

mans being in its core. It is impossible to say whether the ‘collective soul’ ideology with *tarand*-graves as local shrines could develop *in situ* without external influences but such influences certainly did exist. The Estonian society from the 1st millennium BC to the first half of the 1st millennium AD clearly reminds many other societies in the western and southern parts of Europe that existed since the late 4th millennium BC and some even since the 5th millennium. I dare say that the emergence of the “collective soul” ideology with burial tombs fulfilling the role of shrines is the most typical trajectory in the cultural development of societies based on farming or, in some cases, on specialized gathering and fishing.

The unexpected change in ideology since the Middle Iron Age is a less typical and less understandable phenomenon. Destruction of the Roman Age patterns in Eastern and Central Europe because of the intrusion of aggressive groups from the Eurasian Steppe is certainly a major factor responsible for the changes but the very direction of the changes hardly results from it directly. The changes could be somehow related to the spread of Christianity but reasons of such a relation can be two-fold: Either it was a general trend in the ideological development in Western Eurasia with the emergence of Christianity being its most spectacular realization or the emergence of Christianity was a result of a unique combination of historical circumstances, and after that Christianity gradually transformed all the Western-Eurasian ideological space. In any case the reconstructed trend towards the more individualistic conception of the destiny of the human soul reflects a transition to the system of values and ideas that is a direct source of our own civilization.

To sum up, analyzing the archaeological data on prehistory of Estonia, and avoiding any generalizations that would lead him out of Estonian ground, Jonuks has created a research work of great interest for anybody who wants to know how European civilization ultimately emerged.

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## **SYMPOSIUM CHARMS, CHARMERS AND CHARMING HELD ON 21–27 JUNE 2009 IN ATHENS, GREECE**

The second international symposium *Charms, Charmers and Charming*, held under the aegis of the 15th Congress of the International Society for Folk Narrative Research (ISFNR), *Narratives Across Space and Time: Transmissions and Adaptations*, organised by the Hellenic Folklore Research Centre of the Academy of Athens (Athens, 21–27 June 2009), assembled scholars from Cyprus, England, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Romania and Russia. Such reunions organised by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming have become a tradition, since four similar conferences had been held before (London 2003 and 2005, Pécs 2007, Tartu 2008).

The symposium in Athens was arranged in four sessions. The participants of the first session approached different topics referring to 'Charms and Charming in the Greek-Speaking World'. Aggeliki Kompoholi gave a thorough description of the practices of a charismatic healing charmer from Messinia (Greece). She also dealt with the manner in which the charmer was supposed to have acquired the healing gift, a problem which was also at the core of Haralambos Passalis' paper which approached a wide-spread belief that revealing the verbal part of the charm renders the ritual ineffective and discussed the ritual restrictions and taboos involved in the transmission of verbal charms in the Greek folk society. Editor of a corpus of Cypriot spells, Ioannis Ionas attempted to give a systematic description of the Cypriot charms in an analysis emphasising their formal differences and presenting the figures referred to in the incantations and the instruments used in the ritual practices.

The second section, 'Picturing Charms, Charmers and Charming', focused on Gagauz, Georgian, Russian and Vepsian practices of charming. James Kapalo and Jonathan Roper presented the results of researches developed in ethnically and religiously heterogeneous communities. The former discussed the practices of healing in the Gagauz communities living in the southern regions of the Republic of Moldova in respect with two determinant aspects of their identity: their religion (they adhered to the majority religion of Orthodox Christianity) and their language (a variety of Turkish). The field trip to Adjara, a Georgian region inhabited both by Christians and by Muslims, allowed Jonathan Roper to shed light onto contemporary manners of transmitting a



*Some participants of the charms symposium. Front row, from the left: Mare Kõiva, Éva Pócs, Daiva Vaitkevičienė, Emanuela Timotin; back row: Jonathan Roper, Lea Olsan, Andrei Toporkov. Photo by Piret Paal, 2009.*

healing gift within Muslim families or within families whose members are both Muslims and Christians. After an overview of the scholarship referring to Vepsian charms, Madis Arukask discussed, on the basis of his field trips in different Vepsian regions, the importance of charms for the informants' everyday life and their modifications under the influence of the changing social context. Like Jonathan Roper and Madis Arukask, Andrei Toporkov presented video documents, which described the healing practices used by a female charmer living in Karelia; the commentaries insisted on the specificity of informant's practices.

The third section, 'Charm Texts', began with the erudite paper presented by Lea Olsan who continued her analyses on the Old English charms with an investigation regarding the extent to which Late Antique verbal therapeutics re-emerge in Anglo-Saxon medical texts. On the basis of 19th-century Romanian charms presenting Saint Photeine (the Samaritan woman) and the Forty Martyrs as healers of fever, Emanuela Timotin argued that the reinterpretation of hagiographical details would be one of the reasons for which certain saints were assigned various curative functions. Larissa Naiditch's paper surveyed German charms of different periods; her interest in charms containing stories confirmed the importance of colloquia dedicated to certain charm-types, as did the 'Symposium on Historiolas' organised by the ISFNR Committee on Charms, Charmers and Charming in Tartu in 2008.

The last section of the symposium ('Bone to Bone') was the most unitary one. Éva Pócs, Jonathan Roper and Andrei Toporkov joined their efforts in order to throw light onto the transmission of the Second Merseburg charm. Éva Pócs gave a thorough description of the Hungarian tradition, Andrei Toporkov provided a systematic overview of the Slavic tradition and Jonathan Roper dealt with the English variants of this charm-type in connection with other similar Germanic narratives. Focused on problems such as the diachronic distribution of the charms, their classification into types and variants, their variation due to the influence of other literary sources, the reasons behind their contemporary geographic dissemination, the papers outlined a vivid image of the history of this charm-type, a history which needs to be completed by further researches investigating other traditions.

The symposium was brought to a close by a round table on charms studies. Two different issues formed the basis of the debate: the article 'Charms Indexes: Problems and Perspectives' by Tatiana Agapkina and Andrei Toporkov (available at <http://www.ut.ee/isfnr/files/toptransl7.pdf>), which outlines the main methods to be followed in the elaboration of a charm typology, and the recent bibliography on charms.

All the organisers of this symposium and especially its convenor, Jonathan Roper, must be proud of their accomplishment: they connected charm scholars from different countries and offered them the possibility of an interchange of information; they managed to harmonise theoretical discussions and precise descriptions of various charm-types; they paid special attention to contemporary charismatic healing figures or practices of charming.

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