BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

2nd International Conference

BETWEEN THE WORLDS: MAGIC, MIRACLES AND MYSTICISM

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Sofia, Bulgaria

Balkan Ethnology Department
Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with
Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
After the first successful conference of the ‘Between the Worlds’ (BEW), the Balkan Ethnology Department at IEFSEM – BAS is organizing its second international academic forum under the title ‘Between the Worlds: Magic, Miracles and Mysticism’ (BEW 2020). It aims at bringing together scholars and researchers from all areas of humanities and social sciences to an interdisciplinary discussion of their research results on the place and role of magic, miracles and mysticism in traditional and modern societies and communities. The magical and mystical perceptions, experiences, views, beliefs and practices have become more visible in the contemporary globalized world. The miracles of natural areas, sacred places, icons, and monuments are still bringing together a multitude of believers each year to different parts of the world. This comes as testimony to the fact that people still desire to know the unknown and reach out for what cannot be seen, touched, felt and often accounted for. The contact spaces between people and supranatural forces have various social aspects, which set the wide thematic range of the conference.

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The Writing of Magic and the Formation of Knowledge Communities: 
The Case of Magic Books in the Early Modern Period

The early modern European history of witchcraft and magic is primarily a history about practices and beliefs. In recent decades, historians, folklorists and ethnologists have dedicated the majority of their attention towards the study of expressive ritual practices, ideas and beliefs about witchcraft among different social groups in society, and the magical knowledge itself as it was expressed in writing. With witch-trials, pamphlets concerning witchcraft, and charms and conjurations as the main sources, scholars have offered crucial perspectives on early modern European witchcraft and magic. However, what did the magicians themselves think about their practices during this time? How did they view their magical knowledge and how did they justify their actions in a time of witch-hunting?

This paper will address these questions by discussing certain features connected to early modern Norwegian magic books, commonly called Black Books. As individual, handwritten manuscripts, these texts convey key perceptions of witchcraft and magic addressed by the writers. Here, the writers explain, justify, and interpret their magical knowledge and situate it within a larger cultural context and specific knowledge communities. As such, the manuscripts offer direct and first hand access to the practitioners own ideas and beliefs and can offer us a better understanding of the magical realities of early modern Europe.

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Post Ottoman Embodied Religiosity and Heterogenous Communities.
Death Worship and Pilgrimage Practices among Christians and Muslims in
the Balkans and Anatolia

The present paper is looking for the impact of heterogenous communitas in the broader Balkan
and Anatolian cultures of religious worship. We have noticed that all these trivial embodied
experiences of religiosity, notified into the generalized practices of death rituals, mourning
practices and beliefs on charismatic saints. The grace of those commemorated figures, transmitted
through objects, rituals and icons, contributes to the formation of habitus as embodied gendered
religiosity of heterogenous communitas. The latter seem to stand at the antipode of every Modern
unilineal mythology hidden into every nationalist narrative or fundamentalist perception. As such,
the heterogeneous communitas usually facilitate the appropriation/incorporation of the strength
and the power of the Other instead of its exclusion. This in-between modality of interaction,
communication and intersection regards living and dead gendered bodies, people from the same
or different communities, locals and visitors that meet at the occasion of a pilgrimage circular
practices. In order to get the grace from the Saint in honor, this ethnoscape of liminality with plural
diversity and temporalities remains open to possibilities. The latter, beyond any Western dominant
ethnocentric assumption regarding communitas among monoethnic people, should be discussed
in the frame of the Ottoman legacy. The present anthropological comparative attempt discusses
popular diversity practices though the post-ottoman condition of cultural intimacy. As counter to
the master nationalism continuum this ‘post’ conditionality creates critical field for reflexivity about
religion, religiosity, gendered subjectivities, conviventia and diverse temporalities.

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(2000); 'Moslem Women of the Orient. Representations, Cultural Meanings and Politics’ (in Greek, with
Á. Karakasidou, 2006); 'Orientalism at the limits. From the Ottoman Balkans to the Contemporary
Middle East’ (in Greek, with D. Stamatopoulos, 2008); 'Myths of the Other in the Balkans.
Representations, Social Practices, Performances’ (with N. Palantzas, 2013); 'Semiotics and Fieldwork:
On Critical Ethnographies, Punctum. International journal of semiotics’ (with E. Deltsou, 2016). E-mail:
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Defining Magic in the Ancient World

Although many attempts have been made to define ancient magic, this is often made more complicated by assuming that magic can also include medicine, divination, witchcraft, and mystical speculation. I will argue that, in antiquity, each of these topics represents a separate discipline which cannot simply be included under the heading of ‘magic’ nor should they be confused with magic. Once these disciplines are treated separately, it is possible to arrive at a much clearer meaning for ‘magic’, which sets it apart from other types of theory and practice within a general category of ‘ancient science’.

Prof. Mark Geller, PhD, came to UCL’s Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies in 1976. He completed his first degree at Princeton University in Classics, one year of which was spent at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He completed his PhD at Brandeis University in Mediterranean Studies, where he was introduced to several Semitic languages, including Aramaic, Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Arabic, and he wrote his dissertation on the subject of Aramaic magic bowls in relation to Rabbinic texts. After coming to London, Mark studied Akkadian and Sumerian for several years with W. G. Lambert, and subsequently spent a year (1980-81) in Munich at the University’s Institute for Assyriology and Hittitology, as Alexander von Humboldt-Fellow, working with D. O. Edzard. The result of this work was his first book on Sumerian incantations texts known as Udug-hul (‘evil demons’). It was during this period that the bulk of the work was completed on a volume of copies of Sumerian literary tablets from the British Museum, together with a Danish colleague, Bendt Alster. In 1987-88, Mark received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to work in Philadelphia and Chicago on Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual incantations. This was followed up by a year (1999-2000) spent at the Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies in Wassenaar, as part of a research group on ‘Magic and Religion in the Ancient Near East’. His inaugural lecture was delivered in 1994 on the subject of the survival cuneiform, providing evidence for the survival of cuneiform script into the third century AD. This research has provided the basis for his recent studies of connections between Akkadian and Aramaic magic and medical texts, particularly comparing cuneiform tablets with information in the Babylonian Talmud. In the summers of 1996 and 1998 he received further grants from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung to work in the museums and institutes in Berlin, Jena, and Leipzig. Mark acted as Head of Department from 1984-1993, and since 1982 has served as Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at UCL, in which capacity he has organised many conferences and public lectures. In 2000-2001 Mark again received a fellowship from the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Wassenaar, and spent the year working in a research group on Greek and Babylonian medicine. This was followed by grants from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, to spend three months at the Max Planck Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin, in 2002, 2007, 2008, and 2009. He has also received a grant from the Wellcome Trust for the History of Medicine, to spend 2005-2006 in Paris working on ancient Babylonian medicine. Mark is currently on secondment from UCL, serving as Visiting Professor for the History of Knowledge at the Freie Universität Berlin. E-mail: m.geller@ucl.ac.uk
PARTICIPANT ABSTRACTS

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The Birth of Philosophy: from Mythos to Logos

The aim of this paper is to explore the birth of philosophy and philosophical knowledge. Because man uses different sources and types of knowledge to explain what is happening around him. Because he wants to explain the existing and organize his life. „Human beings want to know by nature“, says Aristotle; that is, knowing for man is as basic as natural needs. Human beings want to know by nature because it is impossible to live without acquiring knowledge. Therefore, he must determine the way his life; for this acquiring knowledge is a basic tool. The question of how to be sure if knowledge is correct is one of the main issues in philosophy. Therefore, besides the conditions for obtaining knowledge, the criterion for determining the accuracy of that knowledge poses a problem in itself. Of this criterion in cases where it is not determined or the accuracy of the knowledge obtained is blurred, another ability of man is revealed. The subject in question is also faith. Therefore, besides the desire to know, there is also a desire to believe. Knowing is a situation closely related to human understanding of a situation. In this sense, sometimes people use “irrational” reasons to explain situations where they cannot grasp their causes. So in this paper I would like to explore how knowledge of myths and philosophy are different than each other and how man transfers the knowledge from myths to logos.

Keywords: knowledge, philosophy myths, logos, Ancient Greek

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The Folk Magician and Healer as a Mediator

The figure of the Bulgarian bayachka (the word does not have an unambiguous translation in English, but generally means ‘folk healer’), has various aspects that represent her as a mediator with the world of the supernatural. Pronouncing specific incantations, accompanied by the respective practices, she can protect or heal her patients, thus restoring the optimal balance.
between the individual and the supposed creatures from the other world who are imagined to cause harmful influence. She has an important role in the social structure of the community being consulted in any cases of illness or malaise. Like the midwife, who is in charge of the childbirths, the healer is responsible for the health of her fellow villagers. To fulfil her role adequately, she should possess specific personal characteristics, such as a capability for empathy and understanding of human psychology and its deep dimensions; readiness for sharing the patient’s pains and inconveniences and taking the responsibility for controlling them and for restoring the patient’s inner health equilibrium; as a whole - the capability of influencing people in one way or another. For those personal qualities, the healer is respected but at the same time in a way also avoided, because of the fear that she, being able to contact the supernatural, may be also able to punish and to cause harm.

Keywords: bayachka, mediation, healing procedure, psychological impact, social role

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Beliefs about Flying Serpents in the Belarusian, Estonian and Estonian Russian Tradition

The flying fire serpents are known in almost all regions of the Slavic world, incl. in the Baltic States, among the Finno-Ugric peoples. For Belarusians, the flying serpent is a common character of modern beliefs and narratives, especially in the Eastern regions of Belarus. If we compare Belarusian traditional beliefs of flying enriching serpents with the perception of Russians in Estonia, reflected in the records of 1920-1940 years, archived in the Estonian Literary Museum, we may find a number of parallels in the descriptions of 1) the appearance of demonic character; 2) reciprocal actions of the enriching snake and the man he serves. Besides, the Russians of Estonia can identify the flying serpent with the Estonian demonological character kratt. In this case, the kratt is made from various improvised items and old junk, then it is revived with the help of the sacrament, secretly brought from the Church. Kratt was one of the most popular mythological characters in Estonia until the mid-20th century. There were grain, money, fish, and milk bringers, who were either made at home, bought in Riga, or acquired by chance; sometimes either witch’s or ordinary person’s spirit went to collect treasures as a kratt. The names often refer to the fact
that these are fire-tails or spark-tails, yet the majority are zoomorphic (bird, animal, reptile) or anthropomorphic human-shaped forms. To make them, common everyday items, often good for nothing, are used.

Keywords: flying serpent, mythical creature, treasure bringer, Belorusia, Estonia

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Mare Kõiva, PhD, is a Professor and a Leading Research Fellow at the Estonian Literary Museum. She is a Head of the Centre of Excellence in Estonian Studies and the editor in-chief of the ‘Folklore: EJF’ (founded 1996) and ‘Mäetagused’ (1996-), etc. Her main fieldwork sites are Estonia, Bulgaria, and Belarus. The main research area is religiosity, new religious movements, belief narratives, mythology, charms and sages, ritual year, ethnoastronomy, IT in humanities. E-mail: mare@folklore.ee

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Narratives about Magic in Armenia: Gender and Power

My research is dedicated to magical practices and narratives about them in contemporary Armenia. The main source of my research – materials of fieldwork (interview, participant observation) which was done in July-August in Armenia (Yerevan, Gyumri and Arzakan village). The most often mentioned magical practice is called tukht u gir. It is a harmful practice which looks like folding paper with magical spells on it. This paper is usually sewn into clothes or bedding, in a word, in personal stuff of the ‘victim’ of sorcery. According to my fieldwork, usually the one who makes tukht u gir is a member of the ‘victim’s’ family, as close people are those who have access to personal belongings and bedding. Here I want to notice one important thing: according to Robbin Briggs (1998), magical practices are about taking power over other people. Those who use magic against someone, try to impact them, subordinate to their will. According to my fieldwork, in Armenia, magical practices have pronounced gender specificity: women are mainly involved in witchcraft, most often - mother-in-law. It can be explained by the fact that in Armenian families the mother-in-law is a rather powerful figure, due to her age and the fact that she is the mother of the head of the family. Using harmful magical practices against a daughter-in-law is a way to take control of
son’s family and save the power that could be threatened by a young wife. I also want to note that use of magic does not depend on the level of education and whether the informant lives in a village or city (I did my fieldwork in cities and also in a village) but usually depends on gender (mostly women than men) and family status (the victims of sorcery are usually married women, young wives).

**Keywords:** narratives, personal stories, gender, power, magic, believe in supernatural

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**Urban Mythology. A Discussion of Urban Aesthetics, Architecture and Mythology**

References about some mythological cities of Islam could be found in the Koranic text focused on moral aspects, especially about the human audacity to build in the real world that city promised by Allah to his fervent followers. Allusions regarding these cities can be extracted from a whole series of local legends which have generated a massive awareness even in the farthest parts of the Islamic empire during the Middle ages. The metaphorical description of Imran the Colonnade City and the Copper City provide valuable architectural details, being able to rebuild a princeps typology of the imperial Islamic cities. These descriptions confirm the existence of a specific model of representation of the urban space during the first eras of Islamic history. Examples uncovered in this study select from a whole series of legends those elements which have been the background for the Islamic vision of the ideal city. The legends mentioned here are renowned (geographically and chronologically) among all the regions of the Islamic empire, they have been modified and continuously rearticulated in accordance with the local traditions. There is a constant nucleus, semantically staged in the formula of a binomial ‘City – Paradise’ (the caliphal city represented as a reflection of the Paradise). This specific typology has been used in the planimetry of the palatine cities. The most famous examples of such medieval capital towns which have been extensively influenced by the mythological cities are: The Round city of the Caliph al Mansur, during the 8th century and Madinat al Zahra, the residence of Caliph Abd Al-Rahman III (Cordoba) during the 10th century.

**Keywords:** Islam, urban mythology, the City of Copper, Dar al-Salam, the Round City, Madinat al-Zahra
Incredible Miracles in Crimean Legends

In this article, the word ‘legend’ is used for an oral folk narrative about real events, people, or places. Legends are often created in the interface between history and myth. Generally, historical facts are misrepresented by mythical thinking. Therefore, legends may include incredible miracles, which nevertheless are regarded as true narratives in the culture in which they are told. The more incredible the miracle, the more significant may we expect its value. By this way, many Crimean legends embody a sense of belonging to Crimea. The motive of love for Crimea and fear of losing one’s homeland appears in many folk narratives. For example, in two legends, heroes died abroad but, in spite of their deaths, came back to Crimea. In the first legend, a man was beheaded but he took his head and walked back to Crimea to be buried there (this made him a saint). In the second, a girl was sold to a Turkish harem; she committed suicide by jumping into the Black Sea, and then turned into a mermaid, which has been coming to the Crimean coast annually ever since. These examples are going to be analysed in the presentation.

Keywords: miracles, value, homeland, legends, culture
Etiological Legends and Narratives of Metamorphosis Related to Trees

This paper examines Baltic-Finnic (from Estonian to Livonian area) retellings of universal mythological motives about trees. The current analysis is based on data collected in the 19th to 21st century in the territories of modern Estonia. The digital folklore materials are currently kept in the collection of EFITA and Scriptorium (the Estonian Literary Museum in Tartu). The analysis is connected: 1) First of all, the main semantic field connected with people turning into trees and travelling trees is examined and 2) Secondly, the semantic field vernacular etiologies about the trees and their connections with biblical figures and texts is analysed. The motives about metamorphosis we can find in legends, but also in the corpus of runic (alliterative) songs. Some motives are connected with concrete trees on the real landscape. Etiologies provide information on the aspen, the birch, the spruce, the juniper, the willow, the rowanberry. The core of myth serves as a template for establishing modern etiological concepts. The research is supported by IUT 22-5, and CEES, tk -145.

Keywords: etiology, metamorphosis, legend, tree, plantlore

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Etiological Legends and Narratives of Metamorphosis Related to Trees

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Precious ‘Magic’ from the East – an example of how the Imperial Court in Vienna Acquired Bezoars from the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century

In Western Europe of the late 16th century bezoars were regarded incredibly valuable possessions. Actually, consisting of mineral concretions occasionally found in the stomachs of wild goats, deer and ruminants in general, they were believed to possess certain magical or mystical powers to ward off spells and a crucial medicinal value. They were considered to be effective remedies against almost any kind of poison and unfailing components of longevity potions. Their popularity came hand in hand with the practices of criminal poisoning among early modern European elites. Oriental bezoars were among the most esteemed of these mineral concretions and their rarity and cost kept them exclusive to the majority and a prerogative of the ruling. The proposed paper aims to present an interesting case from the mid-1570’s, when Maximilian II of Habsburg, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, requested from his permanent diplomatic resident in the Ottoman capital David Ungnad to find and send him a big sized bezoar. The case is well documented in the
correspondence between the Viennese court and its representative in Istanbul. Although the diplomatic reports focused mainly on political and diplomatic matters and secret intelligence, they do reveal some intriguing and noteworthy details about the practices of acquiring, transporting, evaluating and paying for the valuable minerals.

**Keywords:** Oriental bezoars, early modern diplomacy, magical objects, Habsburg court, Ottoman Empire

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**Aneliya Stoyanova**, PhD, completed the BA program (2011) and the MA program (2013) at Sofia University. The topic of her PhD thesis is: ‘Vienna, Madrid and the Habsburg-Ottoman relations, 1555–1606’ (2020). Her research focuses on the cooperation and solidarity between the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty in their relations with the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 16th century. More generally her research interests lay in the diplomatic history of the Early Modern period (intercultural diplomacy, permanent diplomacy, diplomatic intermediation), social networking, forms of interaction between Christianity and Islam, relations between the European powers and the Ottoman empire and Safavid Persia, interactions between Early Modern courts in comparison. She conducted her research in the libraries and state archives in Vienna (2015–2016, 2018), Simancas and Madrid (2019) as a Richard Plaschka-Scholarship holder (2015–2016) and a fellow of the Gerda Henkel Foundation (2018–2019). E-mail: aneliya_a_st@abv.bg

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**Use and Sharing of Numerical Codes as a Magical Practice within the Virtual Space**

The research looks into the Internet community that practices sharing of certain number codes for magical purposes and gains. The belief is that there are specific code numbers that help with various things; each one is used for a different gain like money, energy, health, finding love, harmony, etc. The practice is typing the code underneath the post that announces it, in the form of a comment or a tweet, in order to initiate and balance the energy concerning the cause. Following the likes of similar teachings, such as the ideas of Grigory Grabovoy or Lloyd Mear, online users are making online communities of like-minded believers and sharing the codes that bring wellness. The paper will analyse how do beliefs in codes, energy, and lucky numbers transfer into this particular practice, and who does it all reflect online. Through the exploration of digital cultures and communities, it shall explain the case of magic and mysticism in virtual internet space, and the transformation of the beliefs in the online sphere.

**Keywords:** energy, internet, codes, lucky numbers, virtual community

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**Anja Zlatovic** works as Junior Researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Belgrade, Serbia. She is a PhD student of Ethnology and Anthropology at Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, with a topic: ‘The Process of Death on the Internet and the Post-mortem Dying of the Personal Digital Identity’. She finished part of the studies at Panteion University in Athens. Her anthropological
Syndodal period of the history of Russian Orthodox Church is known for its extremely strict requirements imposed on clergy concerning new sacred objects establishment and miracles description. Furthermore, the press censorship in Russian Empire was rigid. Therefore, the editorial boards of the Orthodox journals have been compelled to adapt to such circumstance. The author analyses the mentions about miracles in all issues of ‘Kyiv Diocesan Bulletin’ (Kyievs'ke eparkhiial'ne vedomosti) from the start date of its publication till the disintegration of Russian empire, both in official and unofficial sections. The main aim of this paper is to find out and interpret key features of the editorial policy towards the articles, essays, memoirs, homilies or editorial paragraphs about various kinds of miracles (miracles of Christ, Virgin Mary and Saints themselves, miracles related to ancient or new icons and relics) in various regions (Kyiv, Kyiv eparchy, other eparchies of the empire, other states). Kyiv eparchy is the primary focus because of its unique sacred significance since it was considered to be Second Jerusalem. Thousands of prayers and tourists took an interest in its numerous and famous miraculous icons and relics. The author argues that it is possible to define the relation between traditional religious beliefs in miracles and official Syndodal instructions as political concepts in these materials. It is necessary to compare this to the situation in the other eparchies.

**Keywords:** religious journal, Kyiv eparchy in 1861–1917, miracle, editorial board, publishing policy
Sheep-Goats and Shepherds Relationship in Anatolia in Respective to Magic, Mysticism and Festivals

Anatolian geography is suitable natural habitat for animals such as sheep and goats. The relation between human and animals throughout centuries brought many various shepherding types and practices into existence. The article pays attention on the bond between animals and shepherds in the context of magic, mysticism and festivals. The practice of magic pertains to protection of animals from sickness or misdeed. Any misfortune and hardship encountered during raising of animals believed as evil eye. Daily applications to protect animals from evil and evil eye include pinning ornaments on animal, usage of amulet and *paliurus spina-christi* plant. Some methods used to cure animals also falls into magic category. Shepherds making assumptions about nature and future based on movement and mannerism of animals is subjected to mysticism, including perception of sheep as ‘angel’ and goat as ‘devil’ in analysis of dreams. Festive context includes common practices of mating of sheep and shearing wool where shepherds show their abilities. Passing through a water body with entire herd as a festival proves the bond created between shepherd and animal. The author’s intent is to provide an assessment on human – animal relationship and shepherd practices in Anatolia which could be a basis of comparison with other parts of the world. The data used in the article based on anthropological fieldworks and related literature.

**Keywords:** mysticism, festival, shepherd, goat, sheep
prepare the individual for his/her afterlife. Almost all rituals in human’s life, performed from birth to death are directed toward transition ‘beyond’ and in anticipations of Kayamet (Judgment day). The study is also focused on the functioning of some irrational beliefs and observance of rituals related to magical characters and ‘special’ behaviour in the contemporary Turkish family, as one of the mechanisms for preserving their traditional cultural heritage. These rituals and beliefs are one of the factors distinguishing them from others by ethno-cultural trait, and by preserving and promoting religious syncretism in the so-called popular Islam professed by the studied community. The empirical materials were collected as a result of periodic field studies among Turkish Sunnis living in rural environment in the period 2009-2019.

Keywords: Kayamet, Judgment day, Sunni Islam, magical rituals

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Prof. DSc. Bogdana Todorova
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

The Magic of Mugham and Azerbaijani Mysticism

Mugham (Azerb. Muğamat) is one of the main genres in traditional Azerbaijani music, part of the musical-poetic art of Azerbaijan’s nation. The Mugham combines both philosophical poetry with the philosophy of music as a complement to the harmony of being. In 2008, UNESCO proclaimed the Azerbaijani ‘mugham’ as one of the masterpieces of verbal and intangible cultural heritage. Mughamat represents a collection of makams (degrees in Sufism on the path to union with God), part of the Arab, Turkish and Persian traditions, which symbolises the path to perfection. It is related to the mystical-panteistic philosophy, which relies on love as a philosophical category and is an integral part of the mysticism of Azerbaijan. This philosophy lacks radicalism, opposition to the material and the ideal, to the Creator and creation, to the rational and irrational. It strives to achieve human excellence while also preserving humanism and tolerance. The post-Soviet period allows Western listeners and scholars to become acquainted with the musical works of Azerbaijani masters of mugham and to compare their musical-aesthetic suggestion with German romanticism. Therefore, this report is an attempt to reveal a little-known component of the contemporary life of Azerbaijan, its philosophical tradition by focusing primarily on the philosophy and the magic of the Mugham.

Keywords: Mugham, Azerbaijan, mysticism, philosophy, magic
Sacred Places and Ritual Movement. Notes on the Impact of Space on Bulgarian Folk Customs

The proposed study raises several key questions concerning the ritualized usage of space and place in some of the more indicative Bulgarian folk customs and ceremonies. This covers the discourse on two main topics that on the one hand regard space as ‘absolute’, a category that stands unaffected and independent from the direct human interference, and on the other hand, the consecutive processes in which the intimate symbolic place is achieved and created through the social and religious experience of man. Therefore, the main task is to designate the stages in which space and place acquire their sacred and ritual symbolic significance. Another part of the subject-matter are the roles of space and place in the process of ritual-building. Ritualized and sacred space and time are the backbone of some of the most significant aspects of social interaction, and even of social structure itself. Furthermore, this study is concentrated on the objective of outlining a research paradigm which will allow a form of a constructive analysis to be applied in the study of Bulgarian pre-modern culture. This method will allow the purposeful study of a topic that has been neglected so far. The accurate theorizing of the ritual aspects of space will contribute to a more complete viewpoint on Bulgarian folk culture.

Keywords: space, place, ritual, symbolism, ritualized behaviour
Cecilia Inkol, PhD Student  
York University, Toronto, Canada

**Setting up a Ritual in Deleuze’s Thought-Architecture**

What is a ritual? A ritual is an enactment, an ordered series of actions to invoke certain states of consciousness, spiritual entities or to provoke an influence that ripples from the domain of imagination and intention to manifest spiritual, social, personal and/or material effects. A ritual is bound up with repetition in connotation and practice; we repeat a ritual in the endeavor to induce again a particular outcome of effects. Deleuze's philosophy has been productively compared with hermeticism (Ramey). If we mine the philosophical oeuvre of Deleuze, we can derive fresh insight into the nature of the ritual, what it expresses, and how it operates. For Deleuze, repetition is not what we think it is. Repetition secretly expresses difference and change: repetition is novelty. Repetition is the invocation of chaos, chaos as ordered structure, activating a non-chronological model of time that Deleuze calls the Aion. In Deleuze’s lexicon, the ritual can be conceived as a practice of magic that endeavors to create chains of resonance which energize a dimension of sense, as well as sense-experience or sensation. The inscription of sense is the generation of meaning, and creates new significations, how myth and poetry attain their valences, and is the promise of revolution or transformation. The inscription of sense is the creation of an effect, and the opening of a world. Sense creates existence through its expression, and thus is the locus of magic, as well as its invocation in the ritual.

**Keywords:** ritual, Deleuze, magic, practices, time

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**Assoc. Prof. Desislava Naydenova, PhD**  
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**Magicians and Magical Practice in Medieval Slavonic Legal Texts**

My talk aims at tracing the evidence of magical practice in Slavic legal texts from the earliest translations in the 10th century such as the Law for Judging the People, up to the late 14th century. Special attention will be paid to penitential texts which have long been known to scholars but weren’t accordingly exploited as source for the theory and practice of magic. But this is only one of the reasons that have motivated my interest in them. The more important one, though, is that, unlike the secular law, these legal texts were widely distributed on the Balkans by the end of the 17th century and are found in many Bulgarian, Serbian, Wallachian and Moldavian manuscripts. Changes in the text of these laws as well as the notes in the margins of the manuscripts, indicate that these penitentiaries were in active daily use by the priests. I shall focus on two points: (1) the
description of magical practices (who are the culprits – man or woman), (2) the question of guilt and punishment (is there a difference between white and black magic).

**Keywords:** Mediaeval Bulgaria, canon law, spells, supernatural, witch

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**Assoc. Prof. Dzheni Madzharov, PhD**
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**The Magical ‘Tying’ Action. Changes in its Use and Significance in the Bulgarian Culture of the 19th – 21st Centuries**

The author examines the general functional and semantic characteristics of several Bulgarian rites and ritualized actions performed at different times, places and occasions. The analysis focuses on the unifying action of ‘tying’: *martenitsa*, knot, scissors, egg, bridegroom, student’s bond and more, as well as phrases similar to: ‘To tie my pants’. Although inherently magical, the fastening together action has its specific use in various sign systems and social environments revealing other, unsuspected dimensions. The article presents the wide range of purposes and meanings of this magical action not only in the composition of traditional culture, but also in the contemporary. The reasons for transferring the researched sustainable gesture model to other ritualized actions and sign systems are traced. The change of function and semantics in the use of the ‘tying’ action in an ideological context is analysed.

**Keywords:** ‘tying’, ritualized action, sustainable gesture model

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Between the Worlds: The Touch as a Magical Gesture

The use of magic means certain ritual actions, of symbols, words and gestures for the use of supernatural powers. The difference between posture, body movement in general and gesture in particular will also be shown. The report presents the role and significance of a number of magical gestures that, by touch, connect with the practice of diseases and treatments used at both folk and Christian levels. The author draws attention to the linguistic aspect of the term ‘magic’ and its use in the Old Bulgarian linguistic environment, and of course its meaning in Byzantium. The differences in the names of those who carry out magical practices are also monitored. The different connotations of the word in medieval Bulgaria are also traced. Undoubtedly, an important role in the act of healing is played by the hand, which is a major motor factor in many of the various healing processes. On the one hand, the patient may touch an object, body or clothing in order to heal. On the other hand, the process can be reversed, i.e. the healer to touch the sick person so that he can heal. There are many examples in this regard in the biblical text. Touching as a healing process can be accompanied by more radical methods. Examples of this can be found in the hagiographical texts on the activity of the saints. Thus, in order to be healed, a raging St. Abercius of Hierapolis struck him with his rod.

Keywords: magic, gesture, touching, saint, healer

Elena Dyakova, Leading Researcher
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On the Question of Magical Practices in the Cult of Ancestors as a Tool for Forming Collective Memory among Romanians in Ukraine

Traditional culture includes ideas about the structure of the world, material and immaterial, metaphysical space, which includes various mental constructs generated by the activity of human consciousness. The material and metaphysical world influence each other, receiving embodiment in tangible and visible forms, which in turn start the process of comprehension, processing, and as a result, a new embodiment. The legacy of ancient religious beliefs, echoes of ancestral worship, ritual connection with the dead and magic as a way of communicating with them are found today in calendar rites and rites of passage, in particular, among Romanians in Western Ukraine. The expediency of influencing reality by magic, appealing to ancestors and supernatural forces can now
be called into question by private practitioners of ritual action. Nevertheless, stable ritual forms continue to be reproduced, having lost the final goal in the form of receiving benefits. Repeated actions that involve not only members of individual families, but also the majority of unrelated villagers, allow us to speak about coming to the fore of the social and communicative function of the rite. It is the key to preserving and maintaining the collective memory of the structure of the world, the memory of culture, and thus influences the preservation of ethnic characteristics, and partly the programming of the future.

**Keywords:** ancestor worship, ritual, memory, Romanians, consciousness

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**Modern Paganism among the Mari of the Republic of Tatarstan**

Tatarstan is one of Russia’s most ethnically diverse areas. The topic of our report is the modern practice of pagan rites of the Mari of Tatarstan. The sacred places of Mari are still preserved in Tatarstan. They are fiercely protected and revered by local believers. Such a grove is located in Aktanyshsky district of Tatarstan. During major holidays, as well as in the summer before the start of rural work and in the fall after their completion, prayers are held in the grove under the guidance of the priest. Sacrificial animals are usually rams. According to the Mari, the Gods themselves decide whether to accept the gift. First, the Lamb is sprayed with water from a branch, if it shakes it off, then the Gods accept its death. Lamb blood is watered with fire and the main tree (most often a birch). The meat is boiled in boilers in a special place. All food brought by the participants in the prayer is sanctified by the tunes. Each action is accompanied by prayer.

**Keywords:** paganism, neo-paganism, traditional faith, Mari, faith, rites

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**Elena Frolova**, PhD, is a Candidate of Historical Sciences and Associate Professor at the Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University. Her scientific interests are traditional culture, migration processes, ethnic minorities, identity. Author and co-author of more than 40 scientific publications, including ‘Symbolism and Functions of Masks and Mummers in the Rituals of Mordovians’ (with G. Kornishina, in Russian, 2019); ‘Migrant Women in the Republic of Tatarstan: Integration...
Gypsy Fortune-tellers in Eastern Europe

The proposed presentation has no ambition to summarize and present the overall dimensions of the ‘Gypsy Fortune-tellers’ phenomenon in the vast region of South-East, Central and Eastern Europe and its development over time. The goal is rather to synthesize the fragmentary collected materials gathered in over four decades in different countries in the region, among representatives of different Roma groups. These materials are not collected within a specific project, they are a by-product of other studies, further, they have been supplemented and rethought in the framework of our current ERC advanced grant RomaInterbellum. This allowed us to try to form a general picture, incorporating different nuances of the Gypsy fortune-tellers phenomenon. Along with this, the main focus of the presentation will be placed on the perception of fortune-tellers themselves on their profession, how they perceive and how they evaluated its significance. And most importantly, we will present in our paper significant transformations that have occurred in the lives and activities of Gypsy fortune-tellers, in the context of the overall social transition in the region since the changes from 1989-91. The diverse materials collected over the years make it possible to capture these changes and to outline the general development trends with their different variants.

Keywords: Roma/Gypsies, fortune-tellers, magic, Eastern Europe
We are talking about the so-called ‘miracle of petrified Zoe’ that happened in January 1956 in the city of Kuibyshev (Samara). An urban legend tells the story of a girl turned into a living statue due to a dance with the icon of St. Nicholas in her arms at a youth party. Rumours of a miracle were the cause of mass unrest among the people and the interference of authorities. If in the 1950s this case led to conclusions about the shortcomings of anti-religious propaganda, then in post-Soviet Russia, the miracle was rehabilitated. In 2009, based on these events, the famous director A. Proshkin made the film ‘Miracle’. It should be noted that the events in Kuibyshev took place in the winter of 1956 on the eve of the Twentieth Party Congress and the exposure of the personality cult of Stalin. The psychological atmosphere in society was tense to the limit. The collective unconscious of the people longed for a miracle - the punishment of power for committed crimes. Against this background, an unusual event occurred, rumours about which acquired the power of a magnet and materialized into crowds that had to be dispersed by mounted police. In the post-Soviet period, the authorities headed for active cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church. The plot of the punishment for blasphemy, known in Russia since the end of the 19th century, thanks to the film gained the status of a real fact.

**Keywords:** miracle, Petrified Zoe, A. Proshkin, ‘Miracle’, film
The Phantasms in the Japanese Culture – both Ancient Myths and Contemporary Pop Culture Creatures

This report is dedicated to the theme of mystic in the Japanese culture – both traditional and contemporary. The images of mythological beings are easily detectable in modern Japan. The multi-layered culture of the land of the Rising Sun and its ancient in essence, but modern in use, mythical creatures can be an object of research by different perspectives such as culturological, historical, anthropological, linguistic and psychological point of view. Some of the main points in the report are the geographical and climatic features of the Japanese archipelago, supposedly related to the topic of the phantasms; symbolism of dreams; miracles and the tendency to mystic, the mythological idea of Life, dreaming in the context of Japanese religions and the traditional Japanese arts/contemporary visual arts; outlining the modern dimensions of the ghostly creatures inhabiting the dreams in mythology, traditional culture, but also the Japanese contemporary. Many of the fantastic creatures’ images have become like a trademark, a product for consumption in pop culture after the WWII. Special attention is paid to the symbolic interpretation of the Shinto religion ghosts in Japanese myths and tales, undoubtedly influenced by the traditional culture of China. The report aims to pay attention to the images defining the archetypes – not only in the Japanese but also in the cultures of East Asia.

Keywords: Japanese culture, Shinto religion, mythology, ghosts, manga

Eva Rapoport, Photographer and Cultural Anthropologist
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Spirit Possession, Javanese Magic and Islam: Current State of Affairs

When religious affairs in Indonesia grasp international attention that mostly comes down to Islam and attempts of further Islamisation of the Archipelago. However, local forms of syncretic and
pre-Islamic mysticism, magic and spirit beliefs persist and their adherents keep fighting for recognition on the state level (as Indonesian freedom of religion is limited to the choice between several state-recognized confessions). The objective of this paper is to discuss how pre-Islamic beliefs exist and persist in Java (an island that is home to 57% of Indonesian population), alongside with Islam and despite the advances of modernity. A more detailed outlook on the contestation and resistance is meant to be based on the example of traditional dance known as jathilan or kuda kepang. Trance (believed to be caused by the spirits possessing the dancers’ bodies) constitutes the main attraction of the performance which is commonly held for family (weddings, birthdays and circumcisions) and communal celebrations; during the past two decades it has been enjoying an ever-growing popularity and nowadays most of the shows are advertised via social media. While performance itself serves as the means of connection between human and the unseen spirit world, its performers have to negotiate their identity between global (Islam) and local (traditional Javanese culture and beliefs) planes; how they attest to their experiences and explain their motivations is meant to shed some light on how mysticism and magic survive in the modern context and what kind of alternatives to the major world religions they can present.

**Keywords:** spirit possession, performing arts, Javanese culture, indigenous religions, Islam

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**Eva Rapoport** is a photographer and cultural anthropologist, originally from Russia but for the past seven years based in Southeast Asia. She is working on research of spirit possession beliefs and practices in Javanese culture and developing photography projects documenting traditional performances and festivities in the region. Currently Eva Rapoport is a Research Fellow at the Foundation for Southeast Asian Studies (Bangkok, Thailand). **E-mail:** eva.rapoport@gmail.com

**Prof. Gaby Abou Samra, PhD**
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**A New Magical Bowl**

This paper concerns a magic text, inscribed on a cup, from the Late Antiquity of Mesopotamia. I begin with an introduction which helps us to locate this area, then I present the object, the transcription and the translation of the text, finally a comment on some formulas and expressions. Magic bowls bear inscriptions and spells meant to disable any malevolent demons, preventing them from hurting humans and their families, or causing damage to their property. The spell is written in a spiral or circular form beginning on the bottom moving up to the bowl’s rim and ending with a continuous circular line. These bowl texts contain prayer and protection formulae for their clients: a kind of magic healing from bodily and spiritual illness. My study of these bowls includes physical description, reading the text: transcription and translation; then linguistic, historical and religious commentaries. Magic, sorcery and divination are practices which fascinated and occupied people of Antiquity. The text presented is a small opening that throws a ray of light on a world where magical literature was abundant. This literature was very widespread, in Mesopotamia of the Sassanid era, and practiced by the different communities: Jewish, Christian, Mandean, Manichean. It constitutes an important source for the studies on the old magic and its influence on the later practices and in the Middle East as a whole.
Wizardry and Magic Ritual Practices of Amazigh/Berber Women in Morocco

Wizardry is a well-established social and cultural reality in Maghreb countries. This practice is linked since the down of North African civilizations to the notion of mysticism and is the testimony of a cultural evolution in the arts, magic, religion and other aspects of social life. In Morocco, beliefs about witchcraft are widely held in different regions of the country, and especially in the Amazigh region of the Souss Valley. In this region of Morocco, witchcraft rites are practiced everywhere, among urban and rural societies as well as in private and public spaces. But more specifically, it is associated with women. The notion of wizardry in this context can be defined as a set of malicious practices which aim to obtain some personal benefits that can be sentimental, financial or even physical. It can also be considered as the ability to harm a person through mystical power for many reasons such as revenge or jealousy or to protect oneself from ‘evil eye’ and other evil spells. Against this background, this paper aims to analyse the magic ritual practices of Amazigh women in Morocco. It first presents the different forms and manifestations of women witchcraft rituals that still prevail in our modern societies. It then examines how Amazigh women wizardry as a plural semiology, articulates through mythology and other rituals, issues of identity, culture, history, religion and power.

Keywords: wizardry, witchcraft, magic, Amazigh, women, Morocco

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**Ioannis Mylonelis, PhD Candidate**  
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**Embodied ‘Miracles’: Crossing the Boundaries of Pain**

The current study is presenting a Sufi group from the city of Prizren that I met through my fieldwork in Kosovo. Starting by the common name of Rifāʾiyya, on the one hand, the paper identifies the modern practices of Sufism in the Balkans, and in particular the tariqa (path) Rifāʾiyya in the Kosovo region, observing the celebration ceremony of Ali’s birthday and/or the arrival of spring, the so-called darb al-shish ritual, in which the members of the tariqa pierce their bodies with sharp objects. On the other hand, my paper examines the reality of the absence of pain and the deliberating experience of fear through painful and extreme religious practices, which perceive the status of karāmāt nafs (miracles of Soul). My contribution seeks to make a comparison between the rituals (per se) and the existent academic literature in this field of research. The aim of this paper is to perceive the application of the so-called 'costly rituals or rituals of pain', unique rituals that the members of Rifāʾiyya practice in their bodies and through the community.

**Keywords:** Sufism, Islamic mysticism, rituals, body, Rifāʾiyya

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**Assoc. Prof. Iuliia Shkuratok, PhD**  
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**Traditional Beliefs in Modern Komi-Permyak Culture**

Komi-Permyak belongs to the Permian branch of the Finno-Ugric peoples. Both Komi-Permyak and Russian cultures have similarities. As Komi Permyaks most usually live in rural settlements, when they change their place of residence and become city dwellers, they adopt Russian culture as their native one. This research is based on field data gathered in 2016-2019. A large number of informants are well-educated – having finished vocation schools and having higher education diplomas – yet they show a profound understanding of their ancestral culture. This is shown by their knowledge and understanding of forest, and home spirits, spirits of the dead, the possessed, belief in witchcraft and witches/sorcerers. Home spirits are addressed when there is quarrel at home, or there is a need to care for cattle. Forest spirits are considered to be active when there are happenings of missing humans, and cattle. A specific belief of spirits of the dead exists; such said spirits may inflict an illness—called *myzha*— to a certain person, should he or she forget their
ancestors. Certain curses are lifted through a ritual called *chereshlan*. According to one hospital staff, such said spirits may appear in windows where they sing songs and play an accordion, as it is said, that there is no trouble of work in the afterlife. Witchcraft is believed to be the main reason of existence of poor relations in families and illnesses in general. Despite the general equalisation of belief in 19th-20th centuries, certain elements persist to this very day however adapted to challenges of modernity they can be.

**Keywords:** Komi-Permyak, mythology, witchcraft, spirits, witches

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**Jakov Đorđević, PhD, Research Assistant**

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**Painters’ Names as Saints’ Amulets: of Inscribing Oneself into Sacredness**

The existence of signatures of late Byzantine painters, hidden somewhere in the depicted figures of saints, is well-known among scholars today and much endeavour has been directed toward their proper identification. However, the relation of the painter’s name to the holy person he had chosen to inscribe it on has not been interrogated beyond the simple assertion of his devotion to that particular saint. By noticing that artists’ signatures were intentionally placed on saints as though they were amulets which were supposed to paradoxically protect the holy persons, it will be argued that this practice had a more profound purpose than the mere expression of someone’s piety. It was rooted in the archetypical model of gift-exchange as a powerful structure of establishing bonds with mutual obligations. By subverting the regular relation between human and the divine through rendering his name as an amulet, a gift for the saint, the painter was able to animate the word in a quasi-magical fashion which would have become a substitute for the lasting prayer to the holy person and evidence of their established reciprocal relationship. Along with relying on the Byzantine custom of wearing amulets, the proposed argument will also draw upon the comparisons with certain western examples showing that the concept of gift-exchange was a deeply embedded in medieval societies as a way of making powerful/magical bonds which, if not broken, were perceived to last beyond the confines of death.

**Keywords:** Byzantine amulets, painters’ signatures, gift exchange, vows, mutual bonds

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Magic, Mysticism and Miracles in Folk Mythology of Pomaks’ Community in Greece (Xanthi Region)

The paper is based on materials collected during fieldwork in Pomak villages in Greece (Xanthi region) in 2018–2020. The Pomaks, being Slavic Muslims, descendants of Bulgarian Christians converted to Islam during the Ottoman period, retain in their traditional culture both some archaic Slavic beliefs and some remnants of Christian cults. But now, being Muslims, the Pomaks of Greece are firmly incorporated into Muslim community characteristic for the Greek region of Thrace. The folk mythology in the traditional culture of Xanthi Pomaks is represented by some key characters: *dzhibine* ‘genies’; *furkata zmie* ‘flying snake’ (‘dragon’); *dzhabdyje* ‘witches’. Balkan mythological characters were also registered during our fieldwork: *juda* ‘a female spirit’; *mrava* ‘a personified nightmare’; *stopan* ‘a spirit of the locus’; *karakondzhur* ‘a Christmas demon’; *lamja, smok* ‘a big snake’; etc. Elements of Muslim culture are of great importance in the Pomak mythological beliefs: *hodjas* as antagonists of witches, the Quran as the main amulet and means of fighting with demons, etc. The most common lexeme for mythological characters is *dzhin* ‘genie’. It is used to designate both water and air demons, and it can replace almost any character, being a ‘generic’ designation. The geographic location of the settlement plays also an important role. In remote mountain villages, archaic Slavic beliefs (e.g. *judai*) are more often recorded, while in the villages located in the valley to the east of Xanthi, we fixed mostly narratives about the genies, which were created under the Muslim (Turkish) influence.

**Keywords:** Greece, Pomaks, folk mythology, cultural interference

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Cave and Magic Lamp
We dwell in a cave, in search of the magic lamp - this is not a masquerade. In the innerness of the cave there is light embodied into a magic lamp. There is no cave without a lantern and vice versa. Cave and magic lamp make the foundations of darkness-and-light life oxymoron. This essay aims to explore the cave-and-lamp imaginary space of the magic as a topic, genre, emotion, symbol, and a world of uncanny in the fairy tale, in knowledge, and in everyday life also. The magic lamp becomes an icon of a perpetual search for truth, for lost and desired things, for a dreamed world and person. The Plato’s parable Cave and the fairy tale Aladdin and the Magic Lamp from 1001 Nights, are just two symbolical referring points that provide a suitable landscape for a meditating and thinking journey in the world of magic, coming in touch with its ethics and poetics, and with its tone and sense of wonder. The pursuit of the magic lamp, metaphorically and literary, becomes an inner human request to understand, to become true, to experience, and to believe but not to understand at the same time. Certainly, cave and magic lamp shed light to crucial life dimensions, dilemmas and difficulties. A genie who grants wishes and also can help to get out of the cave, remains always present in human experience. Cave and magic lamp make possible the adventure of the human existence, making it always decent for a never-ending exploration. This essay is a tiny effort for stepping onto that path.

Keywords: Magic Lamp, cave, magic, wonder, fiction, knowledge

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Liana Galabova
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Mystical Perceptions of Sacred Spaces along Their Tourist Socialisation between the Worlds of Faith and Art

Mystical interpretation of art creation on religious purpose is a substantial approach to sacred topology. Bulgarian experience in contemporary church architecture, interior and landscape design compared to centralised communist synodal church building and icon painting demonstrates artistic underdevelopment looking as aesthetic decay popularised as return of mysticism as religious revival. Tourist restorations from last several decades are incomparable in value with archaeological approaches of preceding three socialist decades of well organised and subsidised care about cultural heritage. Supernatural mystical aspects of liturgical arts once neglected by atheist ideology because of their more regulated and representative tourist functions, recently return back in variety of surrogate forms together with a kind of church pop art and asocial practices already overcome by communist historicising of church culture. Postmodern pilgrimage resulted in eclectic approaches in following of aesthetic models of organisation of sacred spaces borrowed from state Eastern Orthodox churches and implemented in post-communist attempts at revival of church ethos including invention of traditions based on memory from quite different historical contexts of religious socialisation. Therefore, some elements of promotion of cultural
heritages influenced theology of aesthetics in unexpected directions as hierotopical interdisciplinary and interreligious field of study of sacred art.

**Keywords:** mystical iconology, hierotopy, religious, pilgrimage tourism

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**Sound Codes in Karelian Mythological Prose as Markers of Liminal State of a Human**

The present paper will analyse audial landscapes of the otherworld, found in Karelian mythological prose. In oral narratives, fixing contact of a person and the “forces” of the forest, we find a wide variety of sound perceptions associated with reality of “another” world, totally different from everyday life. The invisible border dividing “that” world and the world of people is often not visible to the eye - but can be perceived by ear. For a villager, a forest is a communication system located on the border of two worlds. The limitation of the forest space dictates a number of strict rules and regulations (including acoustic ones) for a safe stay in it. We’ll consider the audio practices of interacting with another world using examples of specific narratives recorded on the territory of the Republic of Karelia in the 20th – 21st centuries.

In addition, it will be considered tradition of so-called forest death wails (individual memorial practices related to the need for communication with the deceased loved one), prevalent in the Republic of Karelia and in the Nizhny Novgorod region. In the context of such practices, forest space can be interpreted as an autonomous sound territory. If the funeral rite can be considered as situationally forming an acoustic community, then forest death wails means separation from the everyday sound. This practice will be interpreted in the context of autonomous sound magic acts.

**Keywords:** sound studies, magic practices, liminal, forest death wails, communication between the living and the dead

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**Liliia Tkachuk**, PhD, is an intern researcher at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences. Her research interests are focused on liminality, sound studies and death studies. Author of 7 publications, some of which are: ‘Faceless’ Ritual Masks of the Eastern Slavs: the Experience of the Anti-world’ (2015), ‘Funeral Rite as a Way of Religious Identification among the Rodnovers of the Shabalinsky District of the Kirov region’ (2018). **E-mail:** fairsisters@gmail.com
Performing Miracles by Pentecostal Women

Pentecostalism has impacted many Gypsy and Roma communities across the globe. It offers a new worldview for its adherents and a chance for everyone to be saved in the name of Jesus Christ. Differently from other Evangelical movements, it offers to them an opportunity to be baptised in the Holy Spirit and to be healed. Men and women often experienced the process of conversion differently (Gooren 2010: 93-112), and some authors have analysed Roma Pentecostalism as an avenue for change in gender relations (Gay y Blasco 2012: 1-18). Usually among Gypsies/Roma men are religious leaders. However, there are some cases of female leaderships. A female leader combines several roles in her everyday and religious activities: spiritual leader, public personality and healer. She could be mediator in the settling of disputes among worshippers. In some situations the female pastor plays role of a healer. Although these are rarely met because men pastors have higher authority than women, there are some cases where the wife of the pastor or a female religious leader could perform miracles. Therefore, the aim of the paper is to analyse the ways in which the understanding of the female experience in religious and everyday lives transforms in the process of being spiritual leader in the Holy Spirit, and the ways in which faith constitutes a path of developing new self-image for Pentecostal women.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Roma/Gypsies, miracles, female leaders

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There and Back Again: Little People in Mythology and Fiction

This presentation is on one family of mythological and neo-mythological creatures— little people. They are characters who help humans, predict their fate, punish them or simply live their lives. Little people are rich in species, ranging from underground people, earthly spirits, earth spirits to dwarves, gnomes, thumblings and thumbelinas, leprechauns and elves. The ancient Balto-Finnic common name of kääbüns (dwarf) was originally used to designate an underground dead or also a home fairy (derived from the word kääp meaning a tomb or from the name kääbakas for a home...
All those creatures have somewhat different functions and lifestyles, they range from being human-like creatures living underground in societies similar to human society to beings living near human beings (in stables, houses) or in nature: near rocks, living in forests in their own huts, under mushrooms, and in mountains. The importance of little people is signified in neo-mythology and everyday mythology of the late 19th century to 21st century. Examples of this are: elves, Thumbelina, Three Jolly Fellows, Pokus, Hobbit by Tolkien and many other such creatures. Invention of little people and of their ritual practice is an integral part of our contemporary cultural space and our fiction, incl. literature and media.

**Keywords:** little people, underground people, dwarfs, media & mythology, neomythology

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**Marilyn Love, PhD Student**

Hebrew Bible, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

**Banishing Acts in the Arslan Tash Amulets**

Arslan Tash (ancient Hadātu) is quite literally a site at a crossroads. Situated in Northern Syria near the border of Turkey, Hittite and Assyrian influence is evident in its Iron Age material culture. For instance, the two 7th century BCE amulets (AT1 and AT2) which concern this paper demonstrate a blend of Neo-Hittite, Levantine, and Neo-Assyrian elements in both language and iconography. Each amulet features images of strange, demonic, and/or terrifying beings that are covered and surrounded by inscribed incantations banishing evil creatures from the household. Previous scholarship has indeed demonstrated that the epigraphy, language, and iconography reflect the blended cultural context of these amulets—and more often than not, utilizes a methodological approach that is either philological or art-historical in nature. The tendency to address these linguistic, iconographic, and ritual aspects in isolation overlooks the interplay between iconography and inscription that is evident in the Arslan Tash amulets. These amulets not only evince a crossroads between cultures, but also one between orality and literacy: the inscribed words of the incantations banish the evil night creatures by physically confronting them head-on, surrounding and smothering their iconographic representations. The scribe(s) who crafted these amulets blended elements of performative speech with inscribed iconography in order to reimagine ancient apotropaic rituals in a new social context. The Arslan Tash amulets thus exhibit an emerging mode of ritual performance that increasingly relied upon the convergence of speaking, acting, and writing in order to produce more efficacious results.

**Keywords:** performative speech, magic and writing, amulets, demons, household magic

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**Marilyn Love** is a PhD student in Hebrew Bible at the University of California, Los Angeles. Marilyn specializes in 2nd Temple literature and its reception history with a primary focus on ritual, gender, and...
Empty night (Pustó noc) is the Kashubian name for the ritual that takes place on the last night before the funeral of a deceased person, when people gather in the dead man’s house to pray. After praying the rosary, they stay to chant special religious songs and watch over until the morning. According to folk beliefs of the Kashubian region, the deceased stays permanently in the vicinity of his household until the funeral. When farewelled improperly, a person can return to family and friends, appearing in the form of a demon/ghoul (wieszcz, őp or strzyga) or a witch. Therefore, a prayer for the dead secures the peace of the living. The most common explanation for a modern man, who is not so keen on believing in supernatural/magical aspects of life, is that the repetition and monotony of singing brings relief to the participants of an empty night. The ritual, being gradually forgotten in modern times, has been recorded on the pages of belles-lettres and diaries (e.g. Pusta noc, 1976, 1983, 2017), depicted in feature (e.g. Kamerdyn, 2018), and documentary films (Na psa urok, 2016). In addition, the article will be also based on material collected from interviews with participants and eyewitnesses of such events.

**Keywords:** Empty night, Kashubian custom, death rites, Kashubian demonology
Mystic Relations to the Homeland

Migration has become a key issue and challenge for Europe, which will dominate the European Union’s policy and the individual member states’ political programmes in the coming years. In this respect, the movements from Bulgaria over the last 30 years have led to the departure of large groups of population settled into different destinations, both within and outside the EU. The present study is based on ethnographic material collected from different time periods (2007-2019) among diverse groups of Bulgarian immigrants living in the UK, USA, Canada and Norway. The paper describes and analyses the idea of mystical relations to the homeland defined as a kind of ‘energy’ connecting migrants to Bulgaria. The study is based on the narratives among different Bulgarian groups, especially first generation living abroad, separated according to their profile and their beliefs concerning baba Vanga and magical practices related to the homeland belonging.

Keywords: mysticism, migration, energy, homeland, Bulgarians abroad

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New Mythologies and Miracles in Bulgaria: Outsmarting ‘Fate’

In 2018 the sociological agency ‘Trend’ financed by the daily newspaper ‘24 chasa’ (‘24 hours’) presented their research results related to the magical and conspiracy theory beliefs among the modern Bulgarians. As high as 75 % of those who took part in the study appeared to believe in baba Vanga’s prophetic abilities, 63 % expressed their belief in supernatural powers and 53 % believed in the healing powers of the latter. 66 % were convinced of the fact that many of the current (pandemic) viruses were artificially introduced in order for the big pharmaceutical companies to sell out their medicines. All this has its reflection in the everyday life where even young people knock on wood and wear red thread on their wrists to avoid unfortunate events. Having all this in mind, the paper will present some of the most popular beliefs among Bulgarians in 2020 in the context of their quest to outsmart ‘Fate’ (and in the context of pandemic). Based on
analysis of social media ‘folklore’ and a small-scale quantitative research among students at Bulgarian Universities it will also present the traditional basis of these beliefs in supernatural, mystical, magical and miraculous and the reasons why these are still having a hold on the latest generations of Bulgarians in the age of globalization. Can we explain all this with the fact that the current informational age has, counterintuitively, demolished the authority and rational thought? Is the ‘miraculous thinking’ what we need to save us from the growingly scarier world?

**Keywords:** modern miracles, beliefs, coping mechanisms, Bulgarian students, outsmarting fate, media folklore

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**Assist. Prof. Nevena Dimitrova, PhD**

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, Bulgaria

**Mystical as Ordinary Way of Living**

The relation between magic and mystical experience although being polarized in modern understanding is in fact interconnected and to a large extent considered interdependent. Mysticism as it is considered in Church Fathers and in Byzantium is quite differently understood in scholastic and later European thought and philosophy. Mystical knowledge is largely discussed in early Christian writers such as the author of Mystical Theology. The core idea is that at the end of the knowing process stands the ‘knowing ignorance’ or the state of mystical experience instead of discursive reasoning. The language through which this happens will also be part of my presentation: opposed to formulas used in magic practices, here the language of negation is used. In my presentation I will look upon mystical knowledge and experience in Christological (medieval European) context compared to both other forms of mysticism in medieval and early modern times, as well as to practices regarded as beyond or pre-Christian ones (pagan practices as well as folklore narratives). Mystical realm as incorporating the reasoning and logical discourse in terms of experience and not as opposing those areas will be presented in comparison to everyday local praxis of ‘producing’ miracles. Miracles in Christian context, magic in everyday life, and mysticism (see bibliography on early Church fathers) will be put in correlation and context to see how they intercommunicate in everyday life of common people.

**Keywords:** mysticism, Christianity, everyday practice, magic, Church fathers

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**Nevena Dimitrova,** PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the National Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, BAS. She studied Philosophy at Sofia University (BA 2003), (MA 2005), has a PhD from the universities of Sofia, Leuven,
Magic and Ritual in the Roman Amphitheatre of Beit Guvrin, Israel

The Roman amphitheatre of Beit Guvrin, Israel, was built in the 2nd century A.D. and held bloody spectacles such as gladiator games, wild beast hunts and presumably public executions for nearly 200 years. According to Roman belief, the outcome of these spectacles did not depend solely on the physical strength of the competitors in the arena but was also highly influenced by magic and divine assistance. The use of magic within the amphitheatre of Beit Guvrin is illustrated by the hundreds of artefacts that were revealed during the excavations of the building, mostly found in a special cultic room (sacellum) that was used by the gladiators prior to their fights. These include two votive altars, one of which bears the name of the god Zeus Heliopolites; hundreds of oil lamps that served the gladiators for ritual purposes; a figurine of Harpocrates that was buried near the foundations of the building as a foundation deposit for good luck; and four curse tablets (tabellae defixiones) that were likely used to enhance the odds of the gladiators who wrote them and to put a binding spell on their opponents. In this talk I wish to examine the magical artefacts found in the amphitheatre of Beit Guvrin. I will discuss the use of these artefacts by the gladiators prior to their battles for life or death in the arena and show the importance of magic within the spectacle building of the Roman city.

**Keywords:** amphitheatre, magic, Roman period, Beit Guvrin, Israel

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Greek Magical Practices to See the Predestined Husband in a Dream

The paper refers to the popular maiden rituals targeted to evoke a prophetic dream that will enable the girl to foresee her predestined husband-to-be. Starting from the 19th century numerous ethnographic sources provide various descriptions of the rituals of that kind along with the short texts of the charms spelled by a girl before going to sleep. The most common practice was to put underneath the pillow a certain specific item (a comb, a mirror, a soap, a belt, a ring etc.) or some...
ritual food (St. Theodore koliva, St. Basil pita (βασιλόπιτα), carnival pasta (μακαρόνι των Απόκρεων), Lenten season unfermented bread (προμηθοκούλλοφρα, literally – salted bread), candies handed out to the guests for the wedding). More rarely the girls tied the bedpost with the silk thread, hanged their coat outdoors etc. Modern records demonstrate that although older generations remember the rituals and recite charm texts, there are some transformations of the tradition, especially in the urban environment. The rituals with the Phanourios the Martyr's pita (φανουρόπιτα) may prove a shining example of that kind.

**Keywords**: Greek traditional culture, dream, marriage, ritual food

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**Oksana V. Tchoekha**, PhD, graduated from Lomonosov Moscow State University, Philological Faculty, Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Philology (1999–2004). In 2009 she passed her PhD defence on Comparative Linguistics in the Institute of the Slavic and Balkan Studies with thesis ‘Modern Greek Folk Astronomical lexis in comparison with the Astronomical lexis of the Balkan Slavs: the Moon and the lunar time’. Academic Interests: Balkan folklore, modern Greek folklore and dialectology, folk astronomy. Since 2004 she has worked at the Department of Folklore and Ethnolinguistics, Institute of the Slavic and Balkan Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences). **E-mail**: tchoekha@gmail.com

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**Prof. DSc. Pavel Nosachev**
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**Miracle in the Contemporary Orthodox Fiction: between Esotericism and Christianity**

In recent decades, Orthodoxy has been revived in Russia. Along with the revival of Church life, a new Orthodox subculture is being formed. A significant role in it is played by a special type of fiction aimed at forming the reader foundations of the Orthodox worldview through images and stories. The most famous examples of such literature are the book of Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov ‘Everyday Saints and Other Stories’ (2011), published in millions of copies and withstood 19 reprints, and fantasy fiction for children and teenagers by Julia Voznesenskaya (‘My adventure after death’, ‘Cassandra’s Path’). These books are positioned as parables and personal testimonies that speak about Orthodoxy in the language of modernity. A special role in such literature is played by the idea of a miracle. It is possible to notice that the reality of a miracle, as the intervention of supernatural forces in modern human life, is often presented as the main evidence of the truth of Orthodoxy. For the researcher, the process of constructing a modern narrative of a miracle is of particular interest. In the books of Archimandrite Tikhon and Yu. Voznesenskaya, along with the Orthodox background, it is possible to distinguish an esoteric component. In this paper, I plan to demonstrate how the narrative of the miracle in modern

Orthodox literature is composed from the elements of Orthodox worldview and images, representations and concepts formed in Western esotericism. Among the main forms of this synthesis, one can distinguish ideas about near-death experiences, the spiritual world, paranormal abilities, and practices of religious life, etc.

**Keywords**: Orthodoxy, Western esotericism, miracle, fiction, paranormal, near-death experience, supernatural
The (Ir)rational Human-animal Relationship in Agricultural Traditions and Contemporary Practices in Bulgaria
(on the Example of the Outbreak of Foot-and-mouth Disease in 2011)

This report presents some results of the author’s research carried under the framework of the ‘Local Disasters and Quality of Life: Cultural Strategies in the Overcoming of Natural, Technological and Biological Hazards and Disasters’ project. The project is situated in the interdisciplinary domain of anthropology of disasters focusing on the outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Strandzha region of Bulgaria in 2011. Different tools like questionnaires, surveys, monitoring and semi-structured interviews were implemented in the research process based on the biography and oral history method. Their analysis shows a quite dynamic picture of the relationship between man and domestic animals in the everyday culture of Bulgarians. Only a century ago this relationship reflected the close dependence of men on livestock, reflected in a number of customs, beliefs and rituals in the context of traditional culture. This close link between men and domestic animals was torn apart as a result of the systematic violence that accompanied the introduction of a collective form of ownership over the means of production in agriculture (land, buildings, equipment and livestock) during the communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989). Restoration of democracy, establishment of a market economy and country’s accession to the European Union brought in new forms of the relationship between men and domestic animals. They range from simple economic benefit to human-animal empathy. This link passes through serious testing and interesting modifications in times of crisis such as the outbreak of the foot-and-mouth disease in 2011 and the mass extermination of livestock that followed.

Keywords: traditional culture, human-animal empathy, foot-and-mouth disease, rituals, local disasters

Pavel Nosachev is a Professor, DSc, of the Department of Cultural Studies in the National Research University, Higher School of Economics in Moscow. His research interests are focused on religious studies, western esotericism, religion and popular culture, methodology of scientific research. Author of more than 100 scholarly publications, some of which are: ‘Rejected knowledge: Study of marginal religiosity in the XX and the beginning of the XXI century’ (2015); ‘The Paranormal in Jane Jensen’s ‘Gray Matter’ (2018: 1-10); ‘Links of a Golden Chain: Images of the Hermetic Tradition in Etic Approaches’ (2018: 87-97) E-mail: pnosachev@hse.ru

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The Magic of the Name’ (in Bulgarian, 2007); ‘Live Antiquity. The Scientific Heritage of Dimitar Marinov (1846-1940)’ (in Bulgarian, 2018); ‘Sociocultural Dimensions of Childhood’ (2020 with Janning, M., Tsaneva, E., Periklieva, V. and Le Guennec). Academia.edu: Petya Bankova E-mail: petia64@hotmail.com
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The New Mysticism in Bulgarian Society after the Political Changes in 1989

After the political changes in 1989, Bulgaria is experiencing the power of new freedom in all different aspects of the social life. For nearly 45 years the previous Communist regime preached atheism and promoted the power of the science and human spirit. Everything mystical, together with the official Orthodox religion, was neglected and even forbidden. After the fall of the Communism, the religion slowly regained its positions into the Bulgarian society. However, with the rebirth of the forgotten faith, new mystical believes came into life. In fact, they were always there, hidden but popular among common Bulgarian citizens. After 1989, without the governmental censorship, people with some magical abilities who insist that they can see the future or to heal, find their stage. Some of them were well known and wanted for help in different life situations. One of the most mystical prophetesses by that time was Baba Vanga, whose name is famous even today. Kashpirovski, Juna and many others also became part of this hunger for mystics, and the scandals, as the one with Tzaribiniata dupka, were completely part of the spirit of time. This paper will try to tell more about the new beliefs among Bulgarians during the transition period, and to answer the questions – what were the people looking for and where did they manage to find it – in the faith, in the mystic or in spirituality?

Keywords: mysticism, political changes, transition period, spirituality

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The Miraculous Power of Nature on Children’s Health in Children’s Camps

The healing powers of nature have been well known since ancient times. Along with the many magical practices used in the healing process, the sun, clean air and water are also in direct contact with the course of treatment. Children’s resorts will be presented in this report as a way of reaping the natural benefits of promoting children’s health. Based on the children’s camps established in the middle of the 20th century, the author will examine the idea of the importance of climate to the healing processes, outlining foreign practices and experience in the resort business. With the help of these institutions, a part of the battle with the diseases will be depicted. On the one hand, traditional perceptions of the impact of nature on human health are at the heart of this issue. On the other hand, these psychological models of influence will explain the construction of children’s camps near sacred sites, such as monasteries or holy places.
Keywords: miracle, health, treatment, nature, children’s camps

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Vilnius as the Sacred City: the Mysticism of Saint Maria Faustyna Kowalska and the Revival of the Cult of Divine Mercy at the end of 20th – beginning of 21st century

Maria Faustyna Kowalska (1905–1938) was a Polish Roman Catholic nun and a mystic who lived in Vilnius in 1933-1936. Starting from 1931 on, she reported having visions and conversations with Jesus Christ. While staying in Vilnius she wrote a diary, where she described her mystical experiences. As well, in Vilnius the painting of the image of the Merciful Jesus, executed by artist E. Kazimirowski under the guidance of Sister Faustyna was completed. Her visions inspired the Roman Catholic cult of Divine Mercy. During the WWII and with the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union for fifty years, the natural development of Vilnius was interrupted most brutally resulting in a profound shift in the city’s political, social, cultural, and religious life. The devotional practices to Divine Mercy ceased and the miraculous painting of the image of Merciful Jesus was hidden in various places for many years. After the restoration of independent Lithuania in 1990, interest towards religion has increased significantly. Religious sites and practices of piety that were neglected during the Soviet times reclaimed their symbolic importance. The beatification in 1993 and canonization of Sister Faustyna Kowalska in 2000 by Pope John Paul II resulted in the revival of the Cult of Divine Mercy worldwide. It also affected the religious topography of Vilnius as the new pilgrim route in memory of sister Faustyna was established and the Shrine of Divine Mercy housing the miraculous painting was opened in the old town of the city. Ever since Vilnius has been referred to as the sacred place – the City of Mercy – thus enriching the everyday landscape of the modern city with layers of symbolic meaning.

Keywords: Saint Maria Faustyna Kowalska, the cult of Divine Mercy, mysticism, Vilnius, religious topography

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Allusive Magic: The Bibliomantic Transfer of Ethos from Homer to Virgil to Dante to Notley to Saterstrom

Writers have long incorporated allusions to and insertions of canonical texts into their own writing to imbue their new work with the magical stuff of ancestors. In poetry, allusion serves to transfer the ethos or magic of verse and the writer of that verse to another writer. This essay will explore the allusive technique of deep reading through bibliomancy, a long tradition working with canonical or powerfully imbued texts. The Greek Magical Papyri’s ‘Homeric Oracle’ indicates the magic Homer and his verse held as well as the link between verse and magic in the ancient world. The ways in which Homer’s verse establishes powerful ethos within new texts produced by bibliomancy can be similarly evaluated in other texts that use allusive transfer. The oracular properties of texts by Homer, Virgil, and Dante have led to their use as personal magical objects written into through allusion, a technique that has persisted to the present day. Selah Saterstrom bases her contemporary bibliomantic text ‘The Tale of Brother and Sister’ on her reading of Alice Notley’s ‘The Descent of Alette’, which is based on Dante’s ‘Inferno’, weaving a lineage for herself and her text. Contemporary links between verse and oracle such as this will be explored as bibliomantic allusive practices. By comparing the history of and strategies of magical practice using sacralized poetic texts, I will explore the possibilities of poetic bibliomancy and allusion for contemporary writers and readers.

Keywords: Bibliomancy, Notley, Saterstrom, Homer Oracle, Ethos

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Josip Broz Tito, Imagination and Post-Yugoslav Quest for a Miracle
Contemporary discursive, practical and ritual use of numerous stories and various biographies of Josip Broz Tito is shifting from mere historical memory, to an instrument that enables critique of dominant values and political institutions during the decades of ‘normalization’, ‘democratization’, ‘stabilization’, and means of rhetorical subversion. Enriched with ‘mystery’ and ambiguity of its president, Yugoslav history became a compensation for sense of dissatisfaction, distrust in institutions and general sense of failure in numerous political, economic and cultural plans of post-Yugoslav societies. Once criticized as a part of Tito’s personality cult, rewritten and revisited stories on his life and death become a common place in Serbian daily news and yellow journalism. The titles such as: ‘CIA revealed shocking document – Tito was not real Tito’ (Alo, 7.8.2018) developed rich symbolic and folklore meaning in texts about multiple identities of Yugoslav president. They are based on stories about his mysterious birth and childhood, while inability to find out his ‘real’ biography classifies him in legendary and divine. ‘In Josip Broz Tito’s funeral, Yugoslav people and more than seven hundred invitees were tricked! Instead of marshal’s body, coffin contained a bag full of sand covered with flag’ (Naslovi net, 30.04. 2018); ‘Creepy truth was revealed - Real Tito did not die in 1980’ (Balkanske vesti, 19. 1. 2019).

**Keywords:** Josip Broz Tito, discourse, folklore, birth, death, transition

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**Challenging Realities in Life-Narratives and Memoirs: Roma Authors (not) Writing about Magic**

While many fictional depictions of the Gypsies in world literature and national literatures’ classics are related to their supposed mystical and magical powers, in Romani literature itself magic is not necessarily attributed to Roma/Gypsy characters. Narratives about supernatural events and magical powers do occur often in folklore records and short stories by Roma writers, especially the ones built on motifs and narratives in oral stories spread among the author’s own Roma group or among many communities in the state or region. In most of the memoirs or life-narrative based novels (co)written by Roma, however, there is either an absence of narratives related to magic or
the way of narrating about ‘Gypsy’ magic challenges the image of the Gypsy-with-magic-powers or mystical fortune teller dominating in arts and public discourse in general. After a very short overview of types of narrating about magic in Romani literature, including the diversity of the accounts of powers that do not naturally occur in the real world, the paper will discuss magic (re)presentations or absence in memoirs or life-narrative based novels. On the base of examples of couple of selected works and authors, I claim that we may speak about a pattern in which magic is presented or discussed in novels, life-narratives and memoirs by Roma authors. This pattern aims to challenge the existing stereotypical Gypsy-magic image by ironical reconstruction and/or challenging through real-world and real-life narrative.

Keywords: Romani literature, magic, life narratives, representation

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Sub/versions: The Poetics of Resistance in the Mysticism of Lal Ded and Mirabai

The oral tradition of the Bhakti Movement can be understood as the first act/performance of ‘protest poetry’, and by taking into consideration the two icons of the movement - Lal Ded and Mirabai, it becomes doubly invested with meaning - an act of protesting, an act by women - giving agency to their voice. Lal Ded was a popular 14th century Kashmiri mystic who birthed the creative style of ‘Vakhs’. She belonged to the Kashmiri sect of Shaivism and sought to reform the school of Kashmiri Shaivism. Mirabai is another popular figure - a 16th century mystic, and a celebrated Bhakti saint. A ‘bridal mystic’, she renounced her home since she believed herself to be wedded to Lord Krishna. Lal Ded and Mirabai unsettled the phallocentric discourse by assuming a voice and articulating it within a public domain. They rallied against Sanskrit elitism, and visibly upset the patriarchal discourse so much so that they were termed ‘mad’. This paper is an attempt at negotiating the contours of resistance in the context of Lal Ded and Mirabai - to what extent did the Bhakti Movement impart agency to the two women mystics to ruffle the phallocentric discourse by subverting the system of signification? And how does one negotiate the ‘sadhana’ of Lal Ded and Mirabai as a submission to another male authority and read it in the broader purview of resistance within the gender politics, as well as a definition of selfhood. My paper will seek to demystify these questions by placing a selective range of Lal Ded’s ‘Vakhs’ and Mirabai’s ‘bhajans’ primarily in conversation with the Hindu philosophy of ‘Maya’, and the theoretical works of David Kinsley, and Marcel Mauss.

Keywords: mystic, gender, selfhood, magic, agency
Magic and Miracle: Is There a Difference? A Look through Medieval Latin Texts

At first, the paper aims to examine, briefly, the concepts of magic and miracle in Antiquity. In parallel with these concepts, the paper explores magic, magical art, and miracle through the eyes of members of the medieval Christian society according to some Latin hagiographic and historiographical texts. These texts reveal whether and to what extent magic and wonder are perceived as parts of a binary model in which they are steadfastly opposed to each other. On the one hand, for a medieval man, magic is alien to the divine because it is a manifestation and the result of the activity of impure, demonic powers, and often has fatal consequences for the individual and society. The miracle, on the other hand, is often an act of salvation, accomplished in response to a prayer to God or a manifestation of God's will to save man, and especially his soul. There are mediators in the process of performing magic and miracles. In the first case, the mediators are magicians possessed by demonic powers. In the second case, there are saints or priests as mediators in the communication between man and God. The paper will feature descriptions of mediators as well as of the magic and miracle in Christian Latin texts.

Keywords: magic, miracle, mediator, Latin, texts
The plot/motif ‘F531.3.2.3 – Giants throw tools back and forth’ highlighted by S. Thompson is a narrative element which is known in folk-literature of Slavic, Finno-Ugric, Caucasian and other peoples. Variants of this plot (more than 90) show that usually the giants, who are the first to settle in a natural, ‘wild’ place, throw artefacts – objects that are missing in a new, not yet inhabited world (an exception is when heroes throw stones). Most often, folklore narratives of this type function as short legends, where real local mountains, peaks and/or settlements are mentioned. But the cases when this plot is included in vernacular mythological and ritual complexes are especially interesting for research. The content of the narrative structure determines the types of objects that are sacralised by the inhabitants. The first type of revered object is legendary graves of giants – first settlers (in Russian, Belarusian, Komi-Permyak traditions). The second type is the objects which they threw back and forth: an axe (in Belarusian legend) or stones (in Bulgarian and Komi-Permyak versions of the plot). The stones may have their own names; people believe they help cure various diseases. A popular way to legitimize cult of such objects is to include them in semi-official Christianized practices. This process can be illustrated with the latest field data representing the Komi-Permian tradition.

**Keywords:** giants, stones, folklore narrative structure, vernacular cult

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**Wonderworking Objects and Miracles at Holy Sites in Pernik Region in the Past and Nowadays**

Nowadays exist more than 150 churches and 40 Christian Orthodox monasteries in Pernik region that have been built during previous centuries. Most of them appear during the second half of the 19th century because of the strong religiousness of the local people who lived and donated money and work for the appraisal of sacred places. Due to the oral history and the research interest of local historians could be found narratives about wonders and wonderworking objects preserved at holy sites in this region. Since the end of the 20th century many Bulgarians become more religious and pious and start visiting sacred places. They pray for health and fertility. Thus, thanks to the strong faith of some people new miracles occur. Based on published and archived materials in the text will be presented some stories about miracles connected with wonderworking objects – icons, relics, holly springs in sacred places in Pernik region.
Keywords: miracles, Pernik region, wonderworking objects

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‘Media-Witches’ in the 21st Century Russia

An interest in the ‘supernatural’ in all its manifestations exploded in the first decades of the 21st century in Russia. The latest opinion polls show that Russian people still believe in magicians and witches. Witches and wizards of different kinds, ages and appearances, all take an active part in mass media world. They are mentioned not only in entertainment resources, but in official press-releases as well. In the police reports the witches are usually represented as quacks, but the folklore elements regarding the supernatural can be seen even in these bureaucratic documents. In such documents, the witch always harms a person, taking away their money and/or health. Secondly, we are never given the opportunity to hear the witch’s side of the story because all the evidence is based on the words of the victim. In the tabloid press the image of the sorcerer opposes the official point of view. He or she can practice magic in various forms which is widely shown on numerous TV-shows. Also they often describe for the public their supernatural abilities. Practically all ‘media-witches’ tell viewers and readers that they use dark magic. Today, these magic figures are often pretty or handsome, definitely have strong sex appeal and often are actors or models by occupation. The interest in ‘supernatural’ is constantly expanding in the media outlets. The influence this phenomenon has on modern Russian society is a question for future studies.

Keywords: Russia, supernatural, magic, tabloids, witches

Tatyana Khoruzhenko was born in Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation, in 1989. In 2006 she became full-time student of philological department. Always having ‘A’ level results, in 2010 she got her bachelor’s degree and continued her education to get her master’s degree. She became post-graduate student in 2012. In 2015 she got her PhD. At present she is a faculty member of the philological department of the Ural Federal University. She delivers lectures in Ancient Greek and Latin literature. The sphere of her interests is Russian fantasy, folklore elements in modern literature, newslore and internetlore. E-mail: tkhoruzhenko@mail.ru
The Danger of Spiritual Reality in the S. Grabinski’s Fiction

At the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, the movement of so-called black fiction, literature that plays with themes of mystical practices, horror, supernatural beings, and other worlds, developed in literature. Among the most famous representatives of this genre, H. P. Lovecraft, G. Meyrink, and E. Blackwood are usually highlighted, but black fiction is not limited to their works. A special place in this genre is occupied by the prose of the Polish writer Stefan Grabinski. Grabinski became famous for the collection ‘The motion demon’ (1919), which successfully combined suspicion to modern technical progress (Grabinski depicted trains and Railways as demonic) and multi-level mystical imagery. In his fiction, Grabinski combined Theosophical influences, Catholic demonology, parapsychological and spiritualistic ideas, spiritual alchemy, and mystical religious practices. The most interesting aspects of his work are two cross-cutting themes: the question of the existence of supernatural phenomena, which he often placed on the border between psychic illusion and reality, and the problem of the danger of the spiritual world, which appears hostile to humanity. In my paper, I plan to analyse these two themes of Grabinski’s fiction and demonstrate how he combined images of various religious and mystical traditions.

Keywords: horror fiction, literature, mysticism, S. Grabinski, Theosophy, Catholicism

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At the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th century, the movement of so-called black fiction, literature that plays with themes of mystical practices, horror, supernatural beings, and other worlds, developed in literature. Among the most famous representatives of this genre, H. P. Lovecraft, G. Meyrink, and E. Blackwood are usually highlighted, but black fiction is not limited to their works. A special place in this genre is occupied by the prose of the Polish writer Stefan Grabinski. Grabinski became famous for the collection ‘The motion demon’ (1919), which successfully combined suspicion to modern technical progress (Grabinski depicted trains and Railways as demonic) and multi-level mystical imagery. In his fiction, Grabinski combined Theosophical influences, Catholic demonology, parapsychological and spiritualistic ideas, spiritual alchemy, and mystical religious practices. The most interesting aspects of his work are two cross-cutting themes: the question of the existence of supernatural phenomena, which he often placed on the border between psychic illusion and reality, and the problem of the danger of the spiritual world, which appears hostile to humanity. In my paper, I plan to analyse these two themes of Grabinski’s fiction and demonstrate how he combined images of various religious and mystical traditions.

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Magic Rites at Kryashen-Pagans

Kryasheni are a Turkic-speaking Orthodox population of the Middle Volga region, who have specific features and sustainable ethnic identity. Currently, there are many discussions and opinions on the issue of distinguishing Kryashen as a separate independent ethnos. In Russian ethnological science, Kryashen are usually considered a subconfessional group of the Tatar people. Pagan Kryashen living in the village of Staroe Tyaberdino (Kaybitsky district of the Republic of Tatarstan) are small ethnic group of the Molkeev Kryashen. There are several families in this village who continue to worship pagan gods and conduct magical rituals and cults in special places of ‘energy
power’. One of the most significant places of worship is the ancient sacred oak, which is very popular among pagans. Near the situated in the pole oak is preserved a temple. This is a cult place of worship of the pagan gods, which is used for various magical practices and rituals. It is interesting to note that this group of Kryashen believes that the anger of pagan gods could punish those who in inter-ethnic marriage accepted Orthodoxy along the male line. We must conclude that Kryashens are unique nation, who have interesting rituals and traditions with local differences.

Keywords: traditional faith, Kryashen, faith, rites, pagan

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Obtaining Information from the Dead

The report makes a comparative analysis of the retrieval of information from the dead through the magical rite described in the *Odyssey* and in the adventurous love novel ‘An Ethiopian story’ (Aethiopica – Ethiopian Story or Theagenes and Chariiclea) by Heliodorus. In ‘Odyssey’ (Hom. Od. 10. 504-541 Fuchs), the sorceress Circe teaches Odysseus how to go to the entrance of the kingdom of Hades and Persephone, and what ritual actions to perform in order to learn from the Tyresian Tiresias how to return home. In Aethiopica (The Ethiopian Story or Theagenes and Chariclea) Heliodorus (6. 13-14) recounts the ritual acts performed by the sorceress to summon his dead son back from the world of the Beyond in order to ask him if his brother is alive and well. The similarities and differences in the two rites are discussed. The comparison between two written sources with almost a thousand years between them allows one to observe an inherited magical practice and the change of attitude towards it in the value system.

Keywords: miracles, Odyssey, Kingdom of Hades, Ethiopian story
The aim of the submitted paper is to systematise the source base and to analyse the narrative of a remarkable and enigmatic monument of Early Christian literature – ‘Life of St. Macarius of Rome’ – in the light of the intertextual relationships in its structure and of the contextualization of miracles. Attention should be focused on the circumstance that the literary narrative betrays a possible mysterial character with eschatological nuances and psychagogic mythology. A mystic journey to the World Beyond and the faith in the afterlife should occupy a central place in that circle of notions. The emphasis is laid on the ancient [i.e., non-biblical and non-Christian, respectively pagan] traditions in early medieval Christian literature, and especially on the place and functions of the literary [and possibly non-literary] traditions of ‘The Romance of Alexander the Great’. In this context the ‘Life of St. Macarius of Rome’ is closer to Hellenistic milieu than the Old Testament. We are attempting to find the correlation between the text and the preceding ‘hypotext’ as well, i.e., the text or respectively the genre it is based on, having however transformed it, modified it, re-coded it, elaborated it, etc., so as to unveil the nature of the intertextual relationships abstracted in the analysis as a product not only of literary syncretism or mimesis [of literature, not of life] in the Platonic sense of the notion.

Keywords: miracles, medieval Christian literature, mimesis
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Sacred Places and Miracles  
(To the Legendary Heritage of Heterodox Islam in Northeastern Bulgaria)

The article presents some legendary narratives recorded during field studies around the utraquist (dual, binary ritual), Muslim and Christian, saint places in the region of Shumen and Targovishte (North-Eastern Bulgaria). The analysis looks for their common motives, characters, functions. An attempt has been made to discover some relics of the verbal heritage of heterodox Muslims in Bulgarian lands and its existence in time. For example, the sacred places around the village of Izbul directs to the topos of the sacred and its dynamics in the local oral story. As an object with regional meaning so far, they were beyond the scope of the purposeful research interest. There has been established connection with the net from objects of the heterodox Islam on the Bulgarian lands whose traces in the local memory are only in the toponymy and anthroponymy. On the other hand, the utraquistic sanctuaries in Bulgaria here are regarded as places of shared memory – between Christians and Muslims. From ethnological point of view this text problematizes the issues of religious tolerance in relations between people in local society.

Keywords: sacred places, miracle, heterodox Islam, North-Eastern Bulgaria

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Transformation of Magic: From the Primitive ‘Core’ to Various Ethno-Cultural Forms

The main hypothesis is that the origins of magic, which existed for thousands of years, are in the primitive practice of ancient people when a certain ‘core’ of the phenomenon that we now call magic was formed. With the development of different cultures and ethnocultural areas, a variety of magical forms and practices appeared. The core of primitive magic can be characterized by the following features: the initial idea of the dual nature of all objects, phenomena and events of the surrounding world; the presence of hidden aspects; the direct interaction with the hidden sides of being is possible in order to achieve practical goals - survival, safety, procreation; a kind of democracy in relations with the other world, even the desire to catch up with the hidden forces,
or to command them; high emotional intensity of magical practices, characterized by the utmost sharpness of curiosity, fear, admiration, aggression; magic action is a special system of rituals, actions and practices that are depending on the mentality, era, level of cultural development. Magic was gradually separated from the ordinary life (like other world - from nature), and later, along with development of theoretical and abstract thinking, appeared the concepts: hermetic, occult, esoteric, sacred, mystic. The core of magic we can find in the modern art, religions, everyday life, even in business, and science.

Keywords: magic, primitive ‘core’ of magic, features of magic, transformation

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Saint Patronage: a Modern Point of View

Holy patronage always took a special position in the Russian Orthodox mind. A modern prayer book offers prayers that cover almost all occasions, and in each case, there is a particular which can help in the situation. Most often, such cases of patronage are caused by the facts of vita: for example, St. Nicholas can be prayed for marriage, because, in the miracle about three girls, he helped three poor girls to get married. However, in some cases, a substitution of concepts may arise, as, for example, the same St. Nicholas becomes the patron of the Russian people, which is narrated by Russian hymnography and folklore texts. But the most interesting cases are when holy protection is completely rethought. For example, St. Barbara became a patron of the miner and even a patron of the missile troops. The modern patronage receives sometimes anecdotal forms: St. Vaclav became a patron of barmen; St. Alipij of Pechery is a patron of hairdressers and visagistes and so on. The paper will analyse some popular cases of modern patronage and its representation in the modern media.

Keywords: saint, patronage, professional patronage, media, Russian Orthodox

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Contemporary Images of Healers – between Holiness and Magic

Undoubtedly, the images of healers (medical women), who are practicing traditional healing methods in the contemporary Bulgarian society, combine many social and cultural characteristics. Many years of field research in the field of contemporary manifestations of traditional medicine have continually raised the question of the path chosen by healers. In general, it can be described as a declarative refusal of magical practices. Healer’s legitimizing otherwise goes through an equally declarative attachment to some religion and/or holiness. Field observations, however, show that, according to the classical definition, traditional healing practices also show many similarities to magical actions. The report discusses issues of social and cultural factors that predetermine the choice of healers and which also influence the formation of their image. The purpose of this study will be to trace the transitions between holiness and magic in the images of modern healers. This will be done through the perspective of their personal life stories as well, as the expressed opinion of the surrounding population.

Keywords: traditional medicine, healer, magic, holiness, religion

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The Concept of Good and Evil in Jewish Folklore and Mysticism

The ethical concept in Jewish folklore and mysticism was reflecting the heritage from the ancient Middle – Eastern civilizations (Egypt, Syria, Babylon). There are examples of certain myths which were created before the existence of Judaism, and eventually were somehow ‘adopted’ and preserved (as a Jewish myth) until today. In time, these myths changed along with the historical process of modernity and secularism in Judaism. Another relevant topic in Jewish mysticism was lacking of women theologians until the second half of the 20 century. In fact, in traditional Judaism the women were not allowed to study theology and mysticism. Along with the movements of women emancipation in 1960s in the Western hemisphere, the feminine interpretation of Bible, Talmud and Jewish mysticism brought a relevant contribution in the theological and scientific debate, regarding the contemporary Judaism.

Keywords: Judaism, ethics, folklore, mysticism, tradition

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Creating an Amulet: Parallels between Christian and Jewish Magical Traditions in the Balkans

The use of amulets was the practice that has been strictly prohibited and sanctioned by the Orthodox Church. Creating amulets among Balkan Christians was conceptualized through the writing of scriptures on various materials. Writing of protective scriptures was executed by priests, monks or literate men, similar to Rabbis in the Jewish and Mullahs in Islamic tradition. Prophylactic objects that are known as the ‘Abgar’ scrolls in the Balkan Christian tradition usually contained important visual images. In the Early modern period, the most popular Christian type of scroll was known as ‘The Dream of the Mother of God which she dreamt on the Holy Mountain of Athos’. Malefactors from whom the scroll-amulet protects can be various, but certainly, the deadliest among them is the evil eye, which completely corresponds to the frames of the Jewish and younger Islamic traditions. The practice of wearing amulets was common to all members of Abrahamic religions in the Balkans. In the broadest sense, magical protection among the members of different religions in the Balkans was based on similar beliefs. Folklore magic was combined with the use of the written sources derived from official sacred writings. Therefore, the theological differences within the official religious-cultural frame in the Balkans were exceeded through the popular piety and common practice of folklore magic.

Keywords: amulets, protective scrolls, Orthodox Christianity, Judaism, comparative practices, Balkans

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Magic in the Eyes of the Muslim Roma (Cases from Bulgaria)

As part of one of the largest communities in Bulgaria, the Muslim Roma have been a subject of a number of ethnic and religious studies, but the place of magic in their belief system remains insufficiently examined. The paper presents an ethnographic study on their notions and practices of magic in the context of community’s religious affiliation with the syncretic Islam. Although the existence of magic is recognized in the Islamic religion, its learning and practicing is generally forbidden. Every action (such as the use of amulets, talismans, etc.) aiming at bringing prosperity is also considered unacceptable. It is stated that only Allāh has the absolute power to bring benefit and to protect from harm (Surat Yunus 10: 49). Nevertheless, among Muslim Roma, as well as other Muslim communities in Bulgaria, the Qur’anic norms are not observed strictly, on the contrary, some interpretations of concepts and practices are contradictory, even absurd. In this regard, my research is focused on some of the Roma imams/bodžha (self-taught religious leaders), who, in addition to teaching, preaching and organizing religious rituals, are also known as ‘helpers’ or as holders of ‘magical’ powers - to perform and break spells, to give a ‘diagnose’ for the past and present, to explain past events or to predict the future. According to the field materials these religious or spiritual leaders maintain a blurred boundary between everyday ‘allowed’ and ‘unallowed’ behaviour in canonical perspective. They organize a system of beliefs and practices that seem to satisfy community members’ spiritual seeking and needs.

**Keywords:** magic, Muslim Roma, Islam, religious syncretism, imam/bodžha

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