Symposia Abstracts

1. The ISFNR Section on Charms, Charmers and Charming - 2nd International Symposium

Arukask, Madis (Univeristy of Tartu)

Vepsian Charms as Research Subject and Everyday Practice

In my paper I give an overview about the collecting and publishing of Vepsian charms during the last hundred years. Also, I intend to speak about the charms and related data that I have collected in my field trips to the different Vepsian regions during the last four years, and to discuss the meaning and importance of charms for the informants, and the possible changes of this tradition in connection with the changing social context.

In Vepsian folk culture the forest still plays an important role in everyday life, both in beliefs and practices. Animistic concepts have survived in the world view of the middle-aged and of the older generation who maintain also the use of charms. For the members of communities the forest, but also other spheres what we may meet in the texts as main loci (water ~ lake Onega ~ "the sea"; field ~ "the plain/ green field") seem to be animated places inhabited with spirits known to the people. All this has supported the practical validity of different belief genres and magic among Vepsian people.

Vepsian charms (as texts) have many similarities with the charms of other North Russian peoples. In everyday life the charms are partly used as common knowledge among Vepsian informants. On the other hand, the work with the practicing healer has proven to me that some healing charms (as expected) have their hidden sphere and they do not belong to the tradition known to everybody.

Ionas, Ioannis (Cyprus Research Centre)

The Systematic Study of Cypriot Charms and Incantations

This presentation deals with an initial attempt to standardize in a systematic manner the healing incantations of the Corpus of Cypriot Spells that we lately published. The incantations can be placed into various categories regardless of the purpose for which they were composed. Firstly one distinguishes exorcism, whereby the acting person addresses himself directly to the evil, often personified, in order to make it withdraw. A second category is the prayer-recitation of certain words in order to secure the support of one of the supernatural beings, through which an exorcism for the banishment of evil would take place. The third kind of incantation, the myth, is more widespread. It places on scene one of the major

representatives of Christianity, who falls victim to evil and/or exorcism within the context of a short story. Less common is the incantation-magic formula in a foreign language. Finally, the existence of a number of curses is noted, forming the fifth kind of incantation (for example, an attempt to induce male impotence on a recently married groom in order to dissolve his marriage).

The persons mentioned in the incantations belong to two different camps, with the forces of good combating those of evil. The persons or beings of Christianity are in the first camp (usually the Virgin Mary and Christ), while all the personifications of evil that must be banished are included in the second camp. Constituent parts supporting the scene of myths (type 3) are often drawn from the Holy Gospels: The River Jordan, the Mount of Olives and the cave where Christ was born. Finally, some incantations are accompanied by a kind of ceremony during which certain materials or implements are used such as holy water, a knife, three nails, etc. This standardization can form the future foundation for continuously deeper analyses of the incantations, either in their totality or on a case by case basis.

Kapalo, James, (School of Oriental and African Studies, London)

Relations with Divine Agents in Gagauz Healing Charms

The Gagauz are a minority living in the southern reaches of the Republic of Moldova. While adhering to the majority religion of Orthodox Christianity, their mother-tongue is a variety of Turkish, a fact that in conjunction with their cultural heritage has shaped their religious identity and transformed their religious practices.

This paper explores the relations that are established between Gagauz *ilaççi* healers and divine agents through both the dreams and visions of healers and the performance of narrative *okumak* charms. Gagauz healing charms will be considered from a 'performative' perspective emphasising how the speech acts of the healer bridge the cosmological divide between worldly and transcendent realities and enact and institute social relations with the divine.

Klyaus, Vladimir
(Institute of World Literature, Moscow)

Мультимедийная видеобиблиотека заговорных текстов
(The Multimedia video-library of charms)

Сложности в собирании лечебной магии, объясняемой особым, сакрализованным отношением к ней носителей традиции, является причиной того, что исследователями народной культуры достаточно редко осуществляются фиксации реальных обрядовых актов. В основном в качестве материала исследования

заговорно-заклинательных традиций (текстов и обрядов) используются описание практики лечения вне ситуации их функционирования в традиции. По сути дела, по отношению к этой области народной культуры до сегодняшнего дня сохраняется уровень науки XIX века, когда все фольклор записывался под диктовку, что, как известно, значительно изменяет структуру текста, не дает возможность рассмотреть проблему исполнительского мастерства, соотношения слова и действия и т.д.

Разработанный проект мультимедийной видеобиблиотеки заговорных текстов, позволит ввести в научный оборот уникальный полевой материал, собираемый нами в России с 1993 года. В настоящее время в мультимедийной видеобиблиотеке представлены видеофиксации реальных обрядовых актов лечения от "порчи", сделанных в различных регионах России и ближнего зарубежья от носителей славянской заговорно-заклинательной. Мультимедийный видеоатлас содержит не только видео, но и текстовую информацию. Поисковая система, представляющая собой инструмент анализа слова и действия, позволяет осуществлять анализ заговорного текста в его контекстуальном окружении и в связи с порядком и характером действий исполнителей.

Kompoholi, Aggeliki (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Charming Divine Wrath:
The Presentation of a Greek Woman Charmer
from Messinia in Greece

Charmers have long been accredited as an integral part of folk medicine, possessing distinct characteristics that distinguished them from other practitioners of folk medicine. Popular faith in charmers was undoubtedly very powerful, with various traditional forms of charming having persisted, even in the present days. This presentation offers a monograph of a very charismatic healing charmer from Messinia in Greece. The charmer, renowned for her abilities, inherited her gift from her father who, as she discloses, passed it on to her shortly before his death.

The charms that she practises are numerous; love charms, healing charms for ailments and minor sufferings that may concern or frighten (headaches, toothaches, rushes etc.), charms for harmful or dangerous animals (ants, rats, snakes etc.), as well as charms for the appeasement of adverse meteorological and geological phenomena (drought, tornados, earthquakes etc.) that she herself calls "divine wrath". The present introduction not only elucidates the identity of this Greek woman charmer, but also explores her practice and her place in a wider religious and medical context.

Naiditch, Larissa (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Narrative Part of German Charms. Composition, Pragmatics, Linguistic Peculiarities

The paper investigates German charms of different periods, especially those of them, where a story is told. The chief material of the research is taken from published sources, but several texts of Russian Germans are from the archive of Zhirmunsky in St. Petersburg. The theoretical basis of the paper is the theory of text analysis by Vladimir Propp. In my study the text, as well as the ritual of the charms, are subdivided into a "frame situation" and a "story on the precedent case". The former reflects the need of the customer and his real individual situation, usually a kind of harm that has to be compensated for. The latter contains an analogical story helping to restore the destructed harmony. The characters in each of these two parts are described from the point of view of their functions in the story plot, as well as in the healing procedure. In the "frame part" there are a suffering person, a charmer, practitioner of a specific kind of folk magic, and the personalized evil. In the narrative part the corresponding list of characters include: the healer (it can be Jesus Christ, a Saint, etc.), a suffering person, and the personalized evil. The investigation compares the functions of these two sets of characters. The linguistic realization of the analyzed functions will be described as well.

Olsan, Lea, (University of Louisiana at Monroe)

Latin Charms in Late Antique and Old English Medical Texts

This paper addresses the problem of the extent to which late antique verbal therapeutics, that is to say types of charms such as those found in the *Liber de medicamentis* of Marcellus, re-emerge in Anglo-Saxon medical texts. Comparisons can be made found in four categories: a) *verba occulta* or strings of nonsense syllables, words, and signs; b) negative narratives (of vanishing or diminishing); c) animal rituals including verbal elements; and d) written texts. Modes of verbal healing found in late antique texts can be identified in the Anglo-Saxon medical texts. However, where Anglo-Saxon *carmina* can be linked to late antique techniques and linguistic strategies, it is significant that instances occur where a Christian perspective re-orients ancient techniques that relied on natural phenomena and magic words.

Passalis, Haralambos
(Cross-cultural High School of Evosmos, Thessaloniki)

Ritual Restrictions and Taboos on the Transmissions Verbal Charms of Greek

The paper focuses on the ritual restrictions and taboos that concern the process of the verbal magic transmission in Greek folk society. These restrictions (time of transmission, age of the owner, gender of the successor, etc.) and taboos (death

of the first charmer if the second uses the spell while the first is alive, etc.), which are closely connected with the wide-spread belief that revealing the verbal part of charm renders the ritual ineffective, aim at protecting the transmission of verbal part which is considered as the main part of the ritual performance. Moreover, they can cast light on issues such as the social status of the performer, the owned (or not) state of magic, the problem of collecting charms in fieldwork, and even on the way of performance (the verbal part has to be recited in such a way so that it is not heard). Special attention is given to how this system of verbal part protection is connected to and can explain, partially or wholly lose of section, cross-"contamination" by parts of other charms without, however, these deletions and innovations affecting the ritual efficacy.

Pócs, Éva (1) (University of Pécs)

Hungarian Rite-based Charms: The Relation between Rite and Text

*W*ithin the large overall corpus of Hungarian charms we can clearly distinguish groups of texts which function purely as texts, those accompanied by symbolic gestures and yet others which are passed down as parts of complex rituals. My present paper shows a few characteristic types of Hungarian rite-based charms, among them a text used to cure a sty, as well as certain types of epic charms which include a *historiola*. It is in the context of such texts that I examine the various ways in which charms may be connected to rites and the possible relations between text and action including the various semantic levels. I look at the differences between clerical textual types which were transmitted in writing and the types which were passed down by oral tradition and are more closely tied in with the everyday practice of popular magic – this latter type being referential, through subjective or improvised textual elements, to specific healing rites and situations. The analysis extends to the grammatical structures relevant to these types. All of this clearly outlines some of the general regularities of the relationship between rite and text. Surveying some of the Central and Eastern European parallels to the types described we can also point out some internationally relevant tendencies: there appear to be differences in the use of constant as opposed to changing or improvised textual elements and grammatical structures between East and Southeast European texts which reflect a living magical practice and those Central Western European texts which have been transmitted more commonly in writing (recipe books, books of magic) and have had little to do with specific magical practice.

Pócs, Éva (2) (University of Pécs)

Hungarian Types of the 2nd Merseburg Charm

*I*n this paper I present the Hungarian types and variants of the 2nd Merseburg charm. There are over 40 texts, three of which come from 16th

– 18th century historical sources and the rest from 19th to 20th century folklore collections. These two groups represent three different types. In the majority of the texts it is Jesus himself, travelling to Jerusalem on a donkey, who heals the twisted leg of the animal using the 'bone to bone' magic formula. In other texts the healing is done by another person. The three texts from historical sources show contamination by the textual type 'Jesus complaining to the Virgin Mary' which has Coptic/Byzantine roots and shows Eastern European and Orthodox connections. The texts from the modern period all come, without exception, from a part of Hungary which was partially inhabited by immigrant Germans. In these cases I presume we are talking of the influence of the practice of settlers who also used hand-written recipe books – i.e. we assume a German origin. In the present paper I examine the constant (perhaps originally written) and the altering elements (improvised for the occasion) within the texts, as well as cases when the formula 'bone to bone' is used as independent charms and from all of this I try to conclude the more general regularities of variation.

Roper, Jonathan (1) (University of Leeds)

Contemporary Charms and Charming in the Adjara Region of Georgia

*B*ased on fieldwork from the summer of 2006, this presentation is a largely video documentation of contemporary charming practices among Muslim Georgians in this south-west region adjoining Turkey.

Roper, Jonathan (2) (University of Leeds)

Bone to Bone in England and Beyond

*B*one to bone is perhaps the most written-about charm-type. In this paper, I wish to complement the presentations about Slavic and Hungarian variants by presenting the English variants of **Bone to Bone**, otherwise known as the Second Merseburg charm-type. The number of variants is not large when compared with that of other northern European countries (whose corpora I will also refer to in the course of this presentation), just one sixteenth-century and nine nineteenth-century examples. However, they form an interesting set which needs to form part of the pan-European mapping of this charm-type. I shall also discuss variants in nearby languages and countries.

Timotin, Emanuela

(Institute of Linguistics "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti" of the Romanian Academy)

The Fever and Its Healers. Saint Photeine and the 40 Martyrs in Two Romanian Manuscript Charms

The present paper focuses on two unpublished charms against fever dating from the first half of the 19th century which form a distinct category within the large group of Romanian manuscript charms meant to cure this disease, mainly because they present saint Photeine and the 40 martyrs as principal healers.

The study intends to offer a thorough description of the codex to which the charms belong, to establish the relation between the two texts and other Romanian manuscript charms and to identify the reasons for which these saints were assigned the task to cure fever.

Toporkov, Andrei (Institute of World Literature, Moscow)

Slavic Parallels to the Second Merseburg Charm: Historiography and Modern Problems of Study

The Second Merseburg Charm (hereafter — 2dMC) and its Russian parallels attracted the attention of Russian philologists as early as the middle of 19th century (e.g. Buslajev in 1849). At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian and Belorussian texts of the 2dMC type were systematized by V. Mansikka and by Nikolay Poznanskiy. Mansikka's book was surveyed in the overview made by Reidar Christiansen in 1914. Vladimir Toporov turned to Slavic charms of this type in connection with the problem of the reconstruction of Indo-European poetic language in 1969. In recent years, works dedicated to the Polish and East Slavic versions of 2dMC have appeared (by Agapkina and by Nebzhegovskaja-Bartminskaja). In addition to this, a great number of new charms from different Slavic traditions have been published, collected both orally and from manuscripts. All of this research allows us to depict with great completeness the Slavic versions of 2dMC, their structural and functional variants, and their geographic and quantitative dissemination in different Slavic traditions.

2. Belief Tales Symposium

Angelopoulos Anna (Paris, France)

Greek Ghost Stories and Related Fairy Tales

There are some Greek ghost stories about mermaids who take on the appearance of beautiful young girls, seduce young men and make them mute and impotent.

These fearful creatures belong to the realm of folk belief and polytheistic fantasy or to the demonic population surrounding the Christian Orthodox devil of the local religion. Local beliefs have their own symbolism. Ghosts can assume different forms: human, cattle, donkey, goat. They can also appear in dreams sent by the Devil.

I shall show how the Greek Orthodox system relies on the classical past of Greece to support popular adoption of these ghost stories.

These belief tales will be contrasted with fairy tales such as ATU 402, *The Mouse (Cat, Frog, etc.) as Bride*; ATU 425, *The Search for the Lost Husband* (AaTh 425A, *The Animal as Bridegroom*); and AaTh 465A, *The Quest for the Unknown*.

Bhattacharjee Kishore (Guwahati (Assam), India)

Belief Tales about Two Indian Saints

This paper is about two saints of India: one from the state of Assam and another from West Bengal or Bengal. Shankardeva was a sixteenth-seventeenth century saint from Assam and Ramakrishna a nineteenth-early twentieth century saint from West Bengal. Once Ramakrishna said that people should believe in rebirth; he narrated the following story:

A *sanyasi* was meditating sitting on a corpse in the *tantric* style in a forest.

He saw many terrible scenes. After a while, a tiger came and dragged him away. Another person who was passing by climbed a tree when he saw the tiger. After coming down, he found the materials for worship and a corpse. He sat on the corpse and started meditating. After some time, the goddess appeared. The person said to her: "The earlier person was worshiping you for such a long period with such elaborate arrangements. Why did you deprive him of your protective power?" The Goddess said: "Do you not remember that in earlier lives you worshipped me so much? For that I have bestowed such power upon you".

Ramakrishna's stories are mainly an exegesis of the *Vedanta* on the popular level. This process could also be described with the help of the term "folklorization". Such stories are abundant in the hagiography of the two saints. We will attempt to identify and classify the stories. Some could be catalogued according to AaTh or