medical books. The examples included known and popular Estonian healers Aleksander Heintalu, Luule Viilma, Gunnar Aarma, and also Irje Karjus, who has combined folk knowledge with modern village tourism.

Mihály Hoppál (Experiences with Shamanistic Healers) described different shamanistic healers and their practices within the framework of curative procedures and belief systems. The well-known researcher of shamanism and the president of the Society for Studies in the Field of Shamanism as well as the editor-in-chief of the journal Shaman paid attention to how shamans study popular religion and medicine, and participate in the discourse of the published books. He also spoke about his personal experiences with shamans.

Piret Paal discussed in her poster report (About Keila Nursing Hospital, Caring and Palliative Welfare Services) the importance of palliative medicine and care in the future medicine. She declared that in view of the cultural pluralism of the globalising world also ethnologists, folklorists and medical anthropologists will have an important role to play in the interests of patients and their families. She also suggested that, arising from the dynamics conditioned by the small size of Estonia, a well-organised network of palliative services could even be one of the so-called Estonian Nokias, which means that high quality care services are offered to the citizens and their family members.

Ave Tupits

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHARMS, CHARMERS AND CHARMING

On October 27–29, 2011, the Marc Bloch Russian-French Centre for Historical Anthropology at the Russian State University for the Humanities in cooperation with the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR) and the Russian Academy of Sciences organised a conference on oral charms.

The conference aimed at focussing on one folklore genre, whereby embracing the maximum range of topics: problems, geographical and historical background. The investigation of oral magic has remained on the borderline of several scientific spheres – folkloristics, linguistics, history of literature, ethnology and psychology. The conference discussed the following issues: geography and history of the charms tradition, distribution of various charm types; possibilities for systematising and labelling the databases of national charms corpora; charms and mixed forms (Christian prayers and prayer-like charms, apocryphal prayers, curses, etc.); charms in oral and written tradition; magical inscriptions on various objects; medieval charms in archaeological records; social functioning of the charm tradition; charms and their performers; the role of the church and clerics in the spread of charms, their difference in catholic, protestant, orthodox and non-Christian religions; psycho-social sources of suggestion. The participants of the conference discussed how charms worked, why they were relevant, how 'charming with

words' was practised in contemporary society, and also spoke about video recordings of charming acts and their meaning in charm studies.

The ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming focuses its work on the coordination of charm and incantation studies in different countries, elaboration of methods for their structural and typological description, and compilation of international and local charms indexes, scientific publications and electronic databases. Jonathan Roper (Great Britain/Estonia) has been Chair of the Committee from the very beginning (2007), and the members are Daiva Vaitkevičiene (Lithuania), Mare Kõiva (Estonia), Éva Pócs (Hungary), Emanuela Timotin (Romania) and Andrei Toporkov (Russia). The committee also convened during the conference and decided to admit a new member – Haralampos Passalis (Greece).

The committee organises conferences regularly (at least once in two years) and prepares the proceedings for publication. Until today, conferences have taken place in Pecs (2007), Tartu (2008), Athens (2009), Bucharest (2010) and Moscow (2011). Already before the committee had been officially formed (2007), two conferences on the same topics took place in London (2003 and 2005).

On the basis of the previous conferences the following collections have been published: Charms and Charming in Europe (2004, editors Jonathan Roper and Palgrave Macmillan), and Charms, Charmers and Charming: International Research on Verbal Magic (2009, same editors).

The members of the committee prepared for publication a book of English verbal charms[1], as well as scientific publications on Lithuanian[2], Romanian[3] and Russian[4] charms. The homepage of the committee introduces its activities and provides information about the new publications on magic folklore in different countries (http://www.isfnr.org/index2.html). It also introduces annotated literature about English, Bulgarian, Brazilian, Hungarian, Gagauz, Greece, Irish, Spanish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mari, Norwegian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Slovenian, Ukrainian, French, Swiss and Scottish traditions. The conference presented the first issue of the electronic magazine *Incantatio* (http://www.folklore.ee/incantatio/01.html).

Before the conference, a collection of papers in English entitled '*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*' was published. The editors were Tatyana Mikhailova, Jonathan Roper, Andrei Toporkov and Dmitry Nikolayev. The collection is accessible on the committee's homepage (http://verbalcharms.ru/books.html). However, it has to be mentioned that the content of the collection differs to a certain extent from that of the conference. On the one hand, seven authors (Svetlana Tsonkova, Ekaterina Velmezova, Tatyana Agapkina, Varvara Dobrovolskaya, Ritwa Herjulfsdotter, Katarina Lozić Knezović and Gordana Galić Kakkonen), who had submitted their articles for the collection, were not able to participate; on the other, seven researchers who had not sent their materials (Oksana Tshoha, Katerina Dõsa, Éva Pócs, Maria Kaspina, Elena Minenok, Mare Kõiva, Anna Ivanova) delivered papers at the conference. Anna Ivanova's and Elena Minenok's papers can be read on the homepage http://verbalcharms.ru/books.html. On the same page also Tatyana Agapkina's, Ekaterina Velmezova's, Tatyana Mikhailova's, Andrei Moroz's, Elina Rakhimova's, Andrei Toporkov's and Ludmila Fadeyeva's texts in Russian can be found.

During three days the participants of the conference listened to 31 papers; 15 authors came from Russia and 17 from abroad (Belgium, Great Britain, Hungary, Greece, Latvia, Holland, Romania, Northern Ireland, USA, Ukraine, Finland and Estonia). The issues dealt with were related to the verbal magic of different traditions throughout history. Although most of the papers were based on European material, the speakers also discussed Syrian charms in the Middle East context (A. Lyavdansky), incantations in the Dead Sea manuscripts (I. Frölich) and Hittite charms (A. Sideltsev). The conference also dwelled upon the relation between charms and prayers, their visualisation in iconographic materials, the individual repertoire of several specialists in magic, the possibilities for synchronising local charms databases and the creation of electronic ones, and so on. Many of the presentations were enlivened by unique video materials (A. Ivanov, V. Klyaus, A. Liebārdis).

Alexey Lyavdansky (Moscow, Russia) in his presentation described Syrian charms, their forms and usage, and also investigated the origin of two charm types. A. Lyavdansky found that the formula 'Gabriel on his [protected person's] right and Michael on his left' is a loan from Arabic and/or Jewish source. Another formula 'Mother who strangles children' usually occurs in the texts where a female demon reveals her names to the protective figure. The figure of the female child-killing demon is universal; yet, the majority of the known texts belong to Mediterranean, Middle East and European cultures. According to A. Lyavdansky, the concept of this demon originated in Mesopotamia, and became rooted in Syria through Aramean culture; also it is possible that this loan comes from Byzantine culture, although this is highly improbable.

The paper read by the Hungarian researcher Ida Frölich (Budapest) described the Judaist incantations in Qumran manuscripts. The four psalms attributed to David reflect the characteristics of magical incantations and contain an invocation to the magical power, descriptions of the demonic harm, the disempowering of the demon and expelling it to the nether world.

Tatyana Mikhailova (Moscow, Russia) spoke about charms against thieves in ancient Rome and modern Russia, paying attention to the functions of personal names in charm texts. In addition to this, she contrasted oral and written tradition. Written incantations were mostly used for retrieving the stolen things and punishing the thief, whereas incantations were supposed to avert theft, i.e., they had a preventive function.

Isabelle Valloton (Ghent, Belgium) discussed Russian spells against snakes, comparing them to Egyptian and Mesopotamian ones. She phrased the assumption that some motifs of Russian incantations can belong in old Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts, and, as a result of cultural contacts in the Hellenistic period, they might have reached Greece and from there on to the Slavic peoples.

Haralampos Passalis (Thessaloniki, Greece) tried to contrast narrative charms and myths. The author stated that several parallels can be observed in these texts. Myths provide models for critical situations and also the ways to overcome them. Narrative charms appeal to these mythological precedents. Within the incantation two temporal levels coalesce – the narrative past and the performative present. The charmer adopts the function of a mythological creature to restore the order. Therefore time plays an important role in incantations.

Oksana Tshoha (Moscow, Russia) treated such topics as 'the cow licking a sick calf', 'Christ talking to the Mother of God bewitched by passing angles', etc.

Ekaterina Dysa (Kiev, Ukraine) maintained in her presentation that in Podolsk and Volynian court materials dating from the 17th-18th centuries charm texts were quite rare, even if the case was about bewitching rituals that would presume their usage, and that the charm texts were incomplete in court minutes. In Hetmanic Ukraine incantations were recorded more often and presumably there existed a special practice for interrogating those accused of witchcraft. These differences in the treatment of incantations can be explained by different cultural and legal systems.

Éva Pócs (Budapest, Hungary) specified the genres of prayers and oral incantations in Hungarian traditional lore, proceeding from the content, form and function of texts. Within the functionally determined incantation genre, part of the texts reflect the features of prayers, whereas others resemble incantations. There is also the third type, which merges the characteristics of both incantations and prayers.

Ludmila Fadeyeva (Moscow, Russia) dedicated her presentation to the theme of joy in charms. She observed that these functional groups originate from book-lore. L. Fadeyeva outlined three basic tendencies in the interaction between the charm tradition and Christian literary sources: 1) formal reproduction of the structures originating in book-lore; 2) independent development of motifs derived from Christian sources; and 3) introduction of non-Christian imagery into plots derived from Christian sources.

Maxim Fomin (Coleraine, Northern Ireland) discussed the motif of an appearing fairy as an omen for perishing in the water. The fishermen who took these omens seriously were supposed to avoid death, whereas the ones who ignored the omens, died.

Lea T. Olsan (Monroe, USA) and Peter Murray Jones (Cambridge, Great Britain) spoke about the motifs and formulas in Latin and English in the 10th-15th centuries. They differentiated between three functional charm groups: for conception, for successful pregnancy and for women in labour. Christian and pagan motifs are closely intertwined in charms. The researchers also described the ritual procedures related to incantations.

Maria Kaspina (Moscow, Russia) contemplated the transformation of charm texts in the old Jewish, Aramean and contemporary Jewish oral tradition. The paper was based on the material collected in Ukraine and Moldavia in 2004–2011.

Toms Kencis (Tartu, Estonia) spoke about Latvian fever charms. He described different types of charms and their geographical distribution and also dwelled upon how the features of fever reflected in beliefs, customs and folktales.

Andrei Toporkov's (Moscow, Russia) paper focussed on the reflection of the subject of 'Archangel Michael defeating fevers' in iconography. When examining the composition, characters and system of symbols in this type of icons, he concluded that oral tradition significantly influenced the adoption of this topic in iconography. Thus, the emergence of this particular image type was rooted in a combination of three factors: 1) the narrative nature of charms, which made them similar to apocryphal narrations; 2) extensive spread of charms in the form of prayers; and 3) matches between the charms' imagery and that of popular beliefs about fevers.

Emanuela Timotin (Bucharest, Romania) elicited three charm types meant to heal fever, which originate in the 17th–19th century Romanian manuscripts. The first type consists in incantations like 'Jesus heals St Peter's mother-in-law from fever'. These charms are characterised by the use of the evangelic formula 'In the beginning there was the word'. The second one is about tying twelve knots on a thread, at the same time

reading the twelve fragments about the Passion of Christ from the Gospel, and the third one consists in tying three knots on a thread or any piece of fabric.

Irina Sedakova (Moscow, Russia) discussed the methods of relieving pain caused by fear of fright in folk medicine, Andrei Moroz (Moscow, Russia) spoke about herdsmen's *otpusks* ('release' charms) in ritual and mythological context, and Maria Zavyalova (Moscow, Russia) dwelled upon typical phenomena in spells related to skin sores. Elena Minenok's (Moscow, Russia) paper focussed on spells and charms that became rooted in East Siberia as a result of Stolypin's reforms in 1906–1916 and are still in use in the villages of Irkutsk oblast. Maria Eliferova (Moscow, Russia) spoke about the translation of Russian charms into English and the problems of approach therein.

Henni Ilomäki (Helsinki, Finland) discussed the blood-stopping charm 'Be still, blood, like a wall, like the water in the River Jordan' in East Finland territories. The speaker deduced that the Christian motif has been rooted in Finnish folk medicine through the Swedes and other Christian peoples of Northern Europe, and that it has been influenced by the belief about the magic power of water.

Maarit Viljakainen (Lappeenranta, Finland) concentrated on the charm repertoire of the renowned Finnish folk healer Minna Hauvinen (1837–1914).

Elina Rakhimova (Moscow, Russia) discussed the two branches of epic tradition on the basis of solar imagery, whereas the northern tradition was considered to be more archaic by the author. Rakhimova pointed out the differences in the tradition on the basis of the creation story of the sun, moon and stars, paying special attention to metaphors, paraphrases, alliteration and specific sentence structure.

Jonathan Roper (Tartu, Estonia) compared metrical charms to Anglo-Saxon epic poetry (Beowulf, etc.), as well as to Swedish and Icelandic charms, explaining their common features by genetic connections.

Mare Kõiva (Tartu, Estonia) focussed on the so-called heavenly scripts and books of wisdom where source material for charms has been found; yet, these sources could have been used also as magic objects in several rituals, including healing tradition.

Anca Stere (Bucharest, Romania) in her paper 'Charms as a Vehicle for Political Messages in Communist Romania' claimed that during the communist rule, it was allowed to compile pseudo-folkloristic texts for propaganda purposes. This 'new folklore' was performed on the stage in order to change people's attitudes and create a 'new person'.

Jacqueline Borsje (Amsterdam, Netherlands) introduced, by the example of Irish and Dutch charms, an electronic database and spoke about the transformation of charms from historical reality to the manuscript form, then on to printed text and finally, to electronic text.

Andrey Sideltsev (Moscow, Russia) discussed Hittite charms and their verb aspects: unmarked perfective and imperfective aspects most commonly (but not exclusively) marked by a suffix.

Anna Ivanova (Moscow, Russia) noted that during the last three decades fieldwork folkloristics has become an independent discipline with its own objectives, tasks and methods. The speaker maintained that the main aim of fieldwork is to lose the difference between the internal (practising) and external (collecting, recording) viewpoints in folkloristics. She found that the hypertextual approach is the most suitable here as it enables to view incantations as a continuum divided into certain segments.

Vladimir Klyaus's (Moscow, Russia) paper focussed on how spell and charm traditions were formed in the region of Chinese cultural contacts and how they were influenced by the colonization of the Argun River region by Cossacks. The first records of frequently used magic spells (concerned with love, healing, cattle-raising and housekeeping) from the Argun region date back to the mid-19th century. Today the charm tradition still persists despite the impoverished repertoire of Argun local healers, who have recently ceased to perform complicated rituals. V. Klyaus assumed that within the last 150 years the spell tradition on the Argun River has undergone the same changes that local customs all over Russia.

Aigars Liebārdis's (Riga, Latvia) paper was based on the materials of a documentary on Latvian Easter traditions, which was filmed in the years 2007, 2009 and 2010. The ritual performed at sunset on Good Friday is supposed to protect domestic fowl from hawks and other raptorial birds.

The roundtable discussion at the end of the conference discussed new charm publications and new perspectives for oral magic. Jonathan Roper introduced the electronic version of the magazine *Incantatio*, E. Kuznetsova spoke about Tatyana Agapkina's book on East Slav healing spells entitled *Vostochnoslavianskie lechebnye zagovory v sravnitel'nom osveshchenii: Siuzhetika i obraz mira* (2010) and Andrei Toporkov's book about Russian spells entitled *Russkie zagovory iz rukopisnykh istochnikov XVII — pervoi poloviny XIX v.* (2010, Russian Manuscript Spells from the 17th to the First Half of the 19th Centuries). Dmitri Antonov introduced the book written jointly with Mikhail Maizuls, entitled *Demony i greshniki v drevnerusskoi ikonografii. Semiotika obraza* (2010, Demons and Sinners in Old Russian Iconography. Semiotics of Images).

<div align="center">Ekaterina Kuznetsova, Andrei Toporkov</div>

Notes

[1] Roper, Jonathan. *English Verbal Charms* (FFC, N 288). Helsinki, 2005, 242 pp.

[2] Vaitkevičienė, Daiva (comp., ed.) *Lietuviu užkalbėjimai: gydymo formulės / Lithuanian verbal healing charms. Sudarė, parengė ir įvadą parašė.* Vilnius, 2008, 919 pp.

[3] Timotin, Emanuela. *Descântecele manuscrise româneşti* (secolele al XVII-lea – al XIX-lea): Ediţie critică, studii lingvistice şi filologice. Bucureşti, 2010, 388 pp.

[4] Toporkov, Andrei (comp., ed.). *Russkie zagovory iz rukopisnykh istochnikov XVII — pervoi poloviny XIX v.* Moscow: Indrik, 832 pp.