



Photo: Helen Kästik

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## BNN Newsletter, March 2021

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### Contents

BNN Student Prize: Alevtina Solovyeva.....	2
Call for Papers: Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics 2022 (Volume 17 Issue 2) „Hybrid Beliefs and Identities“ .....	3
Monograph by Vito Carrassi “Il lago e la città scomparsa. Una leggenda eziologica nel Gargano settentrionale.” The lake and the vanished city. An etiological legend in the Northern Gargano. ....	4
Anders Gustavsson “Nineteenth-Century Cholera Epidemics in Sweden from a Popular Perspective” ARV, Nordic Yearbook of Folklore vol. 76, 2020 pp. 119-150 .....	5
Mathias Guenther “‘The hunting-field and its doings’: subjectivities of territory of the  Xam Bushmen of the northern Cape.” Southern African Humanities 33: 99–117 December 2020 .....	6
Project seminar “On the limits of reason: making sense of the inexplicable” 20.–21. November 2020, Põlva, Estonia. Some memories. ....	7

Sincerely,

Kristel Kivari

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*On behalf of the BNN Committee:*

*Mirjam Mencej, Willem de Blécourt, Terry Gunnell, Anders Gustavsson, Desmond Kharmawphlang, Fumihiko Kobayashi, Mare Kõiva, Kaarina Koski, Dilip Kumar Kalita, Mirjam Mencej, Maria Ines Palleiro, Tok Thompson and Ülo Valk.*

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## BNN Student Prize: Alevtina Solovyeva

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Tok Thompson [tokthompson@gmail.com](mailto:tokthompson@gmail.com)

The Belief Narrative Network (BNN) student prize committee (Mare Kõiva, Kaarina Koski, and Tok Thompson) unanimously selected the student paper, "A miracle walking tree': The supernatural in the landscape mythology and social space of contemporary Mongolia" by graduate student Alevtina Solovyeva, in the Department of Estonian and



Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu (Estonia), as the winner of this year's prize for best student paper on belief narratives. The committee calls it "A rich research article, which has precise research questions and sufficient research materials, and provides deep roots for the contemporary phenomenon in earlier Mongolian belief traditions."

The committee would like to note that there was stiff competition for this year's selection, with several outstanding entries submitted. The prize comes with awards, including publication of the article, free entry to the next BNN and/or ISFNR conference, books, and a cash award of 300 euros.

Alevtina Solovyeva is currently a graduate student at the Department of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu (Estonia). She has studied oriental studies, historical anthropology and folkloristics at the Russian State University for the Humanities (Moscow), the National University of Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar), the University of Bonn (Germany), and the University of Tartu (Estonia). Since 2007 she has been on annual fieldwork trips in Mongolia and China, focusing on mythology, rural and urban folk traditions. Her contemporary research is devoted to folk beliefs, narratives and vernacular religion of Mongolian communities.

**Congratulations to Alevtina Solovyeva, this year's winner of the Best Student Paper in Belief Narratives!**

Please see Alevtina's CV and list of publications from Estonian Research Information System [https://www.etis.ee/CV/Alevtina\\_Solovyeva\\_001/est?tabId=CV](https://www.etis.ee/CV/Alevtina_Solovyeva_001/est?tabId=CV) ENG

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## Call for Papers: Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics 2022 (Volume 17 Issue 2) „Hybrid Beliefs and Identities“

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Art Leete [art.leete@ut.ee](mailto:art.leete@ut.ee)

Hybridity is the act of living in borderlands. In many regions of the world, we witness an unexpected rise in ethnic and religious sentiments. Simultaneously, articulation of religious belonging becomes mixed with changes in the group or ethnic identities. Mixed reactions to change on different levels of society appear in everyday conduct but also in state politics.

How can the process of hybridization influence people's religious experience and sense of belonging? How are ethnicity and everyday religiosity connected? What happens at the boundaries of ethnicity and religion? How does postcolonial ambivalence trigger the contestation of religious and ethnic differences?



The 2022 special issue of the Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics (<https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/jef/jef-overview.xml>) calls for articles that discuss mediation of belief and belonging in postcolonial and postmodern settings. We expect to collect a volume of scholarly articles that examine diverse modes of hybridization of religion and collective identities. We encourage our authors to foster theoretical discussions regarding the hybridity of religious conduct and ideas and focus on intriguing case-studies based on field experiences.

**The deadline for submitting article manuscripts is February 15, 2022.** The deadline for notes and reviews is April 30, 2022. The issue will be published in autumn 2022. Please submit your article to e-mail [jef.editors@gmail.com](mailto:jef.editors@gmail.com). Editor-in-Chief responsible for the issue is Prof. Art Leete. Contact e-mail: [art.leete@ut.ee](mailto:art.leete@ut.ee)

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Monograph by Vito Carrassi “Il lago e la città scomparsa. Una leggenda eziologica nel Gargano settentrionale.” The lake and the vanished city. An etiological legend in the Northern Gargano.

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Vito Carrassi [vito1976@interfree.it](mailto:vito1976@interfree.it)

Il lago e la città scomparsa.  
Una leggenda eziologica nel Gargano settentrionale  
(The lake and the vanished city.  
An etiological legend in the Northern Gargano)

#### Abstract

Lake Varano – along with the narrow isthmus separating it from the Adriatic Sea and the five towns standing around it (Ischitella, Carpino, Cagnano Varano, Rodi Garganico, Vico del Gargano) – is not only an enchanting piece of Gargano (Apulia, Southern Italy) landscape; it is also at the centre of an oral narrative tradition that is here examined in its wholeness (historical background, written and literary sources, ethnographic data, narratological and comparative analysis). It is an etiological legend, namely a narrative explaining the origin and the features of something or someone. As a mixture of history, myth and vernacular beliefs, this legend tells an extraordinary event, i.e. the sinking of an ancient and prosperous city, Uria – punished by a biblical deluge due to the sins of its inhabitants – and the resulting birth of the lake, the surrounding towns and the Annunziata shrine. This last one, according to the legend, was originally the outlying house of Nunzia, a young and pure woman, devoted to praying and spinning. Nunzia is the key figure of the story: thanks to her miraculous ball of thread, she (along with her house) is the only survivor from the deluge and, at the same time, the founder of a new order, both geographical and spiritual, as symbolized by the holy crucifix worshipped in the shrine. As a form of space- and place-lore, as well as of religious tale, this legend tells about the ideas, beliefs and images raised by a particular landscape and the relationships the human communities establish with the territory they inhabit.

#### Table of contents

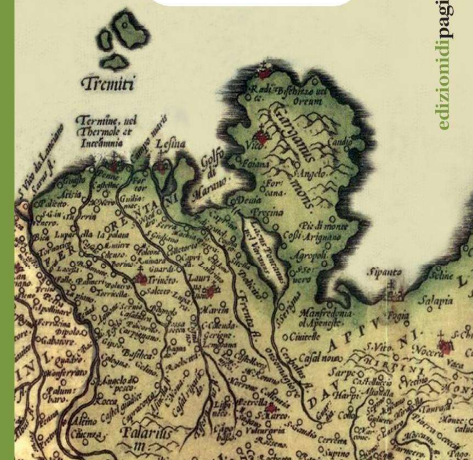
Introduction;  
Narrating the origin and the features of a territory;  
Uria, between history and myth;  
The religious component;  
The written sources;  
The oral tradition and the ethnographic fieldwork;  
The legend in the Web, plastic arts and folk music;  
Legends about lakes in Italy;  
Legends about lakes from all around the world;

Conclusion;  
Afterword (by L. Marchetti);  
Bibliography and sitography.

Vito Carrassi è Dottore di ricerca in Letterature moderne comparate. Ha insegnato Storia delle tradizioni popolari all'Università di Bari, dove ha collaborato con la Cattedra di Antropologia culturale. È autore di numerose pubblicazioni, in particolare di una monografia sul *fairy tale* irlandese (pubblicata anche in edizione inglese), di articoli in riviste internazionali e di saggi in volumi collettanei. La sua ricerca si svolge nell'alveo delle discipline demotnoantropologiche, con una predilezione per lo studio teorico, storico e comparativo dei generi narrativi della tradizione orale.

**I**l lago di Varano, con il sottile istmo che lo separa dal mare e i cinque paesi che gli fanno corona (Ischitella, Cagnano Varano, Carpino, Rodi Garganico, Vico del Gargano), non è solo un suggestivo elemento del paesaggio garganico; è anche il protagonista di una tradizione narrativa che qui, per la prima volta, viene esaminata in tutti i suoi aspetti. Si tratta di una leggenda eziologica, ovvero di un racconto che spiega le origini di un luogo o le cause di un fenomeno. Mescolando storia, mito e credenze popolari, questa leggenda narra un evento memorabile, la scomparsa di un'antica e ricca città, Uria (biblicamente punita con un diluvio per i peccati dei suoi abitanti), e la conseguente origine del lago, dei paesi circumlacuali e del santuario dell'Annunziata. È quest'ultimo che, fin dal nome, ci riporta all'umile ma portentosa protagonista della leggenda, Nunzia. È lei la figura chiave, unica superstite di un passato sommerso dal lago e (ri)fondatrice di una storia e di un mondo nuovi, simboleggiati dal Crocifisso venerato nel santuario. Una leggenda affascinante e densa di significati, che ci invita a riflettere sui rapporti che intessiamo con i nostri luoghi e sull'impatto che il paesaggio ha nelle vicende umane.

Vito Carrassi  
**Il lago  
e la città  
scomparsa**  
Una leggenda  
eziologica nel Gargano  
setentrionale



edizioni di puglia

Vito Carrassi  
Il lago e la città scomparsa.  
Una leggenda eziologica  
nel Gargano settentrionale

Marco Miosi  
Litopolesi.  
Capanne in pietra a secco pugliesi.  
Tra storia, semantica e antropologia

Nino Lavermicocca  
La Via Egnazia  
itinerario d'identità europea.  
Alle origini del Corridoio VIII

patrimoni di puglia

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Anders Gustavsson "Nineteenth-Century Cholera Epidemics in Sweden from a Popular Perspective" ARV, Nordic Yearbook of Folklore vol. 76, 2020 pp. 119-150

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Anders Gustavsson [anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no](mailto:anders.gustavsson@ikos.uio.no)

Abstract

My focus is on the many cholera epidemics which hit Sweden from 1834 until 1873. I have studied how cholera epidemics affected the countryside from an ethnological, folkloristic and cultural historian's point of view. Popular practices and ideas in difficult crisis situations are the subject, rather than top-down regulations. How did the population perceive the cholera and how was the disease treated on the local level when it broke out?

The different epidemics share a common feature: the disease has been spread by shipping across the oceans and then along inland waterways and the shores of larger lakes. A cholera epidemic outbreak immediately raised questions regarding barriers against the immediate neighbourhood. Smoking with juniper or tar was used as a protection against cholera infection. This points to the opinion that the cholera contagion was airborne, namely a miasmatic view. In towns, the disease hit the socially weak areas where poverty, bad hygiene, and overcrowding reigned. This tendency was apparent in the countryside as well. Since the cholera hit local communities suddenly and many died within a short time, it is to be expected that strong fears appeared. There are informants who had survived cholera and left tales of shattering memories. In many cases, the themes in legends about cholera had roots going back to the Black Death in the fourteenth century.

Keywords: cholera, contagion, epidemic, legend, miasma

Full text of the book: <https://kgaabokorder.se/en-US/download/00971fd5-fb17-4b75-aa1f-cc6b499cc63b>

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Mathias Guenther “‘The hunting-field and its doings’: subjectivities of territory of the |Xam Bushmen of the northern Cape.” *Southern African Humanities* 33: 99–117 December 2020

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<https://www.sahumanities.org/index.php/sah/article/view/460>

This paper focuses on the nineteenth-century |Xam of the northern Cape to examine the relationship of people to the environment beyond techno-economic parameters. As a lived-in, engaged-with Umwelt, the landscape becomes socially and culturally inscribed and patterned, thereby subjectivizing its features. Two ways in which this epistemological and ontological process plays itself out in the case at hand are considered—in terms of human/other-than-human relationality, and in terms of mythological imprints on the landscape. Also considered are certain epistemological implications of these anthropocenic processes for San cosmology, specifically its core feature of ontological ambiguity and mutability. KEY WORDS: relational ontology, San mythology, cosmology and rock art, taskscape, religion and ecology, onto-epistemology.



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## Project seminar “On the limits of reason: making sense of the inexplicable” 20.–21. November 2020, Põlva, Estonia. Some memories.

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Kristel Kivari [kristel.kivari@ut.ee](mailto:kristel.kivari@ut.ee)

Department of Estonian and comparative folklore, University of Tartu holds research project funded by Estonian Research Council Vernacular Interpretations of the Incomprehensible: Folkloristic Perspectives Towards Uncertainty (1.01.2020–31.12.2024) The project focuses on vernacular views of, and strategies for dealing with, the realm of the incomprehensible both as discourse and as lived experience. It addresses expressive genres and the related phenomena that are considered irrational or supernatural and cannot easily be comprehended within the framework of rational thinking and have therefore often been overlooked, excluded and marginalised in scholarship. In addition the project addresses socially oriented fears, beliefs and incomprehensible experiences. The project seeks to overcome the scholarly tendency to split the supernatural and social ‘other’, and approaches them through the category of uncertainty, which is considered a creative resource for producing multiple alternative frames of interpretation.

Research team held its first seminar in November, 2020. The days were spent in giving and listening presentations and meetings with the ‘practitioners’ of the inexplicable: patriarch and exorcist of charismatic church, practitioner of runic magic and a leader and practitioner of labyrinth and gong meditations. The program:

Kristel Kivari The play as a metaphor in the UFO research

Ergo-Hart Västriik When the supernatural becomes natural: consciousness and uncertainty in life-coaching group.

Margaret Lyngdoh Ritual, conversion, and prayer: mediating meanings through discursive frameworks

Pema Choedon Four directions: A buddhist ritual to subdue demons

Kikee D. Bhutia Looking back into the Glorious past: Revival of the ethnic Bhutia identity through ritual performance

Alevtina Solovyova Falling into beliefs: A reverse perspective or supernatural experiences of researchers

Danila Rygovski Women’s biographies in the ‘Tale of the Miraculous Events’ or ‘Patericon of Siberia and the Urals’

Tiina Sepp Exploring the inexplicable in York Minster

Ülo Valk Uncertainty, knowledge and interpretive drift: Some observations.

*Photos: Helen Kästik*

