uppsala University Library, Handskriftsavdelningen (signum UUB R593).
 Gasslander, Petrus and/or Johannes 1895. Beskrifning, om allmogens sinnelag, seder, ...
 In: *Nyare bidrag till kännedom om de svenska landsmälen och svenskt folklif* I:3.
 Uppsala, pp. 249–315 (First published by Frans Westerdahl, Stockholm, 1774).
 Interview of Anna Lorentz, 22-9-1984, Ljungström collection. Uppsala.
 Lagerbring, Swen 1784. *Swea-rikes stats-kunskap. Med kgl. maj:ts allernådigste privilegium.* Stockholm: tryckt hos Anders Jac. Nordström.
 Letter from L. Palmgren to N. G. Djurklou 16-4-1874, after Bringéus 1967.
 Letter from J. A. Lundell to P. W. Lundeberg 22-11-1895. Ljungström collection. Uppsala.
 'Likpredikan', the funeral oration of Petrus Gasslander. Forssander's collection, vol. 4, no. 542. Library of the Växjö Diocese.
 Lindmark, Gustaf no date. *Släktkrönika* [Family Chronicle] dated 21.2.1972. Ljungström collection. Uppsala.
 Lundeberg, Clara. *Dagböcker för åren 1890–1914* [Day-books]. Collections of the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research. Uppsala, DFU 40059.
 Manuscript Gasslander, Johannes. *Biografiska anteckningar i interfolierade almanackor för åren 1756–1791* [Biographical Notes (Day-books) Interfoliated in Calendars]. Gothenburg University Library, Manuscripts Department, signum H 1957/13, Heh 8:o 19.
 Manuscript Gaslander, Petrus. Forssander's collection, vol. 4:o 542: 24–44. Library of the Växjö Diocese.
 Palmgren, Ludvig 1925. *Röda boken* [The Red Book, RB] manuscript. Lund: Museum of Cultural History.
Salamoniska magiska konster [The Salamonian Magical Arts]. *Svarthkonstbok, Röda boken* (RB). Museum of Cultural History. Lund, signum IV: 59.

- Salomoniska 1918 = Salomoniska magiska konster: utdrag ur en Westboprests svartkonstböcker. Ur friherre Gabriel Djurklous till Örebro läns museum donerade handskriftsamling. In: Paul Heurgren (ed.), *Meddelanden från Föreningen Örebro läns museum*, vol. 7. Örebro, pp. 7–112.
- Sandvikshäftet* [The Sandvik Notebook, SN]. Collections of the Department of Dialectology and Folklore Research. Uppsala, DFU 39499.
- Schéle, Ragnar no date. *Schélesläkten* (1969). Ljungström collection. Uppsala.
- Svarta boken* [The Black Book, BB]. Lund University Library.
- VFA 1801. Collections of the Department of Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research. Gothenburg.

REFERENCES

- Bringéus, Nils-Arvid 1967. Västboprestens svartkonstböcker. In: *Svenska Landsmål och Svenskt Folkliv*, pp. 13–27.
- Bringéus, Nils-Arvid 1991. "Röda boken" påträffad: Ett meddelande. In: *Svenska Landsmål och Svenskt Folkliv*, pp. 89–91.
- Burseryds socken* 1981. Burseryd: Burseryds hembygdsförening.
- Burseryd: Bilder och berättelser. Slutet av 1800-talet och framåt. Från fem gårdar till ett handels- och industrisamhälle 2012* [Burseryd: Photographies and Narratives from the 19th century up to now. From five farms to a society of business and industry]. Burseryd: Burseryds hembygdsförening.
- Carlsson, C. O. 1901. Burseryds pastorat. Beskrifning öfver Burseryds, Bosebo och Sandviks församlingar. In: Separattryck ur *Ny Smålands Beskrifning*, bilaga till Nya Vexiöbladet, pp. 3–124. Vexjö: Nya Vexiöbladets Tryckeri.
- Dégh, Linda & Vázsonyi, Andrew 1983. Does the Word "Dog" bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling. *Journal of Folklore Research* 20, pp. 5–34.
- Edsman, Carl-Martin 1962. Sjätte och sjunde Mosebok. In: *Saga och sed*, pp. 63–102.
- Gustafsson Reinius, Lotten 2013. Där karbunkelstenarna en gång satt – om hur föremål går förlorade och återvinns. In: Owe Ronström, Georg Drakos & Jonas Engman (eds), *Folkloristikens aktuella utmaningar: Vänbok till Ulf Palmfelt*. Visby: Högskolan på Gotland, pp. 135–153.
- Gunnell, Terry 1998. The Return of Saemundur. Origins and Analogues. In: Terry Gunnell, Jón Jónson & Valdimar Tr. Hafstein (eds.), *Þjóðlíf og þjóðtrú: Ritgerðir helgaðar Jóni Hnefli Aðalsteinssyni*. Reykjavík: Þjóðsaga, pp. 87–111.
- Klintberg, Bengt af 2010. *The Types of the Swedish Folk Legend*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Ljungström, Åsa 2014a. The Missing Books of Magic from Sandvik: In search for hidden books and secret knowledge. In: *Approaching Religion*, Vol. 4/1 (May, 2014), pp. 73–79. Available at: www.abo.fi/approachingreligion
- Ljungström, Åsa 2014b. Svartkonstböcker från Sandvik – och ett bortglömt häfte: Om hemlig kunskap, gömt och glömt i handskrifter och berättande [Secret Knowledge]. In: Katarina Ek-Nilsson & Birgitta Meurling (eds.), *Talande Ting*. Uppsala: Dialekt- och folkminnesarkivet.
- Oja, Linda 2005. De kloka och renlärigheten. In: *Signums svenska kulturhistoria. Stormaktstiden*. Stockholm: Signum, pp. 301–327.
- Pleijel, Hilding 1968. Spiltetutorerna på Bolmsö. In: *Böcker och människoöden*. Stockholm: Bokvännens förlag, pp. 10–25.
- Proctor, Robert 2008. Agnotology. In: Robert N. Proctor & Londa Schiebinger (eds), *Agnotology: the making and unmaking of ignorance*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, pp. 1–27.
- Rääf, Leonhard Fredrik & Wikman, K. R. V. 1957. *Svenska skrock och signerier*. Kungl. Vitterhets-, historie- och antikvitetsakademiens handlingar. Filologisk-filosofiska serien, 0083-677X; 4. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Rosengren, Josef *et al.* 1897–1914. *Ny smålandsbeskrifning* [New description of County Smoland].
- Sandvik – en socken i Småland* 1987. Burseryds och Sandviks hembygdsförening. Burseryd: Fören
- Shuman, Amy 2006. Entitlement and Empathy in Personal Narrative. In: *Narrative Inquiry* 16 (1), pp. 148–155.
- Tuneld, John 1960. *Prästrelationerna från Skåne av år 1667 och 1690*. Skrifter utg. av Kungl. Humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, 59; Kungl. Humanistiska vetenskapssamfundet i Lund; Skrifter 59. Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup.
- Virdestam, Gotthard 1930. Nottebäckes pastorat. In: *Växjö stifts herdaminne*, vol. 4. Växjö: Herdaminneskommittén.
- Virdestam, Gotthard 1931. Burseryds pastorat. In: *Växjö stifts herdaminne*, vol. 5. Växjö: Herdaminneskommittén.
- Wieselgren, Peter 1845. *Ny Smålandsbeskrifning*. Wexjö: Lönnegren.
- Wikman, K. R. V. & Tröner, Johan J. 1946. *Johan J. Törners samling af Widskeppelser*. Skrifter utg. av Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien, 15. Stockholm & Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.

INTERNET SOURCES

- Kloke Bölen. *August Bondeson samlade skrifter*. <http://runeberg.org/bondeson/4/> (retrieved 2014-01-19).
- Nils Gabriel Djurklou, <http://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/17568>, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (art av Bertil Waldén med bidrag av Bengt Hildebrand och E. Holmkvist) (retrieved 2013-03-22).

About the author

Åsa Ljungström is a retired folklorist living in Uppsala. She is a former Senior Lecturer and Docent in Ethnology at Mid Sweden University. Among her research interests are narrativity and material culture, narratives triggered by artefacts, life stories of women, trading farmers, healers, legends and manuscripts of magic art.

CHARMERS AND CHARMING IN GERVĖČIAI LITHUANIAN COMMUNITY IN BELARUS

Daiva Vaitkevičienė

The article focuses on the social functioning of verbal charms within a community. The subject of analysis is a small Lithuanian-speaking community living in the vicinity of Gervėčiai, Belarus, near the Lithuanian border. The survey covers synchronic and diachronic perspectives. The diachronic analysis is based on materials from fieldwork carried out in the vicinity of Gervėčiai in 1970, and stored in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives. Between 2010 and 2012 the author conducted fieldwork within Gervėčiai community.

The article analyses the number and density of charmers within the area, and the social and demographic peculiarities of charming. Special attention is paid to circumstances of charm transmission and family connections that can often be observed between the charmer and his/her successor. In addition, the sacral aspects of charming are considered in the article: charming is viewed by charm-ers as a peculiar religious practice that has not been authorised by the church.

Key words: healing charms, Lithuanian charms, transmission of charms, charmer, community, religion

Lithuanian healing charms have been investigated for more than a hundred years now, however, usually focusing on the texts of verbal charms, their structure, motives, distribution and the comparative context. Therefore the circumstances of charming and transmission of charms have been neglected. This article is intended to unveil the social context of Lithuanian charming practice. A small Lithuanian community residing in the vicinity of Gervėčiai, Astravyets district, Belarus has been selected for investigation. This is the Lithuanian enclave in Belarus located about 20 km off the Lithuanian-Belarusian border and about 60 km from Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania (Figure 1).

The research covers synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Field research in Gervėčiai was pursued between 2010 and 2012¹. In the course of the fieldwork, I communicated with charmers who are still practising today as well as with their relatives and acquaintances. I also tried to collect as much information as possible about former charmers and the circumstances of charm learning, and I asked the charmers to whom and why they would like to pass on their knowledge. With a view to establishing whether the family status of the recipi-



Figure 1 (left). Gervėčiai area, located about 20 km from the Lithuanian-Belarusian border.



Figure 2 (below). Lithuanian villages in Gervėčiai parish.

ent is of importance in charm transmission, inquiries into family genealogical lines were made. Tombstone inscriptions in local graveyards were analysed in order to supplement meagre biographical and genealogical knowledge on deceased charmers. The diachronic research was greatly aided by materials from fieldwork carried out in the vicinity of Gervėčiai in 1970 that are stored in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives².

The research covers a defined geographical area, consisting of 13 villages (Figure 2), the population of which are mostly ethnic Lithuanians. Based on data collected in 1970 and between 2010 and 2012, in total 127 individuals practising charmers have been identified. Table 1 features illnesses, listed according to the frequency of charmers' healing (see number of charmers specialised in particular illnesses in column 3, number of practising charmers during the 2010 to 2012 period in column 4).

In general, illnesses healed by charming in Gervėčiai coincide with charming trends prevalent in the territory of Lithuania as 13 of the illnesses most frequently treated by charming are found in the Lithuanian top 15 (Vaitkevičienė 2008: 23–24, 76). However, Gervėčiai is distinguished by high numbers of charmers treating fright (62), sprain (30), and hernia (17). Moreover, a disorder called *padvėjas* (evil spirit, cf. Belarusian *надзеў*), which is understood as penetration of a demonic spiritual creature into a human body, is an exception as no charms against it have been recorded in Lithuania.

SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PECULIARITIES

In the course of the research attempts were made to establish the distribution of charmers in the area under investigation and identify what part of the community they made up. The administrative and religious centre of the area is Gervėčiai village, where the institutions of administration, trade and services (local administration, bank, post office, library, school, etc.) are concentrated. In addition to these, the Roman Catholic parish church, where Mass is celebrated on Sundays and major feasts, is located in Gervėčiai. Therefore, roads from all the neighbouring villages lead to Gervėčiai. A smaller administrative centre is Rimdžiūnai, which is the second largest settlement in the region after Gervėčiai, with a school and kolkhoz administrative centre. Only half of its inhabitants are locals (mostly centred in the old part of the village); others came there to work in the kolkhoz or were relocated from the zone of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant after the 1986 catastrophe.

Administrative and religious centres have little influence on the tradition of charming, however, they reinforce social connections between people from dif-

| No. | Illness | Total number | 2010–2012 |
|-----|---|--------------|-----------|
| 1. | fright | 62 | 12 |
| 2. | evil eye | 49 | 11 |
| 3. | erysipelas | 46 | 7 |
| 4. | sprain | 30 | 9 |
| 5. | snake bite | 20 | 2 |
| 6. | evil wind | 19 | 4 |
| 7. | hernia | 18 | – |
| 8. | boils | 11 | 1 |
| 9. | bleeding | 7 | 1 |
| 10. | evil spirit (<i>padvėjas</i>) | 4 | – |
| 11. | toothache | 5 | – |
| 12. | witchcraft | 3 | – |
| 13. | inflammation of carpal joint (<i>grižius</i>) | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | sty | 2 | 2 |
| 15. | rabies | 2 | – |
| 16. | insanity | 1 | – |
| 17. | epilepsy | 1 | – |
| 18. | rheumatism | 1 | – |
| 19. | night-blindness | 1 | – |
| 20. | deafness and dumbness | 1 | – |
| 21. | stomach ache | 1 | – |
| 22. | warts | 1 | – |
| 23. | swine illnesses | 1 | – |
| 24. | any illness | 4 | 1 |

Table 1. Illnesses treated by charming in Gervėčiai community.

ferent villages who come to common church services or meet at administrative institutions. If the need arises, people first of all tend to address the charmer living in the same village or in a neighbouring village within the parish. In addition, people who work or have worked together develop close relationships, for example, women who worked together in a kolkhoz and strained hands doing hard work would heal one another by means of charming – they would charm a thread with knots called *saitai* and tie it onto the sore hand. If in the circle of close acquaintances there is no charmer capable of healing a particular ailment, charmers are sought in other villages or sometimes other areas

and districts. The number of charmers in administrative centres has not been observed to be greater. The area is not in any way centred from the charming point of view; the patient himself/herself becomes the centre when starting to look for a charmer in the local area. The research conducted also does not indicate that the church would in any way restrict the practice of charmers, for example charmer Genia Petrovskaya (Gervėčiai village, 1927–2007) was the wife of the sacristan and would help her husband take care of the church. She lived in a house next to the church and patients who came to church services would later go to see the charmer. A highly pious charmer Marija Gražulienė (Gervėčiai village, 1908–1970) lived a few houses away from the parish church. The two charmers were more widely known due to the fact that they lived close to the church and it was convenient to drop by on the way to the church or when making other arrangements in the village.

However, sometimes an undistinguished remote village can become the centre of attraction due to a renowned charmer, for example in the 1910s–1930s Peliagrinda village was famous for being home to charmer Šimas Augulis (1883–1934), and in the second half of the 20th century Girios village was famous for charmer Agota Jakavickienė (1909–late 20th century). Patients came to these charmers not only from the neighbouring villages but also from cities and even foreign countries (Astravyets, Vilnius, Minsk, Maladzyechna; Agota Jakavickienė would heal patients coming from as far away as Moscow). Legends about the powers of these charmers spread wide and were long-lived; between 2010 and 2012 quite a few folk narratives about charmer Šimas Augulis from Peliagrinda were recorded in villages around Gervėčiai, although the charmer had died in 1934. Šimas Augulis is depicted in the narratives as a powerful magician capable of curing all diseases (including deafness, muteness and insanity). In the stories about healing told by his former patients or their relatives, special emphasis is placed on Šimas Augulis' unique capacity not only to establish the cause of illness, but also to read the thoughts of the people addressing him and to describe their past and future. Meanwhile this magician is somewhat demonised in folk-belief legends: he is said to have possessed the *Black Book* and performed various magic tricks in order to play jokes or to teach somebody a lesson (for example immobilising the wedding party's carriage, or making the girls' skirts fall down during dances when they were playing the fiddle, etc.). However, neither stories by Šimas Augulis' acquaintances nor the folk legends present any evidence of this charmer having caused any irreparable damage, let alone harm somebody's health.

Stories of a different kind are told about another famous person from these parts, namely Agota Jakavickienė, a charmer of Ukrainian origin. She settled in Gervėčiai parish after marrying a man from Girios village who did military

service in Ukraine. People were especially perplexed by the way this charmer diagnosed illnesses: the patient was required to bring a raw egg, which charmer then would beat into a glass of water and according to the way the egg looked determine the causes and nature of the person's ailment. People still remember various treatments prescribed by this charmer, for example, Janina Trepšienė (born 1931) from Rimdžiūnai village told me about Jakavickienė charming her four-year-old son who was suffering from fright to the point that he could not even walk. Having uttered the required formula, the charmer instructed Trepšienė to go to the cemetery, cut out a strip from the bark of the aspen tree growing there, measure the boy with this strip (its length should have been similar to the child's height) and then bury the strip in the corner of the cemetery. After Trepšienė followed these instructions, her son was cured (LTRF cd 769). Bronia Kuckienė, Jakavickienė's neighbour and friend, remembered the way this charmer used to heal skin complaints by applying wet linen and burning flax above it. Jakavickienė could charm numerous ailments, including epilepsy and bewitchment; the patients whom she cured of serious illnesses would describe their experiences as miraculous healings (LTRF cd 749).

In the last decades the number of charmers has plummeted. In the 2010–2012 period only 21 practicing charmers lived in the Gervėčiai area, almost half of whom practiced only a single verbal charm. Analysis of the situation in 1970 (on the basis of data collected in the fieldwork sessions of that year and memories of respondents interviewed between 2010 and 2012) allowed identification of as many as 68 charmers practicing at that time. Hence, in four decades the number of charmers in the Gervėčiai area decreased to less than a third.

Nonetheless, changes in the demographic situation should also be taken into consideration – the total population of the village decreased thus, alongside the decline of the tradition, resulting in a decrease in the number of charmers. Taking into account the said circumstances, it would be more precise to speak about the relative rather than absolute number of charmers per capita. Based on the data of the population census of 1970, 2521 individuals lived in the 13 villages in the research area, whereas data from the population census of 2004 suggest that the population decreased to 1601 (*Памяць* 2004: 535–623). Hence, in 1970 there was one charmer per 37 community members, whereas in 2010 one charmer per 76 community members. These figures clearly indicate that in four decades the proportion of charmers to the total number of inhabitants halved. Though this figure makes the decline in absolute numbers of charmers mentioned above less dramatic, it still indicates an obvious decline in tradition.

These statistics allow the assessment of the scope of charming in traditional communities. Even with the decline of the tradition, the number of charmers remains significant. This becomes obvious when the number of charmers and

doctors is compared (calculating the number of charmers and doctors per 1000 people). Table 2 offers World Health Organization statistical data which indicate number of doctors per 1000 people in Belarus, Lithuania and the United Kingdom³; this data is then collated to the statistics of charmers in the Lithuanian villages of Gervėčiai area in 2010:

| Number of doctors (per 1000 people) in Belarus in 2010 | Number of doctors (per 1000 people) in Lithuania in 2010 | Number of doctors (per 1000 people) in the United Kingdom in 2010 | Number of charmers in Gervėčiai community in 2010 |
|--|--|---|---|
| 5 | 3.6 | 2.7 | 13 |

Table 2. Comparison of numbers of charmers and doctors per 1000 people

Despite the rapid decline in the charming tradition, the number of charmers still exceeds that of doctors. This points to the vitality of the charming tradition and shows that in people's minds healing by means of charming and charmers themselves are appreciated and cherished by community members.

TRANSMISSION OF CHARMS

One of the key aspects in the investigation of charming is the pattern of transmission of verbal charms within the community. As often as not transmission is shrouded in mystery and tied by rules to which it is necessary to adhere in order to ensure that the transmitted charm does not lose its power, while the disciple becomes a socially acknowledged charmer.

Unlike charm texts,⁴ transmission rules are not particularly strictly delimited by language and folkloric or religious tradition, displaying considerable similarities in rather distant European regions. According to recent publications discussing the rules of charm transmission in various countries in Europe (England, Wales, France, Greece, Estonia, Russia and others), and also among the English and Irish emigrants in Canada, the following general tendencies may be discerned:

1. Charms are passed on to just one disciple and only immediately before the charmer's passing away (or when the charmer is no longer capable of practicing; Passalis 2011: 9, Davies 1998: 42, Kõiva 1996: 16; Vaitkevičienė 2008: 46, 91);
2. Charms are as a rule passed on down the family line (Passalis 2011: 10; Davies

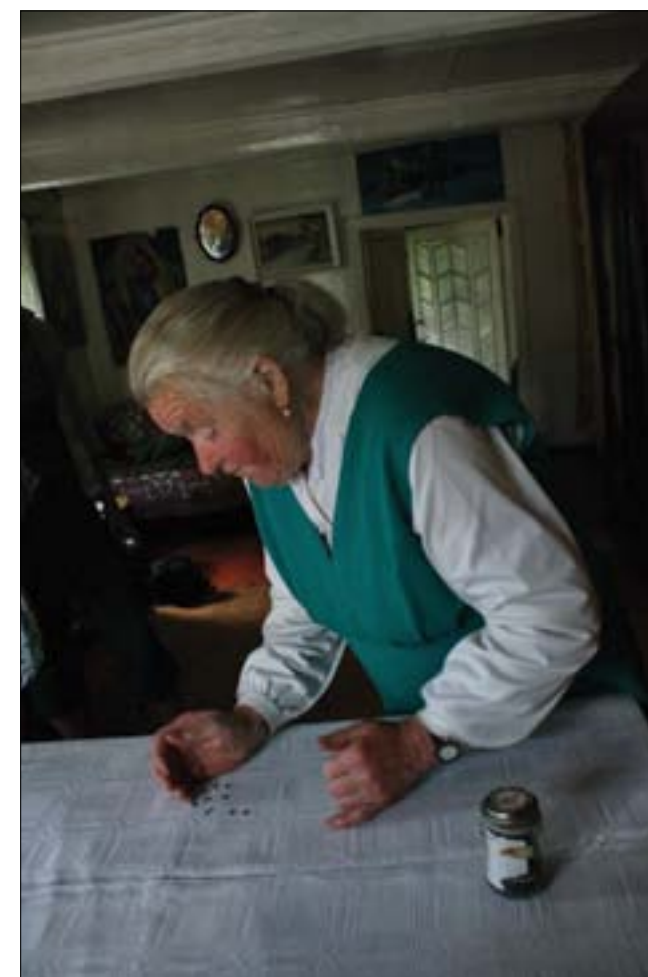


Figure 3. Leonarda Augulienė from Rimdžiūnai charms while counting out the *Datura stramonium* seeds in order to treat fright. Photo by Daiva Vaitkevičienė 2011.

1998: 42; Lovelace 2011: 42; Mansikka 1929: 21, 25; Vaitkevičienė 2008: 48, 92; Толстая 1999: 239; Барташэвіч 2005: 547), although passing on to friends, neighbours or even strangers is also possible (Davies 1998: 42, Passalis 2011: 10, Kõiva 1996: 10). The importance of the family line is illustrated by a peculiarity noted in France, where the charmer is socially acknowledged only when the charm has already been passed on along three family generations ("the healing gift had to be known to have been passed down through three generations at least to be recognized by the community", Davies 2004: 94);

3. Charms can only be passed on to certain special members of the family. In Western Europe and among British emigrants, passing on to the seventh son, who is allegedly endowed with special powers, is emphasised (Davies 1998: 43; Lovelace 2011: 40, cf. Vaz de Silva 2003). Among Lithuanians and Belorussians, there is a deeply entrenched tradition of passing charms on to the firstborn or lastborn child in the family (Mansikka 1929: 23; Vaitkevičienė 2008: 49, 92; Būgienė 2010: 76; Баргашэвіч 2005: 547); passing on to the firstborn is also known in Bulgaria (Толстая 1999: 239);
4. “Contrasexual transmission”, when woman passes on charms to a man and vice versa (Davies 1998: 43; Roper 2005: 80; Lovelace 2011: 42; Passalis 2011: 10; Vaitkevičienė 2008: 49, 92);
5. Charms are passed on to a person of a certain age (e.g. the charmer’s junior, Roper 2005: 81, Vaitkevičienė 2008: 47, 91; Баргашэвіч 2005: 547; Толстая 1999: 239), a married person (Dobrovolskaya 2011: 87), or conversely, to young girls (Толстая 1999: 239);
6. The charmer must possess inherent powers, for example “strong blood” (Davies 2004: 93; Būgienė 2010: 75); or this power may be handed down by the ancestors (for example Owen Davies describes cases of inheriting healing power from ancestors who would eat eagle’s meat, the power would then last through nine generations (Davies 1998: 48).

When conducting research in Gervėčiai, I attempted to establish patterns of transmission typical to this community. The first three rules were undoubtedly confirmed, forming a common normative complex: charms are passed on to a sole person only, who is a member of the family and either firstborn or lastborn (this complex will be further discussed in detail below). The passing on of the charms to the charmers’ juniors is regarded as a matter of course which is not even consciously reflected on (this happens naturally, since charms are passed on from one generation to another). The inherent peculiarities of the charmers are not emphasised in Gervėčiai, although they tend to become evident when charmers are compared with one another or with their patients. Thus, the charmer is commonly thought to have “strong blood” (stronger than the patients’), and a charmer of stronger blood is considered to be more powerful. Yet contrasexual transmission seems to be completely missing in Gervėčiai. Admittedly, this mode of transmission is generally scarcely known across Lithuania: only three such cases have been recorded (Vaitkevičienė 2008: 48, 92), possibly being borrowings from other traditions (this question could be elucidated by studies of the transmission patterns among neighbouring peoples – Poles, Belorussians and Latvians).



Figure 4. Zofija Kuloic from Gėliūnai shows the way to charm water in order to heal sprain. Photo by Evelina Simanavičiūtė 2011.

Transmission on to a single person

When attempting to record charms, researchers constantly face the fact that a charm must be passed on to a single person and cannot be disclosed to others, since it will then no longer be suitable for healing. For instance, during the fieldwork session in Gervėčiai area in 1970 the Lithuanian folklorist Bronislava Kerbelytė wished to record charms from the charmer Paulina Mockienė (Galčiūnai village, 1896–1980), but she could not disclose them. The reason for the refusal was the fact that she may still need the charms herself as people come from afar to ask her for help, and disclosure of charms would strip them of their healing power (LTR 4160/110). However, not all charmers hold such strict attitudes; although everyone is aware of the rule, at times it is disregarded or regarded only partly, thinking that the power of a charm may weaken, yet not vanish completely. Mania Laurinavičienė (Gėliūnai village, b. 1922) has passed

her charms to several members of her family. In 2010 she disclosed her charms to a folklore collector. In our conversation in 2012 Mania complained that after she had disclosed the charms to an “unknown man”, fewer patients would come to her for help. In Laurinavičienė’s words, that man took her patients away as she believes that once the man learned her charms, he started charming himself, having absorbed part of the power and lured the patients away.

Some charmers disagree with the opinion that when disclosed to another person, the charm loses part of its healing power. Anelia Buckienė (Gudininkai village, 1912–apx. 1980) taught her cousin Janina Karmazienė (Girios village, b. 1934) to heal evil wind by means of charming, and the charm was later successfully used by both women (LTRF cd 740/36). Marija Magadzia (Gruodžiai village, b. 1931) learned to charm erysipelas and the evil eye from her friend Julia Kaltan, who lives in the same locality (Gruodžiai village, b. 1931). The charmers claim that if one of them died, the other would uphold the charms. Today, both friends are charmers and both are equally powerful. Sometimes when the patient is seriously ill the charmers charm him/her one by one. According to Marija Magadzia, a charm is not a secret and she has taught quite a few people to heal by charming. In addition, she shared the charms with folklore collectors adding that from then on they could also take up healing (LTRF cd 743/21). However, such cases of charms being easily shared with other people are extremely rare. Usually one person is taught to heal by charming and this person as a rule is a family member.

Family members vs. strangers

The tradition of transmitting charms from one generation to another in the same family is strongly sustained in Gervėčiai Lithuanian enclave. Usually charms are inherited by children and other family members, as people avoid passing them to strangers. Marytė Juškienė (Mockos village, 1931–2013) maintains that “everyone teaches their children [that you have to] give what you have” (LTRF cd 538/7). Janina Karmazienė from Peliagrinda village (niece of charmer Paulina Mockienė) said that by no means could charms be passed on to strangers (LTRF cd 739/58). Marytė Juškienė related that charming was learnt by one generation from the previous, charms were passed on shortly before death and strictly to family members. She asked her mother’s cousin to teach her charming but was refused (LTRF cd 537/10). Marytė Juškienė learnt only one charm from her relatives: her father’s spinster aunt Anelia Kiškelytė (Mockos village, late 19th century–1960), who shared their house, taught her to heal fright.

However, there had been cases when charms were passed on to strangers. Janina Karmazienė (Girios village, b. 1934) learnt to charm erysipelas from her neighbour Bronia Urbonavičienė (Girios village, 1907–1999), with whom they were friends and whom she attended to in her later years. Charmer Anelia Buckienė (Gudininkai village) wished to pass on the charms to her neighbour Leonarda Mažeikienė, however, the latter refused because her husband objected. In almost all cases charms are transmitted to strangers when there are no possibilities to pass them on to family members or relatives.

In the course of the research, data was obtained on 25 cases of charm transmission between relatives; these data are summarised in the Table 3:

| Family connections (blood relatives) | Number |
|--|-----------|
| mother – daughter | 13 |
| grandmother – granddaughter | 3 |
| mother – son | 2 |
| father – daughter | 2 |
| female cousin – female cousin | 2 |
| aunt – niece | 1 |
| aunt – nephew | 1 |
| grandfather’s sister – brother’s granddaughter | 1 |
| Total: | 25 |

Table 3. Transmission of charms to blood relatives

The transmission of charms to blood relatives is overwhelmingly in the mother-daughter direct line (13 cases). There are cases when the direct line skips a generation: grandmother passes her knowledge on to her granddaughter (3 cases) or grandfather’s sister teaches her brother’s granddaughter (1 case). Criss-cross transmission (involving a change of sex) was recorded of two types: mother to son (2 cases), father to daughter (2 cases). There are occurrences of more remote transmissions which are outside the direct family line, but they are rather rare: female cousin to female cousin (2 cases), aunt to niece (1 case), and aunt to nephew (1 case).

These data suggest that the female line prevails in charm transmission over the male line (not a single case of father to son transmission has been recorded), however, this might be attributed to the fact that in general, female charmers outnumber male charmers. Not a single respondent referred to gender as an important factor, yet it was mentioned that women were more eager to learn verbal charms.

Charms may be transmitted not only to blood relatives but also to people related by marriage (Table 4):

| Relation by marriage | Number |
|---|----------|
| mother-in-law – daughter-in-law | 3 |
| father-in-law – daughter-in-law | 1 |
| husband – wife | 1 |
| mother's stepmother – stepdaughter's daughter | 1 |
| mother-in-law – mother-in-law | 1 |
| Total: | 7 |

Table 4. Transmission of charms to relatives by marriage

Although charms are much less frequently transmitted to relatives by marriage, the tendency to pass them on *via* the mother-in-law – daughter-in-law line is the most obvious (3 cases). In all the cases the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law were linked by their place of residence (they either lived in the same house or close to each other in the same village).

In total, 32 cases of charm transmission to relatives (both blood relatives and in-laws) have been recorded. Only 7 cases are known of charms being passed on to people other than relatives. Most often in such cases the recipients are neighbours or friends (Table 5):

| Communal relation | Number |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| female neighbour – female neighbour | 3 |
| female friend – female friend | 3 |
| Strangers | 1 |
| Total: | 7 |

Table 5. Transmission of charms to community members (non-relatives)

It should be noted that in 6 cases out of 7 the charmer and her apprentice were related by close friendship or by living in the same neighbourhood. For example, Bronia Urbonavičienė (Girios village) passed a charm on to Janina Karmazienė (Girios village) as they were very close and Urbonavičienė's children had abandoned her in her later years. According to J. Karmazienė, B. Urbonavičienė and herself were even closer than relatives (LTRF cd 740/29).

Cases of strangers being taught to heal by charming are extremely rare. In the course of the research a single such case was detected: Marija Magadzia from Gruodžiai teaches anyone who would like to heal by means of charming

(including strangers; she claims to have taught quite a few people when she was in hospital in Astravyets).

Alongside the models of charm transmission to family and community members, there are some data regarding an extraordinary way of transmission in which a person is taught to charm in a dream. Charmer Mania Laurinavičienė, whose father Osip Sinkevicz (Puhavitchy village, 1876–1935) was taught to practice charming in a dream, relates the story. At that time a man was sick in a village and Mania's father dreamt of a late neighbour who said, "I will teach you to charm and you go and charm that man and give him charmed water to drink". Mania's father charmed the water, the patient drank it and was himself again. Since then Osip Sinkevicz started healing by charming (LTRF cd 762). This was the only story related to the teaching of charming in a dream recorded in Gervėčiai, however, there are other similar cases known both in Belarus (Лобач, Філіпенка 2006: 55, 208) and in Lithuania. For example, in Kalviai village (Dieveniškės parish, east Lithuania) Jozefa Jančis (1915–1998) saw her late neighbour Marilia Kapusta in a dream in which Marilia passed her charms on to Jozefa. Before her death Marilia Kapusta had promised to transmit her charms to Jozefa Jančis but failed and thus came in a dream to do so⁵. Extraordinary transmission of charms in a dream is known among Estonians (Kõiva 1996: 13, 16) and among southern Slavic people (Толстая 1999: 239).

The first and last child in the family

It is universally known that charms in Lithuania are passed on not to a random member of the family, but exclusively to the first- or last-born child (Vaitkevičienė 2008: 91). This general rule holds true in Gervėčiai as well and is proven by respondents' replies to the question of who is entitled to become a charmer. During my fieldwork I strived to verify the general rule of transmission by finding out the factual situation. Observation and survey results confirmed the regular rule, although it also revealed possible exceptions: out of 17 cases in which data on the charmer's position in the family is available, 14 were eldest or youngest children in their families, however, 3 were middle children, see Table 6:

| First-born | Last-born | Only child | Middle child |
|------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| 4 | 7 | 3 | 3 |

Table 6. Charmers' position in the family from the point of view of primogeniture

Statistically the group of youngest children predominates. Although the general rule does not differentiate between the first- and last-born child, charms are usually inherited by the youngest (this is possibly due to a bigger age difference or certain social or emotional bonds between the parent and the last-born child). Three charmers were the only children in their families and also considered suitable to inherit charming.

Let us more closely consider the exceptions when charmers are neither the first nor the last children in their families and examine their qualification (if this in any way differs from that of other charmers). The charming power of these people differs greatly. Marija Gražulienė, who was the middle child in her family, was a renowned charmer able to heal many illnesses and frequently visited by patients. Zofija Kuloic (Gėliūnai village, 1929–2011) was not widely known and the surveyed members of the community could tell little about her healing. The charmer herself claimed that she had few patients and rather seldom, although some of them would come from remote localities. The third case of the charmer being the middle child in the family rather supports the rule of the first or last child than its exception: Marija Aleksienė (Peliagrinda village, 1920–2000) used charms to heal erysipelas, however, being neither the first nor the last child in the family could not be exactly sure whether her charming was of any help. Aldona Petrikienė (Peliagrinda village, b. 1928) who was treated from erysipelas by Aleksienė said that the charmer warned her that she was neither the first nor the last child in the family and thus the charm might be void. Aldona Petrikienė claims that the charm was to a certain extent helpful, yet failed to fully heal erysipelas and thus she had to turn to another charmer for help (LTRF cd 739/11).

The rule of charm transmission to the first or the last child is related to the concept of healing power. According to the general attitude, the middle child cannot heal people by charming because his/her charms do not work, as only the first- or last-born child has sufficient power to heal. For example, Janina Šaškevič, daughter of Veronika Ulvin (1906–1979) from Gaigaliai, wanted to learn charms, however, the mother refused to teach her as she was of the opinion that her daughter, being the middle child, would not have the necessary power and would be unable to help anyone.

It should be noted that only those who were born first and last can charm and not the eldest and youngest of the surviving children. If the first- or last-born children are dead, none of the surviving members of the family can charm. For example, Veronika Ulvin had 8 children, the eldest son Mečislovas refused to learn to charm considering it a frivolous and unmanly business, and her youngest daughter was dead. Therefore, Veronika Ulvin had no one to pass her charms to. This and other similar examples suggest that the power of charm-



Figure 5. Valerija Bublevič from Mockos demonstrates way of treating the evil eye: she pours water 9 times on the knives in the corner of the table. Photo by Daiva Vaitkevičienė 2011.

ing is understood as inheritance which can be passed on exceptionally to the first- or last-born children as they are the only children who inherit the power of healing. This reveals uneven distribution of power within the family and the singularity of the first- and last-born children. This concept, giving prominence to the beginning and end of the sequence of offspring, reflects the differentiation of family members in terms of power.

Transmission of charms as continuation of tradition

As already mentioned, charms are perceived as an inheritance: charms used by parents and grandparents are inherited by their children and grandchildren or other relatives (and only when children “are not entitled to” or “refuse the inheritance” are charms inherited by strangers). However, the transmission of charms is important not only to the recipients, but also to the transferors who are concerned with the transmission of their charms to other people before they die. It is believed that a charmer who fails to pass his/her charms on to someone faces a long agony before death. Anelė Buckienė from Gudinkai had no one to pass her charms to before death and was in agony for a long time before dying; her neighbour Leonarda Mažeikienė, who was sitting at the bedside of the dying charmer, relates that Anelė could not leave this world for three days – at times it seemed that she was about to die and then would come to life again (LTRF cd 756). Charmer Genia Pūkštienė (Rimdžiūnai village, early–late 20th century) had promised to pass her charms on to her daughter Leonarda Trepšienė, but her brother failed to call for Leonarda in time to see her dying mother. The daughter believes that as her mother “took the secret to the grave”, she had no peace and had been coming to her dreams for a year (LTRF cd 613/23).

Dead charmers take care of their charms after death as well. After her mother’s death, Mania Laurinavičienė had doubts about continuing to heal by charming. Then her mother, charmer Anelia Sinkevicz (Ponys village, late 19th century–1970s) came to her in a dream and ordered her to continue charming (LTRF cd 779/5).

Last but not least, the inheritance of charms and continuation of charmer’s activities is also related to paying homage to the deceased charmer and his/her memory. Bronia Urbonavičienė, who had passed her charms to Janina Karmazienė, said that after her death at least her charms would be cited and she will be remembered as the one who taught them (LTRF cd 740/29).

CHARMING AS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

Traditional charmers in rural localities are characterised by the fact that they perceive healing as a sacral activity and do not request remuneration for their services; such a perception of healing is characteristic of the entire tradition of Lithuanian charming (Vaitkevičienė 2008, 50–52). According to the Lithuanian folklorist Lina Būgienė, the concept of faith keeps repeatedly popping up in interviews with charmers, and is endowed with particular importance and meaning in their narratives and stories about themselves and their power (Būgienė 2010: 79). Charming as a powerful gift from God was acknowledged in Belarussian communities as well (Лобач, Філіпенка 2006: 10). The tendency to relate charming and religion is evident throughout Europe. However, charmers acting as healers are regarded as quite distinct from cunning folk practicing magic; such a strict differentiation is attested in England and Wales (Davies 1998: 41). However, in some regions these categories are not definite: according to Joseph Conrad (1987: 549) “while many South Slavic villages have two conjurers, one for healing charms and one for black magic, it is sometimes the case that one practises the other’s art”.

Research in Gervėčiai supports the fact that charmers view their work as a religious activity. Let us discuss a few typical instances of religiousness and unrequited activity.

One of the most renowned charmers of the Gervėčiai area, Mania Laurinavičienė, is very pious; she perceives charming as a religious practice and views the utterance of charms as a prayer to God. In her opinion, the power of healing comes from God and she is a mere mediator, because it is God who heals (LTRF cd 779/17). She believes that God is more powerful than man and can heal sicknesses that doctors fail to heal (LTRF cd 779/9).

Some charmers hold the opinion that charms help only in cases when the person believes in God (LTRF cd 635/345). Charmers often refer to charms as “sacred words”, “sacred utterances” or “sacred prayers”, as the charms themselves or prayers attached to them often mention Jesus Christ, St. Mary and Saints. This is the folk perception of Christianity which contradicts the official position of the church, disclaiming religious actions and texts that have not been approved by the church. Charmers and the community have a different perception of the situation – they understand charming as a sacral action, even though charmers have not been commissioned by the church to act as mediators between humans and the deity. Charmers, however, do not believe they need such authorisation and perceive healing by means of charming as a religious practice⁶. According to Lina Būgienė (Būgienė 2010: 75–76), who investigated charming in eastern Lithuania, charmers believe that their ability to help people comes from God and they take responsibility to act in the name of God.

Some charmers are really pious, actively participate in religious activities and interact with priests. Genoefa Petrovskaya, whose husband served as the sacristan of Gervėčiai church, would clean and keep the local church in order. Marija Gražulienė would strictly observe fasting. She took care of her relatives' religious lives, for example she arranged the Catholic christening of her hitherto unbaptised nieces. Leonarda Augulienė (Rimdžiūnai village, 1927–2014) sang in church and decorated the cross in Rimdžiūnai village. Marija Magadzia socialises with the priest, who comes to visit her. Charmers and members of the community, in contrast to the official position of the church, do not believe that charming contradicts Catholicism in any way. Conflict between healing by charming and the church is mainly generated by the unfavourable attitude of some priests in this matter. According to the charmers, even priests believe in the sacredness of charms, for example, the story has it that a parish priest whose legs were paralysed as the result of a car accident was healed by charming. The cause of the paralysis, as charmer Marija Magadzia puts it, was fright; the priest was healed by Astravyets charmers who treated him for fright. The charmer notes that the priest was at first reluctant to be treated by means of charming but that when he heard the text of the charm and was ascertained that “everything is clear”, gave his consent to being charmed and was healed (LTRFcd743/29). In Gervėčiai area and in the whole of Lithuania there is a popular story about a priest who scorned charming and would reprove women involved in charming from the church pulpit. However, when a snake bit his cow the priest gave credence to charming (LTRF cd 537; cf. LTR 4155/293, LTR 4232/552–553).

The sacredness of charming is also evident in refusing to take remuneration for the treatment. Charming is perceived as a gift of God that should be shared. Teresa Berniukevič (Mikhailishki village) when refusing to take payment for an act of charming says that “God gave me this gift and I don't need anything”. According to Janina Šaškevič, daughter of charmer Veronika Ulvin, when a patient asks you should not refuse to treat him/her by charming and “then God will send a blessing on you and God will help you” (LTRF cd 752/8). The attitude of the community towards a charmer who refuses to charm when asked is highly negative.

Charmers perceive their practice as sacred work. Charmer Marija Magadzia says that all people who heal by means of verbal charms do so “with God” (LTRF cd 743/30). According to Janina Šaškevič, the one who charms, helps people, therefore following the rite of charming, the charmer feels good and light at heart (LTRF cd 752/8). Marija Magadzia claims that even though the process of charming may be really hard (for example, if a person is harmed by evil eyes, the act of charming may be so difficult that the charmer feels pressure in the

ears, is tormented by yawning and streaming eyes), once the act is completed the symptoms disappear (LTRF cd 743/32). Mania Laurinavičienė claims that even in her declining years she finds it “easy to pray to God” (although relatives and neighbours disagree) and after the act of charming she feels good and light (LTRF cd 762).

The relationships between the charmer and his/her patient (or the patient's relatives who have turned to the charmer for help) fall in line with a certain traditional code of ethics. The charmer does not request remuneration for healing and even rejects the possibility of such remuneration. Janina Karmazienė tells her patients that they are not allowed pay her and those who try will be refused treatment the next time (LTRF cd 740/27). Antanina Augulienė (Rimdžiūnai village, 1880s–1940) spoke to her patients in a similar manner (LTRF cd 769). The code of charmers' ethics provides against the utilisation of power for sordid motives, which is sometimes expressed through a prohibition on thanking – charmer Janina Karmazienė believes that the patient cannot say thank you because if he/she says so, the charm will be void (LTRF cd 740/27). If the patient thanks the charmer, the latter responds with the formula “Do not thank, let it help!” (LTRF cd 749). It is a usual practice in Belarus and Lithuania that charmers heal without compensation; many examples can be given (Vaitkevičienė 2008: 52, 93; Būgienė 2010: 73; Лобач, Філіпенка 2006: 88, 90). The same attitude towards payments is well known among charmers throughout Europe. According to Owen Davies, in France the gift of charming was not commercial and no formal payments were made – the client must not, above all, say thank you, because that would risk breaking the charm (Davies 2004: 93). In England the patients should never say thank you or give any direct cash payment for their treatment; it was a “law” of traditional charming which distinguished charmers from cunning folk (Davies 1998: 44).

It should be noted that although charmers refuse remuneration for their healing, the patient's code of ethics, which exists alongside that of the charmer, binds the patient to express gratitude in a certain way. As in the case with the charmer, this obligation is associated with power – it is believed that if you fail to remunerate the charm, it will not be helpful. The conflict in the charmer's and patient's attitudes is regulated by means of the introduction of gifts: gifts refer to a kind of payment which the charmer receives without requesting or even when objecting. It is an archaic pattern of social communication: to interchange gifts and services instead of direct payment (Mauss 1996). This pattern mainly works in rural communities where charmers and their patients are related by a network of gifts and services. An example can be given from Newfoundland, Canada, where descendants of emigrants from Britain and Ireland continue to practice charming to the present day. According to Martin Lovelace, “rural

society in Newfoundland remains a finely calibrated system of favours given and repaid. ... Some way of giving compensation for charming would easily disappear within the myriad acts of assistance, like help with getting firewood, car repairs, or sharing meat from a hunting trip, which continue in Newfoundland life to the present” (Lovelace 2011: 39–40).

Most often patients in Gervėčiai would try to remunerate the charmer by giving food – a piece of ham, bacon or eggs. Jania Kuckienė (Girios village, b. 1934), whose mother and mother-in-law were renowned charmers, related how people would bring presents to them, such as sweets, a kerchief or even a penny or two. However, they were not very eager to take these presents and would say that they were healing on God’s account and not for payment⁷. People who wanted to repay the charmer sought to leave presents unnoticed, would put them on the table and leave (LTRF cd 753-03).

Not only food but also textiles were given as presents. The renowned charmer Paulina Mockienė from Galčiūnai village would receive towels or a piece of cloth for her treatment (LTRF cd 747). People would bring sweets, cookies or material to make clothes to Anelė Buckienė from Gudininkai (LTRF cd 756).

Money is also mentioned as possible means of payment, however, in the cases of monetary remuneration the attitude was that on no condition could a price be set or pre-negotiated and the patient pays as much as he/she can and wishes to. Charmers from Gudininkai Elena Barauskienė (1899–1987) and her daughter-in-law Leonarda Barauskienė (1925–2005) would never request remuneration but sometimes would “receive a rouble or two” (LTRF cd 761). Šimas Augulis from Peliagrinda would take as much as the patient can pay and if he/she is unable to pay, then he would take nothing (LTRF cd 537/6). Similarly Agota Jakavickienė would not request remuneration but people strived to leave money (LTRF cd 559/4–5).

Gifts and money (and especially money) cannot become the source of income allowing the charmer to live comfortably. Charmer Mania Laurinavičienė told Ona Reketienė (Rimdžiūnai village, b. 1936), who came to her for help, that she could not take money as in a dream she saw her late mother and she told her not to take money for charming because the charm may be ineffective. And if she did not take money, she would make good for both – the patient and the charmer. M. Laurinavičienė claims that people sometimes slander charmers, believing that monetary reward is taken for healing but this is not true as the charmer is rewarded by God rather than by people (LTRF cd 748/35).

CONCLUSIONS

The research in the community of Gervėčiai revealed that to date the practice of charming remains part of social reality significant in people’s lives not only in terms of healthcare but also in terms of the social and religious life. Charmers are individuals who gain respect and reputation within the community for their actual help in the treatment of stubborn illnesses. In line with the charmer’s ethical code, they never refuse to heal and do so without remuneration, thus being viewed by patients and their relatives as highly principled people. In addition, charmers emerge as individuals who represent religion, although the church has not authorised them to take the responsibility. People who do not know charmers and have never turned to them for help are often suspicious and distrustful of them as they have no personal experience (often their opinion is influenced by the media, which tends to paint charmers in a bad light).

The tendency to pass charms to direct progeny or close relatives suggests that charms are listed among family values. The fact that charms are transmitted not to a random offspring but rather to the first- or last-born child allows the assumption that family members are differentiated not only from the point of view of power, but also from the functional aspect, as the first- or last-born children are dedicated to healing and sacred activity. Bearing in mind the fact that in Lithuania the first-born or the last-born child inherited ownership of their parents’ land and house, a presumption can be made that traditionally families strove to retain charms in the same house, passing them on to family members who lived there.

A comparison of different periods revealed that the tradition of charming is in rapid decline. In Gervėčiai this decline is additionally accelerated by the fact that the average age of the representatives of the local community is rather high – the majority of Lithuanians residing there are around 70-80 years of age and most of their children have left and are no longer part of the local community. Therefore very few charmers have the possibility to pass their charms to their children and grandchildren because the attitude of the latter towards charming is totally different.

Despite the above-listed facts, charming in Gervėčiai is still being practiced. The statistical comparison of charmers and doctors, which revealed that the number of charmers per capita exceeds that of doctors, suggests that in the Gervėčiai area the tradition of charming sustains its status as an important social phenomenon.

NOTES

- ¹ Fieldwork was conducted as part of fieldwork sessions organised between 2010 and 2012 by Vilnius University and aimed at linguistic, historic, ethnographic, and folkloristic examination of the Lithuanian enclave (the organiser of the fieldwork sessions was Saulė Matulevičienė). The article is mainly based on the author's audio recordings stored in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives (LTRF cd 531–561, LTRF cd 738–778). In addition, materials collected by other participants in the fieldwork sessions have been analysed, mainly an interview with charmer Mania Laurinavičienė from Gėliūnai conducted by folklorist Saulė Matulevičienė (LTRF cd 779) and data collected by pharmacist Ugnė Gudelytė (LTRF cd 610–683), etc.
- ² Two fieldwork sessions were organised in Gervėčiai in 1970 by the Institute of the Lithuanian Language and Literature and the Lithuanian Society of Regional Studies (Lietuvos kraštotyros draugija). The collections of the fieldwork sessions are stored in the Lithuanian Folklore Archives; many of them are used in my research: LTR 4111, 4151, 4153, 4155, 4156, 4160, 4161, 4224, 4226, 4227, 4232.
- ³ The calculation covers general practitioners and medical specialists. The statistics quoted concerning doctors is based on World Health Organization data. See <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.PHYS.ZS> [checked on 15/06/2013].
- ⁴ I do not mean migratory Christian charms here, which are widespread across Europe and beyond.
- ⁵ Told by Jozefa Jančis' daughter Jania Staniulienė, 71 years of age, residing in Padvariai village, Šalčininkai district. Recorded by Daiva Vaitkevičienė, Inga Butrimaitė, Asta Skujytė, Julija Ladygienė in 2013.
- ⁶ According to Lina Būgienė (2010: 75–76), who investigated charming in eastern Lithuania, charmers believe that their ability to help people comes from God and they take responsibility to act in the name of God. The concept of faith keeps repeatedly popping up in interviews with charmers, and is endowed with particular importance and meaning in their narratives and stories about themselves and their power (Būgienė 2010: 79).
- ⁷ Owen Davies gives a similar example from England: according to the charmer Luke Page, "you got to take no thanks, but thank the Almighty, and keep it to your-self". According to Davies, "this rule presumably derived from the belief that these charms and the ability to charm were divine gifts, and as such should, in turn, be given freely to those who required it" (Davies 1998: 44).

REFERENCES

- Būgienė, Lina 2010. Rytų Lietuvos kultūrinė tradicija: keli užkalbėtojo paveikslo bruožai. In: *Tautosakos darbai*, t. 40, pp. 66–79.
- Conrad, Joseph L. 1987. Bulgarian Magic Charms: Ritual, Form, and Content. In: *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 31/4, pp. 548–562.

- Davies, Owen 2004. French Charmers and Their Healing Charms. In: Jonathan Roper (ed.), *Charms and Charming in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 91–112.
- Davies, Owen 1998. Charmers and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century. In: *Folklore*, 109, pp. 41–52.
- Dobrovolskaya, Varvara 2011. Ritual Prohibitions and Prescriptions for Performing Charms (based on data from Vladimir Oblast). In: *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light. Proceedings of the Conference of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research's (ISFNR) Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming 27–29th October 2011*. Moscow: Probel-2000.
- Kõiva, Mare 1996. The Transmission of Knowledge among Estonian Witch Doctors. In: *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, 2, 42–72. Online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7592/FEJF1996.02.docdoc>
- Lovelace, Martin 2011. Immateria Medica: Charmers and their Communities in Newfoundland. In: *Incantatio: An International Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming*, 1, pp. 36–47. http://folklore.ee/incantatio/Incantatio_2011_1_Lovelace.pdf
- Mansikka, Viljo Johannes 1929. *Litauische Zaubersprüche*. FF Communications, No. 87. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Mauss, Marcel 1999. *The gift: the form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Passalis, Haralampos 2011. Secrecy and Ritual Restrictions on Verbal Charms Transmission in Greek Traditional Culture. In: *Incantatio: An International Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming*, 1, pp. 7–24. http://folklore.ee/incantatio/Incantatio_2011_1_Passalis.pdf
- Roper, Jonathan 2005. *English Verbal Charms*. FF Communications, No. 288. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Vaitkevičienė, Daiva 2008. *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms*. Compiled and edited by Daiva Vaitkevičienė. Introduction by Daiva Vaitkevičienė. Copyedited by Milda Norkaitienė. Translated into English by Laima Vincė Sruoginis. Vilnius: the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore.
- Vaz da Silva, Francisco 2003. Iberian Seventh-Born Children, Werewolves, and the Dragon Slayer: A Case Study in the Comparative Interpretation of Symbolic Praxis and Fairytales. In: *Folklore*, 114, pp. 335–353.
- Барташэвіч, Г. А. 2005. Знахар. In: *Беларускі фальклор: энцыклапедыя*. Мінск: Беларуская энцыклапедыя імя Петруся Броўкі, pp. 547.
- Лобач, Уладзімір, Філіпенка, Уладзімір, 2006. *Полацкі этнаграфічны зборнік*, выпуск 1. Народная медыцына беларусаў Падзвіння, частка 2. Складальнікі Уладзімір Лобач, Уладзімір Філіпенка. Наваполацк: ПДУ.
- Памяць 2004. *Памяць. Астравецкі раён*. Рэдактар: Пашкоў Г. П. Мінск: Беларуская энцыклапедыя.
- Толстая, С. М. 1999. Заговоры. In: *Славянские древности: этнолингвистический словарь* под редакцией Н. И. Толстого, т. 2. Москва: Международные отношения, pp. 239–244.

ARCHIVE SOURCES

LTR – Lithuanian Folklore Archives at Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, manuscripts

LTRF – Lithuanian Folklore Archives, sound recordings

About the author

Daiva Vaitkevičienė, PhD, is a Senior Researcher at the Department of Folk Narrative in the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore. Her research field covers Baltic mythology, folk beliefs and narratives, verbal charms, and ethnomedicine.

Since 1999 Daiva Vaitkevičienė has been investigating charms and has drawn up a typological system of Lithuanian charms. She has compiled and edited a typological folklore publication *Lithuanian Verbal Healing Charms* (2008).

PLICA POLONICA IN BELARUSIAN BELIEFS AND INCANTATIONS

Tatsiana Valodzina

Apparently, there is no disease that attracts so much attention from researchers (both medical doctors and ethnographers) as *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*, the Polish plait). However, to this day there is no generally accepted solution regarding the etiology and history of the disease, which manifests itself in entangled hair and is accompanied by rheumatic pains, sores, rash, crooked nails, blurred vision, as well as attacks of nerves, spasms and increased heart rate. This article will feature Belarusian materials that represent the eastern extent of the area of beliefs related to *Plica Polonica*. The article is based on the folklore and ethnographic data collected by the author over the past 20 years, and aims to analyse the ontology of the disease named *kautun*, its involvement in human communication both with the body and with non-human beings. The article also provides comments on the historical evolution of beliefs and magical practices associated with the *Plica*.

Key words: Belarusian ethnomedicine, healing ritual, *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*), incantations, contemporary beliefs, ethnographic fieldwork.

CAUSES OF PLICA POLONICA IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Apparently, there is no disease that attracts so much attention from researchers (both medical doctors and ethnographers) as *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*, the Polish plait). By the mid-nineteenth century over 900 (!) research articles had been published and their number increased steadily. In 1843 Beschorner, director of the first asylum in Poland, published a large population-based study. However, to this day there is no generally accepted solution regarding the etiology and history of the disease, which manifests itself in entangled hair and is accompanied by rheumatic pains, sores, rash, crooked nails, blurred vision, as well as attacks of nerves, spasms and increased heart rate. One of the first researchers of the disease, Kajetan Kowakewski, wrote in 1839: “The plica is almost entirely confined to certain countries. It occurs in Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Hungary, Silesia, Transylvania, and Prussia. It is also occasionally met with in different parts of Germany; along the Rhine, Switzerland, in Holland and Paris” (Morewitz 2007). This article will feature Belarusian materials that represent the eastern extent of the area of beliefs related to *Plica Polonica*.

This article aims to analyse the ontology of the disease named *Plica (kautun)*, its involvement in human communication both with the body and with non-human beings. It also provides comments on the historical evolution of beliefs and magical practices associated with the *Plica*. The folklore and ethnographic data from across Belarus were collected by the author over the past 20 years and represent the boundaries of research covering the traditional Belarusian medicine.

In his notes on his journey through the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the second half of the 18th century, Englishman William Coxe provides information on the disease:

In our progress through this country we observed several persons with matted or clotted hair which arises from a disorder called Plica Polonica: it receives that denomination, because it is considered as peculiar to Poland; although it is not infrequent in Hungary, Tartary, and several adjacent nations, and instances of it are occasionally found in other countries. According to the observations of Dr. Vieat, an ingenious Swiss physician long resident in Poland, who has published a treatise on this subject; the Plica Polonica proceeds from an acrid viscous humour, penetrating into the hairs: it then exudes from its sides or extremities, and clots the whole together, either in separate folds, or in one undistinguished mass. The symptoms, more or less violent, according to the constitution of the patient, or malignity of the disease, are itching, swellings, eruptions, ulcers, intermitting fevers, pains in the head, languor, lowness of spirits, rheumatism, gout; sometimes convulsions, palsy, and madness. The Plica Polonica appears to be a contagious distemper, which, like the leprosy, still prevails among a people ignorant in medicine, and inattentive to check its progress; but is rarely known in those countries where due precautions are taken to prevent its propagation. Its contagion is probably prevented from spreading among the Russians by the use of the vapour bath.¹

Nineteenth century ethnographers associated the disease with a characteristic climate and life in the marshes, a lack of proper hygiene combined with hard work, fright, and the evil eye, among other causes. “The Polish plait is generated by poverty, damp and poorly constructed dwellings, wearing a warm hat on unbrushed hair, both in winter and in summer, as well as general uncleanness” (Толстой 1983: 6); “Marshes are a true curse of this region (Polesye), having an extremely negative impact on the health of its inhabitants. All sorts of diseases, terrible fever, typhoid, tuberculosis are common among the miasma of the swamp. Besides, a terrible disease unknown elsewhere has built its

nest here – plica. Plica is the result of an acute unthriftiness suffered by many Belarusians. Every hair on the human head is filled with pus, and they all are entangled into a hideous mass, which can be neither touched nor scratched or washed, and has to be worn wrapped in a linen bag. Plica is accompanied by aches, sores, rash, crooked fingernails and an ingrown eyelid” (СНО 1904: 5).

Educated Europeans were actively involved in the fight against the Polish plait, viewing it as superstition and a result of uncleanness. William Davidson (1583–1669), the physician to the Polish King John Casimir after 1651, mercilessly cut plaits, telling the patients to wash their hair and use a comb. The court physician of King John III Sobieski, Irishman Bernard O’Connor (1666–1698), and a Jewish physician Tobias Cohen (1652–1729), also treated their patients by removing the neglected hair. In Galicia, *Plica Polonica* became less visible after Dr. Józef Dietl spread rumours that wearing a Polish plait would be taxed (Gaḡol, Herman). Yet, the statement that “the plica disappeared after in the second half of the 19th century the last doctors who believed in it had died”² (Gaḡol, Herman) seems somewhat presumptuous, especially taking into account the huge number of folk expedition records of recent decades in Belarus (Валодзіна 2007: 410–432, Володина 2008). The rich mass of data related to Polish traditions were analysed in a work by Marczewska (2012: 113–149).

PLICA POLONICA AND THE PRACTICE OF MAGIC

Obviously, the Polish plait is not only a phenomenon of a purely medical nature, but also a whole complex of mythological beliefs. Irreversibly entangled hair was also associated with causes of a supernatural nature, often manifested in the context of imitative magic: the *Plica* was correlated with spinning at Christmas (Богданович 1895: 89), hair washing to commemorate the beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a bat getting into one’s hair (Никифоровский 1897: 188), lost hair being picked up by a bird or a mouse and bedeviling crops in the fields with the magic rite of *zalom*³. The crop and vegetable allusions of the *Plica* are most obvious, especially against the background of mythological and poetic comparisons of hair with vegetation in general. Related texts starting with *zalom* strongly refer to crops, which can serve as a reason for the *Plica*:

Залом дзелалі на полі, тады і на галаве будзе, скруціцца і нічым яго не расчэшаш.
А то расчэшаш і памрэш. Чараўніца як робіць залом, тваё імя скажа. Той кусок не чапалі. А як зачэпіць, стане галава балець. У каго каўтун, дык ей гаворуць: мусіць, залом зжала.

Zalom was made in the field, and then it will be in the hair, too, it will be entangled and it can never be brushed. And if you brush it, then you will

die. When the sorceress is doing zalom, she says your name. That part was not touched. If it is touched, then you will have a headache. Whoever has kautun, she is told: you have probably reaped a zalom.

In Sluck district, *kautun* (the *Plica*) is the name for *zalom* in the field:

Завілі жыта, эта ж мне зрабілі ўрэд, каб каўтун быў. Каўтун. Эта жыта, дык я яго дажа не хачу жаць, а кругом абажну і хай яно стаіць. Патаму што будзе каўтун. Валасы так о скруцяцца, хай Бог прашчае, што я пакажу, скруцяцца, і цэлы год. І галава баліць, усе. Эта ж кажуць, каўтун у яе звіўса. Эта, кажуць, каўтун нехта завіў на полі. Эта каб у хазяйкі завіўся каўтун. Не зжыналі гэты каўтун, так ён і стаіць, і стаіць.

*They have entangled rye, they did it to harm me so that I had kautun. Kautun. This is rye, then I do not want to even reap it and I will reap around it and let it stand. Because I will have kautun. My hair will be entangled just about like this, God forgive me that I will show how, it will be entangled for the whole year. And your head aches, that's it. For they say, "she has kautun". They say someone has twisted kautun in the field. This is done to make kautun on the lady's head. They would not reap this kautun, so it remained standing.*⁵

Moreover, *Plica* therapy is correlated with crop-related manipulations:

– А які час выбіралі, каб зняць каўтун?

– Як жыто стоіць на полю, стропы, тоді можна знімаці. Зжато да стропы стаяць.

– *And what time was chosen to remove kautun?*

– *As the crops are standing in the field, harvested, then it can be reaped. Reaped and the stubble is standing.*⁶

Коўтун нада год вынаўсць. Если год вынасила, и нада ити ў поле, када зажынають жыта, и нажать первый сноп и посадить с тыми валасами бабу и ўже можна знімати.

*Kautun should be worn for a year. If you can wear it for a year, then you should go to the field when rye is starting to be harvested and reap the first sheaf and put the woman with the hair there and then you can remove it.*⁷

In the western part of the European area of distribution of *Plica*-related beliefs the disease is clearly correlated with an intervention of a demonic character, including terminology and etiologic identification. A demon provokes a mat, which is named after the demon: the Slovak *škrat*, *škratek*, ‘spirit bringing wealth’, and *škratec* (*Plica*) (Hoffmann-Krayer, Bächtold-Stäubli 1935/1936:

1286), the Czech *skřítek* (*skřrotek*, *koltun*) (Vyhlídal 1900: 192); the Silesian and Moravian *mamunik* (Bartoš 1906: 191). The Kashubian word *pikas* has two meanings, ‘*Plica*’ and ‘evil spirit’: *zadac komus pikusa*, “instil a disease and the evil spirit in a person” (Sychta 1970: 271), see also the Lithuanian *pūkys* (“in some regions (for example the Klaipėda region) Aitvaras bears the name *pūkys*” (Грэймас 2003: 70)), which is probably linked to the German name for a household demon *Puck*. Bezljaj does not rule out the Serbo-Croatian name for *Plica*, *vilovina*, which is derived from *vila* “witch” (Bezljaj 1982: 317).

Particularly evident is the correlation of *Plica* Polonica with demons in the German tradition, where hair entanglement is attributed to almost all mythological chthonic characters, their names suggesting the names for the disease: cf. as synonymous *Alp-*, *Druden-*, *Hexen-*, *Hollen-*, *Mahr-*, *Schrätelns-*, *Trollenzopf*, *Alpklatte*, *Alpschwanz*, *Bilwistzote*, *Haarschrötel*, *Hollerkopf*, *Mahr-flechte*, *-klatte*, *-locke*, *-zotte*, the English *Elflock*, the Swedish *Martofva* (Höfler 1899: 901). The Balts attribute the functions of a pathogenic demon to a spirit named *Aitvaras* who brings wealth, see Greimas (Грэймас 2003: 78–80), as well as a quote from Rozenbaum’s report: “The Lithuanian night spirit *Aitvaras*, the Polish *wieszczka* or the white *Pani* (mermaid) and the night spirits *Koltki*, *Skrzot* have in folk beliefs an occupation of tangling hair, and since *Wieszczycze*, *Koltki*, *Koltun* were also used to name a disease, which as a result of a demon’s wrath could not be cured medically, according to the beliefs accepted at the time” (Rosenbaum 1838: 550).

The magic and demonic nature of the Polish plait is visible in the causes related to the intentional actions of sorcerers:

Эта насыльная. Эта людзі насылаюць, і калтун завіваецца. І яго віражай не віражай, а ён усіраўно будзя зьвівацца. Эта нада малітву чытаць, каб удаліўся. *It's a jinx. This is said by people and kautun is spun. And if you try to cut it or not, it will be spun anyway. You should say a prayer to remove it.*⁸

Гаварілі, што яна ўмеець паддзелаваць, дык у яе вырас такі каўтун. У яе такі рог баў, як падвяжаць хусткай. Так і хадзіла. Платок завязаць, а ён як рог тарчыць. *They said she could do magic, then kautun grew on her head. She had such a horn when she wore a kerchief. So she was walking around like this. She wore a kerchief, and it stuck out like a horn*”), with “the evil wind blowing over the head.”⁹

– А калтун? Ці чулі вы такое?

– А я насіла. Віхор падкруціў. Вот я сена грабіла і віхор закруціў. І так во сена было перада мной, і схваціў гэта сена і чуць не са мной. І я яшчэ тая ж дура была – маладая саўсем. Яшчэ пайшла гэта сена пазбірала і назаўтра захварэла.

Круціла мяне, вярцела мяне ўсяк, усе косці вярцела, тады ўжо дажа хадзіла, як сарока скакала. Павязлі мяне ў Докшыцы да дзеда. Дзед нада мной пачытаў і сказаў не расчосвацца і запусціць калтун.

– *And what about kautun? Have you heard about it?*

– *Well, I wore one. A whirlwind twirled it. I was raking hay and the whirlwind twisted it. And so the hay was in front of me, and it grabbed the hay just near me. And I was still silly – quite young. I came back to rake the hay and the next day I was ill. It twisted me and spun me as it is, every bone was twisted, then I could still walk, jumped like a magpie. They took me to an old man in Dokshytsy. The man whispered a spell above me and told me not to brush my hair and let kautun grow.*¹⁰

Thus, the European perspective is dominated by understanding the Plica as a result of malicious actions by demons and sorcerers.

INTERNAL PLICA

In the Belarusian tradition, however, there are only a few cases of the Polish plait being caused by the intervention of evil forces. In most records, it is attributed to the eruption of an inner substance (inherent in every human being) under the influence of a number of factors:

У любога чалавека ёсь каўтун, толькі яго нада ўстрывожыць, узнервіць, устаўчы. З бальных нерваў, з бальшого іспуга.

*Every person has kautun, it only should be woken up, flurried, squeezed. Because of nerves, huge fright.*¹¹

Каўтун пры кождому чоловікові есь: пры кому – плачам, пры кому – сном, пры кому – песнямі. Не трэба трогати.

Kautun is in every man: in crying, in sleep, in songs. It must not be touched. (Страхов 2005: 194)

Каўтун? Эта ж ён – да сарака год яго няма, а пасяля сарака ён у кождага. Эта ж тыя самыя нервы. У аднаго яны такія, а ў другога такія. Хто сільна растроіцца, тады каўтун выб’ецца наверх, тады яму і лягчэй.

*Kautun? This is, you do not have it until you are forty, and after forty everyone has it. This is the very nerves. They can differ. Whoever is really worried, then kautun will rise up, and then he feels easier.*¹²

Such representations were known to the Poles, who argued that every person from birth had a *goścca* (internal *Plica*), which is localised in the blood or

bones, and makes itself felt through different pains (Biegeleisen 1929: 263–271, Marczevska 2012: 115).

Such an understanding of the phenomenon as a pathological manifestation (eruption) of vital potency and forces inherent in human beings is confirmed by contemporary records from the beginning of the century when uncleanness or self-neglect are not factors to be considered. It is essential that *Plica Polonica*, perceived as a human counterpart, is therefore described in human terms. However, it bears the opposite sign and is perceived as a dead being, called *nezhyts* (‘lifeless’, ‘dead’):

Бывае чаго-та захоча зьесь, а яму не дасі, бывае і каўтун, бывае і сухата. Помню я: пашла з пакойнай мамкай у Лоеў, а чалавек прадаваў мед. “Мамачка, меду хочу! Мамачка, купі стаканьчык меду”. А за што было купіць той маці? А купіла, я тут на месьце яго і зьела. Значыць, мне трэба было. Значыць, нежыць у чалавека трэбуе. У чалавека е што-та такое, што трэбуецца яму, і з’есць, і выпіць, і ўсё.

*Sometimes you want to eat something, and you don’t, then there is kautun and tuberculosis. I remember I was in Loyeў with my late mother, and there was a man selling honey. “Mommy, I want some honey! Mommy, buy me a glass of honey.” And for what could that mother buy it? And she bought it, and I ate it right there. So I needed it. So the nezhyts’ troubles the man. The man has something that requires it, to eat and to drink, and everything.*¹³

Notably, the Polish plait in a person could cause a desire for food, or, conversely, a ‘protest’ against certain food products. There are many records of *Plica Polonica* accompanied by food abnormalities, when certain foods aggravate the disease and others, on the contrary, alleviate its symptoms.

Каўтун у каго – якую яду любіць ці ня любіць, гэта ня ён, а каўтун ні прымаіць. *Whoever has kautun – what kind of food he likes or dislikes, it is not him but kautun that would not take it.*¹⁴

Яна захацела чаго-та зьесьці і не зьела таго. Есьлі чалавек захацеў што-та... Ён у кождага чалавека ёсь, калтун. Толька не ва ўсех ён выяўляецца. Панімаеця, не ва ўсех. Есьлі чалавек што-та захацеў, нада хоць раз у рот уклаць, хлібнуць, і то ўсё будзецц нармальна. Вот. А тая жэншчына... У яе такі вырас калтун, хай Бог мілуець. Нада прасіць, каб вышаў: Калтун, калтуночак, родненькі браточак, выхадзі, калтун, на пяскі, на каменьне, на сухое кареньне. Тут табе ня быць, не хадзіць, (імя) рецівога серца не знабіць. Не сам аж я сабою, Госпадам Богам, Прячистая Матушка на помашч. Вот так трі раза нада прагуваріваць.

– А як адрэжаш?

– Нельзя яго резаць. Ён дужа гняўлівы, ён магець даць і на серца ці на глаза, ці на галаву. Яго адгваріваеш. Ён сам па сабе даўжон адхадзіць, паціхоньку, паціхонечку. А патом касу эту нельзя кідаць дзе зря. Яго нада браць у беленькі платочак, заварачаваць і кідаць пад Пасху, як Усенашная, на речку, па речку штоб пашоў. Лі жа занасіць на чердак. Адна перекладзіна, як рясэтнік во, вы панімаеця? Другая, і за трэцюю перекладзінку яго лажыць. І хай там ляжыць. А дзе ён дзенецца, адзін Бог знаець.

– *She wanted something to eat and did not eat it. If a man wanted something... Every man has it, kautun. Only not everyone has it opened. You see, not everyone. If a man wanted something, he must at least once put something in his mouth, swallow it, and then everything will be fine. That's it. And that woman... She grew such kautun, God have mercy. You have to ask it to leave: kautun, little kautun, dear brother, come out, kautun, on sand, on the rocks, on dry roots. You will not be here, you will not walk here, will not shiver the heart of the proud (name). Not by myself, in Christ's name, Virgin Mary, help. That's how you should repeat it three times.*

– *And if you cut it off?*

– *You cannot cut it. It can be very angry, it can cause pain in your heart and eyes, or the head. You talk it out. It should leave itself, bit by bit. And then kautun should not be thrown out. It should be taken in a little white handkerchief, wrapped and thrown out at Easter, during the vigil, to the river, so that it could leave in the river. Or take it to the attic. One spoke, where the lattice is, you see? The second, and put it behind the third spoke. And let it lie there. And where it will go, only God knows.¹⁵*

In contemporary context, there exist numerous explanations of the phenomenon as a result of a nervous breakdown:

– Эта нежыць, нежыць, эта цяпер кажуць “нервы”, а то нежыць. Нежыць – што-та есь такое ў жываце. Залатнік-нежыць падходзіць пад грудзі. А каўтун – на галаву выходзіці. Тожа ат нервеннай гэтай сісьцемай. Эта ўсё – нада спакойна сябе весь, только каб не плакаць, а то раструбіць голаву, уб’еш серца.

– А тая нежыць у кожнага чалавека?

– У кожнага чалавека, у кожнага.

– *This is a nezhyts', nezhyts', you now say “nerves” and it's a nezhyts'. The nezhyts', it is something in your stomach. Zalatnik-nezhyts' goes to the chest. Kautun comes out of your head. It's also because of the nervous system. This is all, you should be quiet, only not to cry, or then you worry your head and kill your heart.*

– *And that nezhyts' is in every person?*

– *In every person, in everyone.¹⁶*

These views help understand the motives of verbal charms aimed at taming the *Plica*-demon and returning it to the proper place in the body: “Я ж цябе прашу, табе смачна есці даю, мякку пасцель сцялю, цябе, каўтуна, спаць кладу... Стаць, табе, каўтунок, угадзіць, абнаравіць на сваём месечку, на залатом крэслечку” (“I beg you, I give you tasty food, lay you a soft bed, put you, *kautun*, to sleep... May you be, little *kautun*, please you, tame you on your place, on a chair of gold”) (Барташэвіч 1992: 244). Probably, in accordance with such ideas, after the person's death, the *Plica* must re-join him or her in order to restore the ‘original’ integrity:

Паложуць дзе за іконку каўтун, як знімуць, а як памру, дык і ў гроб мне ўкладуць.

They will put kautun somewhere behind the icon, after they cut it, and when I die, then they will put it to my coffin.¹⁷

Ну, она умэрала, йон узяў одрызаў ей того куўтуна. Одрізаў да кажэ: Я ў садочку закопаў. А она ему сныцца да сныцца: Сынок, прыняси ты мні голоўу мою, зняў да куда ты дэў. Прыняси мне назад. И кажэ, мусіў выкопваты и нэсты на могицы закопваты матэры. И тоўды нэ стало сныцца.

Well, she was dying, he cut that kautun. He cut it off and said: I've buried it in the garden. And he keeps seeing her in his dreams: 'Son, bring me my head, you took it and put it somewhere. Bring it back to me.' And he said he had to dig it out and took it to the cemetery to dig it next to his mother. And then he stopped seeing her in his dreams.¹⁸

Incantations against *Plica Polonica* predominantly address it as an animate being accentuating expressions of relationship:

Каўтун-каўтунічка, мая родная сястрычка, не б’емса мы, не сварэмса мы, да за ручкі пабярэмса мы, да хадзем мы ў чыстае полечка, там столічкі пазасыціланы, кубачкі паналіваны. Сіняе і зялёнае віно мы расьпівалі, каўтуна і каўтуніцу разганялі і на чыстую воду пускалі.

Kautun, little [female] kautun, my dear sister, we do not fight, we do not argue, we will join our hands, we go to the field, there the tables are laid and the cups are full. We drank blue and green wine, we chased kautun and little [female] kautun and put it in clear water.¹⁹

The texts of incantations against the *Plica* imply that it, like other diseases, has been personified, including a certain family hierarchy:

Гаспадару Богу памалюсь, старшаму каўтуну пакланюсь. Старшы каўтун, унімай сваіх прыслуг: дняўных, начных, вадзяных, ветраных...

I will pray to Dear God, I will greet the eldest kautun. "Eldest kautun, tame your servants: day ones, night ones, water ones, wind ones..." (Барташэвіч 1992: 245)

Many texts are based on addressing the disease as a character, often with a clear desire to calm, please or persuade it: "Каўтун, каўтуночак, мой мілы дружочак, а ты ў гэтай галовачцы не сядзі, не ляжы...", ("Kautun, little kautun, my dear little friend, do not be in this little head, do not sit and do not lie..."). *Kautun* (he-*kautun*) and *kautunikha* (she-*kautun*) are sometimes treated as brother and sister, or as a young couple: "Kautun, kautunitsa, boy and girl, you are not many, only two" (Барташэвіч 1992: 246).

Another interesting fact is that *Plica Polonica* in the popular imagination is endowed with the capacity for independent living, even outside the human body.

Прыхадзіла дзядзіна, дык яна казала, што ей зьнялі ды ня воўрамя. Дык нада браць хустачку сьвежую, з магазіна мацерыялу ці хустачку-высыпаначку, зьвязаць эта і на гару занесла і дзе дзьверы адчыняюцца ў сенцах там з крохвінай. А тады прашло сколькі ўрэмя, нешта ей задумалася, яна палезла. Аж ён вырас, ажно ў хусту ня лез. Сам па сабе. Патаму што не дарос тут. А есьлі б яны абрэзалі непраўільна, магла б памерці ці паралізаваць. І яшчэ адна баба, у яе дзьве касы было. Што-та ей цяне галаву. Цяне, дак яна адрэзала косы і прывезла к бацькам, тут бацькі жылі. Яна прывезла, пагладзіла косы свае і палажыла ў шуфляду і кажа: "Мае красавіцы, аддыхайця і мая галава хоць аддыхне". Ну і ўсё. Яна па восені абрэзала, а вясной адкрыла шуфляду ў шкапу, паляджу, дзе мае красавіцы. Аж там такі во камяк ляжыць, зьбіў каўтун у камяк, зьбіў. Эта ў Лянёўцы было. Яна атрэзала, што каўтун астаўся тут, у косах. Адчыніла, а там каўтун, камяк. Закапавалі абычна па межах. Паліць іх нельзя.

My uncle's wife came, so she said that they took it off but not in good time. So you should take a fresh kerchief, a cloth from the store or a printed shawl, wrap it and take it to the attic and where the doors open into the hall there with a rafter. And then some time passed, she began to think about it and climbed there. It had grown, it was bigger than a kerchief. By itself. Because it had no time to grow here. And if they had cut it wrong, she could have died or be paralysed. And another woman, she had two braids. Something was annoying her head. So she cut the braids and brought them to the parents, her parents used to live here. She brought them, brushed her braids and put them in a drawer and says: "My beauty, have rest and let my head rest." Well, that's it. She cut them in the autumn and in spring she opened the drawer in the closet to see where her beauty was. And there was such a ball, a mat of hair made by a kautun. This was in Lianioŭka. She cut it and kautun stayed here, in the braids. She

*opened it and there was kautun, a ball. They would usually bury them at the end of the field. You cannot burn them.*²⁰

Perception of *Plica Polonica* in terms of human categories is to some extent influenced by the gender differences in types of *kautuns* although it is the shape of entangled hair that serves as a visual motivation to determine whether it is male or female, a *kautun* or *kautunitsa*: "Есьлі самка – усю голаву круціць, есьлі самец – можа і да пола атрасьці"²¹, ("If it's female, all your head is twisted, if a male it may grow to the floor."), "Каўтуніца зьвівае ўсі валасы. Усі, саб'е во так во, да лба. А каўтун атдзельна. Ён робіцца атдзельна, во такая во паласа"²², ("Kautunitsa entangles all your hair. All of it; mats it like this, up to your forehead. And kautun is apart. It is separated, such a band.")

The identification of the Plica as a part or substance of the body, which is present in each person and which for some reason receives outward manifestations and causes a morbid condition, underlies the ritual practices and incantation motives aimed at establishing equal relations with the disease.

ARTIFICIAL FORMATION OF *PLICA POLONICA*

Ethnographers, although not doctors, drew attention to the fact that *kautun* is not always a disease: "this felted hair was not matted by itself from some poison, germs or dirt, but is the creation of human hands" (Грынблат 1928: 134). A special mat of hair can be used as a remedy for a number of vaguely defined diseases that do not have names in the folk nomenclature and cannot be treated with home remedies. The emergence of a mat of hair can often be seen as a good sign and was not removed at once in order to get rid of internal diseases. Others purposefully attempted to plait a mat so that the disease became external, came out of the person's body and thus eased his or her pain:

У чалавека, прымерна вот у жэншчыны, ломіць цела, галава баліць, усе суставы баляць. Нада запусьціць голаў і не часаць. Мая падруга запусьціла галаву, ён і зьвіўся такі, як рэшата. Яна і год насіла. Ён атышоў, нескалька валасоў толькі дзіржалася. Перад Пасхай атрэзалі тыя валасы.

*A man, for example a woman says her body's aching, her head aching, all joints aching. You need to neglect your hair and stop brushing it. A friend of mine stopped brushing her hair, and it grew as big as a sieve. She wore it for a year. It was then separated, only a few hairs remained. Before Easter they cut that hair off.*²³

Я іспытала сама. З падзіўка бывае, хто завідае. У мяне такое было, што забалела нага, і так мяне палажыла, што я два года лежала. Врачы што не рабілі, нічога

не зьдзелалі. Сказалі – паспрабуйце па бабках. Завезьлі мяне к бабцы. Я ў яе была дзевяць дней. Яна ўтрам і вечарам мне выгаваравала. Нож такі бальшы і перад іконай гаварыла. Як яна выгаварала, сказала: не чашы галаву, запусьці. Сьпераду яно адрастала, а сюды сыходзіў. Сюда спаўзаў. І вот перад Пасхай я к ёй паехала, яна яго зьняла і нада ня перадам, а задам кінучь яго ў печ і спаліць. Каб яно ўсё згарэла. Я так і зьдзелала і ўсё – пашла нармальна.

I have experienced it myself. It happens from an evil eye, when someone envies you. I had it when my leg was aching, and it was so bad that I was lying for two years. The doctors could not do anything. They told me to try a wise woman. They took me to a wise woman. I was there for nine days. She whispered above me in the morning and in the evening. Such a large knife and she whispered before the icon. As she was whispering she said: don't comb your hair, let it grow. It was growing on the front, and here it went off. It crawled down here. And before Easter I went to her, she took it off and you should not face it but with your back to it, throw it in the oven and burn it. So that it should be burnt. So I did this and that's all – I was fine.²⁴

It is curious that one of the earliest reports of *Plica Polonica* indicates that neglecting one's hair is not a disease in the strict sense, but the cure. A letter written by Staringelius, the rector of the Zamojski Academy, to professors of Padua in 1599 says that, “common people are treated by neglecting a mat, which after removal relieves the patient from his infirmity” (Biegeleisen 1929: 256).

A number of ritual practices are aimed at externalising the internal or ‘hidden’ *Plica Polonica*. In order to form a mat, the patient's hair was greased with sticky substances – resin, honey and even “mouse fat”, or a piece of wool from a lamb sheared for the first time was placed inside (Federowski 1897: 390). Objects and plants associated with the idea of spinning or rotation, including lines used to weave fences, could be used, or the hair could be washed with hemp nettle and *vinca* (*Vinca minor*, L.). Items with a high sacral status were also widely used: threads that tied the wedding loaf, or gimp yarn from church vestments.

Removing the *Plica* was strictly prohibited, either on purpose or outside a ritual, as it may result in serious consequences, including the death of the patient:

У мамы быў калтун. З пуду. У вайну, прыдуць з вінтоўкай, мы малыя, і тату к сьцяне стаўлялі. Збіваецца, робіцца, як валенак, звалены з воўны. Сядзім над мамай, расчэшам, расчэшам, разьбяром, ня пройдзець мінут дзесяць, а ў яе ўзноў зьвіўся калтун. Саб'ецца, мы ўзноў. Дык ей тады адбіраець рукі, ногі, як станем разбіраць, у галаву колаць, невазможна. “Не, дзеці, не нада. А то

нічога не вазьму ў рукі”. Тры гады насіла. А тады ён адрас, стаў з'езджаць ужо на плечы, гэты вайлак, яна сама адрэзала. Яна Богу малілася”.

My Mom had kautun. Because of frights. During the war we were small, soldiers would come with rifles, put Dad against the wall. It was matted, becoming like a felt boot. We were sitting above our Mom, brushing and combing her hair, and in less than ten minutes she would have kautun again. When it matted, we start again. She had her arms and legs paralysed as we started undoing it, her head would ache unbearably. “No, children, do not do it. Or I will not be able to hold anything”. She wore it for three years. And then it grew big and began to go down her shoulders, this felt, she cut it off herself. She prayed to God.²⁵

The *Plica* should be first of all looked after, worn for a certain time, whispered to with special spells and then removed.

Thus, the folk medicine complex is characterised by a differentiation between the external *kautun* and the internal *kautun*. Moreover, the entangled hair on the head in some cases was understood as forcing the disease outside and was accompanied by a set of specific magical procedures.

HEALING RITUALS AND INCANTATIONS

A wide range of ways to cure *Plica Polonica* exist including such traditional means as fumigation or pouring wax over the patient's head (Демидович 1896: 126), which is also widely known in the treatment of other diseases. However, the *Plica* should be removed under strict spatio-temporal conditions. The actor (performer) of the rite is a charmer, a wise woman, or in relation to a child, his or her mother, or a person vested in popular beliefs with ritual purity and as a result with a special sacred power: “як чэсная дзяўчына сніміць і пусціць на раку дак не будзець”²⁶, (‘if an honest girl takes it off and lets it float down the river, then it will be over’). Recent fieldwork records provide more frequent cases of a patient or relative removing *Plica Polonica*. Noteworthy is the case of a woman's *Plica* being removed by her deceased relative who appears in a dream and promises to take the mat together with the scalp:

– Коўтуны такія як пальцы, а коўтуница як гэта шепка. У водном месці золле ўсі косы і ўсё.

– А як адразалі?

– Нэльзя рэзаті. У якую пору запусьтыш, носіты. У тебе можа булі? Не? От слухай. У яку пору запусьтыш... У мене зноў зарэ буде. Воны злемчуца. Просто голову одрывае. Пошла в магазін, а там: “Бабушка, дай я тебе отрэжу.

Отрежу тебе і помою, нагрэю воды”. Кажу: “Не дуры ты мне света, голову і жопу. Што ты хочэш, каб я скалічыла? У яку пору запусціла, до такей і буду носіць. Я запусціла перэд Трійцай, до Трійцы буду носіць”. От так. Сныцца мне мая сэструха троюродна, а вона вмэрша, вона мне сныцца: “Ты отрезала коўтуныцу? Ты отрезала коўтуныцу свою?” Я кажу: “Не”. А я ж знаю, што вона ўмэрла. А то гаворыць зо мной. Кажу: “Зося, як жэ ты прышла?” – “А я просто прышла за тобою, коўтуныцу отрэзаті тобі”. А я: “Ты шчо, здуріла?” А вона: “Істінный Господь, праўда, шчо з тілом одрыжу тобі”. А вона вмэрша. Я як налякалас. Я памятаю, шо з гэтаго бока я одрызала ножэм. А боліло так, шо понатягала, шо тыждень голова боліла. Різала ножэм. Яна мне налякала, я гэту сторону отрызала.

Я пошла к сэстрэ. “Манько!” – “Шо такэ?” Кажу: “Бачыш, одін бік одрызаны”. – “А хто ж тобі?” – “Зося прыснілася, шо одрыжа со скурою. ‘Я тобі со скурою отріжу. Бачыш, што вона робыць, шляпу носыць на голове’. ‘Зосечко, мылэнька, сэстрынонько, дэ ты’, – кажу, – ‘осмэртла, там ты зопачывай. Господь з тобою, дай тобі, Божэ, дэ осмэртла, там і зопачывай, з усімі святымі’. Кажу: ‘я отріжу, Зосечко, нэ іді’. ‘А то со шкурой отрежу’, – кажэ. Істінный Господь!”

Я кажу: “Валечко, ратуй. Одріж мне, кажу, коўтуныцу. Зося прыснілася. А я різала – натягла. І, – кажу, – зарэ голова болыць”. Тут племяннік прышоў до еі. Прышоў да кажэ: “Шо тут баба, – кажэ, – мутыць?” – “Прышла коўтуныцу одрызуваць”. – “Дай, – кажэ, – я одрыжу”. Я кажу: “Нехай Валя. Ну бяры, рыж”.

– А дзе яго дзяваць?

– Дэ ёго подыті? Я раней одрызувала да пуд стропіла заткну, а чы іх вороны круцяць, воны і зноў круцяцца. Кажуць, няможна, куда ж мне подеть. Кажэ: у грубу ўкынь да згорыць да і всэ.

– Вы яго так і спалілі?

– Так і спаліла.

– *Kautuns are like fingers and kautunitsa is like a hat. All the plaits will run into one another and that's it.*

– *And how did you cut them?*

– *You can't cut them. In whichever season it appears, you should wear it. You haven't had it? No? Here, listen. Which season it appears... I will have them again. They will be felted. Nearly tear your head off. I went to a store, and there, “Grandma, let me cut if off. I'll cut if off and wash it, boil some water.” I said, “You do not fool me, my head and my ass. Do you want to maim me? Whichever season it started in, until the same season I will wear it. It started before Whitsun, so I will wear it until Whitsun.” That's it. I saw a dream about my second cousin and she was dead by then, so I saw her in my dream: “Have you cut your kautunitsa? Have you cut your kautunitsa?” I say, “No”. And I knew she was dead. And now she*

is speaking to me. I say, “Zosia, how did you come here?” – “I just came for you, to cut your kautunitsa.” And I said, “Are you crazy?” And she: “In God's name, I tell you the truth, I will cut it together with your body.” And she was dead. I was scared to death. I remember that I cut it with a knife from this side. And it ached so much that I was having a headache for a week. It cut me like with a knife. She scared me and I cut that side off with a knife.

I went to my sister. “Manko!” – “What's the matter?” I said, “You see, one side is cut off.” – “And who did that to you?” – “I saw Zosia in a dream, she said she would cut it together with the scalp. ‘I will cut it together with the scalp. See what she is doing, she wears a hat on her head’. ‘Zosia, my dear, my sister, where you are’, I said, ‘all dead, there you should rest, together with all the saints’. I say, ‘Don't come, Zosia, I'll cut it myself. And she said she would then cut it off together with the scalp. In God's name!’

I say, “Valia, save me. Cut my kautunitsa. I saw Zosia in my dream. I tried to cut, but it was bad. And, I say, I have a headache now.” Then her nephew came to her. He came to say, “What is this woman stirring up here?” he said. – “She came to cut her kautunitsa off.” – “Let me cut it,” he said. I said, “Let Valia do it. Well, take it and cut it off.”

– *And where do you put it?*

– *Where do you put it? I used to cut if off and put under the rafter, and when crows twist it, it starts spinning again. They say you can't, where can I put it? They say, put it the stove and it will burn and that's it.*

– *So you burned it like this?*

– *Yes, I burned it.*²⁷

Naturally, the first step in getting rid of the *Plica* was the cutting of the matted hair, which is ritually significant and well developed. Among the more popular were the following actions: burning with hot iron or a hot knife: “a healer took two stones, he put one on *kautun*, and cut it off with the other one²⁸; “You can take it off either with a silver wire, burning each hair, or cutting it off with a stone, not once, but some 20 hairs a day” (Никифоровский 1897: 265); “*Kautun* can only be removed by cutting the plaits with a flint and carefully burning it with a Candlemas candle hair by hair” (Сержпутоўскі 1998: 209). All these actions can be classified by their “fiery”, stony nature, as the *Plica*, as a manifestation of the chthonic, otherworldly forces, was removed only with a *natural* tool – fire, stone, or iron. Sometimes a natural origin is underlined, for example, *kautun* can be cut off with “wild stone” (дзікім камнем):

Наша матка, бывала, лечыць і зніма, лечыць і зніма, а тады гэтыя косы нейкім камнем патаўчэ, дзікім камнем адсякае. Адсякае, на комін параскладае і спаліць, нікагда на вадку не насіла. (Барташэвіч 1992: 509)

Our mother used to treat and remove it, treat and remove, and then she would pound those braids with a stone, cut it with a wild stone. She would cut them, put them on the stove and burn them, she never took them to the water.

Teeth are included in the category of the “natural” as well:

Як у дыты ковтун, яго маты должна одгрысты зубамі. Як одкусыла, не беры рукамі – а толькі плюнь. Тоды ковтун загыбае.

*If a child has kautun, then his mother should bite it off with her teeth. When she bites it off, do not touch it – but only spit it out. Then kautun dies.*²⁹

Such tools as scissors or even a simple knife are not represented in healing practices; they appear only as a result of forgetting tradition. In any case, the ban on using an ordinary knife to cut *kautun* is consistently maintained.

The removed *Plica* should be properly disposed of or destroyed. The burning of the mat was a ritual action: “яго нада занесці спаліць на ростанькі”³⁰, (“It should be taken to a crossroads and burnt”); “на комін каўтун параскладае і спаліць”, (“She would put them on the stove and burn them”) (Барташэвіч 1992: 509); “Баба атрызала у Чысты чытвір ковтуна, спалыла в печы: ‘Нехай ідэ не з огнем, з дымом’ Голову чысто свяцоной водою помыла і дякуй Богу, ныц нэма”³¹ (“A woman cut *kautun* off on Maundy Thursday and burned it in the oven: ‘Let it leave not with the fire, but with the smoke’. She washed her hair with clean holy water and, thank God, all was gone”). Apart from burning, the prescription to send the cut hair downstream on flowing water or to bury it was also popular: they take it to a crossroads and bury it, “закопуюць у тэ місто, де капае з стріхі”³² (“bury it in a place where water is dripping from the roof”) or “закапаць у мурашнік”³³, (“bury it in an ant hill”):

– Ці чулі вы пра калтун?

– Дачушка, я і сама яго насіла.

– А з чаго ён робіцца?

– З пуду, з растройства. Яго нада загавараваць. Бабка мне кніжку на галоўку палажыла, пачытала, а тады коску сплела мне пасярод галавы, маленькую коску, а тады ён як стаў складацца і зрабіўся шапкай такой. Насіла, ездзіла. Знімалі. Зразала, сказала мне: Прывязеш дамоў, спалі яго, кажаць, у вядрэ, а тады, кажаць, у палатняную трапачку, не ў крамную, а ў саматканую чысценькую завярці і закапай на старане, на захад сонца. Папялок той. Я гэдак і зробіла.

– *Have you heard about kautun?*

– *Daughter, I myself wore one.*

– *And why does it appear?*

– *Because of fright, because of nerves. It should be spelled. A wise woman put a book on my head, whispered a bit, and then she wove a plait in the middle of the head, a small pigtail, and then it began to grow and became like a hat. I wore it, walked with it. She cut it off and told me, “You bring it home, burn it,” she says, “in a bucket,” and then, she says, in a linen cloth, not in a cloth from the shop, but in a homemade, neat cloth and dig it at the end of the field, at sunset. Those ashes. That’s what I did.*³⁴

Especially important is an instruction to bury the removed *Plica* deep in dry soil, otherwise “the matted hair will come again”. Equally illustrative are recommendations to bury the matted hair under an aspen tree³⁵ or “under the crane”, the place where the pole falls from the well³⁶.

Sending the *Plica* downriver water, burying or burning it are semantically equal in the intention to send it to the other world and thus to prevent a relapse. The semantics of leaving the *Plica* in the otherworldly space are suggested by such conditions of the ritual as a prohibition on looking back:

Зняты каўтун трэ занесці на растанцы, закапаць у зямлю, трэйко плюнуць і не азіраючыся хутка йсці да гасподы. А калі хто сустрэнецца да загаворыць, та яму не можна нічога адказваць, бо каўтун зноў вернецца да ўзсядзе на таго чалавека, што насіў закапаць каўтун.

The removed kautun should be taken to a crossroads, buried, then you spit at it three times and quickly walk back home without looking back. And if you meet anyone and he talks to you, you cannot answer anything, because kautun will return and sit on the man who took it to bury. (Сержпутоўскі 1998: 209)

The location of the removed *kautun* in the house is fixed at opposite ends of the home’s vertical axis, meaning that it was either carried to the attic, plugged under the top edge of the door, in order to walk under it, or buried under the threshold:

Тады яго нада заткнуць у парога, дзе ходзіш, дзе ходзяць усе людзі. Як уваход, дзе ля дзвярэй, уверсе. Так яго хорашэнька зрабіць, у пакецік і палажыць. У парозе каб ён быў.

*Then it must be plugged at the threshold, where you walk, where all people walk. At the entrance where the door is, at the top. So cut it well, put it in a bag and leave it there. So that it was at the doorstep.*³⁷

У мяне ў самой быў. Я ездзіла ў Гарадок. Там адзін чалавек быў. Даваў вады, а тады сказаў зрэзаць і занесці на канюшню, дзе коні стаяць, і пад крокву на канюшню.

*I myself had one. I went to Haradok. There was one person. He gave me some water, and then he told to cut it and take it to the stables where the horses are, and put it under the rafters in the stables.*³⁸

Спужаўса да коўтун. Тыдзень не расчэшаш і яно зьвіваецца, плёткамі покруціцца, а там усю голову зробіць як горшка. І ходзіш год, а посьле на Усеночнэ отрэзаюць некаторыя да отрэжуць того коўтуна і кідаюць на воду каторыя, а каторыя застрэкаюць дзе дзьверы гэтыя, ото дзе ходзяць, над дзьверамі.

*I was so scared, and I had kautun. If you don't comb it for a week, then it's woven, twist with loops, and there it will make the entire head as a pot. And you wear it for a year, and then during a vigil someone cuts this kautun and throws it into the water, and others put it where the door is, where they walk, over the door.*³⁹

The transparent liminality of the *loci* (crossroads, water, chimney) is continued in the “critical”, boundary characteristic of time. Using the system of the *lunar* cycle: “at old moon *kautun* is cut off”; the *day*: “they take it off at midnight” (Federowski 1897: 390); and the *year*:

У Чыстый чэтвор мэюцца до сходу сонца, коўтунчыкы одбываюць камэньем, у новы платок звязываюць і на бэгучую воду, дэ вода бэжыць, упускаюць тые коўтуны.

On Holy Thursday you should wash before sunset, kautun should be washed with stones, wrapped in a new kerchief and taken to the flowing water, where the water is flowing, and dropped this kautun there. (Толстой 1983: 146)

До Всеночной носять, а на Всеночной ішчуть такіх людей, каторі зрезваць умеюць, да на воду пускаюць.

*You should wear it until the vigil, and at vigil you look for such people who can cut it off, and send it down the river.*⁴⁰

As it can be seen from the calendar system, the most appropriate time for removing the matted hair is the Easter complex, and, above all, Maundy Thursday, as well as the day of baking Easter bread “Здымалы, як пасху пэклы ў пэчы, послі кідалы ў огонь, коб згорыв, пасля булкі ў піч”⁴¹, (“They would take it off when Easter bread was baked, then they would throw it in fire so that it was burned in the stove, after the bread.”)

Interestingly, the beliefs regarding *Plica Polonica* have striking west-east Slavic parallels, including on the very border of the *Plica* area. In particular, in a small area in eastern Belarus the word *kautun* is used to name all sorts of wounds, furunculi and purulent rashes. The Czechs call such skin diseases *koltún mokrý*, while the Poles believe that the *Plica* can manifest itself as a rash and blotches (Marczewska 2012: 115). Both traditions indicate wounds that take a long time to heal and require magic treatment:

Мокра на галаве, такой корачкай забіраецца, апяць кісьнець. Хто чаго захацеў... Вот я захацела яблыка, а мне не прішлося зьесь, вот і калтун. А есьлі зьясі, то ён быстра схадзіў.

*It's wet on the head, it's covered with such a crust, festers again. It depends on what you want... Me, I wanted an apple, and I did not get it, so I had kautun. And if you eat it, then it came off quickly.*⁴²

– А каўтун – бываець на галаве, дзе ўгодна адкладываецца, эта проста мякнець, эта такія болькі. Есьлі не залюбіў. Захацеў чаго-та калавек, дапусьцім, захацела я сахару, а яго не было, вот мне і прікінулась.

– Дык гэты каўтун жывець у чалавеку?

– Жывець, жывець. Вот яму як нечым не ўгадзіш, і ён начынаець сваю эту реакцыю. І тады так во чэшаш галаву і гавораш: “Было на галаве дзвінаццаць калтуноў, стала адзінаццаць, была адзінаццаць, стала дзесяць, была дзесяць, стала дзевяць, была дзевяць, стала восем, была восем, стала сем, была сем, стала шэсь, была шэсь, стала пяць, была пяць, стала чатыры, была чатыры, стала трі, была трі, стала два, была два, стаў адзін, быў адзін, не стала ні аднаго. Ты калтун-калтунішча, сабаку ў хвост укачайся і на маю галаву забывайся. Амін, амін, амін.” Ён можаць у любым месці быць.

– *And kautun, it can be on the head, it can appear anywhere, it's just soft sores. Someone wanted something, let's say I wanted some sugar, and there was no sugar, and that's why I got it.*

– *So this kautun lives in a person?*

– *It lives, it does. If you don't please him somehow it begins its reaction. And then you comb your hair like this and say, “There were twelve kautuns on my head, then there were eleven, there were eleven, then there were ten, there were ten, then there were nine, there were nine, then there were eight, there were eight, then there were seven, there were seven, then there were six, there were six, then there were five, there were five, then there were four, there were four, then there were three, there were three, then there were two, there were two, then there was one, there was one, then there was none. You kautun, big kautun, go to a dog's tail and forget about my head. Amen, amen, amen.” It can be anywhere.*⁴³

The ritual magical healing and removal of the *Plica* are generally in line with the general idea of sending the hostile substance (disease) to the otherworldly loci and the restoration of disturbed bodily harmony.

CONCLUSIONS

The folk beliefs and narratives concerning *Plica Polonica* in Belarus is a logical continuation of the 'classical' European tradition. However, the Belarusian material recorded over the past 20 years enables the researcher to shift the emphasis from the external to the internal causes of the disease. The etiology of the disease is dominated the body's response to the influence of demonological intervention or, more often, disharmony inside the body itself.

The cultural complex of *Plica Polonica* represents a friend – foe dichotomy, which can be displayed on two axes: man – external world (*kautun* as a result of demonic interventions), and man – internal world (*kautun* as part of the human body). In terms of folk anatomy and folk medicine, friends and foes surround a person outside and complement the human being inside. However, the two elements are not opposed within the body, but, by complementing each other, appear as parts of the whole, as the two ends of a single semantic axis with numerous transitional and mutually neutralising zones. Perceptions of *kautun* illustrate the idea that the internal otherworldliness is a necessary part of the microcosm. It is not the negatively marked element, the removal of which people should crave, but a necessary and organically inherent inner 'strange' world, which requires specific regulations and harmony.

Translated from Belarusian by Kanstantsin Staradubets.

NOTES

¹ Вільям Кокс, *Вандроўкі па Вялікім Княстве*. <http://hetman.by/vandroyki-pa-vyalikim-knyastve-vilyam-koks.html>.

² Gałol, J., Herman, G. *O buskich wodach, pewnym rymie i francuskiej chorobie*, <http://geoportal.pgi.gov.pl/portal/page/portal/pgi-os/wiedza/O%20Buskich%20wodach>.

³ *Zalom* is a sheaf of twisted, broken or knotted rye (or other corn) in a field made by malevolent people in order to bring disease or even death to the owner of the field.

⁴ 2001, Dashkaŭka village, Mahiloŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (H.H., b. 1919).

⁵ 2010, Yatchava village, Sluck district, Minsk region (S.S., b. 1926).

⁶ 2007, Balandzitchy village, Ivanava district, Brest region (K.F., b. 1923).

⁷ Malya Aŭciuki village, Kalinkavitchy district, Homiel region. AP.

⁸ 2011, Usochskaia Buda village, Dobrush district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1935).

⁹ 2011, Vialikaia Leshtchanka village, Mscislaŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (P.T., b. 1926).

¹⁰ 2007, Bui village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (C.V., b. 1922).

¹¹ 2010, Falitchy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (U.T., b. 1932).

¹² 2010, Lavy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (L.M., b. 1939).

¹³ 2011, Mochava village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1933).

¹⁴ 2007, Hadziŭla village Lepel district, Viciebsk region (Y.E, b. 1937).

¹⁵ 2012, Trascino village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (A.M., b. 1927).

¹⁶ 2011, Mochava village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (A.M., b. 1933).

¹⁷ 1999, Yushki village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (M.M, b. 1935).

¹⁸ 1985, Lapacin village, Pinsk district, Brest region (S.S., b. 1911). AP.

¹⁹ 2010, Shtchytkaŭka village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (S.F., b. 1924).

²⁰ 2013, Virkau village, Klitchaŭ district, Mahiloŭ region (K.N., b. 1937).

²¹ 2010, Prusy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (S.V., b. 1934).

²² 2010, Kryvanosy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (P.Y., b. 1926).

²³ 2008, Novaia Hrebla village, Brahlin district, Homiel region (P.N., b. 1927).

²⁴ 2011, Malinaŭka village, Loyeŭ district, Homiel region (G.F., 1934).

²⁵ 2006, Bayary village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (H.M., b. 1926).

²⁶ Sviadzica village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (P.V., b. 1912). AP.

²⁷ 2007, Strelna village Ivanava district, Brest region (L.K, b. 1929).

²⁸ 1996, Susha village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (S.M., b. 1910).

²⁹ 2007, Psyahchava village, Ivanava district, Brest region (M.K., b. 1932).

³⁰ Slabada, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (T.A.Y., b. 1924)

³¹ 2004, Zabuzhki village, Kobryn district, Brest region (I.T., b. 1920).

³² Radtchyck village, Stolin district, Brest region (D.N., b. 1914). AP.

³³ 2001, Okana village, Lepel district, Viciebsk region (K.V., b. 1921).

³⁴ 2006, Shklancy village, Dokshytsy district, Viciebsk region (K.K., b. 1915).

³⁵ Zhabchitsa village, Pinsk district, Brest region. AP.

- ³⁶ 2007, Tyshkavitchy village, Ivanava district, Brest region.
- ³⁷ 2010, Lavy village, Staryia Darogi district, Minsk region (L.M., b. 1939).
- ³⁸ 2006, Pola village, Ushatchy district, Viciebsk region (P.V., b. 1936).
- ³⁹ 2011, Dubrova village, Leltchycy district, Homiel region (A.A., b. 1931).
- ⁴⁰ Vierchniya Zhary village, Brahın district, Homiel region. AP.
- ⁴¹ 2004, Padlesse village, Zhabinka district, Brest region (E.G., b. 1922).
- ⁴² 2012, Lipovk village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (M.M., b. 1946).
- ⁴³ 2012, Vietka village, Chocimsk district, Mahiloŭ region (Z.N., b. 1949).

ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Polesie archive of the Department of Ethnolinguistics and Folklore, Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

REFERENCES

- Bartoš, F. 1906. *Dialektický slovník moravský*. Praga: Nákladem České akademie císaře Františka Josefa pro vědy, slovesnost a umění.
- Beschorner, F. 1843. *Der Weichselzopf. Nach statistischen und physiologischen Beziehungen dargestellt*. Breslau: F. Hirt. http://www2.psykl.med.tum.de/varia_alternate_takes/Texte/dreadlocks_foerstl_elliger_95.doc
- Bezljaj, F. 1982. *Etimoloski slovar slovenskega jezika: druga knjiga*, K-O. Ljubljana: Mladinska Knjiga.
- Biegeleisen, H. 1929. *Lecznictwo ludu polskiego*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności.
- Federowski, M. 1897. *Lud Białoruski na Rusi Litewskiej. Materiały do etnografii słowiańskiej zgromadzone w latach 1877–1905: w 8 t. T. 1: Wiara, wierzenia i przesady ludu z okolic Wołkowyska, Słonima, Lidy i Sokółki*. Kraków: W-wo Komisji Antropologicznej Akademii Umiejętności.
- Hoffmann-Krayer, E. & Bächtold-Stäubli, H. (ed.) 1935–1936. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens VII, 1935–1936*. Berlin und Leipzig: Verlag Walter de Gruyter.
- Höfler, M. 1899. *Deutsches Krankheitsnamen-Buch*. München: Verlag von Piloty.
- Marczewska, M. 2012. *Ja cię zamawiam, ja cię wypędzam...: choroba : studium językowo-kulturowe*. Kielce: Instytut Filologii Polskiej UJK.
- Morewitz, Harry A. 2007. A Brief History of Plica Polonica. In: *Nontoxic Head Lice Treatment*. <http://nuvoforheadlice.com/Plica.htm>
- Rosenbaum, M. 1838. Medizin. In: *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. Bd. 3, No 220, pp. 545–550.
- Sychta, B. 1970. *Słownik gwar kaszubskich na tle kultury ludowej IV. P-R*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.
- Vyhliđal, J. 1900. Skřitek (skřotek, koltun) ve vlasech po názoru lidu českého ve Slezsku. In: *Český lid* 9, 192.
- Барташэвіч, Г. А. (склад) 1992. *Замавы*. Уклад., сістэм. тэкстаў, уступ арт. і камент. Г. А. Барташэвіч; Рэдкал.: А. С. Фядосік (гал. рэд.) і інш. Мінск: Навука і тэхніка.
- Богданович, А. Е. 1895. *Пережитки древнего мирозерцания у белорусов: Этнографический очерк*. Гродно: Губернская типография.
- Валодзіна, Т. В. 2007. *Народная медыцына: рытуальна-магічная практыка*. Уклад., прадм. і паказ. Т. В. Валодзінай. Мінск: Беларуская навука.
- Володина, Т. В. 2008. Колтун у беларусов (по современным записям). In: *Palaeoslavica XVI/1*. Cambridge, pp. 165–182.
- Грынблат, М. Я. 1928. Этнаграфічнае вивучэнне каўтуна. Інстытут беларускае культуры. *Запіскі аддзелу гуманітарных навук*. Кн. 4. Працы катэдры этнографіі. Т. 1. Сш. 1. Менск, pp. 127–153.
- Грэймас, А. Ю. 2003. *Пра багоў і людзей. У пошуках этнічнай памяці*. Пер. з літоўскай С.Шупы. Мінск: “Энцыклапедыкс”.
- Демидович, А. 1896. Из области верований и сказаний белоруссов. *Этнографическое обозрение*, No. 2–3, pp. 107–145.
- Никифоровский, Н. Я. 1897. *Простонародные приметы и поверья, суеверные обряды и обычаи, легендарные сказания о лицах и местах*. Витебск: Витебская губернская типография.
- Сержпутоўскі, А. К. 1998. *Прымхі і забабоны беларусаў-палешукоў*. Мінск: Універсітэцкае.
- Сно, Э. 1904. *В болотах Полесья. Белорусы*. Санкт-Петербург: Типография О. Н. Попова.
- Страхов, А. Б. 2005. Полесские фольклорно-этнографические материалы в современных записях: 2. Заговоры и народная медицина. Публикация и комментарии А.Б. Страхова. In: *Palaeoslavica XII/2*. Cambridge, pp. 163–204.
- Толстой, Н. И. (ред.) 1983. *Полесский этнолингвистический сборник: Материалы и исследования*. Москва: Наука.

About the author

Tatsiana Valodzina, Ph.D., is head of the department of folklore and culture of the Slavs at the Research Center of Belarusian Culture, Language and Literature in the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Her sphere of scientific activity is connected with the representation of the body and the traditional medicine of the Belarusians, folklore narratives, and the traditional agricultural calendar. She is the sole, or co-author, of 7 books, including *Human body: Words, Myth, Ritual* (2009) and *Folk medicine: ritual and magic practice* (2007).

THE ORAL AND WRITTEN TRADITIONS OF LATVIAN CHARMS

Aigars Lielbārdis

This article is about the oral and written traditions of Latvian charms, analysing them in a historical and cultural context. The article examines healing charms mainly and contextualizes them by reference to similar texts from the European charm tradition. The division into oral and written traditions is based on the assumption of their functioning, dissemination and transmission through different generations, space and time. Schematically, the depiction of the influence on Latvian folklore and cultural history relating to the spread and functioning of Latvian charms and folk medicine traditions, can be divided into three clusters: 1) the pre-Christian, 2) the Early Christianity and 3) a cluster of Lutheran and Herrnhut charms. The first two clusters are associated mainly with the oral charm tradition, while the third, with written tradition.

Key words: Latvian healing charms, oral tradition, folksongs, written tradition, Books of Heaven.

The Archive of Latvian Folklore has more than 54,000 units of Latvian charms and their variations. Although the Archive of Latvian Folklore was founded in 1924, the collection contains charms collected and recorded by Fricis Brīvzemnieks dating back to 1867¹. However, most of the texts were collected and sent to the Archive during the 1930s in collaboration with schools and students from all over Latvia. The charms were submitted to the Archive in written form – schoolchildren interviewed their parents, and grandparents, and schoolchildren wrote down verbal incantations and copied them from old handwritten documents, which led to some changes in the texts.

Researcher T. M. Smallwood has stated that surviving written copies, or verbal records taken down over the centuries, are mere scattered traces of material which people carried around in their heads or had written down (Smallwood 2004: 12). This statement confirms the idea that each unit of text ending up in the archive is just one of many possible variations. In defining “speech genres” Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin pointed out that before any new phonetic, lexical or grammatical phenomenon can enter a language system, it goes through a long and complicated process of stylistic processing and probation

(Bakhtin 1979: 243). Continuing the idea expressed by Bakhtin, it can be said that the origin and variations of the written folklore units can be found in the oral tradition, and also partly for those that were mainly spread in written form.

Mainly healing charms will be examined in this article, providing comparable material to similar texts in the European charm tradition. The division into oral and written traditions is based on the assumption of the functioning, dissemination and transmission through different generations, space and time. In addition to the materials at the Archive of Latvian Folklore, significant collections of Latvian healing charms have also been published by Fricis Brīvzemnieks (Treuland) (Brīvzemnieks 1881), Edith Kurtz (Kurtz 1937–1938) and Kārlis Straubergs (Straubergs 1939–1941).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The present territory of Latvia, as well as part of present day Estonia, were part of a country called Livonia around the end of the 12th century, which later became a Confederation of Livonian countries. Livonia was one of the most active regions in the medieval period, in terms of religion and trade, because religion was one of the driving forces of political and economic influence and *vice versa*. Riga and seven other towns, now in modern Latvia, were in the Hanseatic League, which was an influential European trade network, founded in the 13th century.

The principles for spreading Christianity in Europe can be traced back to the end of the 6th century. Pope Gregory the Great sent a letter to Mellitus during the Gregorian mission, when Anglo-Saxons were converting to Christianity, pointing out the following: “However, when Almighty God has brought you to our most reverend Bishop Augustine, tell him what I have decided after long deliberation about the English people, namely that the idol temples of that race should by no means be destroyed, but only the idols in them. Take holy water and sprinkle it on these shrines, build altars and place relicts in them. For the shrines are well built, it is essential that they should be changed from the worship of devils to the service of the true God” (Richards 1980: 245). Christian missionaries followed the same principles in later centuries and this too is connected to Latvian cultural history, especially in the context of the activities of the early Catholics.

In 11th century several parts of today’s Latvia were familiar with Eastern Christianity, but from the end of the 12th century many preachers from different Western Christian missions and religious orders, like the Augustinians, Dominicans, Benedictines, Cistercians, and later Jesuits, also operated in Livonia. Around the year 1190, Pope Clement III allowed Livonian Bishop May-

ward to employ monks and clergymen of all orders (Švābe 1937: 16) to perform their main task, that of putting Christian principles into practice among the “pagans”. Coming from the different countries of Western Europe, the monks brought the traditions of the Christian world. It is thought that incantations were spread along with them, and, no less important, charms, which were a common component of healing practice at that time in Western Europe (Smallwood 2004: 14–16).

The Jesuits, who operated in Latvia from 1582 to 1820, left written evidence of the connection of religious orders with the tradition of Latvian folk medicine. Jesuit annals contain information about the Jesuits spreading the practice of using different consecrated objects, for example candles, corn, oil, salt, etc. It is said that water of St. Ignatius Loyola was very popular and widely used in healing (Kleijntjens 1940: 254). According to historian Jonathan Wright, the cult of martyr relicts and holy water was mostly used by the Jesuits (Wright 2004: 5). Nevertheless, at the same time, the Jesuit annals indicate that during the 17th and 18th centuries there were a lot of different charmers in Livonia: old women who healed human and livestock diseases with the aid of water and salt, and through the whispering of odd and meaningless words (Kleijntjens 1940: 253). Although direct evidence of the Jesuits or the monks of other religious orders, who may have spread incantations, is not found in Latvian cultural history, when we compare the historical heritage of other European countries in previous centuries in the context of religion (Thomas 1971: 25–50), there are many analogies.

Lutheranism began to spread and gain root in Latvian society during the first part of the 16th century, when part of Livonia came under the rule of the Kingdom of Sweden. Riga became one of the most active centres of Lutheranism in Europe. As Jürgen Beyer has pointed out, from the 16th century, the countries around the Baltic Sea were divided between Catholicism and Lutheranism (Beyer 1997), and the territory of Latvia was also divided, mainly between these two groups of religious ideological interests. During the 1730s in the central part of Latvia, which was a Lutheran influenced area, a rapid spread of the Herrnhuter movement began (*Unitas Fratrum*, Latvian *hernhūtisms*). This movement came from Germany, from Herrnhut, as a movement of the Unity of the Brethren. The activity of the Herrnhuters was closely linked to the dissemination of the “Books of Heaven” (*Debesu grāmatas*), as well as the spreading of charms in handwriting along with these books.

ORAL TRADITION

The most ancient examples of the oral tradition of Latvian charms include texts that were registered in the form of folksongs. Folksongs constitute a genre of Latvian traditional poetry and were mainly passed on orally, and performed by reciting and singing. During the second half of the 19th century, when the major collection of Latvian folksongs began to be issued (Brīvēznieks 1873, Barons & Visendorfs 1894–1915), the oral passing on of folklore values was still widespread.

Latvian folk songs are mostly quatrains in a trochaic or dactyl metre, as with for instance this blood staunching charm:

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Dieva dēli klēti cirta, | <i>The sons of God made a barn</i> |
| Zelta spāres spārodam(i); | <i>Making golden rafters;</i> |
| Es aizslēdzu vara vārtus, | <i>I locked the copper gate,</i> |
| Ne lāsīte netecēs. | <i>Not a single drop will flow.</i> |
| (Jāsaka 9 reizes “Amen”). | <i>(“Amen” to be said 9 times).</i> |
| (LD 55335 ²) | |

This example is known in the Lithuanian charm tradition as well and is reputed to be a borrowing from the Latvian (Vaitkevičienė 2008: 452–453). The “sons of God” mentioned above are typical characters of Latvian mythology in folksongs and this charm text can be referred to as the pre-Christian tradition.

Among the blood staunching words in folksong form, there is also the motif of ravens, for example:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Melni kraukļi gaisā skrēja, | <i>Black ravens flew in the sky,</i> |
| Melnas asnis laistīdami; | <i>Sprinkling black blood;</i> |
| Tēvs aizslēdzu vara vārtus, | <i>Father locked the copper gate,</i> |
| Man pilīte neizkrita. | <i>Not a drop fell from me.</i> |
| (LD 34136) | |

The raven motif is known in the Slavic charm tradition in which there are texts about flying ravens – when the storm and the rain stop, the bleeding stops as well (Агапкина, Левкиевская and Топорков 2003: 181–182). Parallels to Slavic tradition are discoverable in the motif of rivers, resembling veins, for instance:

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Līku loku upe tek | <i>A winding river flows</i> |
| No kalniņa lejiņā; | <i>Downhill</i> |
| Aiztecēja mīļa Māra | <i>Dear Mara hurried there,</i> |
| Saturēja straujupīti. | <i>And stopped the swift river.</i> |
| (LD, 34132) | |

It is considered that the rhythm and poetry of folksong helped users to memorise the text more easily. These examples contain sayings, which according to a theory postulated by Albert Lord and Milman Parry, are a “formula” (Lord 1960: 30), and are more widely common in folk poetry as well as being characteristic not just of charms in folksong form, for example the formula “*No kalniņa lejiņā*” or “*Dieva dēli klēti cirta*”.

The last charm example can be related to the period of Early Christianity as well, because “Dear Mara”, which is local version of the Virgin Mary, is mentioned. But most of the charms, where some analogies can be found with other types of incantation texts common throughout Europe and related to Christianity, are principally in prose. Nevertheless there are several exceptions – texts in prose poetry, for example ‘Bone to bone’ type texts:

Kauliņš pie kauliņa, mīkstums pie mīkstuma, dzīslīņa pie dzīslīņas, sarkanas asins krustiem cauri.

Bone to bone, flesh to flesh, vein to vein, red blood running through the sacrum. (Brīzemnieks 1881: 141)

Or other one:

“Pantiņš pie pantiņa, kauliņš pie kauliņa, dzīslīņa pie dzīslīņas, dūriens dur durdams, lai deviņi pērkonī sasper.” Pērkoņa vārdi pieminēti, uzspļaudi virsū.

“Joint to joint, bone to bone, vein to vein, prick is pricking, from nine thunders to be kicked down.” When thunder’s name is mentioned – spit on it. (LFK 150, 831)³

In the last example, similarities with Second Merseburg Charm, which is the most fully extant pagan verbal magic formula (Roper 2005: 96) are apparent. The thunder is the god of Latvian pre-Christian mythology. The Archives of Latvian Folklore store 15 variants from all over Latvia of this ‘Broken bones words’ subtype.

Among other European incantation types, the “Flum Jordan” type texts are also found among Latvian charms. The possible prototype is a charm about Moses going along the Red Sea. He strikes his stick in the water; the water stops, as does the bleeding. This formula is a subtype of the Jordan motif. This type of text can be found in a written example from the 9th century in Latin (Roper 2005: 104–109; Krayer & Bächtold–Stäubli 1931–1932: 767–769). The following are variations of this type in Latvian folklore:

Sarkans vīrs brien pa jūru, tērauda krusts rokā; izbrien malā, – dambis priekšā, ciets kā dzelzis, ciets kā tērauds.

A red man wades in the sea with a steel cross in his hand; he comes out of the water – a dyke in front of him, hard as iron, hard as steel.
(Brīzemnieks 1881: 143)

This text can be perceived as an analogy with another Latvian charm text, which is in the form of a folksong:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Lai bij vārdi, kam bij vārdi, | <i>Anybody can say something</i> |
| Man pašam stipri vārdi: | <i>But I have powerful words:</i> |
| Daugaviņu noturēju, | <i>I held the River Daugava,</i> |
| Mietu dūru vidiņā. | <i>By stabbing a pole in the middle of it.</i> |
| (LD 34131) | |

From the examples above it can be noticed that some parts of charm texts are adapted to local conditions from other languages, for example German or Latin, lesser known people like “Moses” are simply replaced by “a man” in Latvian, “Jordan” with “a river” or even with “Daugava”. Charms known in Europe had to get through certain barriers to get into Latvian tradition – they had to overcome the language threshold and then be passed on through several generations. It is almost impossible to detect the exact period when a text entered into Latvian tradition or whether texts belong to pre-Christian or Early Christian tradition. Nevertheless, the cultural context and the spreading of the texts took place. Most of them occurred due to the presence of Christianity in the Latvian cultural space. Jonathan Roper mentions a case in which a text of the ‘Come butter come’ incantation type was taught to a lady by a Church-man in the 1550s (Roper 2005: 99). The odds are that this case is similar to the practice of other representatives of the church too, for instance the work of monks of different religious orders across Europe.

The first known case of a charm in Latvian being written down came from a Riga witch trial protocol in 1584. The text has a folk song metre and was used to conjure weapons: “Dzelzeniek, trumelniek, atslēdz dzelzu vārtus [...] nosikiedzi vanadziņi [...] dzelzu vārti dārdēdami [...], ar šiem vārdiem appūš viņš sāli un var tad ar to visus ieročus apvārdot”, (‘Knight, drummer, unlock the iron gates [...] squawk a little hawk [...] iron gates rumbling [...], with these words, he blows on the salt and then one can charm all the weapons with it.’) (Augstkalns 2009: 497; Straubergs 1939–1941: 61).

The comingling of two traditions can be established in this case as well: charms, which can be included in the folksong genre (pre-Christian tradition), supplement the “charming of salt”, which comes from the Christian practice, and which was practiced by the medieval clergy to cure illnesses and to drive out evil spirits (Adamovičs 1933: 474; Thomas 1971: 29). Thus, incantation types and their variations, which were known in Europe during the Middle Ages, spread

orally and in close conjunction with the activities of religious representatives. Another way that charms were spread in the Middle Ages can be confirmed by this example, which is connected with active warfare in Livonia and elsewhere in Europe. The movement of various armies and mercenaries between various European countries created the circumstances and opportunities for charms to spread. This applies in particular to texts that are connected with war situations, for example, blood staunching charms, weapons charms, horse glanders charms and others, as well as some classical medicinal techniques of the time, which have, today, become folk medicine traditions.

WRITTEN TRADITION

The written tradition of Latvian charms started in the early 18th century in the central part of Latvia. The spread of the tradition is linked closely with the Herrnhuters' movement. The written tradition includes charm texts, which were transcribed by hand, i.e. manuscripts, a large proportion of which contain the "Books of Heaven" (*Debesu grāmatas*). More than 100 originals, as well as copies are stored in the Archive of Latvian Folklore. The large number of books indicates a special attitude towards making and copying them, which only became possible after people had acquired literacy skills. The main reason for rewriting charm texts was the wish to keep them, copying them from other written or typed texts, as well as translating them. The making of several copies could have been due to the writer wanting to use them in healing, to hand them over to their descendants, as well as to guard themselves from death and misfortune.

The Herrnhuters' movement dates back to the 15th century, starting out as the Hussite movement in the Bohemian and Moravian regions of the current Czech Republic. They were persecuted for religious reasons, with their activities being officially terminated. A group from the movement escaped in 1722 and arrived at the estate of Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf in Saxony, where they founded the Herrnhut settlement (Straube 2000: 42). The first Herrnhuters arrived in Latvia in 1729 and settled near Valmiera, which became the initial centre of the movement in Latvia and in the Baltic region (Adamovičs 1933: 505–576). The movement was not only concerned with religion, but also had a social and cultural role, and was quite popular. The most active time for the Latvian congregations was in the early 19th century, when the number of brethren reached 29,000 (Apīnis 1987: 13).

The Herrnhuters organised religious meetings with speeches and told people about their religious experiences and visions. Speeches were given at these gatherings and the parish listened to quotes from the Bible or original essays by

Herrnhuters being read out to them. It was quite popular among the Herrnhuters to write autobiographies, translations and adaptations from German into Latvian, which constitute a distinct manuscript tradition in Latvian literature. Thus, at the end of the 18th century, the percentage of people who were literate in the Herrnhuter regions in Vidzeme (the central part of Latvia) was as high as 88 %, and this was an important factor in the spread of the brethren's manuscripts, including the manuscripts containing charm texts. During their rewriting, the texts were inevitably changed and modified.

The origin of the title "Book of Heaven" ("Debesu grāmata") is related to the most ancient meaning of the word *grāmata*. Until the 18th century, the word *gramota* in Latvian meant a letter, as well as an article or a document. This etymology for the "Book of Heaven" can also be proved by examples from other languages, for example "Himmelsbrief", "Taevakiri", "Letter of Christ" or "Heavenly letter". The external shape of the 'letters' helped to create the metaphorical meaning for them – often they were small-sized, handmade with a hardcover, and pocket-sized books as well. They were similar to chain letters in the sense of instructions about rewriting them and handing them on to avoid some danger.



Figure 1. Erna Stallite's Book of Heaven. Photo Aigars Liebārdis, 2010.⁴

The Latvian bibliophile Jānis Misiņš considered that the “Book of Heaven” appeared around the year 580 in Spain. Initially they served the churches in their efforts to ensure people’s compliance with their provisions, such as blessing Sundays. So one of the first “Books of Heaven” was considered to be a “Sunday Book” (Misiņš 1922: 17). According to an Estonian researcher into the “Books of Heaven”, Rudolf Pöldmäe, they had spread in all Christian regions over the centuries, sometimes becoming a serious, and almost official, means of political struggle, finding many adherents in wider society. Over time, the simple “Sunday Book” was joined by various charms, which turned it into a magical remedy against natural disasters, wars, diseases; they provided protection for one’s home, from sudden death, serious illnesses, helped in giving birth and in stopping blood. Therefore, the “Books of Heaven” were very common, especially in times of war and disease (Pöldmäe 1938: 101).

“Books of Heaven” became known in Latvia around 1790, when they were translated from German; initially they were distributed only as manuscripts. In the 1820s, the “Books of Heaven” were widespread in Estonia and the Latvian part of Livonia and Courland (Misiņš 1922: 17). The first broader information in Latvian about the “Books of Heaven” appeared in 1822 (*Latviešu Avīzes* 1822: 1) and the first version was printed in 1842 in the newspaper *Latviešu Avīzes* (Strauchmann 1842). Three other “Books of Heaven” are known to have been printed after that time, in 1870 (AL⁵, R, 17459, 1), 1873 (AL, R, 17459, 3) and 1876 (AL, R, 17459, 2).

Sometimes the publishing of the “Books of Heaven” was organised by the official Church with the reason being to denounce the practice, but often this gave exactly the opposite effect – the texts were rewritten and passed on from newspapers. Nevertheless, the “books” could be bought. For example, a teacher of German descent living near Rīga, produced “Books of Heaven” in Latvian and sold them in large quantities – a copy for 50 silver kopecks (Pöldmäe 1938: 102). It has also been stated that Herrnhuter teachers in Latvia asked their students to rewrite “Books of Heaven” (Pöldmäe 1938: 109).

Different studies divide the “Books of Heaven” into types. Latvian folklorist Kārlis Straubergs, in researching the “Books of Heaven” that are kept at the Archive of Latvian Folklore, distinguished the Books of London, the Archangel Michael, Charles Magnus, Gredory, General Skobolev, etc. (Straubergs 1939–1941: 183). The contents of the books found in Latvia and Estonia are quite similar. At the beginning there is a reference to the divine origins of the book, which was brought from heaven by the angel Michael, followed by critical remarks on blessing Sundays, sanctification, penance, etc., and keeping to norms similar to the Commandments. Then instructions follow in the book on the fact that it can save one from misfortunes such as fire and diseases, that it can

stop bleeding, and so on, as well as pointing out lucky and unlucky days. Then there are the ‘stories’ of the 12 Jewish tribes and how they had transgressed against Jesus. Although the books, which are common in Latvia, correspond generally to the types of books known in Germany (Kramer & Bächtold-Stäubli 1931–1932: 21–27), the ones distributed in the Baltic region differ in that lucky and unlucky days are not marked, and the 12 Jewish tribes mentioned are not found in the books known in Germany, thus suggesting that these additions are of local origin (Pöldmäe 1938: 105–106).

The “Books of Heaven” also include other charm texts, translated and transcribed from other collections, or supplemented from the writer’s knowledge. From analysis of the 114 Books available in the Archive of Latvian Folklore, Straubergs listed 2,520 incantation units (39 Books with no supplemented charms) (Straubergs 1939–1941: 193). Thus, the “Books of Heaven” have been a rich source and a way of spreading some of the incantation formulas that later arrived in the Archives of Latvian Folklore in different ways and separately. During the Second World War, such books were given to soldiers to keep them safe. Such handwritten amulets are still used today. For example, a teacher whom I met in 2013 during fieldwork in Latgale (in the eastern part of Latvia), keep a Book written on one leaflet in her purse. The content of this Book is the Christian legend about Mary and the three thieves, and in this way the teacher believes that her bag and her money will be protected from thieves.

Alongside the “Books of Heaven”, an essential issue relating to written tradition is the Latvian charm collection published by Brīvzemnieks in 1881, *Материалы по этнографии латышского племени* (‘Ethnographic materials on the Latvian tribe’) (Brīvzemnieks 1881). The publication has made a great impact, both on the body of Latvian charms and the tradition generally, because the collection has served as the source of many of the charm texts and their variations, which were later sent to the Archive of Latvian Folklore by students and schoolchildren in the 1930s. Today the transcripts of the Brīvzemnieks’ collection still serve as a handbook for healers.

CONCLUSION

The Latvian charm tradition states that the charm text must not be changed, otherwise it will no longer have any power. The text and its execution has to be repeated accurately as has been done before. However, changes do enter due to the nature of the executor’s memory – replacing forgotten fragments of text with similar ones, while changes could also be individual, arising during the performance. These latter changes are described by Lauri Honko as being “real variations”, and Honko points out that even as archived specimens, unable

to change and develop, they may be set to sketch the scope and limits of real variation in the textual universe that existed at the time of their documentation (Honko 2000: 16). In analysing the oral tradition of Latvian charms in a historical context, only individual notes on charm texts are available, but there is almost no data on their performance. However, real variations can also be applied to the oral tradition of the past, as otherwise charm texts from other European languages, such as German, couldn't have entered the Latvian charm tradition and adapted to the features of the poetics of Latvian folksongs.

In turn, variations exist in the Latvian written tradition, which can be partly described as mechanical variations. These have arisen due to mistakes made in rewriting the texts (letter and number mistakes), as well as through the conscious correction of texts, so that they are different from others, as is confirmed in their collection by children. Mechanical variations mean that the formulas, at their moment of writing, weren't applied or used as charms, but rather existed only as texts without a functional context, for example, when schoolchildren copied charm texts from each other with the aim of making a different text.

A schematic depiction of the influence of charms on Latvian folklore and cultural history, relating to the spread and functioning of Latvian charms and folk medicine traditions, can be divided into three clusters: 1) the pre-Christian, 2) the Early Christian and 3) a cluster of Lutheran and Herrnhut charms. The first two clusters are associated mainly with the oral charm tradition, while the third, with written tradition.

The oral and written traditions of Latvian charms come together at the turn of the 18th–19th century when a large section of society became literate. In the introduction to the charms chapter in *Материалы по этнографии латышского племени*, Fricis Brīvzemnieks writes about his two grandmothers, both of who had been well-known charmers. One of them healed with ancient or “powerful words”, which she knew by heart. She only acquired writing skills in her sixties, so that she could write down the incantation texts in order to send them to Brīvzemnieks in Moscow (Brīvzemnieks 1881: 113). Thus, it is more probable that written texts are preserved longer than charm texts, which have functioned only orally and did not realise their potential of being included in any of the archives.

NOTES

¹ In 1867 Fricis Brīvzemnieks (Treuland) undertook the first fieldwork on Latvian folklore. Among the materials collected were folksongs, legends, tales, proverbs, riddles and charms.

² Here and hereafter LD – Latvian Dainas. Barons, Krišjānis and Visendorfs, Henrijs 1894–1915. *Latvju dainas*. Vol. 1–6. Jelgava: H.J. Draviņ-Dravnieks.

³ LFK – the Archive of Latvian Folklore.

⁴ Charmer Erna Stallīte's Book of Heaven. Picture taken during fieldwork in northern part of Latvia, 2010.

⁵ AL – Academic Library of the Latvian University, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books.

REFERENCES

- Adamovičs, Ludvigs 1933. *Vidzemes baznīca un latviešu zemnieks (1710–1740)*. Rīga: Ģenerālkomisija Latvijas Vidusskolu Skolotāju Kooperatīvs.
- AL 1870. Academic Library of Latvian University, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books. R, 17459, 1.
- AL 1873. Academic Library of Latvian University, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books. R, 17459, 3.
- AL 1876. Academic Library of Latvian University, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books. R, 17459, 2.
- Augstkalns, Alvis 2009. *Darbu izlase*. Rīga: LU Latviešu valodas institūts.
- Barons, Krišjānis & Visendorfs, Henrijs 1894–1915. *Latvju dainas*. Vol. 1–6. Jelgava: H. J. Draviņ-Dravnieks.
- Beyer, Jürgen 1997. Prolegomena to a History of Story Telling Around the Baltic Sea. C. 1550–1800. In: *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*. Vol. 4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7592/FEJF1997.04.balti>
- Brīvzemnieks (Treiland), Fricis 1873. *Сборник антропологических и этнографических статей о россии и странах, ей прилежащих*. Moscow.
- Brīvzemnieks (Treiland), Fricis 1881. *Материалы по этнографии латышского племени*. Moscow.
- Honko, Lauri 2000. Thick Corpus and Organic Variation: an Introduction. In: L. Honko (ed.), *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation and Textuality in Oral Tradition*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, pp. 13–28.
- Kleijntjens, Jans 1940. Latvijas vēstures avoti jezuitu ordeņa archivos. In: *Latvijas vēstures avoti*. Vol. 3. Rīga: Latvju Grāmata.
- Krayer, E. & Bächtold-Stäubli, H. 1931–1932. *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens*. Vol. IV. Berlin & Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter.
- Kurtz, Edith 1937–1938. *Heilzauber der Letten in Wort und Tat*. Vol. I–II. Rīga. *Latviešu Avīzes* 1822. No. 37, 1.
- Lord, A. B. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press.
- Misiņš, Jānis 1922. Debesu grāmatas. In: *Latvju grāmata*. No. 1. Rīga: Latviešu grāmatu tirgotāju un izdevēju biedrība, pp. 16–18.
- Pöldmäe, R. 1938. Die Früheste verbreitung der Himmelsbriefe in Estland. In: *Acta Ethnologica*. Copenhagen, pp. 100–115.
- Richards, Jeffrey 1980. *Consul of God*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Roper, Jonathan 2005. *English Verbal Charms*. FF Communication, No. 288. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica.
- Smallwood, T. M. 2004. The Transmission of Charms in English, Medieval and Modern. In: J. Roper (ed.), *Charms and Charming in Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11–31.
- Straube, Gvido 2000. *Latvijas brāļu draudzes diārijs (jaunākais noraksts) jeb Hernhūtiešu brāļu draudzes vēsture Latvijā*. Rīga: N.I.M.S.
- Straubergs, Kārlis 1939–1941. *Latviešu buramie vārdi*. Vol. 1–2. Rīga: Latviešu folkloras krātuves izdevums.
- Strauchmann 1842. Kā sader gaisma ar tumsību un dievbijāšanu ar māņu ticību kopā. In: *Latviešu Avīzes*, No. 42–45.
- Švābe, Arveds 1937. Senās Latvijas vēstures avoti. In: *Latvijas Vēstures avoti*. Vol. 1, Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds.
- Thomas, Keith 1971. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Vaitkevičienė, Daiva 2008. *Lietuvių užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas.
- Wright, Jonathan 2004. *God's Soldiers*. London: Image.
- Агапкина, Т. А. & Левкиевская, Е. Е. & Топорков, А. Л. 2003. *Полесские заговоры (в записях 1970–1990-х гг.)*. Moscow: Indrik.
- Бахтин, М. М. 1979. *Эстетика словесного творчества*. Moscow: Iskusstvo.

About the author

Aigars Lielbārdis is Researcher at the Archives of Latvian Folklore at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia. His scientific interests are related to the Latvian charming tradition, calendar customs, traditional music, and the Latvian diaspora in Siberia.

THE GOLDEN CHARACTERS OF THE LETTER FALLEN FROM HEAVEN: A STUDY CASE FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Laura Jiga Iliescu

The research here approaches the topic of the devotional values of the act of writing/reading aloud a formalised text. Especially when speaking about the southeast European rural milieu up to the second half of the 19th century, the presence of scribes and of readers was relatively rare, although not completely absent. We are dealing with people for whom writing/copying a text and/or listening to a reader was not a habit or a daily practice, but a special event more or less attached to a ritual or the ritualised context of performance.

The paper discusses the particular case of a certain version of the Apocrypha, ‘the Legend of Sunday’, also known as the ‘Epistle Fallen From Heaven’, a version today stored in the archive of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest. It was copied and carried by a soldier in the First World War, to protect himself from being injured or killed.

In the first part of the study I analyse the flexibility of this verbal structure, which allows interesting insertions by the scribe in order to increase both the efficacy of the text and the receivers’ (!) belief in its miraculous power. In this regard, the story within a story that I am speaking about worked as a vehicle to help the spread of a distinctive group of legends and magic practices. My aim is to grasp the dynamics of the believers’ expectations in the effectiveness of writing/reading/holding a *special* text.

Keywords: devotional writing, Heavenly Epistles, First World War, Romanian culture

Manuscript file no 77 stored in the Archive of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in Bucharest contains a version of the *Legend of Sunday* written on the last 7 pages of a *verș* – a small stitch book of poems, songs and short daily notations. This *verș*, 36 pages of paper bound with black cotton, written with indelible pencil, looks damaged, probably as a consequence of its current use before being acquired by the archive¹. We have only very few data about the identity of the former owner of this *verș*: his name – Romulut Aroneasca –, the fact that he was born in Retiș, a village near Brasov, and the information that, as a soldier in the First World War, he was prisoner in Italy.

Placed in the space of cohabitation between literacy and traditional orality, the the Apocrypha *Epistle of Jesus Christ*, also known under the names *Epistle fallen from the Heaven* and *Legend of Sunday*, works both as folklore and as literature, especially during the processes of creation and of transmission of its versions through copying, translation and adaptation. In this regard, such a text is defined by anonymity, collective character, intertextuality, variability and, often, by oral performance (the aloud lecture, the collective reading, telling the stories). Hereby, due to the similarities between oral variant and written version, the study here brings into attention just one of the Hypostasis of the *Epistle of Jesus Christ*, specifically the one written by Romulut Aroneasca in his *vers*.

The popular receptiveness to the letters which came down from Heaven, correspondence which mediates the relationships between God and His Church, might be related with the fact that Christians were more or less familiar with the sacred epistolary genre due to the practice of reading the *Epistles* of the Apostle Paul in church, during the holy mass and preaching. Accessible and, at first glance, understandable by everybody: “*L’importance capitale des épîtres du Nouveau Testament tient à ce mélange de familiarité (Paul écrit à ses amis) et de sacralité (Paul transmet la parole de Dieu)*” [‘the key importance of the Epistles in the New Testament results from their mix of familiarity (Paul writing to his friends) and of sacrality (Paul transmitting the Word of God’), according to Alain Boureau² (Boureau, 1991: 130).

Actually, the great importance attached to the act of delivering the *Epistle Fallen from Heaven* answers to Apostle Paul’s ardent urge towards the spreading of his own *Epistles*: – “I charge you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the holy brothers” (1 Thessalonians 5:27) – and the threat against those who disregard them or doubted his words: And if anyone does not obey our word in this letter, remember that man, and have no company with him, so that he may be ashamed (2 Thessalonians 3:14).

In Romanian, the first version of the *Epistle* that, according to the legend, was written down in golden characters by the very hand of Jesus Christ, represent a copy of a translation after a south-Slavic version (the original one have been lost. It was written by the priest Grigore from the village Mahaci (South Transylvania) at the end of the 16th century³, possible as part of the Orthodox reactions against the Calvinist propaganda. Immediately, subsequent copies are attested. The official Church *Index* of the forbidden books (1667-1669) mentions *Legend of Sunday* among the “untruthfulness books”. But this did not represent a real impediment for its diffusion and the text continued to be copied in concordance with the demand of its *author*.

Here is the version we deal with in this study:

This epistle was written by our Saviour Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and Archangel Michael was sent with it to earth. This epistle was written in golden letters and was found in Canygsberg [Köningsberg?], in Georgia, and was hanging in the air above the Church of Michael, above the baptistery.

When somebody wanted to write it, then it would fold and would close.

Its content is indeed very wise: “The ones who work on Sundays will be cursed all their life. [...] Work and perform Christian prayers. Do not dress your bodies in useless clothes, [...]. Help the starving, the thirsty and the poor.

Believe that this epistle was written by God Himself! Work for 6 days and celebrate the seventh!

Do not forget about it, for I will punish you with famine and with dearth.

I, your Lord, bid that you shall not work on anything on Sunday [...], but pray from your heart for your sins to be forgiven. You shall not cheat on your neighbour. Tame your bodies and stop the bad urges. You shall not burden your neighbour, not rise against your parents and brothers and shall not be perjurers against your neighbour. [...] Those who do not believe this epistle and do not observe its commands, shall not receive blessing from God.

Those who have this epistle in their home shall receive My holy will. [...]

I, Jesus Christ, wrote this with My own hand. And those who speak against it, will not be blessed. Tell one another about this epistle. And those who will not do this will be locked out of the Holy Church. Write this epistle to one another, and even if your sins are as many as sand grains and as many as the leaves in a tree, and even if your mistakes are as many as the stars in the sky, they will all be forgiven. Improve your life, as I do not want you to die for your sins. I will judge you when the time will come [...].

In the year 1816⁴, the sun will be covered and it will fade. On the 21st of September, that year, black fog will come down and many people will die and the countries will be divided. In the year 1889, the clouds will be broken and an unprecedented earthquake will shake all the world and all the countries will change.

Christ’s home epistle

A *grof* [landlord, a Transylvanian term] had a servant. This servant he wanted to kill because of his father. The executioner did not want to cut his head off, he could not hurt his head at all. When the grof heard

this, he asked the servant why the executioner couldn't either kill him or hurt him. The servant answered: "My father wrote down these letters: B.F.C.H.O.A.C.". When the *grof* heard this, he ordered that if there is somebody with a bleeding nose or with a bleeding wound, and it keeps bleeding, to put these letters on a saucer or on a sword and the bleeding will stop. Those who wear this epistle with them, will never be a victim of stealing as his enemies cannot do anything against the 5 holy wounds of Our Lord: H.C.O.H.C. He will never be judged: H.H.T.F. [...]

Those who have this epistle with them, will suffer no loss. [...]

Those who have this epistle with them, will be protected against enemies, guns and bullets. That who does not want to believe, should write it down and tie it around a dog's neck and shoot the dog and will see that the dog will not be shot. Those who wear this epistle with them, will not be touched by the enemy's weapon. A.M.E.N.E.

[...]I will surround you with all the weapons in this world, for the Holy Father, Holy Son and Holy Spirit. May you live in peace! I am praying in the name of the Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, not to be touched by any bullet. [...] God protects him in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This epistle is sent from the Heaven and was found by the Christians in the year 1791 and it was written with golden letters and was hanging over the baptistery. When somebody wanted to grab it, they could not touch it as it moved back, until the year 1799, when they thought about writing it down and spread it around.

Then, they took the epistle and it read that whoever works on Sunday, will be burning. And you shall not work on Sunday, [...] I give you 6 working days and you should go to church on the seventh. Whoever will not do this, will be punished with famine and beatings. [...]

Whoever has this epistle and does not give it to others, for them to read it, that man will be rejected by the Church of Jesus Christ. This epistle should be given from one to another and even if they have sins as many as the grains of sand or as leaves in the trees, all will be forgiven. [...]

I also want them to know Your will. Lighten up their heart and make it receive love and forgiveness. Give us Your peace, You, Merciful, for us to be able to live our life on earth with love and joy, and to pass with serene face and immaculate heart. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. As Yours is all the kingdom and power and glory. Amen.

The names of Our Lord Jesus Christ:

Victory, power, word, penitence, wise, Jesus, the One who knows all, guiding, peace, light, meal, shepherd, guest, life, way, head, emperor, unity and righteous, groom, victorious, the real human Son and our God, first comer, first born, Christ, peak, heavenly bread, father, builder, Savaot, the One who never dies, Holy Spirit, merciful, helper, strong, sun, Christ, healer, good, merciful, forgiving our sins, the First One ever, doer, mercy, lion, strength, I Am the One who Is, guide, spring, truth, son, joy, confessor, eternal door, God with three faces, one and only, emperor over emperors.

Any of these names we may say, we must think about our Lord, Jesus Christ. People should have with them all these names written down and reading them again and again, to know by heart.

Amen⁵

At the end of our lecture, we wonder on the values assigned to the *Letter of Christ* by Romulut Aroneasca (and probably by his comrades) at the beginning of the XXth century. Is the text still perceived as a *heavenly letter*? Is it still assigned with sacred status? And, if yes, is this status derived from the fact that it was written *by the very hand of Jesus Christ*, or something else intervened? In other words, was the primary message of the letter changed around 300 years after the *Legend of Sunday* first attested version in Romanian?

We cannot directly approach the questions above, since the former user(s) of our version are gone for a long time. In order to suggest answers, let us start with an oblique view over what the calligraphic and structural features of the text suggest about its owner(s) and about the practices in which it was involved.

ORTHOGRAPHY⁶

- first of all, the letter is written relatively correctly;
- the weak presence of punctuation marks which seem to be arbitrarily used in the text, as if the writer knew they exist but he did not know how to use them, makes us think that they did not have semantic or syntactic meanings for him; he might have read it aloud as he wrote, repeating the word and the sentence while writing it, recreating the intonation from the oral technique;
- the occurrence of joined words, written without pauses, may be explained within the framework of the distinction between the fluidity of oral expression and the fragmentary character of written expression (in accordance with Ong: 1982). When listened to, the lack of spaces between words and (more rarely)

the arbitrary splitting of words, do not disturb the coherence of the discourse. This means that although written, the discourse is meant to be listened to and not read. Its graphic transcription did not remove it completely from the oral area and the version copied by Romulut Aroneasa remains dominantly aural, not visual;

- the use of capitals at the beginning of each line, not at the beginning of a new sentence (as the current orthographic rules require), suggests, again, that the scribe's mental text works as a continuum, without the phraseological segmentation usually induced by the intense practice of writing.

COMPOSITION

- there is a lack of an epistolary formula. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, the popular (urban and rural) practice of correspondence in Romania shaped versified formula based on folkloric patterns, used in the frames of written communication, at the horizontal, familiar and unofficial levels. On the other hand, official salutation epistolary formula have already been put into popular circulation by the Alexander Romance⁷, translated into Romania in about the same period as the first attested copy of the *Legend of Sunday*. Neither the first nor the second have been adjusted to the vertical communication between Heaven and earth;
- at the end of Romulut Aroneasca's document, I noticed its sliding towards the first person voice, which does not represent the original author (He whose hand wrote in golden characters); rather there might be identified either the voice of the scribe – for example “I pray in the name of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” – or the very voice of Sunday – for example “I shall begirt you with the all weapons in the world, for the eternal God Father, and Son and Holy Spirit”⁸.

I dare to propose this hypothesis based on the following data:

As an anthropomorphic character, St. Sunday (*Sfânta Duminică*) appears in Romanian fairytales together with her sisters St. Wednesday (*Sfânta Miercuri*) and St. Friday (*Sfânta Vineri*) as a hero's holy adjuvant or, on the contrary, a punisher. According to some legends, she is an old woman wearing white clothes, living religiously outside the laic world “over the Saturday River” (Muşlea & Bîrlea 2010: 378); other legends describe her as having a body full of wounds indirectly caused by those people who do different works on her day. As a memorata character, she shows herself to people, asking them to observe Sunday.

Her folkloric ‘rating’ is surpassed by St. Friday, known as *Sfânta Vineri* and/or *Sfânta Paraschiva*. Unlike St. Sunday, St. Friday has a hagiographic

file that narrates her martyrdom, certifying her human origin (hence she is not an anthropomorphisation of the day of Friday). The Apocrypha *Legend of St. Friday* is included in the same *Codex Sturdzanus* in which the *Legend of Sunday* appears in its turn. A contamination between the two characters is not impossible.

Concerning the creators and the users of this Letter, Romulut Aroneasca and/or his fellows, or the author(s) of the version that served as a model for Romulut, we have to take into consideration the fact that their narrative repertoire and cultural horizon should contain at least some of these ‘other’ stories about St. Sunday.

- the existence of repetitions and also a few illogical passages in the text raises the question of Romulut Aroneasca's source(s) and of his fidelity to them. According to the indication on the first page of our text, George Kaiser's printing house in Sibiu, we are very probably dealing with a manuscript copied after a printed version of the *Legend of Sunday*, one of those that was highly circulated during the First World War and which brought important earnings to some printing houses (Cartoian 1927: 104). But, did Romulut use one single source, or more? The three different graphic manners for transcribing the name of Jesus Christ, and their distributions within the economy of the text – *Iisus Hristos*, at the beginning, then *Christos* and finally in *Gristos* – suggest multiple sources, a hypothesis which is enforced by the repeated titles inserted in the text and of some fragments in the *Epistle*.⁹

At the beginning of the 20th century, chapbooks that combined different texts were widespread. For example, the famous Steinberg print shop in Bucharest gathered the Apocrypha *Journey of Mother of God*, the *Legend of Sunday*, and the *Mother of God's Dream* under the common title *The Epistle of our Lord Jesus Christ, which has been sent by God from Heaven* without any spatial demarcation between them, even without the title of the individual tales (Cartoian 1927: 78–79). In fact, this was the most common format for spreading these three texts (always together). For a copyist like Romulut Aroneasca, such a situation might have been disorienting. In the mean time, his text, too, compiles the *Legend of Sunday*, the *Different names of Jesus Christ*, a prophetic paragraph¹⁰ and some graphic formulas, on the basis of their common numinous protective power.

In addition to this, Romulut Aroneasca's version has some data in common with the edition printed in Calaraşi in 1929 (hence, later than the one we are dealing with), which was described and classified by Emanuela Timotin in her book:

The structure of the *Epistle* and the occurrence of the golden letter motif allow us to put this text next to the PP translation of the *Legend of*

Sunday, the Olive Mountain version, but especially next to the western amulets concerning the delivery of some divine letters to the earth by Michael the Archangel. Even if some details may suggest a German origin of the text, we cannot advance any hypothesis about the conditions under which this unedited version of the *Legend of Sunday* was translated into Romanian language, conditions that remain to be clarified by further studies. (Timotin 2005: 275)¹¹

The original (lost?) version of the *Epistle* delivered by George Kaiser's printing house in Sibiu (hence in a both Romanian and German milieu) possible served as a model for the one printed in Calarași in 1929, or else they shared a common source which remains obscured to this day. The document transcribed and analysed in this article could work as a valuable piece included in the chain of transmission of the *Legend of Sunday*.

In agreement with J. Kapalo's remarks concerning the same story – “this textual tradition also raises questions in respect to the relationship between learned or literary culture and illiterate and orally based folk culture as classically defined” (Kapalo 2011: 120) – I consider it meaningful to outline, from this perspective, the profile of Romulut Aroneasca, considering the above features of his writing. Aroneasca belonged to the category of literate people, involved as creators and consumers of the popular culture of writing, but still attached to traditional orality, who wrote under special conditions and to whom even the act of writing represented an event (see Chartier 1991: 9–10). Thanks to its special status, the act of copying the *Epistle of Jesus Christ* represents in itself a double event that gets new data in the context of war, danger and the vicinity of death¹².

THE MESSAGES OF THE LETTER

At a first level of the message exploration, our *Epistle* explicitly delivers Christian dogmatic knowledge and moral demands in accordance with the Decalogue (whose 4th command concerns the Sunday holiday), thus having a purely catechistic function. Simplistically and directly, the supreme reward for observing the rules is eternal life in Paradise, as opposed to hell's eternal dark in the case of disobedience. At a terrestrial level, the reward consists of health, wealth, luck and protection against all evils, as opposed to poverty, accidents, diseases and global cataclysms.

If we agree with the premise that the *Epistle fallen from the Heaven* was identified as sacred, faithfulness to the original represents some conditioning with ritual functions. Yet, in comparison with the first attested version of the

Legend of Sunday and other further versions, Romulut Aroneasca's text presents differences, and the opening of the text towards inserting new legends is remarkable.

We wonder what the reasons for such differences are, and whether they may represent a modern change in the religious approach of the *Epistle's* users, at least at the beginning of the 20th century and during the First World War. Yet, we do not know if the changes were made by Romulut Aroneasca or somebody else had done them before him.

The practice of inserting stories in the body of a given religious text in order to prove the credibility and efficacy of the host text is common within so-called modern popular and folk religiosity.

In our case, the probative narratives, gathered in the second part of the document under the title ‘the House Epistle¹³ of Jesus’ could originally have formed an autonomous text. They work as exempla. One of them – about a servant who was sentenced to death, but whose neck could not be touched by the executioner's axe because of the protection of the B.F.C.H.O.A.C capitals series¹⁴ – is, in fact, a legend instituting a set of graphic formulas and ritual gestures with protecting and therapeutic consequences (writing the letters on a sword or placing them on a plate), all of them being under the secular precedential and authority of a local landlord (the *grof*), who not only worked together with divine authority but almost replaced it.

Another insertion – the challenge of proving the efficiency of direct contact between someone's body and the ‘body’ of the *Epistle* – contains narrative germs for further legends about protection against bullets (we should not forget that we are speaking about a war context).

Thanks to its open character, this version of the *Epistle* adds to its original function of mediating the correspondence between God and the people, the function of spreading a group of legends and magic gestures. In other words, the written text becomes not only a channel for divine messages, but also an arena for peddling narratives and practices. Under conditions of war, its potentialities are activated and adapted to a context in which the evil – very terrestrial – is represented by the enemy in the battlefield, by the fire, the blood and the bullet. We recognise the oral mechanisms for creating and transmitting legends.

In the meantime, we also recognise the signs of movement towards a sort of, let's say, terrestrial religiosity, which, touched by the influence of the modern positivism of those times, needs more palpability. We are in the same framework described by J.P. Alber when he talked about Saint Anthony's Chain:

La texte se défend contre le scepticisme qu'il pourrait susciter, et veut inscrire sa vérité dans une dimension qui n'est pas celle de l'acte de foi: il apporte au contraire des preuves «expérimentales». Ce faisant, il se

démarque du champ de la religion des prêtres, et, loin de prétendre convertir, se borne à affirmer sa propre efficacité.

The text defends itself against potential scepticism, and attempts to put its truth into a dimension beyond that of faith: on the contrary, it provides “experimental evidence. By doing this, it stands out from the field of the religion of priests, and, far from trying to convince, it merely asserts its own effectiveness. (Albert 1993: 210)

THE LETTER AS AN OBJECT

The involvement of the Letter of Jesus Christ in ritual practices has been examined in a few complementary ways, whose literary expressions – in the specific case of Aroneasca’s version – I will attempt to explain in the following pages.

Its efficacy is manifested while reading, listening to, reciting, copying, touching or carrying it. Together with the demands for handing the text, these latent powers are expressed through formulas incorporated in the very body of the document.

The process of identifying the message with its verbal expression, leads to the situation in which the letter itself becomes the guarantee of reward: “Write this epistle to one another, and even if your sins are as many as sand grains and as many as the leaves in a tree, and even if your mistakes are as many as the stars in the sky, they will all be forgiven.” It looks as if spreading the *Epistle* is enough, and the other demands – being a good Christian, celebrating Sunday, etc. – may all be neglected. The practice of reading this text aloud in front of a sick person may be linked to the above-mentioned forgiveness, since, religiously speaking, illness is a consequence of sin. We know, from other situations in which religious texts are used, that an additional healing power comes from reading without interruption. In this regard, suggest a possible relationship between this unbroken reading, on the one hand, and (as we already noticed) the lack of punctuation marks in the version *fluidly* written by Romulut Aroneasca, on the other hand.

Another point of discussion is that Jesus did not dictate the *Epistle* to a human writer, but His own hand originally *wrote* it. To acquire the *Letter of Jesus Christ* by copying it attests to the devotional effort of reiterating the divine gesture¹⁵. In addition, the divine touch of the paper (or any other support) consecrates not only the original letter, but all its subsequent versions, through a process of serial contaminations that turn the text into an object with sacred power in itself, with or without explicit connection with the content of the text and its initial message. Such an approach to the *Epistle* – specifically

not the content, but the written artefact being evaluated as sacred – may have encouraged the copyist’s sense of freedom to make insertions in what we call a ritual text.

Taking into account our previous discussion of the first person voice that can be seen in different paragraphs of the document, a new hypothesis arises: could it be ascribed to the Letter by itself, as a personified powerful sacred object?

What was the main reason Romulut Aroneasca copied it? What does the *belief* about which the text speaks mean? Is it trust in the authenticity of the letter or the belief in its protective, curative or other functions? Or is it the consciousness of a religious act or an additional need for protection on, let us call it, magic principles? Does the insert of exempla illustrate the weakening of the belief that the *Letter* was written by the very hand of Jesus Christ?

In the entirety of Romanian (not only) Christian canonical and apocryphal literature, the *Legend of Sunday* does not represent a unique case of a text suffering physical manipulations apart from those related to the acts of its writing/reading. Its double determination, theological and magical, expresses, in my opinion, the tendency of the popular and secular understanding of Christian doctrine, a new valorisation of the rituals initially performed by the priest as part of canonical Christian public and private rituals (reading the Holy Texts for Liturgical service, protecting, healing, etc.). The integration of support that sustains the whole religious message – the unit formed by the text and by the paper together – into an assemblage of contiguous practices, is part of the phenomenon of taking over and reshaping the official gestures described by the canonical texts and unfolded in the liturgical arena of performance¹⁶.

The manner in which Romulut Aroneasca’s text brings together the modern forms of religiosity and their linked superstitions with traditional religious forms, gives an insight into his internal horizon. He is still attached to the old religious structures that relate him to God, to the world, to war, to life and death and to the original, catechetical, functions of the Heavenly Epistles. However, he is also open and receptive to the new, modern, perspectives on how to assume the sacred, how to negotiate between credulity and scepticism. The synthesis of these elements will characterise 20th century religiosity. The beginning of the 21st century still shares some common ground with former religiosity:

In the summer of the 2003 I bought a booklet called *Talisman* from a Romanian orthodox monastery; the booklet contains a text that read: “found in 1585 under the Grave of Jesus Christ. The one who will read this prayer, or who will listen to it, or who will keep it with him/herself, will be protected against instant death, will be not defended in battle [...]. The one who will write down this prayer, even in his/her own name or in the name of others, will be blessed, the Lord God said. [...] Cause I gave you six working days, but the seventh, the

Sunday, has to be a day for resting and for praying”. Almost 100 years after Romulus Aroneasca’s *Epistle*, this *Talisman*, a self-described prayer, a version in its turn integrated into a chain of copies (and printed booklets) no longer claims to be written by Jesus Christ, but continues to satisfy the expectations of some believers. Things changed since 2003 to nowadays (2014) and, entering the cyberspace, the *Talisman* is delivered through new technologized means, as well. Together with the old *Legend of Sunday*, they have to face the desires of believers who belong to this post postmodern era, which, *inter alia*, reshape the devotional gestures of writing, reading and listening. But here starts a question which is to be investigated further.

NOTES

- ¹ This study represents a development of a former work, published in Romanian (Jiga Iliescu 2004). One of the reasons I am continuing it here is the need to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War.
- ² Alain Boureau, *La norme épistolaire, un invention médiévale*, în Roger Chartier (sous la dir.), *La correspondance. Les usages de la lettre aux XIXe siècle*, Fayard, 1991, p. 130.
- ³ For a monograph on this Apocrypha in Romanian literature, see Timotin 2005.
- ⁴ Was the text written before or after this date? Does it have any relations to it?
- ⁵ Here is the Romanian original version, which I transcribed *ad litteram*, without any orthographical, syntactic or other ‘correction’ or adaptation:

Această epistolă a scris-o Mântuitorul Nostru Isus Hristos, Dumnezeu Domnul, și s-a trimis pe pământ Cu Arhanghelul Mihail. Această Epistolă era scrisă cu litere de aur și s-a găsit în Canygsberg în Grusia și atârna în aer deasupra bisericii lui Mihail, deasupra căldărușei de botez.

Dacă cineva voia să o scrie, atunci ea se pleca de sine, și iarăși se închidea.

Cuprinsul ei (e) de toată înțelepciunea:

“Cine lucrează duminica, va fi blestemat în viață. Lucrați și vă îndreptați îndoirile voastre la rugăciunile creștinești. Nu vă îmbrăcați cu haină nefolo(sitoare), nu vă împlețiți sub părul nostru și să nu vă întâmpinați (?) cu lumea. Milostiviți pe flămânzi și setoși și săraci.

Credeți că este epistola scrisă de însuși Dumnezeu! Lucrați 6 zile și a șaptea să o serbați! Nu o uitați, căci vă voi pedepsi cu foamete și cu scumpete.

Eu, Dumnezeu vostru, vă poruncesc că nici un lucru să nu lucrați duminica înainte de a [???]. Iar lui Dumnezeu cu [???]. Acolo să vă rugați cu osârdie, ca să luați iertare păcatelor voastre. Nu înșelați pe de-aproapele vostru. Să vă îmblânziți trupurile și opriți pornirile rele. Nu apăsați pe de-aproapele vostru, nu vă ridicați peste părinții și frații voștri și nu fiți martori mincinoși în contra de-aproapelui vostru. Dacă veți face așa, vă voi da vouă pace veș(nică). Cine nu crede această epistolă și nu face după poruncile ei, nu va primi binecuvântarea de la Dumnezeu.

Eu, Isus Hristos, aceasta eram scris cu mâna mea. Și cine va vorbi în contra ei, nu va fi binecuvântat. Spuneți unul altuia epistola. Și cine nu va face acestea, va fi închis din sfânta Biserică. Scrieți unul altuia această epistolă, și de vor fi păcatele voastre cât năsipul în mare și câtă frunză în pom, și de-ți fi făcut greșeli câte stele pe cer, vi se vor ierta vouă. Îmbunătățiți-vă viața, că eu nu vă voiesc să muriți pentru păcatele voastre. Eu voi ținea cu voi judecată la vremea cea de apoi. Și nu-mi veți putea răspunde la 7 întrebări.

Cine are această epistolă în casa sa, acela să aștepte bună voința mea cea sfântă. Cinstiți epistola mea pentru aceea căci v-o am trimis cu îngerul Meu.

În anul 1816 se va întuneca soarele și se pierde strălucirea. În 21 septembrie în acela an, se va arăta negura rece și mulți oameni vor muri și țările se vor împărți. În anul 1889 se vor face rupturi de nori și un nemaipomenit cutremur de pământ va tremura lumea toată și țările se vor schimba. Luna și soarele la șapte oare și jumătate se vor întuneca. O parte a lumii, de tot se va întuneca. Oamenii vor fi scârbiți și vor cădea în răsărit pietre. Și atunci prin un tunet se va arăta, prin un tunet nemaipomenit, că s-a înrăit lumea. Și atunci se va prăpădi o unică parte din ea”.

Epistolă de casa lui Hristos.

“Un grof avea un servitor. Pe acela au voit să-l omoare pentru tatăl său. Când n-a voit să-i taie călăul capul, el n-a putu să-i veteme capul cu nimica. Cum au auzit groful de aceasta, a întrebat pe servitor că pentru ce nu l-a putut călăul omori și cum nu l-a putut vătăma. Servitorul răspunde: <<Tata a fost scris următoarele litere: B.F.C.H.O.A.C.>>. Cum au auzit groful aceasta, a poruncit că dacă cuiva îi curge sânge din nas, sau are vreo rană din care curge sânge și nu să oprește, să pună literele acestea pe o farfurie sau pe o sabie, atunci se va oprim sângele. Cine poartă la sine această epistolă, acela nu va fi păgubit prin furt, pentru că dușmanii lui nu pot face nimic cu aceste 5 sfinte răni ale Domnului: H.C.O.H.C. Așa nu va fi niciodată judecat: H.H.T.F. [...].

Cine va avea această epistolă la sine, nu va avea nici o pagubă. [...] Și dacă va avea o muiere să nască și nu va putea naște, să-i dea această epistolă în mână, și va naște și pruncul va fi norocos.

Cine poartă această epistolă care e bună la casă și va avea averi în numele lui Dumnezeu Tatăl și Duhul Sfânt, amin.

Precum Cristos a stat liniștit în grădină, așa va fi lui toate întâmplările liniștite. Toți văzuții și nevăzuții cari va porunci în numele morții lui Isus Hristos, fiul lui Dumnezeu. Cine poartă această epistolă la sine contra dușmanului, contra armelor și a glonțului, fi va scutit. Cine nu vrea să creadă, acela să o scrie și să lege de gâtul unui câine și să puște după el și va vedea că nu-l va nimeri. Cine poartă această epistolă la sine, acela nu va fi lovit de arma dușmanului. A.M.E.N.E.

Drept că Christos a umblat pe pământ, au murit și au înviat și s-a înălțat la ceriu și șede de-a dreapta Tatălui. Și așa nu vei putea fi înjunghiat. Eu te voi înconjura cu toate armele din lumea aceasta, pentru veșnicul Dumnezeu Tatăl, Fiul și Duhul Sfânt. În liniște să stai. Eu mă rog în numele sângelui Domnului nostru Isus Christos, ca nici un glonț să nu te lovească. [...] Dumnezeu îl ferește în numele Tatălui și al Fiului și al Sfântului Duh.”

Această epistolă e trimisă din ceriu și s-a aflat în creștini la anul 1791 și era scrisă cu litere de aur și atârna în aer deasupra căldării de botez. Când voia cineva să apuce, nu o putea ajunge, că să trăgea îndărăpt, până în anul 1799, când le-au venit în gând să o scrie și să o împartă la lume.

Atunci au luat epistola și era în ea scris că cine va lucra Dumineca, va fi arzând. Și voi să nu lucrați Dumineca, [...] Eu vă da(u) 6 zile de lucru, iar a șaptea să mergeți la biserică. Cine nu face așa, va fi pedepsit cu foamete și cu bătăi. Eu vă rog ca sâmbătă seara să nu lucrați până târziu. Și tineri și bătrâni, să vă rugați pentru păcatele voastre. Și vi se dau vouă, că nu sunteți răscumpărați cu aur și în argint. Vedeți voi iubirea de oameni. Așa ușor vă pot și prăpădi. Nu fiți mincinoși cu limba, cinstiți pe tatăl vostru și pe mama voastră și nu vă jurați strâmb în contra de apropielul vostru. Atunci vă voi da sănătate și pace. Și cine în această epistolă nu va crede, va fi fără de noroc și fără de binecuvântare. Cine are această epistolă și nu o va da și altora să o cetească, acela va fi sfârșit de biserică lui Hristos. Această epistolă să o ia unul de la

altul, și de va fi făcut păcate cât nisipul în mare și câtă frunză la pomi, toate vor fi iertate. Celui ce va trăi în onoare și cel ce ???cinste pe mine, cu moarte va muri. Întoarceți-vă, căci dacă nu, veți fi pedepsiți părintește, pentru că voi nu veți putea răspunde de păcatele voastre.

Iar cine va avea această epistolă în casa sa, acela va fi dormit cu pruncii iubiți și înțelepți. Țineți poruncile mele care vi le-am trimis prin îngerul meu în numele lui Isus Hristos. Doamne, tu ai făcut pe om pentru ca să trăiască în bună înțelegere și dragoste pe pământ, pe apă [???].

Mai vreau să cunoască această voință a Ta. Luminează-le inima și fă primitoare dă dragoste și iertare. Dă-ne pacea Ta, prea îndurate, ca să putem petrece pe pământ cu dragoste și bucurie, și să trecem cu fața senină și inima curată. Și ne iartă nouă greșelile noastre precum și noi iertăm

celor ce ne-au greșit nouă. Că a Ta este împărăția și puterea și mărirea în veci, Amin.

Feluritele nume ale Domnului nostru Isus Christos:

biruire, putere, cuvânt, pocăință, înțelept, Isus, atotștiutor, îndrumător, pace, lumină, masă, păstor, oaspe, viață, cale, cap, împărat, unire și: cinstit, mire, biruitor, adevărat fiu omenesc și cu noi Dumnezeu, începător, întâi născut, Hristos, înălțime, pâine cerească, părinte, ziditor, Savaot, fără de moarte, sfânt Duh, îndurător), sprijinitor, puternic, soare, Christos, vindecător, bun, îndurător, de păcate milostiv, mai înainte de toți vecii, făcător, milă, leu, mărire, Eu Sunt care Sunt, îndreptător, izvor, adevărat, fiu, bucurie, [???], mărturisitor, ușă veșnică, Dumnezeu în trei fețe, neîmpărțit, împărat peste toți împărății.

Dintr-acestea, pe ori care îl pomenim, trebuie să ne gândim la Domnul nostru Isus Hristos. E bine ca tot omul să le poarte la sine aceste numiri, și, repetându-le cu cititul, să le știe din cap,

Amin.

⁶ I try to make my comments as clear as possible, in order to help those who cannot understand the Romanian original text reproduced above.

⁷ I mean the correspondence between Alexander the Great and Aristotle, between Alexander and King Porus, etc.

⁸ A third hypothesis will be given below.

⁹ The model of sermonic rhetoric, which assumes repetition at its turn, possibly influenced the copyist's style.

¹⁰ These prophetic sentences may be derived from the list of comminations addressed to

those who do not observe Sunday, as they appears in the former versions, including the 16th century one; for example, the open of the sky, which will allow a fire rain to fall on the earth, "in the month of Prier [April]"

¹¹ "Organizarea *Epistolei* și prezența motivului slovelor de aur ne permit să alăturăm textul în discuție de traducerea PP a *Legendei duminicii* din redacția Muntele Măslinilor, dar mai ales de amuletele occidentale privind trimiterea pe pământ a unor scrisori divine prin intermediul arhanghelului Mihail. Chiar în condițiile în care anumite detalii par a indica o origine germană a textului, nu putem înainta nici o ipoteză privind condițiile în care a fost tradusă în românește această versiune inedită a *Legendei duminicii*²⁷, ele rămânând să fie elucidate de studii ulterioare".

¹² It could be of some interest that the war, in which Romulut Aroneasca and his fellows were involved, could have been interpreted as a punishment and/or as apocalyptic signs.

¹³ In this part of the document, the term 'epistle' supports a semantic extension and means any kind of written text with magic potential.

¹⁴ I wonder whether the series had any meanings, or were they more or less randomly chosen, repeating a practice *en vogue* in the pages of those almanacs.

¹⁵ The printing of the *Legend of Sunday* at the end of the 19th century modified the relationship between *having* and *copying* a text.

¹⁶ "Concerning the terminology, some scholars call these texts apocryphal prayers or false prayers, while other researchers propose a difference between canonical prayer, quasi-canonical prayer, apocryphal prayer, charm with functions of a prayer and magical charm." (Tsonkova 2011: 27)

REFERENCES

- Albert, Jean Pierre 1993. La "chaîne de saint Antoine": religion ou superstition? In: *Ethnologie des faites religieux en Europe*. Colloque tenu sous la direction de: Nicole Belmont et Françoise Lautman. Paris: Édition du C.T.H.S.
- Boureau, Alain 1991. La norme épistolaire, un invention médiévale. In: Roger Chartier (sous la dir.), *La correspondance. Les usages de la lettre aux XIXe siècle*. Paris: Fayard.
- Cartoian, Nicolae 1929. *Cărțile populare în literatura românească. Vol I. Epoca influenței sud-slave* [Popular books in Romanian Literature. Vol I. The South-Slavic influence]. București: Casa Școalelor
- Chartier, Roger 1991 (sous la dir.). *La correspondance. Les usages de la lettre aux XIXe siècle*. Paris: Fayard
- Jiga, Laura 2003. On the borderline between orality and literacy. Documents written by peasants, stored in archives of folklore. In: *Symposia. Caiete de etnologie și antropologie*. Craiova: aius, pp. 211–220
- Jiga Iliescu, Laura (coord.) 2004. *Scrieri țărănești. Documente olografe aflate în AIEF* [Peasants' writings. Documents stored in AIEF]. Anthology by Laura Jiga Iliescu

- (coordinator, introductory study and critical edition) Anca Stere, Cristina Neamu. Bucuresti: Cheiron
- Jiga Iliescu, Laura 2004. O ipostază a “Scrisorii căzute din cer”, la începutul secolului al XX-lea [An hypostasis of the “Letter falled down from the Heaven”, at the beginning og the 21st century]. In: *Xenopoliana*. Buletinul Fundației Academice “A. D. Xenopol” din Iași, XII, 1–4, Iași, pp. 165–178
- Kapaló, James A. 2011. *Text, Context and performance: Gagauz Folk Religion in Discourse and Practice*. Leiden: Brill
- Muşlea, Ion & Bîrlea, Ovidiu 2010. *Tipologia folclorului din răspunsurile la Chestionarele lui B. P. Hasdeu* [The typology of folklore from the answers at the Questionnaire of B. P. Hasdeu]. Cu un cuvânt înainte de Ion Taloş, ediția a doua revăzută și întregită de Ioan. I. Muşlea. Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Române. [1970, Bucureşti: Editura Minerva.]
- Ofrim, Alexandru 2001. *Cheia și Psaltirea. Imaginarul cărții în cultura tradițională românească* [The Key and the Psalter. The imaginary of the book in the Romanian traditional culture]. Cu un cuvânt înainte de Irina Nicolau. Pitesti: Editura Paralela 45.
- Ong, Walter 1982, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London & New York: Routledge
- Timotin, Emanuela 2005. *Legenda duminicii. Studiu monografic, ediție și glosar de ...* [The legend of Sunday. Monography, edition and glossary by ...]. Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română, vol. X. Bucureşti: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă – Academia Română.
- Tsonkova, Svetlana, 2011. Practical texts in difficult situations: Bulgarian medieval charms as Apocrypha and Fachliteratur. In: *Incantatio. An international Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming*, 1, pp. 25–35. http://folklore.ee/incantatio/Incantatio_2011_1_Tsonkova.pdf

About the author

Laura Jiga Iliescu is a senior researcher at the Constantin Brailoiu Institute of Ethnography and Folklore in the Romanian Academy (Bucharest, Romania). Her main domains of interest are interference between oral and written cultural expressions during European pre-Industrial times; traditional, modern and virtual religious narratives, rituals and practices; mountain ethnology; the formalised externalisation of knowledge in oral performance; fieldwork techniques; and archiving and editing documents relating to intangible cultural heritage.

FROM WRITTEN TO ORAL TRADITION. SURVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION OF ST. SISINNIOS PRAYER IN ORAL GREEK CHARMS

Haralampos Passalis

The Sisinnios prayer or Gylou story, part prayer part exorcism, is an ambiguous narrative enjoying an intercultural as well as a diachronic distribution. The text, which refers to the harmful influence and restraint – through the sacred intervention of Saints or an Angel – of a female demon bearing different names (Lilith, Gyllo, Werzelya, Veshtitsa/Aveshtitsa etc., depending on the particular ethnic culture from which it has emerged) has received substantial attention from researchers on an international scale. In the Greek tradition, in which this female demon is known as Gyllo, Gyloy, Yello or Yalou, there have been recordings of more than thirty versions of the text, spanning a time period from the fifteenth up to the early twentieth centuries. These recordings are located geographically in various different parts of Greece, and have been used within the framework of a folk religious context as a means of protection for newborn babies and their mothers. What is the effect of this particular story on the oral tradition of charms, i.e. on those charms which are orally transmitted and performed? What forms has it assumed, and which particular elements of the written tradition have been transmitted, incorporated, transformed, modified or omitted from charms in the process? The present study aims, on the one hand, to contribute further to the exploration of the well-known myth, and, on the other, to offer additional insight into the interaction between the written and oral tradition of charms in light of the fact that the Gylou story is particularly susceptible to those interpretational studies which focus on the crucial processes of incorporation and transformation of the written tradition in the field of oral charms.

Key words: Archangel Michael, Greek oral charms, exorcisms, Gylou story, female demon, folk religion, Saints, St. Sisinnios prayer, written/oral tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The text of the so called “St. Sisinnios prayer”, where a “child-stealing witch” (Gaster 1900), or a ‘child-harming’ / ‘child-killing’ female demon (Lyavdansky 2011: 19–20) afflicting new-born children, and pregnant or recently delivered women, has attracted and continues to attract the interest of many researchers of various scientific fields.¹ Traces of this story appear in magic plates, scrolls, lead amulets, pendants, illustrated magic manuscripts, frescoes, “over a time-

span of several thousand years in many cultures scattered widely around the eastern Mediterranean and in other parts of Europe” (Greenfield 1989: 140).² During its diachronic and cross-cultural journey the story has been used as a general and structural scheme for the symbolic representation of social fears and angst, inscribed in the collective subconscious, regarding afflictions which may occur to vulnerable social groups and especially at crucial times of the biological and social cycle of life, such as in pregnancy and in early childhood. Along this route the structural pattern of the story remained almost the same, though variants has appeared mainly in the female demon’s names (Abyzou, Lilith, Lilita, Malwita, Zardukh, Lamastu, Alabasandria, Gallu, Gyllo/Gylou, Werzelya, (A)veshtitsa, “Ebedisha,” etc.), and also in the names of sacred personae (Salomon, Sisinnios/Sisynios (and Synidores), Socinius, Sousnyos, prophet Elias, archangels Michael, Gabriel etc.) it features.³

In the Greek academic field, this prayer is well known by the name of the female demon as an exorcism of Gylou, also Gello, Gillou, Gillo, Iallou etc.⁴ (< ancient Greek Γελλώ [Gello], Byzantine/modern Greek Γελλού [Gellou], Γιλλού [Gillou]).⁵ A variety of researchers have extensively examined this text as it appears in Greek culture from the Byzantine period till nowadays.⁶ The most systematic analysis of the literary evolution of the Greek Gylou story remains, however, the approach of Greenfield (1989). In his research, Greenfield approaches the content and the types of the Greek Gylou story “over a span of almost six centuries and quite a wide geographical distribution [and] provides an important... insight into the process of traditional interaction, alteration and development which lies behind the contemporary, the encountered, forms of such popular belief” (Greenfield 1989: 140). His thorough examination, based upon thirty two more or less distinct versions of the story (Greenfield 1989: 90), resulted in the distinction of two basic motifs and types of this text: Sisinnios/Melitene type and the Michael type stories. According to Greenfield (Greenfield 1989: 92), “Of the thirty-two versions being considered, seven are of the Sisinnios/Melitene type, twenty two are of Michael type, and a further three contains versions of both types”. It is worth mentioning that in both types the same female demon presents herself by using several comprehensible as well as incomprehensible names the number of which varies from variation to variation and it ranges from 12 to even 72.⁷

In the first type (Sisinnios/Melitene type) the main characters opposed to the evil demon in a fairly elaborate narrative are St. Sisinnios and his relatives, particularly his sister Melitene. According to Greenfield (1989: 93) this type divides into five basic sections: 1) Introduction of Melitene who reveals the killing of her children by the evil demon Gylou; 2) the fresh pregnancy of Melitene and her effort of protecting herself by seeking refuge in a fortified castle; 3)

the visit by her saintly brothers (Sisinnios, one or two others), their admission after some debate, and the slipping through of Gylou (more often transformed into a fly) who kills the new baby in the night; 4) the chase, capture, torture of the malevolent demon by Melitene’s brother, and negotiation in order to make her give the children back – Gylou’s demand to drink human milk in order to give the children back is miraculously fulfilled and at least one child is given back; 5) Gylou is tormented again by saints and then reveals her secret names which work as an amulet against her.

In the Michael type story, the central role of the sacred personae is often undertaken by Archangel Michael or some other holy figure (Greenfield 1989: 92). This type, which follows a simpler encounter pattern contains three basic sections, the order of which varies from the text to text (Greenfield 1989: 104): 1) an encounter of the archangel Michael (or some other sacred figure) with the demon and description of demon’s appearance followed by archangel’s demand to know where she has come from and where she is going; 2) answers to these questions by giving an account of the demon’s actions which includes information concerning the disguises she may adopt and the harm and afflictions she may cause chiefly to babies and to women during the period immediately before or after giving birth (she may also be associated with a wider range of misfortunes); 3) the revelation, after being threatened, of her names which could be used as a preventive measure in an amulet or prayer against her harming actions.

The story of Gylou in any of the aforementioned types, and with greater or lesser differentiation, remained alive in Greek traditional culture till the middle of the twentieth century, both in the oral/folk and written/learned tradition. The two traditions where this text appears also represent two different systems of communicative technology and at the same time two different systems of transmission and performance which are in constant feedback and interrelationship. This paper aims at examining this interrelation and feedback, while giving special attention to the oral tradition of the story. To begin with, given that these issues have been approached in detail by previous scholars, we will briefly examine the written tradition of the text as well as the survivals and traces connected with legends, rituals and superstitions in the context of Greek traditional culture. Then we will try to detect traces of survival and modifications in the charms, in particular those which are orally transmitted and performed. More specifically, the main focus of this research will be on the forms which the story of Gylou has assumed and on the special elements which have been incorporated, transformed, modified, or even omitted, during the whole process.

1. THE WRITTEN TRADITION OF THE TEXT

The literary variants of the text (in both of its main types) survived in use until the early twentieth century. Eleven variants among the most recent ones dating from the eighteenth century to the beginnings of the twentieth follow the Archangel Michael type: three versions of the eighteenth century,⁸ four of the nineteenth century,⁹ two from a written manuscript of the priest Roboti,¹⁰ originating from the island of Lefkada and dated between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century.¹¹ The number of variants that follow the pattern of Melitene is much smaller. From the eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, four such variants have been documented: one in a manuscript dated to 1858 from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 43–45; HE4 in Greenfield 1989, 90), one dating from the middle of the nineteenth century (1862) from the town Konitsa in Epiros (Οικονομίδης 1956: 19–23; O3 in Greenfield 1989, 91), and one variant of a manuscript dating from 1830 from the town Sitia in Crete (Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 67–68; SP2 in Greenfield 1989, 91).¹² Finally, we should note the existence of three more recent variants including both types: one manuscript dated between the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 47–48; HE6 in Greenfield 1989: 91, 92) and two variants of the same period from the island of Naxos (Οικονομίδης 1940: 65–70; O1 and O2 in Greenfield 1989: 92).

The basic characteristics of the texts of the literary tradition are that the incantation is passed on written form and its performance is based on reading or writing the text (cf. χαρτί(α) της Ιαλλούς, γαλλουδοχάρτι(α) (paper(s) of Iallous), Οικονομίδης 1975–76: 260, Ημελλος 1965: 40 note 6, Στέλλας 2004: 137)¹³ – in the last case, the considered magic quality of those texts is transferred to the object on which they are inscribed that is then used as a protective amulet against the demons' attack (Ζερβός 1958: 253–54). All these variants are written in literary/scholarly language and are performed almost exclusively by priests. Additionally, it should be noted that the texts of exorcism of that type are not integrated in the frame of the officially recognized documents of religious practices, and often trigger conflicts with clergymen higher in the hierarchy (Οικονομίδης 1940: 65, 1975–76, 26, Στέλλας 2004: 137). They are not, however, regarded as improper within the frame of the folk religious system, since, on the one hand they are not in direct opposition with the concept of Christian perception, and on the other, they portray many similarities, primarily in the expression and content, with the officially recognised exorcisms and prayers. The fact remains, however, that they are based on a pre-Christian tradition and are used in parallel with recognised prayers.¹⁴

It is notable that almost all variants are in possession of priests often in manuscripts and codes of churches and monasteries (Ημελλος 1965: 40, 41).

This is not a paradox, since the clergy represent the main body of literacy in Greek traditional culture.¹⁵ Frequent ethnographic testimonies verify not only the ownership but also the performance of such texts by priests: “στο χωρίο Απεράθου του νησιού Νάξος συνηθιζόταν ο εξορκισμός να διαβάζεται σε παιδί που έπασχε από κακό μάτι ή άλλο κακό από ιερείς με τον τίτλο Χαρτί της Ιαλλούς” (*In the village of Aperathou in Naxos an exorcism entitled ‘Paper of Iallous’, was read by priests to a child suffering from the evil eye or other afflictions*) (Οικονομίδης 1975–76: 260). The variants that Kontomihis publishes derive from a book of blessings and exorcisms by papa-Roboti, who was a priest in Athani, and also a prominent chiropractor, a skilful doctor, and a mystifying exorcist (Κοντομίχης 1985: 62). The specific manuscript was passed on to the priest's son, also a priest, papa Gabriil Roboti, abbot of Faneromenis Monastery, and then to the successor priest in Faneromeni Monastery on the island, papa-Georgaki, who gave it to the collector (Κοντομίχης 1985: 62–63). Apparently this kind of exorcism has been current in many parts of Greece. It is certain that further research involving unpublished manuscripts will reveal an even greater number of variants.

2. THE ORAL TRADITION

Nonetheless, what happens with oral tradition, that is the tradition based on word-of-mouth transmission of information? The female demon is known of various dialectal variants such as Γελλού [Gellou], Ελλού [Ellou], Γιλλού [Gillou], Γ'λλου [G'llou], as well as Γιαλλού [Giallou] and Ιαλλού [Iallou],¹⁶ in many Greek areas (ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλού).¹⁷ Adequate ethnographic data validate the historical dissemination with trivial or vital differences. The semantic content of the name Gylou with its dialectal variants has incorporated various definitions, which are related directly or indirectly to the action of a female malevolent demon. The most common are: malevolent spirit which harms and kills infants; diseases of infancy; a monster that strangles sheep; a ghost that haunts pregnant women; a female child born on Christmas night; fairy and elf; a wicked (or immoral) woman who casts evil-eye spells.¹⁸ Numerous traditions and superstitions are found related to these meanings in different parts of Greece.

These traditions have been recorded and analytically presented by renowned Greek scholars (Oeconomides 1965, Οικονομίδης 1975, Αικατερινίδης 1990). The supplementary elements reported on this article simply substantiate and enhance the dissemination of this myth, which appears vast in areas where pertinent information supports the survival and parallel use of the literary variants.¹⁹ The correlation between the female demon and a woman who casts spells (or a female figure who follows a similar pattern of malevolent actions with fairies

and elves) is evident, even in those complementary testimonies. The following ethnographic testimonies from Paros are indicative of such a connection:

when the recently delivered woman became ill and died from fever, people presumed that Giallou had casted an evil eye spell. Every disease that either the baby or the recently delivered mother suffered, they said Giallou had cursed them. They still do so. (Στέλλας 2004: 137)

Giallou is the one who chases and casts evil eye spells on newborn and unbaptized children and that is why she can strangle them. (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37)²⁰

The malicious deeds of the female demon are not limited to harming newborns and parturient women, but expand to other people as often happens also in written tradition: “*She is the source of so many evils, that is she drinks, drains the milk of parturient women, destroys the fruit, the crops, sinks the ship and drowns the seamen and infects whatever she touches*” (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37).²¹

Evidence of literary tradition of the first type regarding the danger of Giallou’s invasion, is widespread and can be found those areas where the literary types are also used, for instance in Cycladic islands Paros and Naxos. According to ethnographic data from Paros:

As long as the recently delivered woman was unchurched [...] and even later, after having her child blessed by church, they avoided going to her house late at night, as Gialou would enter with them [...] The door was always leaning and was closed early. In dire need, the door would open, if a relative or a stranger knocked three times, formed crosses with his fingers and uttered sacred words. (Στέλλας 2004: 112–113)

Whoever entered the house knew that Gialou followed. [...] If she failed to enter she would imitate animal sounds and human voices, to trick them, to slightly open the door so that she could get inside in a prone position... But once she was indoors she would lay her big nails and squint-eyes to infect anything she touched. (Στέλλας 2004: 113)²²

Moreover, according to an account from Naxos:

The Yalou [local spelling] was a demon that trailed people to find an open door after midnight at houses of unbaptized children. The Yalou followed the person entering the house and killed the child. To protect her child a mother had to keep a cross made from cane and a piece of bread (on which she had traced the sign of the cross) beneath the child’s pillow [...] The unchurched mother was not even supposed to leave her baby for a moment, because, it was said, mice might eat it. A recently delivered mother

was not supposed to be left alone at all; in the evening no one besides her husband and close kin were supposed to enter the house. A breach of any of these interdictions, or contact with a corpse, meant loss of her milk. (Stewart 1991: 101)

Other historical evidence, with a wide dissemination in oral tradition, relates to the transformation of the female demon into a serpent²³. The following tradition from Paros is a characteristic example for this type of metamorphosis:

Gello (or presently and traditionally named Giallou) [...] was unmarried when she fell pregnant and died in labour. Since then seeking for vengeance, she turned into an evil elf. Incantations from Paros against reptiles and insects which torment humans refer to her as ‘ftavoutou’ or ‘efta voutou’ and ‘ftaloutrou or efta loutrou’ (one who dives in the seashore and showers seven times). Her infinite transformations are also seven (dragon, monster, snake, leaping or flying) in order to enter in wherever she desires. Habitually she dives into the seashore (Voutou, Loutrou) to transform, or to escape when being chased. Traditionally [...] she is referred to as: the one who lives in the seashore (gialou), the evil fairy (katsa aneragdou), the one who dives into the seashore (voutixtra), the one who casts an evil eye spell (ftarmistra), who is wicked (kakistra), who acts maliciously (striglistra) and the one who strangles babies (pniompaidou). (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37)²⁴

Her name is intentionally cited in incantations for protection against dangerous land reptiles, primarily used when people had to sleep outside to attend agricultural work. The following extracts of incantations “against dangerous land reptiles” are typical examples of this connection:

Αι Γιώργη μου,²⁵ δένε και χαλίνωνε τα συρνάμενα της γης,| τον όφη τσαι την όχεντρα,| την Ελλού τσαι τη Μαντού, |το μικρόν αγραλινάτσι [...]

St George, | bind and put a harness to the land reptiles, | the snake and the viper, | Ellou, Mantou | the small spider in the field [...]. (Kasos, Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1935: 21–22)

Αϊ- Γιώργη μετά σου| και κυρά Πεντακλησού,| δένε και χαλίνωνε| το Βραχνά και τη Γελλού,| τον όφη και την όχεντρα [...]

St George and Virgin Mary of the five churches, | bind and restrain | the nightmare and Gellou, | the snake and the viper [...]. (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 244)²⁶

Αι-Γιάννη βούθα μας, βούθα μας τριβούθα μας,| Τρεις αντζέλοι του Χριστού τσαι τρεις της Παναγιάς,| γέσετε, χαλινώσετε τα συρνούμενα της γης,| τα πονηρά της

νύχτας, την Γελλού, την Μαλλού, τη Ξαθού, τη Μιαλοτσεφαλού, τον όφιο, την όφιεντρα το σκορπιό, τη σκολόπεντρα, το μικρό το ρωαλλάτσι| αποκάτω στο πλακάτσι, όσα να βγ' ο ήλιος [...] να συνάξω τα σατσία μου| τσαι να μτσάσω τα παιδιά μου| τσαι να πάω στηβ βουλειά μου.

St. Ioanni, help us, thrice help us. | Three Angels of Christ and Virgin Mary, | bind and put a harness on the crawling land reptiles, | the evil of the night, Gellou, Mallou, Ksathou | Mialotsefalou ['who has a big head'], *the snake, the viper, the scorpion, the caterpillar, the poisonous bags | under the rocks until sunrise [...] | to collect my sacks, | to gather my children | and go to my work.* (Karpathos, Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1932: 159)²⁷

3. FROM WRITTEN TO ORAL TRADITION

3.1 THE MELITENE TYPE

Can we find charms in oral tradition which maintain traces from literary texts?²⁸ Yes indeed, both traces and fuller examples of both types are identifiable in incantations performed and transmitted orally, with variations either vital or trivial. Let us examine the following charm against the evil eye from the village of Asi Gonia in Chania (Crete), which was recorded by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 249– 251) in 1964:

Ως είχαν οι πέντε αδελφοί| κι είχανε μια αδελφή,| την κερά Μελετινή. Εννιά παιδάκια είχανε| κανένα δεν τ' απόμεινε. Πύργο χρυσό εκάνανε και μέσα την εβάλανε οι γι-αδελφοί τση. Και χάρη του Θεού ευρέθη βαρεμένη και έκανε αρσενικό παιδί. Κι ακούσανε οι γι-αδελφοί τση κι ετρέχανε, τα δόσια να δώσουν| τσι χαρές να κάμουν. Κατά χάρη Θεού εχτυπήσανε την πόρτα| και τη βρήκαν σφαλιστή. -Ανοιξε μας, αδελφή μας, τα δόσια να δώσουμε| τσι χαρές να κάμουμε. -Δεν σας ανοίγω, αδέλφια μου, γιατί 'ναι η Σούδα, η Μούδα, η κακιά γειτόνισσα, και θα μπει να μου πάρει των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. -Ανοιξε μας, αδερφή μας, κι εμείς κρατούμε κουμπούρια, μαχαίρια, σκαπέτια| να τηνε σκοτώσουμε. Εκείνη δεν εγίνη μουλάρι γή μουσχάρι| να μπει να τση πάρει των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο, μον' εγίνη μύγια| και εμπήκε κοιλιά κοιλιά του αλόγου| και τση πήρε των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. -Γλακάτε, αδέρφια μου, πριν τον ποταμό περάσει, πριν το σκαμνί τση κάτσει, πριν το άντρα τση αγκαλιάσει, να τση πάρετε των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. Εγλακούσαν και την εφτάξανε, πριν τον ποταμό περάσει, πριν το σκαμνί τση κάτσει, πριν το άντρα τση αγκαλιάσει. -Να μαςε δώσεις των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο, απού 'πήρες τσ' αδελφής μας. -Α δύνασθε να ξεράσετε| τση μάνας το γάλα, δύναμαι

κι εγώ να ξεράσω| των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. Εγιαγείρανε γρινιασμένοι, χτικιασμένοι. Κατά χάρη Θεού ευρέθη μια προβατίνα, ψοφισμένη, βαρεμένη| και αρμέγουνε στσι καταπαλάμες τως το γάλα, και τση το πήγανε και το 'πιε| και ανατρόπιασε από τσι εβδομήντα δυο τση φλέγες| κι εξέρασε οβράκια, οφιδάκια, λιακονάκια| κι ένα παληκαράκι με τ' άρματα ζωσμένο.

There were five brothers | and they had one sister | lady Melitene. Nine children she had | yet none was left. | Her brothers built a golden tower and put her in it. | And with God's grace she got pregnant again | and gave birth to a boy. | And her brothers found out, and ran | to offer their gifts | and rejoice. | With God's grace they knocked at the door, | but it was locked. | – Let us in sister, for we have gifts to offer | and rejoice. | – I won't open my brothers, because there lurks Souda, Mouda, | the evil neighbour, | and she will invade to take my nine-month baby, the newborn. | – Let us in, our sister, | and we carry guns, knives, hoes | to kill her. | Yet she did not transform into a mule or a calf | to enter and take | the nine-month child, | the newborn, | but she became a fly and sneaked in, stuck on the horse's abdomen and took her nine-month child, | the newborn. | – Run, my brothers, | before she crosses the river, | before she sits on her stool, | before she hugs her husband, | take back from her the nine-month child, | the newborn. | They ran and approached her, | before she crosses the river, | before she sits on her stool, | before she hugs her husband. | – Give us back the nine-month child, | the newborn, | whom you took from our sister. | – If you can vomit | the mother's milk, then I can too gush out the nine-month child, | the newborn. | They returned distressed, disappointed, irritated. | With God's grace an ewe was unearthed, | dead, pregnant | and they milk it with their hands, | and took it to her to drink it | and she was terrified by her seventy-two veins | and threw up Jewish children, little snakes, little lizards | and an armoured young boy. (Against the evil eye, Αικατερινίδης 1990: 249–251)

We are undoubtedly presented here with a rhythmic oral variant of the well-known Melitene type, expressed in the regional dialect. Influences and correlations with almost all parts of literary variants of that type can be discerned. The charm begins by referring to Melitene and her brothers, as well as to the revelation of her children's loss, and it continues with her brother's attempt to protect her by building a tower (parts 1 and 2 of the literary examples). What follows then is a reference to her new pregnancy, the reason for her brothers' visit to her. Melitene's initial refusal to admit them results in her brothers reassuring her that they would protect Melitene's baby if necessary. Subsequently, the female demon, transformed into a fly, invades and kills the baby (part 3 in

the literary examples). The brothers chase and capture the female demon, and claim the baby back. Melitene's demand to drink the mother's milk in exchange for the child is met, resulting in her vomiting up the children (part 4 of the literary forms). The fifth part of the literary variants regarding the fresh torment of the demon and the disclosure of names is entirely omitted. Noticeably, this incantation retains the name 'Melitene' while having no reference to the name 'Gylou', which is rather replaced by a series of nonsensical words: Σούδα, η Μούδα [Souda, Mouda], someone who is identified with the evil neighbour ("η κακιά γειτόνισσα").

There are two more charms from Crete based on the equivalent tradition of Melitene type. These are variants recorded during the first decades of the twentieth century, and also used against the evil eye. Despite having evolved from this type, these incantations demonstrate more diversity compared with the literary variants. We cite here only one of the two (B), as they are both quite similar with but few differences.

Στ' όνομα του Χριστού και τ' αγίου Παντελεήμονα. | Ήτανε εννιά αδέρφια κι είχανε μιαν αδερφή. | Τη σπιτώσαν, την παντρέψαν | και την ενοικοκυρέψαν κι έκαμε και εννιά κοπέλλια. | Κι επήγαινε και τση τα τρωε η τσίγκρα, η μίγκρα, τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα. Κι έμαθα ντο οι γι-εννιά αδερφοί κι ευτύς εξεκινήσαν. | Ξανάστροφα ντυθήκανε κι ετσά καβαλλικέψαν | κι ούλοι τωνε ξανάστροφα τον ποταμό διαβαίνουν | και φτάνουνε ξανάστροφα στην πόρτα τσ' αδερφής των. -Πόρισε, αδερφή, ν' ανοίξεις | με το μαραμέν' αγείλι. | -Και πώς θα πορίσω, αδέρφια μου, που κάθετα στα κότσια τω μπεγριώ σας η τζίγκρα, η μίγκρα και τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα; | -Πόρισε, συ, αδέρφι μας, | μα 'μεις θα τηνε δείρομε, | θα τηνε μαγκλαβίσομε, | στον ποταμό θα τηνε ρίξομε και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι θα τση χτυπήσομε. | Κι εκείνη εσηκόθηκε ευτύς και των ανοίγει | κι η τσίγκρα τση θανάτωσε και τα εννιά κοπέλλια. | Κι εκείνοι την επιάσανε και την εδείρανε, στον ποταμό τη ρίξανε | και την εμαγκλαβίσανε, | και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι τση χτυπήσανε. | -Είντα σας έκαμα, μωρέ, | και με δέρνετε, | με μαγκλαβίζετε, στον ποταμό με ρίχνετε | και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι μου χτυπάτε; -Να πάεις, τσίγκρα, μίγκρα, να μασε φέρεις τσ' αδερφής μας τα παιδιά. Και τότες επέρνα ο Χριστός κι ευλόησε στη χέρα ντου του μαύρου σφαχτού το γάλα κι ανασταθήκανε των εννιά αδερφώ τσ' αδερφής τα εννιά παιδιά. Καλόστροφα ντυθήκανε κι ετσά καβαλλικέψαν κι ετσά περνούν τον ποταμό στο σπίτι ντω γαέρνουν.

In the name of Christ and Saint Panteleimon. | There were nine brothers who had one sister. | They housed, married and settled her | and she gave birth to nine children. | And tsigra, migra, the creature born at a cursed moment, ate them. | And the nine brothers found out and set off | immediately. | Wearing their clothes back to front they rode their horses | and

crossed the river backwards | and so they reach their sister's door. | - Come out, sister, to open the door | with your sad face. | - And how should I let you in, my brothers, for tsigra, migra, the one born at a cursed moment, sits on your horses' legs; | - Let us in, our sister, | and we will beat her, | we will torture her, | throw her into the river | and with the black handled knife | will stab her. | And she immediately got up and let them in | and tsigra, migra killed her nine children. | And they caught and hit her, | and dumped her into the river | and tortured her, | and stabbed her with the black handled knife. | - What have I done to you, | and you beat me, | torture me, | throw me into the river | and with the black handled knife / stab me? | - Go, Tsigra, Migra, and bring our sister's children. | And it was then that Christ walked by and blessed with his hand the milk of a black slaughtered animal and the nine children of the nine brothers' sister resurrected. They put their clothes in the right way and rode their horses properly and in this way crossed the river and returned home. (Πάγκαλος 1983: 362-63)

The incantation begins with a general reference to the nine brothers with one sister whose children had been eaten by a female demon (part 1 of the literary examples). No names are mentioned. In the previous charm (A), the typical number 9 defined the number of children, whilst now 9 identifies the number of brothers. Here, the female demon is described as *τσίγκρα, η μίγκρα, τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα* (*tsigra, migra, the creature born at a cursed moment*).²⁹ The new pregnancy of the sister along with the building of the castle to protect her newborn children are not cited (part 2 of literary forms). The indication of how the female demon entered into the castle (part 3 of literary types) is evident only in Melitene's words to her brothers when they plead her to open the door of the castle.³⁰ Omissions and vital differences emerge in the pursuit of, torture of, arrest of, and negotiations with the female demon (part 4 of the literary examples). In the final part of this oral charm a sacred figure, Christ, appears, blesses the milk of a slaughtered animal and consequently the children return. Nevertheless, the role of the milk and how the female demon gave the children back are not specified. The fifth part of the literary variants regarding the fresh torment of the demon and the disclosure of names is also omitted. The discernible adaptations and modifications, which come up when we compare and contrast this charm with the previous one, are anticipable. Undeniably, the structural frame of this incantation is the literary variant of the Melitene type.

Indirect confirmations and distant traces of the Melitene type appear in another incantation (C) from the oral tradition, once again documented in Crete.

Θάρμισε μια γυναίκα ένα παιδί κι απόθανε. | Της έδωσαν τότε γάλα ψοφισμένης προβατίνας, | το πιε, εξέρασε ό,τι είχε θιαρμισμένα. | Ως τα ξέρασε αυτά | να ξεράσει το αίμα της καρδιάς του, | αφού εθάρμισε τον [...].

A woman casted the evil eye on a child and the child died. | Then they gave her milk from a dead ewe, | drank it and vomited whatever she had casted. As she vomited those, | the blood from his heart of one who casted the evil eye on the [...] (name of afflicted child), should similarly gush out. (Against the evil eye, Χριστοδουλάκης 2011: 287)

In this charm, which uses the parallel type, the objective element of the charm is designated in the form of narration (Πασσαλής 2000, 200) and associated with two basic aspects of the story. Firstly with the milk used to restore the damage and secondly with the vomiting of children.³¹

3.2 THE MICHAEL TYPE

Are there charms in oral tradition that retain elements or traces of the written literary Michael type? The described encounter upon which this type is structured, is common to the oral tradition of the current Greek charms. It actually constitutes a characteristic structural frame of a wide category of Greek oral incantations (Πασσαλής 2000: 176–177), which rely on the encounter of a sacred person with an evil power who is often bound to cause harm. The order that the core characters appear in is of no importance. The following stereotypical dialogue is of this form: ‘–Where are you going? – I’m going to harm that person’. The second part includes the therapeutic intervention of the supporting persona who dispels the demonic figure and usually exiles it to secluded, inaccessible places where it is unable to cause harm, thus annulling its malevolent activity.

Some oral incantations, which are apparently associated with the second type of the story, are exemplified here as case in point. In these examples (D and E) the assisting power is either Archangel Michael (D) or another sacred persona, usually the Christ (E), while the malevolent agent is a female demonic figure related, either directly or indirectly, to Gylou.

Ως άστραψε η ανατολή κι εκίνησεν η δύση | εκίνησ’ η κερά Καλή να πα να κυνηγήσει, | ξανάστροφα καβαλλαρέ και τα μαλλιά τση κάτω. Μιχαήλ Άγγελος τσ’ απαντήχνει και τση λέει: | ‘Πού πάεις, κερά Καλή, κερά Καλικωμένη, | ξανάστροφα καβαλλαρέ και τα μαλλιά σου κάτω;’ | –Πάω κοράσια να μαράνω, οζά να ξελερώσω, βούγια να ξεξευλώσω, τση κακής μάννας το γιο να θανατώσω. | –Μη πάς κοράσια να μαράνεις, οζά να ξελερώσεις, βούγια να ξεξευλώσεις, τση κακής μάννας το γιο να θανατώσεις. Μόνο να πας στα όρη στα βουνά, να βρεις τ’ άγριν λάφιν να μπεις στο κεφάλι του και να σχαμουριέσαι κιόλας.

After the sunset, at twilight | the Good Lady set off to go hunting, | riding her horse backwards with her hair down. | Michael the Angel meets her and asks: | “Where are you going, my fine Lady, my good Lady | riding your horse backwards with your hair down? | –I am going to wither girls, harm animals, unyoke oxen, kill the bad mother’s son. | – Do not go to wither girls, unyoke oxen, kill the bad mother’s son. But, do go away in the mountains, find the stag, penetrate its head and yawn. (Therissos, Βαρδάκης 1926–28: 245)

Ο Χριστός επήαινε τσ’ η Ελλού του πάντηξε. –Πού πάεις, Ελλού αρκαοντυμένη; – Πάω να κάμω μάννα τσαι κόρη να σφαιί, καλόν αντρώου να μαχιστεί, καλού οσκού μαντρί να ξεκουδουνώσω, καλό θεμέλιο να ρίξω κάτω, καλό δενδρί να ξεριζώσω, καλής σκρόφας ουρούνια να μαράνω. –Στρέψ’ απ’ αυτού, Ελλού, τσ’ άμε στο γυρογάλι, που ’χει άλοο σιεροπόι, σιεροκάλικο τσαι μελανό συκώτι. Από ’τσει να φάεις τσ’ από τσει να μπτσεις τσαι λείψ’ αυτού τους χριστιανούς τους θεοφοούμενους.

The Christ set out and encountered Ellou. –Where are you going Ellou in your scales?– I am going to trigger conflict between a mother and a daughter, make a good couple quarrel, destroy the pen of a good shepherd, pull down every solid foundation, uproot a good tree, kill a good sow’s piglets. –Turn back, Ellou, and go by the shore where a strong horse with a cast-iron leg on an iron horseshoe and a black liver stands. You shall eat there and go away from the devout Christians. (Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1935: 14–15)

What is actually portrayed in incantations D and E? The former illustrates a female demon that, though not named, is obviously a demonic female power on the verge of causing harm. The latter depicts a dialect variation of the name Gellou as Ελλού [Ellou]. In Ellou’s response, in D, we also identify a correlation with her wicked activity towards children and women, also evident in incantation E, yet having a more generalized effect. However, regarding the way the sacred figure confronts the female demon, there is no indication of any influence of literary tradition on the relevant part of either incantations. Conversely, this part follows the common element of the expulsion of the hostile power, which is typically encountered in many evil-eye charms (Πασσαλής 2000: 181–182). In these incantations the female demon is the personified figure of the evil-eye spell (αβασκαντήρα, βασκαντήρα, βασκα-βασκανία [avaskantira, vaskantira, vaska-vaskania]):³²

Κίνησ’ αβασκαντήρα, χαλκομαντλισμένη, χαλκοποδιμένη, χαλκοτσιμπερωμένη. Στη στράτα, που πάγαινε, Χριστός ν’ απάντησε [...].

Avaskantira set off wearing kerchief and copper shoes. On her way she encountered Christ [...]. (Ρούσιας 1912–13: 51)

Κίνησε βασκαντήρα, βασκαμένη,| ανάποδα μαντ'λισμένη,| ανάποδα τιμπερωμένη
ανάποδα φορεμένη. | Τα δέντρα ξεερριζώνοντα. | Και τα β'να ραΐζοντα [...] Νε βρήκε
Χριστός και Παναΐα κι' ν' αρωτήσανε. –Πού πας, βασκαντήρα [...].

There goes vaskantira wearing her kerchief and clothes back-to-front. | The trees are uprooted and the mountains crack [...] Christ and Virgin Mary found her and asked – “Where are you going, vaskantira” [...]. (Evia, Σέττας 1976: 280)

Βάσκα βασκανία, [...] Ο Χριστός και τ' Άγιο πνεύμα κι η κυρά η Παναγία [...] Ήρθε
και επέρασε ο Μιχαήλ αρχάγγελος [...].

Vaska vaskania, [...] Christ and the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary [...] There comes and goes archangel Michael [...]. (Mani, Τσουμελέας 1912–13: 289)

Is it plausible to claim that these oral incantations follow the literary Archangel Michael type? Although the elements of such an association are traceable, it is difficult to support this conclusion. So what is real situation? The study of the variants of this type demonstrates that traces of the literary story were embedded into a predetermined frame of oral incantations which either preceded or simply existed in parallel with the literary use of this type. Not surprisingly, instances of an encounter with a male personification of the evil eye (βαμός, δαρμός, φταρμός, λουλλ^dας, χαρκάς [vamos, darmos, ftarmos, tharmos, loull^das, charkas]) are much more frequent.³³ The initial frame upon which the myth was adapted involved the encounter of a sacred power with a male personified figure of the evil. This is illustrated in one incantation by the change of the female name Ellou into the male Ελλουάς [Ellouas]:

Ο Χριστός επήαινε, ο Ελλουάς του πάντηξε, είπε του: ‘Πού πάεις καρκαντυμένε, καρκαπαωμένε, καρκάν την όψην έχεις τσαι μελανόν συκώτι’; – ‘Πάω να κάμω μάννα τσαι κόρη να σφαού, καλόν αντρόννο να χωρίσει, καλά αέρφ’τσα να κατακόψω, καλά ’ουρούνια να μαράνω, [...].’

Christ was on his way, when Ellouas met him and told him: “Where are you heading off dressed in scales, with sharp expression and a black liver?” – “I am going to make a mother and a daughter argue, to separate a good couple, to harm good brothers, to kill fine pigs [...].” (Kasos, Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1935: 13)

In the above mentioned oral charms, we observe the literary incident of the story of Gylou modified into a rhythmic³⁴ narrative, oral charm and formulated with the regional lay dialect, in the form of a separate narration of an incident

happened in the distant past. It is worth mentioning that all the documented charms of this type are for use against the evil eye and have been recorded in various parts of Crete, including in the same geographical district of Chania. Incantation A was recorded by Αικατερινίδης (1990) in 1986 in the village Asi Gonia, western of Chania county, while the two equivalent ones, are documented by the same collector, during the first decades of the twentieth century. One in Nio Chorio situated northeast of the county of Chania in the area called Kismamos, whereas the other in the area Armeni in the central part and northwest of the county in the province Apokoronas. There is no information about the area of documentation for the third charm (C). However it originates from Crete. It is by no means coincidental that all the variants derive from an area where there is a confirmed parallel use of the literary exorcism of that type (Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 67–68). What is also noteworthy is that the first incantation, recorded in the second half of the twentieth century, is the most inclusive and the closest to the literary variation, illustrating that the tradition of the Melitene type remains alive and endures throughout the twentieth century. Research would certainly reveal further variants of the same type at least in Crete, within a region where, in addition to the documented literary variants of the story, sufficient testimonies have been acquired for the dissemination of the legend since the Venetian era³⁵.

4. THE CONNECTION WITH THE EVIL EYE

The association of the evil eye spell with disfigured external features of women is well disseminated in Greek oral tradition. Such women are even called γελλούδες [gelloudes]³⁶ and are often mentioned in incantations against the evil eye spell (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 241):

Η Παναγία η Δέσποινα ελούσθη, εχτενίσθη,| στο χρυσό της θρανίο έκατσε| και περάσανε οι γελλούδες, [...] και μαδήσαν τα μαλλιά της και φυράζαν τα βυζά της. | Ο Δεσπότης Χριστός περνά και την ρωτά [...].

The Virgin Mary washed and combed her hair, | sat on her golden throne | and gelloudes went by [...] | and her hair fell and her breast withered. | Christ went by and asked her [...]. (Against the evil eye, Crete, Κουτουλάκη 1962: 196–97)

The effect of the evil eye spell cast by gelloudes targets everyone, yet it primarily aims at small children. In the incantation (A) against the evil eye spell which evolves from the Melitene type, Gylou is substituted by the wicked neighbor. Γελλούδα [Gellouda] is also the name of a disease affecting small children, caused

by the malicious deeds of these women who curse the child, speak ill of it and cast the evil eye spell (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 252), while in the island of Kalimnos the children who suffer from this disease are called γιαιλουτζιασμένα [giailoutziasmena] (Ζεββός 1958: 253). In Crete, to deal with this disease they follow a ritual called the stabbing of gellouda.³⁷ The root cause of those women's deeds is hatred. Unsurprisingly, ζήλα [zila (jealousy)] is included in the catalogue of women with malformed external characteristics, who encounter Virgin Mary and cast the evil eye spell (Cyprus, Κυριαζής 1926: 90–91, Κυπριανός 1968: 178, Σπανός 1993: 304).

Testimonies and evidence of the correlation between hatred, jealousy, the evil eye spell and the prayer of Saint Sisinnios are documented much earlier from a wide category of extant bronze or copper pendant-amulets which “are attributable to the early Byzantine period (sixth/seventh century)” (Spier 1993: 60)³⁸. These amulets, according to Spier (ibid. 61–62):

show on one side the nimbate ‘rider saint’ spearing the female demon, and on most examples he is accompanied by an angel who raises one wing [...] Especially characteristic of the group is the use of the formula (in several variants): ‘Flee, detested one, Solomon (or Sisinnios and Sisinnarios, or a similar phrase) pursues you...’ [...] The reverses depict complex scenes mixing magical images of the Evil Eye (once labelled <ΦΘΟΝΟΣ>, envy, serpents, lions and the female demon, [...])³⁹

Indicative of this connection is the amulet (see figure 1) first published in *Revue des Études Grecques* (Schlumberger 1892: 74).⁴⁰ Possibly the female demon of the prayer had formerly been connected to the evil eye spell in oral tradition. Equally, the charms elements were considered as particularly efficient against the evil eye spell. In a variation of the Archangel Michael type prayer on a 15th century codex (Parisinus 2316, 318^v ff, Reitzenstein 1904: 297–98), the female demon whom Archangel meets and confronts is cold: βασκοσύνη [vaskosini] (=evil eye). Perdrizet (1922: 24) comments on the occurrence of that name, and remarks: “Quant à βασκοσύνη aucun nom ne saurait mieux convenir à notre diablesse l’envie, la jalousie étant le caractère essentiel des esprits du Mal, et la fascination, le mauvais oeil, leur moyen de nuire le plus redoutable”.⁴¹



Figure 1. ΦΘΟΝΟΣ (envy), “Seal of Solomon, Dispel any evil from the one who bears it”. Amulet of sixth / seventh century against envy (early Byzantine period). (Schlumberger 1892: 74)

Although the evil-eye is a common infection and subject matter of many texts for exorcism, in some of which is personified (Reitzenstein 1904: 295, cod. Parisinus 2316), a direct connection between Gylou and the evil eye is not frequent in the literary variants of the text. Importantly, the term βασκοσύνη [vaskosini (evil eye)] in the previously cited exorcism is not included in the list revealed by Gylou herself. The name βασκανία [vaskania (evil eye)], as part of the name list for the female demon, is only found in a more recent variant, belonging to a priest in the village Vourtsi in Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 47). The citation of this name is probably a recent addition by a scribe, also a priest (Ημελλος 1965: 41) while copying from another priest's document, or is attributable to the widespread association of the evil eye spell with the deeds of a female demon in folk tradition. The influence of the lay oral ritual on the literary tradition of the text is depicted in one of those exorcisms (Ημελλος 1956: 43) of the same area, when the priest read it to the child suffering from fever or the evil eye (Ημελλος 1956: 50 note 3).

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, traces and influences of the literary variants of both the Melitene and the Archangel Michael type have affected the formation, structure and narration of modern oral Greek charms. Specifically, the Melitene literary type changes into a rhythmic narrative oral incantation, expressed in the regional dialect preserving sufficient elements of the original myth with the expected modifications and transformations which rule the production and reproduc-

tion of the oral incantations. Nonetheless, the survival of this type is limited and it is mainly encountered in those areas of Crete where we have a certified, parallel use of its literary variants. In this area the myth of this female demon stays alive at least until the mid twentieth century.

It is more difficult to detect existing literary variants of the Michael type. Features of this type are traced in oral incantations which are structured upon the pattern of the encounter between an evil power and a sacred person. The influence of the literary type upon those incantations is plausible solely in that part of the oral charms related to the encounter between the core characters and their subsequent stereotypical dialogue. Conversely, in these oral charms the part referring to the extermination of the evil power does not follow the literary variants, but instead a different but recognizable pattern of expulsion. The study of the variants of this type demonstrates that traces of the literary story were embedded into a predetermined frame of oral charms which either preceded or simply existed in parallel with the literary use of this type.

It has also been inferred that the sections including the disclosure of the names of the female demon are omitted. The latter omission can be easily explained as it is associated, on the one hand, with the change of function of the text, and on the other, with the communicative technology applied for its transmission and performance of oral charms (Passalis 2011a). The reading or writing of the literary forms functions as a preventive, precautionary measure against affliction which may affect newborn babies and also women during the period before or after they give birth. The change of function of text into being a therapeutic healing measure against an affliction which has already struck removes the need to mention these names. Moreover, the communicative technology of oral charms is based on verbal and memorial transmission and performance (Passalis 2011a). This also constitutes a basic factor preventing the retention of numerous (ranging from 12 to 72) and to a large extent the incomprehensible, nonsensical names by the charm's users.

All the variants of both types are almost exclusively performed against the evil eye. The fact that is that the context of an oral magico-religious system the evil eye is considered as a broad category of affliction connected with pregnant, parturient women and small children facilitated the association with Gylou. Evidence and testimonies of this widespread connection in lay tradition have been recorded much earlier in amulets/pendants. This explains the usages of literary exorcisms of Gylou against the evil eye or even the occurrence of the names of Gylou as 'Vaskosini' or 'Vaskania' in them. Finally, the comparative study of the literary types and the lay oral incantations of Gylou is a good example of the interrelation between the written and oral tradition of charms as well as of its feedback which is considered evident in the effect of the writ-

ten tradition; it is often difficult, however, to validate this interrelation in its reverse route from the lay to literary or from the oral to the written.

NOTES

- ¹ The historical approach of the prayer from different perspectives has resulted in a wide and extensive bibliography on this topic. Some of the most representative studies are: Gaster 1900; Perdrizet 1922; Winkler 1931; Barb 1966; Müller 1974; Greenfield 1989; Naveh & Shaked 1998: 111–122, 188–197; Spier 1993; Ryan 2006. For a broader and more detailed representative bibliography see Greenfield 1989, 83–84 note 1. See also note 3. Indicative of the increased interest in the Sisinnios prayer is the cross cultural project titled “The Sisinnios Prayer in literature, fine arts and magic rituals (Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Eastern Africa)” that is currently under process by the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH) under the supervision of Andrei Toporkov, Lecturer at the Marc Bloch Russian-French Centre for Historical Anthropology, at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH).
- ² Indicative of the history and survival of the story is the title of Gaster's (1990) article: “Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch”. According to Lyavdansky (2011: 20) “the concept in question may have been born in Ancient Mesopotamia, not later than in the Old Babylonian period (1800–1600 BCE). It was borrowed by adjacent Aramaic-speaking people in Syria, as attested by the text from Arslan Tash (ca. 7th c. BCE), and by the creators of Aramaic magic bowls in Sassanian Mesopotamia (5th–7th cc. CE). It is most natural to think that the ‘strangling female demon’ was inherited by the Syriac charm tradition from the tradition of Aramaic magic bowls together with many other figures, motives and formulas common to these two traditions”. It worth also noting that archaeological discoveries, mainly amulets, pendants, defixiones, iconographic representations have permitted a more holistic approach of this tradition, since its interpretation and decodification extends the limits of the written text, see Perdrizet 1922; Müller 1974: 91–102; Spier 1993; Naveh & Shaked 1998; Grotowski 2009: 74–85; Giannobile 2004; cf. also Toporkov 2011 for iconographic survival in Russian religious icons.
- ³ Details about the origin and the types of the female demon as well as of the sacred figures which face it see Gaster 1883: 393–397; 1900: 134–162; *Fries* 1891: 55–70; Basset 1894; Gaster Th. H 1947; Barb 1966; Dujčev 1967; West D. 1991; Burkert 1992: 82–87; Spier 1993; West M. 1997; Fulgum 2001: 142; Ullendorff 2006: 79–82; Lyavdansky 2011: 19–20.
- ⁴ In this paper, the female demon's name will be spelled mainly as Gylou, as it appears in Greenfield study (1989); various other spellings in this paper correspond to the forms found in the texts and to its dialectical variants as found in ethnographic data. For the dialectical variants of the name see below in the section 2 concerning the oral tradition of the texts.
- ⁵ The name of the female demon Gello is attested in a poem by the ancient Greek poet Sappho (Γελλώ παιδοφιλωτέρα, [*Gello paidophiloterá*]), a fragment of which is registered by Zenobius Sophista (2. c. a.); for other testimonies found in texts of ancient and later Greek literature see *Οικονομίδης* 1965: 329–330 and Hartnup 2004: 35, 85–86, 149–150.

The tradition of the female demon Gylou continues to exist uninterrupted during the Byzantine period (Hartnup 2004: 85–95; Patera 2006: 312–315) until today.

- ⁶ Greek exorcisms of Gylou have been published by Greek and foreign scholars. Allatius (1645: 129–133, 133–135) in the mid 17th century published two exorcisms in Latin translation; one of these is also edited by Worrell (1909: 158–161), while the second by Winkler (1931: 109–110); both the exorcisms of Allatius are also published by Gaster (1900: 143–148). Iriarte (1769: 423–24) reports a text from manuscript of Biblioteca Nacional 105 of Madrid (15th century). The reports of text variants increased at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th. Legrand (1881: xviii) reports a text of Parisinus graecus 2316 (15th century); the same text with some slight variants is reported by Reitzenstein (1904: 298–99), Winkler (1931: 112) and Worrell (1909: 162). The ones who follow are: Vasiliev (1893: 336–337) who publishes two texts (of 15th century) from the codex Neapolitanus II C 33 and Barberin. III 3; Rouse (1899: 162, Kalymnos, 18th century), Dmitrievskij (1901: 118–19, nineteenth c.); Pradel (1907: 275–76), who presents two variants from Marcianus Graecus II 163 (16th c.); Reitzenstein (1904: 297–98) from Parisinus Graecus 2163 (15th century), Janiewitch (1910: 627, 18th century); McCown (1922: 43–45) who reports three texts from Holkham Hall 99 (15th–16th century; Delatte (1927: 248–249) who presents one from a manuscript of the National Library of Greece 825 (beginning of the 19th century), and finally Greenfield (1989: 86–90) who publishes one from Bodleian Library of Oxford (d’Orville 110, 15th century). As for the Greek scholars, Σάθας (1876: 573–577) reports three texts from Parisinus Graecus 395 (15th–16th century), Ημελλος (1965: 41–48) reports six variants, 4 of which from a manuscript of mid nineteenth century from Amorgos, and the other two of the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the 20th century, while Οικονομίδης (1940) reports two exorcisms of the end of nineteenth-beginning of the 20th century from Naxos (1940: 65–70) as well as one more by a manuscript from Epirus (Konitsa) of mid nineteenth century (1956, 19–23). Also, Σπυριδάκης (1941–42: 61–62, 67–68) reports two texts from Crete (Sitea) (mid nineteenth century). Two more exorcisms of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries are reported by Κοντομίχης (1985: 51, 262–263, 266), whereas a variation of the beginning of the 18th century from an unpublished manuscript from the area of Merampellou in Crete is reported by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 247–48). Of exceptional importance is, also, the oldest surviving exorcism of this kind, found on a Cypriot inscription of the 8th century in Cyprus and published by Giannobile (2004). The majority of the aforementioned variants have been a subject of comparative study by Greenfield 1989, which remains the most complete approach to the text so far.
- ⁷ For a comparative presentation of the names see Gaster 1989 and Giannobile 2004: 752 (Tabella 1).
- ⁸ Delatte 1927: 111, DE1 in Greenfield 1989: 91; Janiewitsch 1910: 927, JA in Greenfield 1989: 91; Rouse 1899: 162, RO in Greenfield 1989: 92.
- ⁹ Ημελλος 1965: 41–43, HE1, HE2, HE3 in Greenfield 1989: 90; Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 61–62, SP1 in Greenfield 1989: 91), one from the late nineteenth century (Dmitrievskij 1901: 118–119, DM in Greenfield 1989: 90) and one dated between the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 45–47, HE5 in Greenfield 1989: 91).
- ¹⁰ Κοντομίχης 1985: 51, 262–263, 266), and another one, which is published by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 247–48) from an unpublished manuscript of eighteenth century from the area

of Merambellou (Crete).

- ¹¹ The remaining variants of this type are older and dated as follows: seven variants of the 15th century (Iriarte 1769: 423–24, IR in Greenfield 1989: 90; Legrand 1881: 298–99, LE in Greenfield 1989: 90; Reitzenstein 1904: 297–298, RE in Greenfield 1989: 90; McCown 1922: 43–45, TSH, TSL, in Greenfield 1989, 91; Vassiliev 1893: 618–619, VA1, VA2 respectively in Greenfield 1989: 91).
- ¹² The remaining variants of this type are older and are dated as follows: one from the 15th century (Greenfield 1989: 86–88, 90), two variants dated between the 16th and the 17th century (Allatius 1645: 133–35; Σάθας 1876: 573–75; AL2 and SA1 respectively in Greenfield 1989: 91, 92) and one variant of the first half of the 17th century (Allatius 1645: 126–29; AL2 in Greenfield 1989: 90).
- ¹³ Cf. also “Some old women in Apeiranthos recall that they used to read the *yalou* prayer [*kharti tsi yalous*] so that the exotika would not come to strangle their children at night” (Stewart 1991: 101).
- ¹⁴ For the relationship between the exorcisms and the standard worship see Daniélou 1961: 1995–2004. For the Church’s official statement regarding charms and exorcisms see Κουκουλές 1948: 46–47, 240–41 and Παπαδόπουλος 1926: 232–233.
- ¹⁵ See Goody 1989: 16; cf. “The nineteenth century as well as the early part of the 20th teem with evidence indicating that the priests themselves were the performers of these practices and that they were also the holders of black magic scripts as well as medical manuscripts” (Passalis 2011b: 5, 6).
- ¹⁶ The name Ιαλλού [Iallou] is connected etymologically from the noun γιάλος [gialos= seashore, beach], defined as a residence of elves and demonic spirits.
- ¹⁷ The dissemination and extensive use of the word is illustrated by a number of derivatives (nouns and verbs), such as (Α)γελλούδα/Γιαλλούδα [(A)gellouda/Gialluda] (ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλούδα), Γιαλλουδάκι [Gialloudaki] (ibid., s.v. Γελλουδάκι), Ελλούι [Elloui] (ibid., s.v. Γελλούδι), γιαλλουδιάζω /γιαλλουδιασμένος [gialloudiazō, gialloudiasmenos] (ibid., s.v. γελλουδιάζω), Γιαλλούρα [Gialloura] (ibid., s.v. Γελλούρα) etc.
- ¹⁸ ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλού. See also Αικατερινίδης 1990: 237 and Oeconomides 1965: 328–29.
- ¹⁹ Cf. for relevant testimonies in areas where the tradition of Gellou remains alive: “Some old women in Apeiranthos recall that they used to read the *yalou* prayer (*kharti tsi yalous*) so that the exotika would not come to strangle their children at night” (Stewart 1991: 101); see also Στέλλας 2004: 137.
- ²⁰ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²¹ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²² The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²³ The connection of Gellou with reptiles and snakes is widely spread. In many literary traditions Gylou responds to Michael’s question
- “[t]hat she enters into houses as a snake, and as a serpent and a winged lizard and that she drinks women’s milk that she claws at the eyes at the eyes of small children

and she strangles infants, she hurls fruit down trees and she dives into the sea and pull many under so that they drown” (Stewart 1991: 101).

²⁴ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.

²⁵ Where the symbol | appears in the article, it denotes change of verse in case of a rhythmical registered oral charm.

²⁶ In almost all mentioned charms against a dangerous reptile it is worth noting the connection between Gellou and St. George, who according to Orthodox illustrations, is portrayed riding a horse and killing a serpent with his spear; for the correlation between St. Sisinnios and St. George see Κουρίλας 1957: 49–50 and Ήμελλος 1965: 48–49.

²⁷ In incantations against nightmare Gellou is, also, included among factors related to its emergence (Karpathos, Μιχαηλίδης–Νουάρος 1932: 160).

²⁸ The examination of this issue is challenging due to the lack of a full compilation and publication of Greek incantations. Yet, we will attempt to the best possible extent an accurate insight based on a collection of 4000 incantations in my personal archive. Indisputably, future research and the discovery of additional charms could throw further light on the issue.

²⁹ These are nonsensical words which often appear in charms against the evil eye or to cure various diseases of the eye. For their meaning see Πασσαλής 2000: 295, 296 and Passalis 2012: 12.

³⁰ In an equivalent variant (Crete, Πάγκαλος 1983: 363–64) this fact is integrated in the narrative, as it is stated that the female demon invaded from κότσια τω μπεγριώ (the legs of horses).

³¹ The previous charm is portrayed as an independent one. However, the same charm, except for trivial differences, is evident in the last part of another incantation against the evil eye (Χριστοδουλάκης 2011: 273–274).

³² A similar incantation against disease caused by malevolent spirits (αερικό), following the same pattern, the female figure is called Φασκατίδα (Faskatida, went with clean and combed hair [...] Christ encountered her [...], my translation) (Megara, Βλάχου 1959: 549–50).

³³ “Εξεκίνησε ο βαμός, ο δαρμός, | ο καταποντισμός, | τη κακής ώρας ο γιος, | να πάει στα όρη στα βουνά, | πάνω στσι μαδάρες, | οζά να ξελερώσει, | βούγια να ξεζελώσει, | δεντρά να ξερριζώσει, | αλώνια να ξεσταλικώσει | και τη καλής μάνας το γιο να βρη να θανατώσει. | Και ο Χριστός τ’ απάντηξε στο δρόμο που πορπάθιε | κι εντύς τον αναρώτηξε και λέει του [...]”

(There he goes, vamos (=evil eye), darmos, | the disaster, | the cursed moment’s son, | to reach the mountains, on steep bushy areas, | to take off animals’ bells and destroy them, | to unyoke oxen, | to uproot trees | to destroy grains, | to find and kill the good mother’s son. | Then, Christ met him on his way and instantly asked him [...]) (Against evil eye, Πάγκαλος 1983: 359–60);

“Ο φταρμός επήγαινε κι ο Χριστός του ’πάντηξε. | –Πού πας φταρμέ, πρικοφταρμέ; –Πάω να βρω άγκουρα να μαράνω, | λιγερή να καψοφλοήσω, μωρά παιδιά να ζεματίσω [...]”

(While ftarmos was going ahead, Christ met him. | – Where are you going, Ftarme, bitter Ftarme? – I am going to find children to wither, | a pretty girl to burn | to flame, |

to scorch babies [...]) (Against evil eye, Crete, Φραγκάκι 1949: 48–49);

“Ο θαρμός, ο καϊμός, | τση ξαναστροφης ο γιος, | επήγαινε | στα δίστρατα στα τρίστρατα. Οι Άγιοι Σαράντα τον συνάντησαν και τον ρώτησαν [...]”

(Tharmos, kaimos (torture), the odd mother’s son, | off was going | to crossroads. | When Agioi Saranta (forty saints) encountered him and asked him [...]) (Against wounding and the evil eye, County Kidonia Crete, Βαρδάκης 1926–28: 246);

“Ως εκίνησ’ ο φταρμός, ο καημός... Αϊ Γιώργης, Αϊ Γιαννης κι Άγιος Παντελέημος του ’παντήξανε και του λένε [...]”

(As ftarmos, kaimos set off... St Georgios, St. Ioannis and St Panteleimonas met him and told him [...]) (Against evil eye, Crete, Παπαδάκη 1938: 520);

“[...] λουλλδάν απάντησε. Ο Χριστός το ρώτησε(v) [...]”

(Christ encountered Loulldan and asked [...]) (Salakos Rhodes, Παπαχριστοδούλου 1962: 74–75);

“Χαρκάς, περνάει, πάνω ζωσμένος, κάτω ζωσμένος, | ανάποδα καβαλλικεμένος [...]”

(Charkas goes by armoured all over his body, | riding the horse backwards [...]) (Lefkes Paros, Κορρές 1966: 113–14).

At this point it is essential to emphasize that, according to the evidence we have, the pattern of the encounter of a sacred assisting persona with a male wicked demon is more widespread and found in incantations against the evil eye spell.

³⁴ The main characteristic of the rhythmic structure is the lack of a common rhythm that would fit all verses.

³⁵ Regarding the dissemination of Gellou traditions and exorcisms during Venetian era see Κουκουλές 1940: 10 and Παπαδάκης 1976: 118.

³⁶ Cf. “Durant l’époque Byzantine, Gylou est une démone puissante, un être surnaturel à part entière, contre lequel il existe des moyens apotropaïques, tandis que les Géloudes sont des femmes mortelles a pouvoirs surnaturels, des sorcières, qui peuvent être punies. Demone et mortelles partages cependant la même fonction qui consiste à attaquer les enfants” (Patera 2006: 324). For the associations between the story of Gylou and the evil eye see Sorlin 1991: 413–414; Patera 2006: 321–324.

³⁷ This ritual relies on the stabbing of an onion with seven reeds and is accompanied by the following words: “Θα καρφώσω τη Γελλούδα, τη φρυδού [...]” (I shall stab gellouda, fridou [...]) (Sklavi Sitia, Crete, Αικατερινίδης 1990: 252).

³⁸ See also for this type of amulet and pendants Schlumberger 1892: 73–93; Bonner 1950: 211; Russell 1982: 543; Barb 1972: 343–357; Matantseva 1994: 110–121.

³⁹ For similar illustrations on an amulet from a Roman graveyard in Bulgar-Keui of Kyzikou, see Dorigny 1891: 287, 291; Perdrizet 1903: 46–47. Cf. also a fresco of fifth-seventh century in the monastery of St. Apollo in Bawit of Egypt depicting St. Sisinnios spearing a female demon with an eye thrust by three swords (Clédat 1906: 79–80; Hugué 2007: 298).

⁴⁰ Cf. Perdrizet 1903: 47–48, especially p. 49, where another amulet with an evil eye and almost identical illustrations is presented. See also Perdrizet 1922: 27.

⁴¹ Regarding the association of hatred with the evil eye spell see also Perdrizet 1900: 293.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Andrei Toporkov, who has invited me to contribute to the project “The Sisinnios Prayer in literature, fine arts and magic rituals (Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Eastern Africa)” currently under process by Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH). This article, published in *Incantatio* 4, has been the result of his inspiring me to deal with the Sisinnios prayer in Greek culture. I would also like to extend my thanks to Alexey Lyavdanskij for reading and providing corrections to my paper. Last but not least, I would like to thank Jonathan Roper for his constant assistance to me and for his significant contribution to the further development of charms studies in Europe.

REFERENCES

- Allatius, L. 1645. *De Templis Graecorum Recentioribus Ad Ioannem Morinum; de Narthece Ecclesiae Veteris, Ad Gasparem de Simeonibus; Nec Non de Graecorum Hodie Quorundam Opinationibus*. Ad Paullum Zacchiam, Iodocum Kalcovium & Socios.
- Barb, A. 1966. Antaura. The Mermaid and the Devil's Grandmother: A Lecture. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 29, pp. 1–23.
- Barb, A. 1972. Magica Varia. In: *Syria* 49, pp. 343–357.
- Basset, René (ed. & transl.) 1894. *Les Apocryphes Éthiopiens IV. Les légendes de S. Tertag et de S. Sousnyos*. Paris: Librairie d'Arts Indépendent.
- Bonner, C. 1950. *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Burkert, W. 1992. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*. (Translation of *Die Orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur*, Heidelberg 1984, by M. Pinder and W. Burkert.) Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press.
- Clédat, J. 1906. *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit, II* [Mémoires Institut Français d'Archéologie Oriental du Caire 12]. Le Caire: Institut Français d'Archéologie Oriental du Caire.
- Daniélou, J. 1961. Exorcisme. In: M. Viller, F. Cavallera & J. de Guibert (eds.), *Dictionnaire de la spiritualité. Ascétique et mystique. Doctrine et histoire*. IV/2. Paris: Beauchesne.
- Delatte, A. 1927. *Anecdota Atheniensa I*. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de la Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liege XXXVI. Paris: Liege.
- Dmitrievskij, A. [1901]. *Opisanie liturgitseskich rukopisej II. Euchologia*. Kiev: Hildesheim 1965.

- Dorigny, Al. Sorlin 1891. Phylactère alexandrin contre les Épistaxis. In: *Revue des Études Grecques* 4, pp. 287–296.
- Dujčev, I. 1967. Apocrypha byzantino-slavica: Une collection serbe d'exorcismes d'origine Byzantine. In: *Zbornik Filos. Fakulteta Univ. Beograd* 9, pp. 247–250.
- Fries, K. 1891. The Ethiopic Legend of Socinius and Ursula. In: *Actes du Huitième Congrès International des Orientalistes* 2, pp. 55–70.
- Fulgum, M. M. 2001. Coins Used as Amulets in Late Antiquity. In: Sulochana Ruth Asirvatham, Corinne Ondine Pache, John Watrous (eds.), *Between Magic and Religion: Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and Society*. Lanham Md: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 139–147.
- Gaster, M. 1883. *Literatura populară romană*. București: Ig. Haimann, Librar-Editor.
- Gaster, M. 1900. Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch. In: *Folklore* 11, pp. 129–162.
- Gaster, Theodor H. 1947. The Magical Inscription from Arslan Tash. In: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6/3, pp. 186–188.
- Giannobile, S. 2004. Un dialogo tra l' arcangelo Michele e il demone Abyzou in un' iscrizione esorcistica cipriota. In: *Mediterraneo Antico* VII/2, pp. 727–750.
- Goody, Jack 1989. *The Logic of Writing and the organization of Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Greenfield, R. 1989. St Sisinnios, the Archangel Michael and the Female Demon Gylou: The Typology of the Greek Literary Stories. In: *Byzantina* 15, pp. 82–141.
- Grotowski, Piotr L. 2009. *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography*. Brill: Leiden.
- Hartnup, K. 2004. *On the Beliefs of the Greeks: Leo Allatios and Popular Orthodoxy*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Huge, E. 2007. Military Forces. In: Philip Sabin, Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, Michael Whitby (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*. Volume II: *Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge: University Press, pp. 270–309.
- Iriarte, J. 1769. *Regiae bibliothecae Matritensis codices Graeci MSS*. Madrid.
- Janiewitsch, O. 1910. AYP. *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 13, pp. 627–630.
- Legrand, E. 1881. *Bibliothèque grecque vulgaire* 2. Paris: Maisonneuve et Cie.
- Lyavdanskij, A. 2011. Syriac Charms in Near Eastern Context: Tracing the Origin of Formulas. In: Tatyana A. Mikhailova, Jonathan Roper, Andrey L. Toporkov, Dmitry S. Nikolayev (eds.), *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light*. Moscow: PROBEL, pp. 15–21.
- Matantseva, T. 1994. Les amulets Byzantines contre le mauvais oeil du Cabinet des Médailles. In: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*, 37, pp. 110–121.
- McCown, C.C. 1922. *The Testament of Solomon*. Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 9. Leipzig: Hinrichs.
- Müller, C. D. G. 1974. Von Teufel, Mittagsdämon und Amuletten. In: *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 17, pp. 91–102.
- Naveh, J. & Shaked, S. 1998. *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (3rd ed). Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Oeconomides, D. B. 1965. Yello dans les traditions des peuples hellénique et roumain. In: *Λαογραφία* 22, pp. 328–334.

- Patera, M. 2006. Gylou, démon et sorcière du monde byzantin au monde néogrec. In: *Revue des études byzantines* 64, pp. 311–327.
- Passalis, H. 2011a. Secrecy and Ritual Restrictions on Verbal Charms Transmission in Greek Traditional Culture. In: *Incantatio. An international Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming* 1, pp. 7–24. http://folklore.ee/incantatio/Incantatio_2011_1_Passalis.pdf
- Passalis, H. 2011b. *Clerics and Ambiguity: Social Control and Religious Identity Formation in Greek Traditional Culture*. Amsterdam: SPIN (online: http://spinnet.eu/images/2010-11/passalis_clerics_and_ambiguity.pdf)
- Passalis, H. 2012. From the power of words to the power of rhetoric: nonsense, pseudo-nonsense words, archaisms and artificially constructed compounds in Greek oral charms. In: *Incantatio. An international Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming* 2, pp. 7–22. http://dx.doi.org/10.7592/Incantatio2012_1_Passalis
- Perdrizet, P. 1900. Inscription chrétienne de Dokimion. In: *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 24, pp. 291–299.
- Perdrizet, P. 1903. Σφραγίς Σολομώντος. In: *Revue des Études Grecques* 16, pp. 42–61.
- Perdrizet, P. 1922. *Negotium prerambulans in tenebris*. Strasbourg: Université de Strasbourg.
- Pradel, F. 1907. *Griechische und süditalienische Gebete, Beschwörungen und Rezepte des Mittelalters*. Giessen: A. Töpelmann.
- Reitzenstein, R. 1904. *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
- Rouse, W. H. D. 1899. Folklore from the Southern Sporades. In: *Folklore* 10, pp. 151–185.
- Russell, J. 1982. The Evil Eye in Early Byzantine Society. In: *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 32, pp. 539–548.
- Ryan, W. F. 2006. Ancient Demons and Russian Fevers. In: Ch. Burnett & W. F. Ryan (eds.), *Magic and the Classical Tradition* [Warburg Institute Colloquia; V. 7]. London: Turin, pp. 37–58.
- Schlumberger, Gustave Léon 1892. Amulettes byzantins anciens, destinés à combattre les maléfices et les maladies. In: *Revue des Études Grecques* V, pp. 73–93.
- Sorlin, I. 1991. Striges et Geloudes. Histoire d'une croyance et d'une tradition. In: *Travaux et Mémoires. Centre de recherche d'histoire et de civilisation byzantine* 11, pp. 411–36.
- Spier, J. 1993. Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and their Tradition. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 56, pp. 25–62.
- Stewart, C. 1991. *Demons and the Devil: moral imagination in modern Greek culture*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Toporkov, A. 2011. Visual Representations of Charms against Fever on Russian Icons. In: Tatyana A. Mikhailova, Jonathan Roper, Andrey L. Toporkov, Dmitry S. Nikolayev (eds.), *Oral Charms in Structural and Comparative Light*. Moscow: PROBEL, pp. 173–179.
- Ullendorff, Edward 2006. *Ethiopia and the Bible. Schweich Lectures on Biblical Archaeology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Vassiliev, A. A. 1893. *Anecdota Graeco-Byzantina*. Moscow: Imperial University.
- West, M. 1997. Hocus-pocus East and West: Theogony, Ritual, and the Tradition of Esoteric Commentary. In: A. Laks & G. Most (eds.), *Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 81–90.
- West, D. R. 1991. Gello and Lamia: Two Hellenic Daemons of Semitic Origin. In: *Ugarit-Forschungen* 23, pp. 361–368.
- Winkler, H. A. 1931. *Salomo und die Karina: eine orientalische Legende von der Bezwingung einer Kindbettdämonin durch einen heiligen Helden*. Veröffentlichungen des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Tübingen 4. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Worrell, W. H. 1909. Studien zum abessinischen Zauberwesen. In: *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 23, pp. 149–183.
- Αικατερινίδης, Γ. Α. 1990. Η Γελλώ στη δημόδη παράδοση της Κρήτης. In: *Επετηρίς του Κέντρου Ερεύνης της Ελληνικής Λαογραφίας* 26–27, pp. 236–256.
- Βαρδάκης, Σπ. Γ. 1926–28. Κρητικά έποδαί. In: *Λαογραφία Θ'*, pp. 239–248.
- Βλάχου, Αλ. 1959. Μεγαρικά ήθη και έθιμα. In: *Λαογραφία ΙΗ'*, pp. 543–50.
- Ζερβός, Γ. 1958. Νήσου Καλύμνου. Παραδόσεις- Ιστορικά Παραμυθολογήματα- Προλήψεις- Δεισιδαιμονίες-Στοιχειά-Στοιχειωμένοι Τόποι, Έθιμα - Κακά. In: *Δωδεκανησιακόν Αρχείον* 3, pp. 239–265.
- Ήμελλος, Στ. Δ. 1965. Εξορκισμοί της Γελλούς εκ χειρογράφων εξ Αμοργού. In: *Επετηρίς του Λαογραφικού Αρχείου ΙΖ'*, pp. 40–52.
- ΙΑ = *Ιστορικών Λεξικών της Νέας Ελληνικής, της τε κοινώς ομιλουμένης και των ιδιωμάτων της Ακαδημίας Αθηνών*, τόμ. Α'-Ε', 1933–1989. Αθήνα: Ακαδημία Αθηνών.
- Κοντομίχης, Π. 1985. *Η λαϊκή ιατρική στη Λευκάδα*. Αθήνα: Γρηγόρης.
- Κορρές, Γεώργ. Ν. 1966. Λαογραφικά της Πάρου. Α. Ξόρκια. In: *Επετηρίς της Εταιρείας Κυκλαδικών Μελετών Ε'* (1965–1966), pp. 104–24.
- Κουκουλές, Φ. 1940. Συμβολή εις την Κρητικήν λαογραφίαν επί Βενετοκρατίας. In: *Επετηρίς της Εταιρείας Κρητικών Σπουδών, Γ'*, pp. 1–101.
- Κουκουλές, Φ. 1948. Βυζαντινών βίος και πολιτισμός, τόμ. Α' Π. In: *Μνημεία λόγου, σχήματα, προλήψεις*. Αθήνα: Παπαζήσης.
- Κουρίλας, Ευλόγιος 1957. Ο καβαλλάρης Άγιος Γεώργιος εν τη αιογραφία και λαογραφία δημόδης τύπος εν Θράκη. In: *Αρχείον του Θρακικού Λαογραφικού και Γλωσσικού Θησαυρού* 22, pp. 17–186.
- Κουτουλάκη, Ευαγγελία 1962. Γηθειές εκ Κριτσάς Κρήτης. In: *Λαογραφία Κ'*, pp. 196–203.
- Κυπριανός, Χρυσ. 1968. *Το Παγκύπριον Γυμνάσιον και η Λαογραφία*, τόμ. Β'. Λευκωσία-Κύπρος, pp. 171–203.
- Κυριαζής, Ν. Γ. 1926. Δημόδης ιατρική εν Κύπρω. In: *Κυπριακά Χρονικά Δ'*, pp. 1–186, 251–56.
- Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος, Μ. 1932. *Καρπαθιακά μνημεία Β'*, *Λαογραφικά Σύμμεικτα Καρπάθου*, vol. 1. Αθήνα.
- Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος, Μ. 1935. *Γλωσσικά και λαογραφικά Κάσου*. Αθήνα.
- Οικονομίδης, Δ. Β. 1940. *Απεραθίτικα λαογραφικά σύμμεικτα 1*. Αθήνα: Μαυρίδης.
- Οικονομίδης, Δ. Β. 1956. Εξορκισμοί και ιατροσόφια εξ Ηπειρωτικού χειρογράφου. In: *Επετηρίς του Λαογραφικού Αρχείου* 8 (1953–54), pp. 14–40.
- Οικονομίδης, Δ. Β. 1975–76. Η Γελλώ εις την Ελληνικήν και Ρουμανικήν λαογραφίαν. In: *Λαογραφία*, 30, 246–278.
- Πάγκαλος, Γεώργ. Εμμ. 1983. *Περί του γλωσσικού ιδιώματος της Κρήτης 7. Τα λαογραφικά*. Αθήνα: Έκδοσης Κέντρον Ερεύνης Ελληνικής Λαογραφίας Ακαδημίας Αθηνών.

- Παπαδάκη, Ειρήνη, 1983. Λαογραφικά Σύμμεικτα Σητείας. Δ. Γητειές. In: *Επετηρίς της Εταιρείας Κρητικών Σπουδών* 1, pp. 513–29.
- Παπαδάκης, Εμμ. 1976. *Μορφαί του λαϊκού πολιτισμού της Κρήτης του 15ου και 16ου αιώνας κατά τας γραμματειακάς πηγάς* (Doctoral dissertation). Αθήνα.
- Παπαδόπουλος, Α. Α. 1926. Εξορκισμοί κι εξορκιστάι. In: *Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών* 3, pp. 225–234.
- Παπαχριστοδούλου, Χ. Ι. 1962. Λαογραφικά σύμμεικτα Ρόδου. In: *Λαογραφία Κ'*, pp. 66–175.
- Πασσαλής, Χ. 2000. *Νεοελληνικές λαϊκές επωδές (γητειές, ζόρκια). Μορφολογικά χαρακτηριστικά και εθνογραφικές καταγραφές* [Neo-Hellenic Incantations (Charms-Spells). Morphological Analysis and Ethnographic Data]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki: School of History and Archaeology (online: <http://thesis.ekt.gr/13624>).
- Ρούσιας, Γ. 1912–13. Επωδαί Ξηροχωρίου. In: *Λαογραφία Δ'*, pp. 46–52.
- Σάθας, Κ. 1876. *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη Ε'*. Εν Βενετία: Τύποις του Φοίνικος.
- Σέττας, Δημ. Χρ. 1976. *Εύβοια λαϊκός πολιτισμός. Δημοτικά τραγούδια. Επωδές-παραδόσεις-κ. α.* Αθήνα.
- Σπανός, Δ. Γ. 1993. Ο Εργηγορός της Χίου. Εμπειρική ιατρική και Γιατροσόφια. In: Χαβιαρά-Καραχάλιου Σεβαστή (ed.), *Η λαϊκή ιατρική της Χίου*. Αθήνα: Gasci-Hellas, pp. 420–431.
- Σπυριδάκης, Γ. Κ. 1941–42. Εξορκισμοί και μαγικοί κατάδεσμοι εκ κρητικών χειρογράφων. In: *Επετηρίς του Λαογραφικού Αρχείου* 3–4, pp. 60–76.
- Στέλλας, Ζ. 2004. *Της Πάρος, ζουγραφίες ατσούμπαλες. Αηθειές και άλλα λαογραφικά και γλωσσικά*. Αθήνα.
- Τσουμελέας, Σ. 1912–13. Επωδή της Βασκανίας. In: *Λαογραφία Δ'*, 289.
- Φραγκάκι, Ευαγγελία Κ. 1949. *Συμβολή στα λαογραφικά της Κρήτης*. Αθήνα.
- Χριστοδουλάκης, Στ. Ν. 2011. *Γητειές, Λαϊκή θεραπευτική της Κρήτης*. Αθήνα: Μπατσιούλας.

About the Author

Haralampos Passalis is currently employed as a teacher of Ancient and Modern Greek Language and Literature at the Intercultural School of Evosmos–Thessaloniki (Greece) and has also been working as a researcher at the Centre for the Greek Language-Department of Greek Medieval Lexicography (Thessaloniki) since 1998. He is a member of the compiling team for the Dictionary of Medieval Vernacular Greek Literature 1100–1669 (Λεξικό της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής Δημόδους Γραμματείας) [vols 15 (2003), 16 (2006), 17 (2011), 18 (2013), nineteenth (2014)] published by the Centre for the Greek Language in Thessaloniki. Personal research interests mainly focus on Vernacular Folk Literature and Tradition as well as on the magico–religious system of Greek Traditional Culture.

BOOK REVIEWS

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

The researches into Udmurt charms and prayers published by Tatiana Vladykina, Vladimir Vladyskin and Vladimir Napolskikh during recent decades have been intriguing. Now those who know Russian can have a more detailed overview of the Udmurt charming tradition. Tatiana Panina's monograph "Word and Ritual in Udmurt Folk Medicine" (*Слово и ритуал в народной медицине удмуртов*) is based on fieldwork and published materials. The heading refers to the intentional complexity of the book, a desire to view, besides the textual side of the charms, also practices associated with them. Timewise the analysed material dates back to the 18th century, while the most recent texts originate in the fieldwork in 2003. T. Panina explains the background on some Udmurt concepts (*pell'as'kon, kuris'kon*) and discusses charms as rhythmically organised texts with a certain psychological and functional orientation: they are meant to influence the outer world to produce the desired result. In her monograph the author uses different folkloristic methods: comparative-typological, synchronic descriptions, comparative-historical method, semantic analysis and the methodology of ethnolinguistics. This is inevitable in the case of a genre with variegated content, structure and ritual practice.

Due to the linguistic-cultural specific features, confessional circumstances (long-term ethnic belief, existence in the intersection of Christianity and Islam), and traditions of neighbouring peoples from different language families the material is fascinating and complex. The expelling of diseases is the most extensive sphere of application of charms, which involves the aetiologies of diseases and a myriad of treatment models, not to mention that the sphere itself covers everything from hygiene to illnesses, and from cure to social welfare. Panina defines healing rituals as a complete cultural system, as part of the Udmurt traditional worldview system, which helps to disclose the codes for verbal and non-verbal texts. The author brings to the fore the personal level of rituals and discusses the levels of space and time, attributes and actions in practices and verbal charms. She also analyses colour symbolism, and for the first time ever discusses the role of foreign (Russian) verbal charms and Christian prayers in the Udmurt tradition, which so far have deserved little attention.

As texts, religious views and activities are treated in an intentionally syncretic manner, the book enlightens us about the main facets of folk medicine,

introducing the reader to popular definitions of diseases, hygiene rules, and more general cure procedures. The second chapter describes a variety of temporary and permanent rituals, and gives an overview of calendrical rituals and those related to room cleansing, as well as of symbolic rituals (e.g. the symbolic re-birth of a child, which was used to fight so-called animal-origin diseases), transmissions of diseases, ritual deception of diseases, etc. The ritual “re-baking” of the sick person and many other rituals elicit the main features of the archaic range of methods. A separate subchapter gives an overview of the verbal charms for expelling a disease.

The following two chapters dwell upon the specific features of the rituals associated with charms and their verbal side. The author brings to the fore the personal code related to the text, which is divided between the addressee and the addresser, and secured by the status of the healer. The requirements set on the healer seem to be widely known and stereotypical, including those concerned with good health and existence of teeth, as well as other determiners of social status (e.g., the healer could be a widow or a women who had given birth to several children).

Space requirements as well as attributes and the semantic side of the charms have been characterised in great detail, by concrete spatial objects (yard, window, sauna, crossroads, water bodies, etc.).

The monograph provides an overview of the researches on the collection and publication of the Udmurt material, which certainly constitutes valuable information for the reader. As concerns the study of charms on the international level, the most comprehensive overview is given of Russian publications, yet several significant sources are missing even here. A more detailed characterisation of the material in other languages has been hindered by global diffusion and problems in finding relevant books and articles. It is obviously a separate topic, as in many countries this genre features a long history with a wide range of theoretical approaches, and covering all this material in one book would have a negative impact on presenting the results obtained on the basis of own material.

The main value of the book consists in examining the Udmurt material from several aspects and discourses. It is a good academic publication, another achievement in the sphere of charm studies.

Mare Kõiva

Department of Folkloristics, Estonian Literary Museum

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

Given the increasing interest in magic and witchcraft, it is particularly important that authentic folklore material should be published to provide an alternative to all the sorts of secondary sources of information, of which (unfortunately) there are many. In this context, the unique and irreplaceable source of living material is that submitted directly by a collector. Materials collected by numerous folklore expeditions always offer exceptional value, but, as a rule, have the disadvantage that they usually are well hidden from the majority of the reading public and are available only to the elite. But here we have a happy exception: Rita Balkutė, senior archivist at the Lithuanian Folk Culture Centre, has published the result of her many years of fieldwork. For more than 30 years she has collected material on folk magic and medicine in Lithuania and abroad. The book contains material resulting from more than 140 expeditions in 19 regions of Lithuania, as well as in Lithuanian enclaves in Belarus and Poland. The book presents 882 texts, selected from more than 1,200 author’s recordings.

The book is divided into seven parts, in each of these the field material proper is preceded by brief summaries of the texts to come. The first section is devoted to sorcerers and contains stories, folk beliefs and practices that describe the careers and characteristics of sorcerers: their aetiology (how sorcerers differ from exorcists, and how one can become a sorcerer), typology (what kind of sorcerers there are), their relationships, life and death; a separate section is devoted to portraits of individual well-known magicians, compiled according to the informants’ accounts. The second part of the book includes a description of the methods of harmful magic. The chapters here cover magic by means of voice, hands, ringing, wind, etc.; magic items (salt, blood, food, clothing, money, etc.); love magic and wedding magic. A separate section describes how you may protect yourself from the effects of magic. The third part of the book is devoted to people with the “evil eye”. This section which forms a large portion of the book includes a classification of people with the evil eye (as well as the cause of the “evil eye”); description of the influence of the evil eye on people, animals, plants, and things; various methods of treating humans and animals suffering from the effects of the evil eye, and a section on how to escape from the evil eye. The fourth, fifth and sixth parts deal with people with “light” hand, “heavy” hand, and an “evil voice”. Finally, the last part is devoted to witches, who steal the milk of cows.

The book benefits from its numerous illustrations which depict the informants, as well as the objects used in magic rituals. At the end of the book there

are the references data regarding the informants and their geographical locations, as well as a glossary (because of the use of dialect vocabulary and other low frequency words by informants).

The undeniable advantage of the publication is to present texts in the form in which they are recorded by collector without any cuts and changes. The form of dialogue allows us to understand better the attitudes of informants to the subject; the reader feels included in the conversation. For the same reason, this material is interesting not only for folklorists, but also for linguists and dialectologists: the texts feature various dialectal features, besides part of the texts themselves being in different languages (in Russian, in Belarusian and Polish). All the texts have been edited from a linguistic point of view: the Lithuanian texts are edited by folklorist Dr Kostas Aleksynas, Polish texts were edited and translated by Dr Maria Romanova, and the Belarusian texts were edited and translated by the lecturer at the Center of the Belarusian language, literature and ethnic culture Nina Petkevich.

This book marks just a beginning to the planned publications of the collector. Her forthcoming books will include a collection of spells (“The Power of Spell”), the medical material (“Power of Treatment”) and materials on unusual abilities (“Magic Knowledge”). Undoubtedly, the present edition, and the ones to follow, will contribute greatly to the treasury of Lithuanian folklore recordings.

Maria Zavyalova
Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

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

Charm scholars, and especially those who read Russian, will be well aware of both the individual and the joint work of Tat'iana Agapkina and Andrei Toporkov in the field of verbal magic charms and the wider field of the history of magic and folk belief among Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians (see articles in English by them in *Incantatio* 2 and 3, and reviews of two previous books by them in *Incantatio* 2; Professor Toporkov is a member of the editorial board of this journal). Their contribution has been outstanding, not least in their attempts to establish a taxonomy of charms and framework rules for a charm motif index. We are now indebted to them for a substantial new joint work which will be not only an invaluable tool for researchers in East Slavic charms but also for all folklore scholars concerned with the problem of classification in motif indexes.

The book is to some extent a reworking and development of the authors' earlier bibliography of 2010 and 2011, but it is updated and very much expanded, in particular with material from manuscript and Ukrainian sources. Even so, it is still a project in progress; it is restricted to certain types of charm and does not try to cover the whole extent of East Slavic verbal magic (hence the “Materials for ...” in the title). It does nevertheless cover a substantial part of the possible corpus.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is the motif index which classifies charms by function into 14 groups under two major headings: I (Agapkina) medical; II (Toporkov) social, hunting and fishing, military. Each of these two sections is preceded by an introduction explaining the content and methodology. Each motif is followed by a source list, with occasional commentaries, arranged by area: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus.

The second part is entitled “Annotated Bibliography”. It begins with a very detailed and informative 26-page essay by Toporkov on the history of the publication of East Slavic charms, with all the complications of censorship which that involved. This is followed by a methodological introduction by both authors, which explains in particular what is *not* included, e.g. the plethora of recycled and fake charm texts in post-soviet popular publications.

The bibliography which follows is also divided into sections for Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and within those sections chronologically by author, with full details of publication and content, including the functions of the charms

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

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

William F. Ryan

CONFERENCE REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Svetlana Tsonkova
Central European University – Budapest/University of Pécs