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FROM WRITTEN TO ORAL TRADITION. SURVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION OF ST. SISINNIOS PRAYER IN ORAL GREEK CHARMS

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The Sisinnios prayer or Gylou story, part prayer part exorcism, is an ambiguous narrative enjoying an intercultural as well as a diachronic distribution. The text, which refers to the harmful influence and restraint – through the sacred intervention of Saints or an Angel – of a female demon bearing different names (Lilith, Gyllo, Werzelya, Veshtitsa/Aveshtitsa etc., depending on the particular ethnic culture from which it has emerged) has received substantial attention from researchers on an international scale. In the Greek tradition, in which this female demon is known as Gyllo, Gyloy, Yello or Yalou, there have been recordings of more than thirty versions of the text, spanning a time period from the fifteenth up to the early twentieth centuries. These recordings are located geographically in various different parts of Greece, and have been used within the framework of a folk religious context as a means of protection for newborn babies and their mothers. What is the effect of this particular story on the oral tradition of charms, i.e. on those charms which are orally transmitted and performed? What forms has it assumed, and which particular elements of the written tradition have been transmitted, incorporated, transformed, modified or omitted from charms in the process? The present study aims, on the one hand, to contribute further to the exploration of the well-known myth, and, on the other, to offer additional insight into the interaction between the written and oral tradition of charms in light of the fact that the Gylou story is particularly susceptible to those interpretational studies which focus on the crucial processes of incorporation and transformation of the written tradition in the field of oral charms.

Key words: Archangel Michael, Greek oral charms, exorcisms, Gylou story, female demon, folk religion, Saints, St. Sisinnios prayer, written/oral tradition.

INTRODUCTION

The text of the so called “St. Sisinnios prayer”, where a “child-stealing witch” (Gaster 1900), or a ‘child-harming’ / ‘child-killing’ female demon (Lyavdansky 2011: 19–20) afflicting new-born children, and pregnant or recently delivered women, has attracted and continues to attract the interest of many researchers of various scientific fields.¹ Traces of this story appear in magic plates, scrolls, lead amulets, pendants, illustrated magic manuscripts, frescoes, “over a time-

span of several thousand years in many cultures scattered widely around the eastern Mediterranean and in other parts of Europe” (Greenfield 1989: 140).² During its diachronic and cross-cultural journey the story has been used as a general and structural scheme for the symbolic representation of social fears and angst, inscribed in the collective subconscious, regarding afflictions which may occur to vulnerable social groups and especially at crucial times of the biological and social cycle of life, such as in pregnancy and in early childhood. Along this route the structural pattern of the story remained almost the same, though variants has appeared mainly in the female demon’s names (Abyzou, Lilith, Lilita, Malwita, Zardukh, Lamastu, Alabasandria, Gallu, Gyllo/Gylou, Werzelya, (A)veshtitsa, “Ebedisha,” etc.), and also in the names of sacred personae (Salomon, Sisinnios/Sisynios (and Synidores), Socinius, Sousnyos, prophet Elias, archangels Michael, Gabriel etc.) it features.³

In the Greek academic field, this prayer is well known by the name of the female demon as an exorcism of Gylou, also Gello, Gillou, Gillo, Iallou etc.⁴ (< ancient Greek Γελλώ [Gello], Byzantine/modern Greek Γελλού [Gellou], Γιλλού [Gillou]).⁵ A variety of researchers have extensively examined this text as it appears in Greek culture from the Byzantine period till nowadays.⁶ The most systematic analysis of the literary evolution of the Greek Gylou story remains, however, the approach of Greenfield (1989). In his research, Greenfield approaches the content and the types of the Greek Gylou story “over a span of almost six centuries and quite a wide geographical distribution [and] provides an important... insight into the process of traditional interaction, alteration and development which lies behind the contemporary, the encountered, forms of such popular belief” (Greenfield 1989: 140). His thorough examination, based upon thirty two more or less distinct versions of the story (Greenfield 1989: 90), resulted in the distinction of two basic motifs and types of this text: Sisinnios/Melitene type and the Michael type stories. According to Greenfield (Greenfield 1989: 92), “Of the thirty-two versions being considered, seven are of the Sisinnios/Melitene type, twenty two are of Michael type, and a further three contains versions of both types”. It is worth mentioning that in both types the same female demon presents herself by using several comprehensible as well as incomprehensible names the number of which varies from variation to variation and it ranges from 12 to even 72.⁷

In the first type (Sisinnios/Melitene type) the main characters opposed to the evil demon in a fairly elaborate narrative are St. Sisinnios and his relatives, particularly his sister Melitene. According to Greenfield (1989: 93) this type divides into five basic sections: 1) Introduction of Melitene who reveals the killing of her children by the evil demon Gylou; 2) the fresh pregnancy of Melitene and her effort of protecting herself by seeking refuge in a fortified castle; 3)

the visit by her saintly brothers (Sisinnios, one or two others), their admission after some debate, and the slipping through of Gylou (more often transformed into a fly) who kills the new baby in the night; 4) the chase, capture, torture of the malevolent demon by Melitene’s brother, and negotiation in order to make her give the children back – Gylou’s demand to drink human milk in order to give the children back is miraculously fulfilled and at least one child is given back; 5) Gylou is tormented again by saints and then reveals her secret names which work as an amulet against her.

In the Michael type story, the central role of the sacred personae is often undertaken by Archangel Michael or some other holy figure (Greenfield 1989: 92). This type, which follows a simpler encounter pattern contains three basic sections, the order of which varies from the text to text (Greenfield 1989: 104): 1) an encounter of the archangel Michael (or some other sacred figure) with the demon and description of demon’s appearance followed by archangel’s demand to know where she has come from and where she is going; 2) answers to these questions by giving an account of the demon’s actions which includes information concerning the disguises she may adopt and the harm and afflictions she may cause chiefly to babies and to women during the period immediately before or after giving birth (she may also be associated with a wider range of misfortunes); 3) the revelation, after being threatened, of her names which could be used as a preventive measure in an amulet or prayer against her harming actions.

The story of Gylou in any of the aforementioned types, and with greater or lesser differentiation, remained alive in Greek traditional culture till the middle of the twentieth century, both in the oral/folk and written/learned tradition. The two traditions where this text appears also represent two different systems of communicative technology and at the same time two different systems of transmission and performance which are in constant feedback and interrelationship. This paper aims at examining this interrelation and feedback, while giving special attention to the oral tradition of the story. To begin with, given that these issues have been approached in detail by previous scholars, we will briefly examine the written tradition of the text as well as the survivals and traces connected with legends, rituals and superstitions in the context of Greek traditional culture. Then we will try to detect traces of survival and modifications in the charms, in particular those which are orally transmitted and performed. More specifically, the main focus of this research will be on the forms which the story of Gylou has assumed and on the special elements which have been incorporated, transformed, modified, or even omitted, during the whole process.

1. THE WRITTEN TRADITION OF THE TEXT

The literary variants of the text (in both of its main types) survived in use until the early twentieth century. Eleven variants among the most recent ones dating from the eighteenth century to the beginnings of the twentieth follow the Archangel Michael type: three versions of the eighteenth century,⁸ four of the nineteenth century,⁹ two from a written manuscript of the priest Roboti,¹⁰ originating from the island of Lefkada and dated between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century.¹¹ The number of variants that follow the pattern of Melitene is much smaller. From the eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, four such variants have been documented: one in a manuscript dated to 1858 from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 43–45; HE4 in Greenfield 1989, 90), one dating from the middle of the nineteenth century (1862) from the town Konitsa in Epiros (Οικονομίδης 1956: 19–23; O3 in Greenfield 1989, 91), and one variant of a manuscript dating from 1830 from the town Sitia in Crete (Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 67–68; SP2 in Greenfield 1989, 91).¹² Finally, we should note the existence of three more recent variants including both types: one manuscript dated between the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 47–48; HE6 in Greenfield 1989: 91, 92) and two variants of the same period from the island of Naxos (Οικονομίδης 1940: 65–70; O1 and O2 in Greenfield 1989: 92).

The basic characteristics of the texts of the literary tradition are that the incantation is passed on written form and its performance is based on reading or writing the text (cf. χαρτί(α) της Ιαλλούς, γαλλουδοχάρτι(α) (paper(s) of Iallous), Οικονομίδης 1975–76: 260, Ημελλος 1965: 40 note 6, Στέλλας 2004: 137)¹³ – in the last case, the considered magic quality of those texts is transferred to the object on which they are inscribed that is then used as a protective amulet against the demons' attack (Ζερβός 1958: 253–54). All these variants are written in literary/scholarly language and are performed almost exclusively by priests. Additionally, it should be noted that the texts of exorcism of that type are not integrated in the frame of the officially recognized documents of religious practices, and often trigger conflicts with clergymen higher in the hierarchy (Οικονομίδης 1940: 65, 1975–76, 26, Στέλλας 2004: 137). They are not, however, regarded as improper within the frame of the folk religious system, since, on the one hand they are not in direct opposition with the concept of Christian perception, and on the other, they portray many similarities, primarily in the expression and content, with the officially recognised exorcisms and prayers. The fact remains, however, that they are based on a pre-Christian tradition and are used in parallel with recognised prayers.¹⁴

It is notable that almost all variants are in possession of priests often in manuscripts and codes of churches and monasteries (Ημελλος 1965: 40, 41).

This is not a paradox, since the clergy represent the main body of literacy in Greek traditional culture.¹⁵ Frequent ethnographic testimonies verify not only the ownership but also the performance of such texts by priests: “στο χωρίο Απεράθου του νησιού Νάξος συνηθιζόταν ο εξορκισμός να διαβάζεται σε παιδί που έπασχε από κακό μάτι ή άλλο κακό από ιερείς με τον τίτλο Χαρτί της Ιαλλούς” (*In the village of Aperathou in Naxos an exorcism entitled ‘Paper of Iallous’, was read by priests to a child suffering from the evil eye or other afflictions*) (Οικονομίδης 1975–76: 260). The variants that Kontomihis publishes derive from a book of blessings and exorcisms by papa-Roboti, who was a priest in Athani, and also a prominent chiropractor, a skilful doctor, and a mystifying exorcist (Κοντομίχης 1985: 62). The specific manuscript was passed on to the priest's son, also a priest, papa Gabriil Roboti, abbot of Faneromenis Monastery, and then to the successor priest in Faneromeni Monastery on the island, papa-Georgaki, who gave it to the collector (Κοντομίχης 1985: 62–63). Apparently this kind of exorcism has been current in many parts of Greece. It is certain that further research involving unpublished manuscripts will reveal an even greater number of variants.

2. THE ORAL TRADITION

Nonetheless, what happens with oral tradition, that is the tradition based on word-of-mouth transmission of information? The female demon is known of various dialectal variants such as Γελλού [Gellou], Ελλού [Ellou], Γιλλού [Gillou], Γ'λλου [G'llou], as well as Γιαλλού [Giallou] and Ιαλλού [Iallou],¹⁶ in many Greek areas (ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλού).¹⁷ Adequate ethnographic data validate the historical dissemination with trivial or vital differences. The semantic content of the name Gylou with its dialectal variants has incorporated various definitions, which are related directly or indirectly to the action of a female malevolent demon. The most common are: malevolent spirit which harms and kills infants; diseases of infancy; a monster that strangles sheep; a ghost that haunts pregnant women; a female child born on Christmas night; fairy and elf; a wicked (or immoral) woman who casts evil-eye spells.¹⁸ Numerous traditions and superstitions are found related to these meanings in different parts of Greece.

These traditions have been recorded and analytically presented by renowned Greek scholars (Oeconomides 1965, Οικονομίδης 1975, Αικατερινίδης 1990). The supplementary elements reported on this article simply substantiate and enhance the dissemination of this myth, which appears vast in areas where pertinent information supports the survival and parallel use of the literary variants.¹⁹ The correlation between the female demon and a woman who casts spells (or a female figure who follows a similar pattern of malevolent actions with fairies

and elves) is evident, even in those complementary testimonies. The following ethnographic testimonies from Paros are indicative of such a connection:

when the recently delivered woman became ill and died from fever, people presumed that Giallou had casted an evil eye spell. Every disease that either the baby or the recently delivered mother suffered, they said Giallou had cursed them. They still do so. (Στέλλας 2004: 137)

Giallou is the one who chases and casts evil eye spells on newborn and unbaptized children and that is why she can strangle them. (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37)²⁰

The malicious deeds of the female demon are not limited to harming newborns and parturient women, but expand to other people as often happens also in written tradition: “*She is the source of so many evils, that is she drinks, drains the milk of parturient women, destroys the fruit, the crops, sinks the ship and drowns the seamen and infects whatever she touches*” (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37).²¹

Evidence of literary tradition of the first type regarding the danger of Giallou’s invasion, is widespread and can be found those areas where the literary types are also used, for instance in Cycladic islands Paros and Naxos. According to ethnographic data from Paros:

As long as the recently delivered woman was unchurched [...] and even later, after having her child blessed by church, they avoided going to her house late at night, as Gialou would enter with them [...] The door was always leaning and was closed early. In dire need, the door would open, if a relative or a stranger knocked three times, formed crosses with his fingers and uttered sacred words. (Στέλλας 2004: 112–113)

Whoever entered the house knew that Gialou followed. [...] If she failed to enter she would imitate animal sounds and human voices, to trick them, to slightly open the door so that she could get inside in a prone position... But once she was indoors she would lay her big nails and squint-eyes to infect anything she touched. (Στέλλας 2004: 113)²²

Moreover, according to an account from Naxos:

The Yalou [local spelling] was a demon that trailed people to find an open door after midnight at houses of unbaptized children. The Yalou followed the person entering the house and killed the child. To protect her child a mother had to keep a cross made from cane and a piece of bread (on which she had traced the sign of the cross) beneath the child’s pillow [...] The unchurched mother was not even supposed to leave her baby for a moment, because, it was said, mice might eat it. A recently delivered mother

was not supposed to be left alone at all; in the evening no one besides her husband and close kin were supposed to enter the house. A breach of any of these interdictions, or contact with a corpse, meant loss of her milk. (Stewart 1991: 101)

Other historical evidence, with a wide dissemination in oral tradition, relates to the transformation of the female demon into a serpent²³. The following tradition from Paros is a characteristic example for this type of metamorphosis:

Gello (or presently and traditionally named Giallou) [...] was unmarried when she fell pregnant and died in labour. Since then seeking for vengeance, she turned into an evil elf. Incantations from Paros against reptiles and insects which torment humans refer to her as ‘ftavoutou’ or ‘efta voutou’ and ‘ftaloutrou or efta loutrou’ (one who dives in the seashore and showers seven times). Her infinite transformations are also seven (dragon, monster, snake, leaping or flying) in order to enter in wherever she desires. Habitually she dives into the seashore (Voutou, Loutrou) to transform, or to escape when being chased. Traditionally [...] she is referred to as: the one who lives in the seashore (gialou), the evil fairy (katsa aneragdou), the one who dives into the seashore (voutixtra), the one who casts an evil eye spell (ftarmistra), who is wicked (kakistra), who acts maliciously (striglistra) and the one who strangles babies (pniompaidou). (Στέλλας 2004: 136–37)²⁴

Her name is intentionally cited in incantations for protection against dangerous land reptiles, primarily used when people had to sleep outside to attend agricultural work. The following extracts of incantations “against dangerous land reptiles” are typical examples of this connection:

Αι Γιώργη μου,²⁵ δένε και χαλίνωνε τα συρνάμενα της γης,| τον όφη τσαι την όχεντρα,| την Ελλού τσαι τη Μαντού, |το μικρόν αγραλινάτσι [...]

St George, | bind and put a harness to the land reptiles, | the snake and the viper, | Ellou, Mantou | the small spider in the field [...]. (Kasos, Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1935: 21–22)

Αϊ- Γιώργη μετά σου| και κυρά Πεντακλησού,| δένε και χαλίνωνε| το Βραχνά και τη Γελλού,| τον όφη και την όχεντρα [...]

St George and Virgin Mary of the five churches, | bind and restrain | the nightmare and Gellou, | the snake and the viper [...]. (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 244)²⁶

Αι-Γιάννη βούθα μας, βούθα μας τριβούθα μας,| Τρεις αντζέλοι του Χριστού τσαι τρεις της Παναγιάς,| γέσετε, χαλινώσετε τα συρνούμενα της γης,| τα πονηρά της

νύχτας, την Γελλού, την Μαλλού, τη Ξαθού, τη Μιαλοτσεφαλού, τον όφιο, την όφιεντρα το σκορπιό, τη σκολόπεντρα, το μικρό το ρωλλάτσι| απουκάτω στο πλακάτσι, όσπα να βγ' ο ήλιος [...] να συνάξω τα σατσία μου| τσαι να μτσάσω τα παιδιά μου| τσαι να πάω στηβ βουλειά μου.

St. Ioanni, help us, thrice help us. | Three Angels of Christ and Virgin Mary, | bind and put a harness on the crawling land reptiles, | the evil of the night, Gellou, Mallou, Ksathou | Mialotsefalou ['who has a big head'], *the snake, the viper, the scorpion, the caterpillar, the poisonous bags | under the rocks until sunrise [...] | to collect my sacks, | to gather my children | and go to my work.* (Karpathos, Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1932: 159)²⁷

3. FROM WRITTEN TO ORAL TRADITION

3.1 THE MELITENE TYPE

Can we find charms in oral tradition which maintain traces from literary texts?²⁸ Yes indeed, both traces and fuller examples of both types are identifiable in incantations performed and transmitted orally, with variations either vital or trivial. Let us examine the following charm against the evil eye from the village of Asi Gonia in Chania (Crete), which was recorded by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 249– 251) in 1964:

Ως είχαν οι πέντε αδελφοί| κι είχανε μια αδελφή,| την κερά Μελετινή. Εννιά παιδάκια είχανε| κανένα δεν τ' απόμεινε. Πύργο χρυσό εκάνανε και μέσα την εβάλανε οι γι-αδελφοί τση. Και χάρη του Θεού ευρέθη βαρεμένη και έκανε αρσενικό παιδί. Κι ακούσανε οι γι-αδελφοί τση κι ετρέχανε, τα δόσια να δώσουν| τσι χαρές να κάμουν. Κατά χάρη Θεού εχτυπήσανε την πόρτα| και τη βρήκαν σφαλιστή. -Ανοιξε μας, αδελφή μας, τα δόσια να δώσουμε| τσι χαρές να κάμουμε. -Δεν σας ανοίγω, αδελφια μου, γιατί 'ναι η Σούδα, η Μούδα, η κακιά γειτόνισσα,| και θα μπει να μου πάρει των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. -Ανοιξε μας, αδερφή μας,| κι εμείς κρατούμε κουμπούρια, μαχαίρια, σκαπέτια| να τηνε σκοτώσουμε. Εκείνη δεν εγίνη μουλάρι γή μουσχάρι| να μπει να τση πάρει των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο,| μον' εγίνη μύγια| και εμπήκε κοιλιά κοιλιά του αλόγου| και τση πήρε των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. -Γλακάτε, αδέρφια μου,| πριν τον ποταμό περάσει,| πριν το σκαμνί τση κάτσει,| πριν το άντρα τση αγκαλιάσει,| να τση πάρετε των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. Εγλακούσαν και την εφτάξανε,| πριν τον ποταμό περάσει,| πριν το σκαμνί τση κάτσει,| πριν το άντρα τση αγκαλιάσει. -Να μαςε δώσεις των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο,| απού 'πήρες τσ' αδελφής μας. -Α δύνασθε να ξεράσετε| τση μάνας το γάλα, δύναμαι

κι εγώ να ξεράσω| των εννιά μηνών το παιδί, το συνωροκαμωμένο. Εγιαγείρανε γρινιασμένοι, χτικιασμένοι. Κατά χάρη Θεού ευρέθη μια προβατίνα, ψοφισμένη, βαρεμένη| και αρμέγουνε στσι καταπαλάμες τως το γάλα, και τση το πήγανε και το 'πιε| και ανατρόπιασε από τσι εβδομήντα δυο τση φλέγες| κι εξέρασε οβράκια, οφιδάκια, λιακονάκια| κι ένα παληκαράκι με τ' άρματα ζωσμένο.

There were five brothers | and they had one sister | lady Melitene. Nine children she had | yet none was left. | Her brothers built a golden tower and put her in it. | And with God's grace she got pregnant again | and gave birth to a boy. | And her brothers found out, and ran | to offer their gifts | and rejoice. | With God's grace they knocked at the door, | but it was locked. | – Let us in sister, for we have gifts to offer | and rejoice. | – I won't open my brothers, because there lurks Souda, Mouda, | the evil neighbour, | and she will invade to take my nine-month baby, the newborn. | – Let us in, our sister, | and we carry guns, knives, hoes | to kill her. | Yet she did not transform into a mule or a calf | to enter and take | the nine-month child, | the newborn, | but she became a fly and sneaked in, stuck on the horse's abdomen and took her nine-month child, | the newborn. | – Run, my brothers, | before she crosses the river, | before she sits on her stool, | before she hugs her husband, | take back from her the nine-month child, | the newborn. | They ran and approached her, | before she crosses the river, | before she sits on her stool, | before she hugs her husband. | – Give us back the nine-month child, | the newborn, | whom you took from our sister. | – If you can vomit | the mother's milk, then I can too gush out the nine-month child, | the newborn. | They returned distressed, disappointed, irritated. | With God's grace an ewe was unearthed, | dead, pregnant | and they milk it with their hands, | and took it to her to drink it | and she was terrified by her seventy-two veins | and threw up Jewish children, little snakes, little lizards | and an armoured young boy. (Against the evil eye, Αικατερινίδης 1990: 249–251)

We are undoubtedly presented here with a rhythmic oral variant of the well-known Melitene type, expressed in the regional dialect. Influences and correlations with almost all parts of literary variants of that type can be discerned. The charm begins by referring to Melitene and her brothers, as well as to the revelation of her children's loss, and it continues with her brother's attempt to protect her by building a tower (parts 1 and 2 of the literary examples). What follows then is a reference to her new pregnancy, the reason for her brothers' visit to her. Melitene's initial refusal to admit them results in her brothers reassuring her that they would protect Melitene's baby if necessary. Subsequently, the female demon, transformed into a fly, invades and kills the baby (part 3 in

the literary examples). The brothers chase and capture the female demon, and claim the baby back. Melitene's demand to drink the mother's milk in exchange for the child is met, resulting in her vomiting up the children (part 4 of the literary forms). The fifth part of the literary variants regarding the fresh torment of the demon and the disclosure of names is entirely omitted. Noticeably, this incantation retains the name 'Melitene' while having no reference to the name 'Gylou', which is rather replaced by a series of nonsensical words: Σούδα, η Μούδα [Souda, Mouda], someone who is identified with the evil neighbour ("η κακιά γειτόνισσα").

There are two more charms from Crete based on the equivalent tradition of Melitene type. These are variants recorded during the first decades of the twentieth century, and also used against the evil eye. Despite having evolved from this type, these incantations demonstrate more diversity compared with the literary variants. We cite here only one of the two (B), as they are both quite similar with but few differences.

Στ' όνομα του Χριστού και τ' αγίου Παντελεήμονα. | Ήτανε εννιά αδέρφια κι είχανε μιαν αδερφή. | Τη σπιτώσαν, την παντρέψαν | και την ενοικοκυρέψαν κι έκαμε και εννιά κοπέλλια. | Κι επήγαινε και τση τα τρωε η τσίγκρα, η μίγκρα, τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα. Κι έμαθα ντο οι γι-εννιά αδερφοί κι ευτύς εξεκινήσαν. | Ξανάστροφα ντυθήκανε κι ετσά καβαλλικέψαν | κι ούλοι τωνε ξανάστροφα τον ποταμό διαβαίνουν | και φτάνουνε ξανάστροφα στην πόρτα τσ' αδερφής των. -Πόρισε, αδερφή, ν' ανοίξεις | με το μαραμέν' αγείλι. | -Και πώς θα πορίσω, αδέρφια μου, που κάθετα στα κότσια τω μπεγριώ σας η τζίγκρα, η μίγκρα και τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα; | -Πόρισε, συ, αδέρφι μας, | μα 'μεις θα τηνε δείρομε, | θα τηνε μαγκλαβίσομε, | στον ποταμό θα τηνε ρίξομε και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι θα τση χτυπήσομε. | Κι εκείνη εσηκόθηκε ευτύς και των ανοίγει | κι η τσίγκρα τση θανάτωσε και τα εννιά κοπέλλια. | Κι εκείνοι την επιάσανε και την εδείρανε, στον ποταμό τη ρίξανε | και την εμαγκλαβίσανε, | και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι τση χτυπήσανε. | -Είντα σας έκαμα, μορέ, | και με δέρνετε, | με μαγκλαβίζετε, στον ποταμό με ρίχνετε | και με το μαυρομάνικο μαχαίρι μου χτυπάτε; -Να πάεις, τσίγκρα, μίγκρα, να μασε φέρεις τσ' αδερφής μας τα παιδιά. Και τότες επέρνα ο Χριστός κι ευλόησε στη χέρα ντου του μαύρου σφαχτού το γάλα κι ανασταθήκανε των εννιά αδερφώ τσ' αδερφής τα εννιά παιδιά. Καλόστροφα ντυθήκανε κι ετσά καβαλλικέψαν κι ετσά περνούν τον ποταμό στο σπίτι ντω γαέρνουν.

In the name of Christ and Saint Panteleimon. | There were nine brothers who had one sister. | They housed, married and settled her | and she gave birth to nine children. | And tsigra, migra, the creature born at a cursed moment, ate them. | And the nine brothers found out and set off | immediately. | Wearing their clothes back to front they rode their horses | and

crossed the river backwards | and so they reach their sister's door. | - Come out, sister, to open the door | with your sad face. | - And how should I let you in, my brothers, for tsigra, migra, the one born at a cursed moment, sits on your horses' legs; | - Let us in, our sister, | and we will beat her, | we will torture her, | throw her into the river | and with the black handled knife | will stab her. | And she immediately got up and let them in | and tsigra, migra killed her nine children. | And they caught and hit her, | and dumped her into the river | and tortured her, | and stabbed her with the black handled knife. | - What have I done to you, | and you beat me, | torture me, | throw me into the river | and with the black handled knife / stab me? | - Go, Tsigra, Migra, and bring our sister's children. | And it was then that Christ walked by and blessed with his hand the milk of a black slaughtered animal and the nine children of the nine brothers' sister resurrected. They put their clothes in the right way and rode their horses properly and in this way crossed the river and returned home. (Πάγκαλος 1983: 362-63)

The incantation begins with a general reference to the nine brothers with one sister whose children had been eaten by a female demon (part 1 of the literary examples). No names are mentioned. In the previous charm (A), the typical number 9 defined the number of children, whilst now 9 identifies the number of brothers. Here, the female demon is described as *τσίγκρα, η μίγκρα, τση κακής ώρας το γέννημα (tsigra, migra, the creature born at a cursed moment)*.²⁹ The new pregnancy of the sister along with the building of the castle to protect her newborn children are not cited (part 2 of literary forms). The indication of how the female demon entered into the castle (part 3 of literary types) is evident only in Melitene's words to her brothers when they plead her to open the door of the castle.³⁰ Omissions and vital differences emerge in the pursuit of, torture of, arrest of, and negotiations with the female demon (part 4 of the literary examples). In the final part of this oral charm a sacred figure, Christ, appears, blesses the milk of a slaughtered animal and consequently the children return. Nevertheless, the role of the milk and how the female demon gave the children back are not specified. The fifth part of the literary variants regarding the fresh torment of the demon and the disclosure of names is also omitted. The discernible adaptations and modifications, which come up when we compare and contrast this charm with the previous one, are anticipable. Undeniably, the structural frame of this incantation is the literary variant of the Melitene type.

Indirect confirmations and distant traces of the Melitene type appear in another incantation (C) from the oral tradition, once again documented in Crete.

Θάρμισε μια γυναίκα ένα παιδί κι απόθανε. | Της έδωσαν τότε γάλα ψοφισμένης προβατίνας, | το πιε, εξέρασε ό,τι είχε θιαρμισμένα. | Ως τα ξέρασε αυτά | να ξεράσει το αίμα της καρδιάς του, | αφού εθιάρμισε τον [...].

A woman casted the evil eye on a child and the child died. | Then they gave her milk from a dead ewe, | drank it and vomited whatever she had casted. As she vomited those, | the blood from his heart of one who casted the evil eye on the [...] (name of afflicted child), should similarly gush out. (Against the evil eye, Χριστοδουλάκης 2011: 287)

In this charm, which uses the parallel type, the objective element of the charm is designated in the form of narration (Πασσαλής 2000, 200) and associated with two basic aspects of the story. Firstly with the milk used to restore the damage and secondly with the vomiting of children.³¹

3.2 THE MICHAEL TYPE

Are there charms in oral tradition that retain elements or traces of the written literary Michael type? The described encounter upon which this type is structured, is common to the oral tradition of the current Greek charms. It actually constitutes a characteristic structural frame of a wide category of Greek oral incantations (Πασσαλής 2000: 176–177), which rely on the encounter of a sacred person with an evil power who is often bound to cause harm. The order that the core characters appear in is of no importance. The following stereotypical dialogue is of this form: ‘–Where are you going? – I’m going to harm that person’. The second part includes the therapeutic intervention of the supporting persona who dispels the demonic figure and usually exiles it to secluded, inaccessible places where it is unable to cause harm, thus annulling its malevolent activity.

Some oral incantations, which are apparently associated with the second type of the story, are exemplified here as case in point. In these examples (D and E) the assisting power is either Archangel Michael (D) or another sacred persona, usually the Christ (E), while the malevolent agent is a female demonic figure related, either directly or indirectly, to Gylou.

Ως άστραψε η ανατολή κι εκίνησεν η δύση | εκίνησ’ η κερά Καλή να πα να κυνηγήσει, | ξανάστροφα καβαλλαρέ και τα μαλλιά τση κάτω. Μιχαήλ Άγγελος τσ’ απαντήχνει και τση λέει: | ‘Πού πάεις, κερά Καλή, κερά Καλικωμένη, | ξανάστροφα καβαλλαρέ και τα μαλλιά σου κάτω;’ | –Πάω κοράσια να μαράνω, οζά να ξελερώσω, βούγια να ξεξευλώσω, τση κακής μάννας το γιο να θανατώσω. | –Μη πάς κοράσια να μαράνεις, οζά να ξελερώσεις, βούγια να ξεξευλώσεις, τση κακής μάννας το γιο να θανατώσεις. Μόνο να πας στα όρη στα βουνά, να βρεις τ’ άγριν λάφιν να μπεις στο κεφάλι του και να σχαμουριέσαι κιόλας.

After the sunset, at twilight | the Good Lady set off to go hunting, | riding her horse backwards with her hair down. | Michael the Angel meets her and asks: | “Where are you going, my fine Lady, my good Lady | riding your horse backwards with your hair down? | –I am going to wither girls, harm animals, unyoke oxen, kill the bad mother’s son. | – Do not go to wither girls, unyoke oxen, kill the bad mother’s son. But, do go away in the mountains, find the stag, penetrate its head and yawn. (Therissos, Βαρδάκης 1926–28: 245)

Ο Χριστός επήαινε τσ’ η Ελλού του πάντηξε. –Πού πάεις, Ελλού αρκαοντυμένη; – Πάω να κάμω μάννα τσαι κόρη να σφαιί, καλόν αντρώου να μαχιστεί, καλού οσκού μαντρί να ξεκουδουνώσω, καλό θεμέλιο να ρίξω κάτω, καλό δενδρί να ξεριζώσω, καλής σκρόφας ουρούνια να μαράνω. –Στρέψ’ απ’ αυτού, Ελλού, τσ’ άμε στο γυρογάλι, που ’χει άλοο σιεροπόι, σιεροκάλικο τσαι μελανό συκώτι. Από ’τσει να φάεις τσ’ από τσει να μπτσεις τσαι λείψ’ αυτού τους χριστιανούς τους θεοφοούμενους.

The Christ set out and encountered Ellou. –Where are you going Ellou in your scales?– I am going to trigger conflict between a mother and a daughter, make a good couple quarrel, destroy the pen of a good shepherd, pull down every solid foundation, uproot a good tree, kill a good sow’s piglets. –Turn back, Ellou, and go by the shore where a strong horse with a cast-iron leg on an iron horseshoe and a black liver stands. You shall eat there and go away from the devout Christians. (Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1935: 14–15)

What is actually portrayed in incantations D and E? The former illustrates a female demon that, though not named, is obviously a demonic female power on the verge of causing harm. The latter depicts a dialect variation of the name Gellou as Ελλού [Ellou]. In Ellou’s response, in D, we also identify a correlation with her wicked activity towards children and women, also evident in incantation E, yet having a more generalized effect. However, regarding the way the sacred figure confronts the female demon, there is no indication of any influence of literary tradition on the relevant part of either incantations. Conversely, this part follows the common element of the expulsion of the hostile power, which is typically encountered in many evil-eye charms (Πασσαλής 2000: 181–182). In these incantations the female demon is the personified figure of the evil-eye spell (αβασκαντήρα, βασκαντήρα, βασκα-βασκανία [avaskantira, vaskantira, vaska-vaskania]):³²

Κίνησ’ αβασκαντήρα, χαλκομαντλισμένη, χαλκοποδιμένη, χαλκοτσιμπερωμένη. Στη στράτα, που πάγαινε, Χριστός ν’ απάντησε [...].

Avaskantira set off wearing kerchief and copper shoes. On her way she encountered Christ [...]. (Ρούσιας 1912–13: 51)

Κίνησε βασκαντήρα, βασκαμένη,| ανάποδα μαντ'λισμένη,| ανάποδα τιμπερωμένη
ανάποδα φορεμένη. | Τα δέντρα ξεερριζώνοντα. | Και τα β'να ραΐζοντα [...] Νε βρήκε
Χριστός και Παναΐα κι' ν' αρωτήσανε. –Πού πας, βασκαντήρα [...].

*There goes vaskantira wearing her kerchief and clothes back-to-front. |
The trees are uprooted and the mountains crack [...] Christ and Virgin
Mary found her and asked – “Where are you going, vaskantira” [...].* (Evia,
Σέττας 1976: 280)

Βάσκα βασκανία, [...] Ο Χριστός και τ' Άγιο πνεύμα κι η κυρά η Παναγία [...] Ήρθε
και επέρασε ο Μιχαήλ αρχάγγελος [...].

*Vaska vaskania, [...] Christ and the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary [...] There
comes and goes archangel Michael [...].* (Mani, Τσουμελέας 1912–13: 289)

Is it plausible to claim that these oral incantations follow the literary Archangel Michael type? Although the elements of such an association are traceable, it is difficult to support this conclusion. So what is real situation? The study of the variants of this type demonstrates that traces of the literary story were embedded into a predetermined frame of oral incantations which either preceded or simply existed in parallel with the literary use of this type. Not surprisingly, instances of an encounter with a male personification of the evil eye (βαμός, δαρμός, φταρμός, λουλλ^dας, χαρκάς [vamos, darmos, ftarmos, tharmos, loull^das, charkas]) are much more frequent.³³ The initial frame upon which the myth was adapted involved the encounter of a sacred power with a male personified figure of the evil. This is illustrated in one incantation by the change of the female name Ellou into the male Ελλουάς [Ellouas]:

Ο Χριστός επήαινε, ο Ελλουάς του πάντηξε, είπε του: ‘Πού πάεις καρκαντυμένε,
καρκαπαωμένε, καρκάν την όψην έχεις τσαι μελανόν συκώτι’; – ‘Πάω να κάμω μάν-
να τσαι κόρη να σφαού, καλόν αντρόνο να χωρίσει, καλά αέρφ’τσα να κατακόψω,
καλά ’ουρούνια να μαράνω, [...].’

*Christ was on his way, when Ellouas met him and told him: “Where are
you heading off dressed in scales, with sharp expression and a black liver?”
– “I am going to make a mother and a daughter argue, to separate a good
couple, to harm good brothers, to kill fine pigs [...].”* (Kasos, Μιχαηλίδης-
Νουάρος 1935: 13)

In the above mentioned oral charms, we observe the literary incident of the story of Gylou modified into a rhythmic³⁴ narrative, oral charm and formulated with the regional lay dialect, in the form of a separate narration of an incident

happened in the distant past. It is worth mentioning that all the documented charms of this type are for use against the evil eye and have been recorded in various parts of Crete, including in the same geographical district of Chania. Incantation A was recorded by Αικατερινίδης (1990) in 1986 in the village Asi Gonia, western of Chania county, while the two equivalent ones, are documented by the same collector, during the first decades of the twentieth century. One in Nio Chorio situated northeast of the county of Chania in the area called Kismamos, whereas the other in the area Armeni in the central part and northwest of the county in the province Apokoronas. There is no information about the area of documentation for the third charm (C). However it originates from Crete. It is by no means coincidental that all the variants derive from an area where there is a confirmed parallel use of the literary exorcism of that type (Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 67–68). What is also noteworthy is that the first incantation, recorded in the second half of the twentieth century, is the most inclusive and the closest to the literary variation, illustrating that the tradition of the Melitene type remains alive and endures throughout the twentieth century. Research would certainly reveal further variants of the same type at least in Crete, within a region where, in addition to the documented literary variants of the story, sufficient testimonies have been acquired for the dissemination of the legend since the Venetian era³⁵.

4. THE CONNECTION WITH THE EVIL EYE

The association of the evil eye spell with disfigured external features of women is well disseminated in Greek oral tradition. Such women are even called γελλούδες [gelloudes]³⁶ and are often mentioned in incantations against the evil eye spell (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 241):

Η Παναγία η Δέσποινα ελούσθη, εχτενίσθη,| στο χρυσό της θρανίο έκατσε| και
περάσανε οι γελλούδες, [...] και μαδήσαν τα μαλλιά της και φυράζαν τα βυζά της. |
Ο Δεσπότης Χριστός περνά και την ρωτά [...].

*The Virgin Mary washed and combed her hair, | sat on her golden throne |
and gelloudes went by [...] | and her hair fell and her breast withered. |
Christ went by and asked her [...].* (Against the evil eye, Crete, *Κουτουλάκη*
1962: 196–97)

The effect of the evil eye spell cast by gelloudes targets everyone, yet it primarily aims at small children. In the incantation (A) against the evil eye spell which evolves from the Melitene type, Gylou is substituted by the wicked neighbor. Γελλούδα [Gellouda] is also the name of a disease affecting small children, caused

by the malicious deeds of these women who curse the child, speak ill of it and cast the evil eye spell (Αικατερινίδης 1990: 252), while in the island of Kalimnos the children who suffer from this disease are called γιαιλουτζιασμένα [giailoutziasmena] (Ζερόβος 1958: 253). In Crete, to deal with this disease they follow a ritual called the stabbing of gellouda.³⁷ The root cause of those women's deeds is hatred. Unsurprisingly, ζήλα [zila (jealousy)] is included in the catalogue of women with malformed external characteristics, who encounter Virgin Mary and cast the evil eye spell (Cyprus, Κυριαζής 1926: 90–91, Κυπριανός 1968: 178, Σπανός 1993: 304).

Testimonies and evidence of the correlation between hatred, jealousy, the evil eye spell and the prayer of Saint Sisinnios are documented much earlier from a wide category of extant bronze or copper pendant-amulets which “are attributable to the early Byzantine period (sixth/seventh century)” (Spier 1993: 60)³⁸. These amulets, according to Spier (ibid. 61–62):

show on one side the nimbate ‘rider saint’ spearing the female demon, and on most examples he is accompanied by an angel who raises one wing [...] Especially characteristic of the group is the use of the formula (in several variants): ‘Flee, detested one, Solomon (or Sisinnios and Sisinnarios, or a similar phrase) pursues you...’ [...] The reverses depict complex scenes mixing magical images of the Evil Eye (once labelled <ΦΘΟΝΟΣ>, envy, serpents, lions and the female demon, [...])³⁹

Indicative of this connection is the amulet (see figure 1) first published in *Revue des Études Grecques* (Schlumberger 1892: 74).⁴⁰ Possibly the female demon of the prayer had formerly been connected to the evil eye spell in oral tradition. Equally, the charms elements were considered as particularly efficient against the evil eye spell. In a variation of the Archangel Michael type prayer on a 15th century codex (Parisinus 2316, 318^v ff, Reitzenstein 1904: 297–98), the female demon whom Archangel meets and confronts is cold: βασκοσύνη [vaskosini] (=evil eye). Perdrizet (1922: 24) comments on the occurrence of that name, and remarks: “Quant à βασκοσύνη aucun nom ne saurait mieux convenir à notre diablesse l’envie, la jalousie étant le caractère essentiel des esprits du Mal, et la fascination, le mauvais oeil, leur moyen de nuire le plus redoutable”.⁴¹



Figure 1. ΦΘΟΝΟΣ (envy), “Seal of Solomon, Dispel any evil from the one who bears it”. Amulet of sixth / seventh century against envy (early Byzantine period). (Schlumberger 1892: 74)

Although the evil-eye is a common infection and subject matter of many texts for exorcism, in some of which is personified (Reitzenstein 1904: 295, cod. Parisinus 2316), a direct connection between Gylou and the evil eye is not frequent in the literary variants of the text. Importantly, the term βασκοσύνη [vaskosini (evil eye)] in the previously cited exorcism is not included in the list revealed by Gylou herself. The name βασκανία [vaskania (evil eye)], as part of the name list for the female demon, is only found in a more recent variant, belonging to a priest in the village Vourtsi in Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 47). The citation of this name is probably a recent addition by a scribe, also a priest (Ημελλος 1965: 41) while copying from another priest's document, or is attributable to the widespread association of the evil eye spell with the deeds of a female demon in folk tradition. The influence of the lay oral ritual on the literary tradition of the text is depicted in one of those exorcisms (Ημελλος 1956: 43) of the same area, when the priest read it to the child suffering from fever or the evil eye (Ημελλος 1956: 50 note 3).

CONCLUSION

Undeniably, traces and influences of the literary variants of both the Melitene and the Archangel Michael type have affected the formation, structure and narration of modern oral Greek charms. Specifically, the Melitene literary type changes into a rhythmic narrative oral incantation, expressed in the regional dialect preserving sufficient elements of the original myth with the expected modifications and transformations which rule the production and reproduc-

tion of the oral incantations. Nonetheless, the survival of this type is limited and it is mainly encountered in those areas of Crete where we have a certified, parallel use of its literary variants. In this area the myth of this female demon stays alive at least until the mid twentieth century.

It is more difficult to detect existing literary variants of the Michael type. Features of this type are traced in oral incantations which are structured upon the pattern of the encounter between an evil power and a sacred person. The influence of the literary type upon those incantations is plausible solely in that part of the oral charms related to the encounter between the core characters and their subsequent stereotypical dialogue. Conversely, in these oral charms the part referring to the extermination of the evil power does not follow the literary variants, but instead a different but recognizable pattern of expulsion. The study of the variants of this type demonstrates that traces of the literary story were embedded into a predetermined frame of oral charms which either preceded or simply existed in parallel with the literary use of this type.

It has also been inferred that the sections including the disclosure of the names of the female demon are omitted. The latter omission can be easily explained as it is associated, on the one hand, with the change of function of the text, and on the other, with the communicative technology applied for its transmission and performance of oral charms (Passalis 2011a). The reading or writing of the literary forms functions as a preventive, precautionary measure against affliction which may affect newborn babies and also women during the period before or after they give birth. The change of function of text into being a therapeutic healing measure against an affliction which has already struck removes the need to mention these names. Moreover, the communicative technology of oral charms is based on verbal and memorial transmission and performance (Passalis 2011a). This also constitutes a basic factor preventing the retention of numerous (ranging from 12 to 72) and to a large extent the incomprehensible, nonsensical names by the charm's users.

All the variants of both types are almost exclusively performed against the evil eye. The fact that is that the context of an oral magico-religious system the evil eye is considered as a broad category of affliction connected with pregnant, parturient women and small children facilitated the association with Gylou. Evidence and testimonies of this widespread connection in lay tradition have been recorded much earlier in amulets/pendants. This explains the usages of literary exorcisms of Gylou against the evil eye or even the occurrence of the names of Gylou as 'Vaskosini' or 'Vaskania' in them. Finally, the comparative study of the literary types and the lay oral incantations of Gylou is a good example of the interrelation between the written and oral tradition of charms as well as of its feedback which is considered evident in the effect of the writ-

ten tradition; it is often difficult, however, to validate this interrelation in its reverse route from the lay to literary or from the oral to the written.

NOTES

- ¹ The historical approach of the prayer from different perspectives has resulted in a wide and extensive bibliography on this topic. Some of the most representative studies are: Gaster 1900; Perdrizet 1922; Winkler 1931; Barb 1966; Müller 1974; Greenfield 1989; Naveh & Shaked 1998: 111–122, 188–197; Spier 1993; Ryan 2006. For a broader and more detailed representative bibliography see Greenfield 1989, 83–84 note 1. See also note 3. Indicative of the increased interest in the Sisinnios prayer is the cross cultural project titled “The Sisinnios Prayer in literature, fine arts and magic rituals (Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Eastern Africa)” that is currently under process by the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH) under the supervision of Andrei Toporkov, Lecturer at the Marc Bloch Russian-French Centre for Historical Anthropology, at the Russian State University for the Humanities (RSUH).
- ² Indicative of the history and survival of the story is the title of Gaster's (1990) article: “Two Thousand Years of a Charm against the Child-Stealing Witch”. According to Lyavdansky (2011: 20) “the concept in question may have been born in Ancient Mesopotamia, not later than in the Old Babylonian period (1800–1600 BCE). It was borrowed by adjacent Aramaic-speaking people in Syria, as attested by the text from Arslan Tash (ca. 7th c. BCE), and by the creators of Aramaic magic bowls in Sassanian Mesopotamia (5th–7th cc. CE). It is most natural to think that the ‘strangling female demon’ was inherited by the Syriac charm tradition from the tradition of Aramaic magic bowls together with many other figures, motives and formulas common to these two traditions”. It worth also noting that archaeological discoveries, mainly amulets, pendants, defixiones, iconographic representations have permitted a more holistic approach of this tradition, since its interpretation and decodification extends the limits of the written text, see Perdrizet 1922; Müller 1974: 91–102; Spier 1993; Naveh & Shaked 1998; Grotowski 2009: 74–85; Giannobile 2004; cf. also Toporkov 2011 for iconographic survival in Russian religious icons.
- ³ Details about the origin and the types of the female demon as well as of the sacred figures which face it see Gaster 1883: 393–397; 1900: 134–162; *Fries* 1891: 55–70; Basset 1894; Gaster Th. H 1947; Barb 1966; Dujčev 1967; West D. 1991; Burkert 1992: 82–87; Spier 1993; West M. 1997; Fulgum 2001: 142; Ullendorff 2006: 79–82; Lyavdansky 2011: 19–20.
- ⁴ In this paper, the female demon's name will be spelled mainly as Gylou, as it appears in Greenfield study (1989); various other spellings in this paper correspond to the forms found in the texts and to its dialectical variants as found in ethnographic data. For the dialectical variants of the name see below in the section 2 concerning the oral tradition of the texts.
- ⁵ The name of the female demon Gello is attested in a poem by the ancient Greek poet Sappho (Γελλώ παιδοφιλωτέρα, [*Gello paidophiloterá*]), a fragment of which is registered by Zenobius Sophista (2. c. a.); for other testimonies found in texts of ancient and later Greek literature see *Οικονομίδης* 1965: 329–330 and Hartnup 2004: 35, 85–86, 149–150.

The tradition of the female demon Gylou continues to exist uninterrupted during the Byzantine period (Hartnup 2004: 85–95; Patera 2006: 312–315) until today.

- ⁶ Greek exorcisms of Gylou have been published by Greek and foreign scholars. Allatius (1645: 129–133, 133–135) in the mid 17th century published two exorcisms in Latin translation; one of these is also edited by Worrell (1909: 158–161), while the second by Winkler (1931: 109–110); both the exorcisms of Allatius are also published by Gaster (1900: 143–148). Iriarte (1769: 423–24) reports a text from manuscript of Biblioteca Nacional 105 of Madrid (15th century). The reports of text variants increased at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th. Legrand (1881: xviii) reports a text of Parisinus graecus 2316 (15th century); the same text with some slight variants is reported by Reitzenstein (1904: 298–99), Winkler (1931: 112) and Worrell (1909: 162). The ones who follow are: Vasiliev (1893: 336–337) who publishes two texts (of 15th century) from the codex Neapolitanus II C 33 and Barberin. III 3; Rouse (1899: 162, Kalymnos, 18th century), Dmitrievskij (1901: 118–19, nineteenth c.); Pradel (1907: 275–76), who presents two variants from Marcianus Graecus II 163 (16th c.); Reitzenstein (1904: 297–98) from Parisinus Graecus 2163 (15th century), Janiewitch (1910: 627, 18th century); McCown (1922: 43–45) who reports three texts from Holkham Hall 99 (15th–16th century; Delatte (1927: 248–249) who presents one from a manuscript of the National Library of Greece 825 (beginning of the 19th century), and finally Greenfield (1989: 86–90) who publishes one from Bodleian Library of Oxford (d’Orville 110, 15th century). As for the Greek scholars, Σάθας (1876: 573–577) reports three texts from Parisinus Graecus 395 (15th–16th century), Ημελλος (1965: 41–48) reports six variants, 4 of which from a manuscript of mid nineteenth century from Amorgos, and the other two of the end of the nineteenth – beginning of the 20th century, while Οικονομίδης (1940) reports two exorcisms of the end of nineteenth-beginning of the 20th century from Naxos (1940: 65–70) as well as one more by a manuscript from Epirus (Konitsa) of mid nineteenth century (1956, 19–23). Also, Σπυριδάκης (1941–42: 61–62, 67–68) reports two texts from Crete (Sitea) (mid nineteenth century). Two more exorcisms of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries are reported by Κοντομίχης (1985: 51, 262–263, 266), whereas a variation of the beginning of the 18th century from an unpublished manuscript from the area of Merampellou in Crete is reported by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 247–48). Of exceptional importance is, also, the oldest surviving exorcism of this kind, found on a Cypriot inscription of the 8th century in Cyprus and published by Giannobile (2004). The majority of the aforementioned variants have been a subject of comparative study by Greenfield 1989, which remains the most complete approach to the text so far.
- ⁷ For a comparative presentation of the names see Gaster 1989 and Giannobile 2004: 752 (Tabella 1).
- ⁸ Delatte 1927: 111, DE1 in Greenfield 1989: 91; Janiewitsch 1910: 927, JA in Greenfield 1989: 91; Rouse 1899: 162, RO in Greenfield 1989: 92.
- ⁹ Ημελλος 1965: 41–43, HE1, HE2, HE3 in Greenfield 1989: 90; Σπυριδάκης 1941–42: 61–62, SP1 in Greenfield 1989: 91), one from the late nineteenth century (Dmitrievskij 1901: 118–119, DM in Greenfield 1989: 90) and one dated between the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, from the island of Amorgos (Ημελλος 1965: 45–47, HE5 in Greenfield 1989: 91).
- ¹⁰ Κοντομίχης 1985: 51, 262–263, 266), and another one, which is published by Αικατερινίδης (1990: 247–48) from an unpublished manuscript of eighteenth century from the area

of Merambellou (Crete).

- ¹¹ The remaining variants of this type are older and dated as follows: seven variants of the 15th century (Iriarte 1769: 423–24, IR in Greenfield 1989: 90; Legrand 1881: 298–99, LE in Greenfield 1989: 90; Reitzenstein 1904: 297–298, RE in Greenfield 1989: 90; McCown 1922: 43–45, TSH, TSL, in Greenfield 1989, 91; Vassiliev 1893: 618–619, VA1, VA2 respectively in Greenfield 1989: 91).
- ¹² The remaining variants of this type are older and are dated as follows: one from the 15th century (Greenfield 1989: 86–88, 90), two variants dated between the 16th and the 17th century (Allatius 1645: 133–35; Σάθας 1876: 573–75; AL2 and SA1 respectively in Greenfield 1989: 91, 92) and one variant of the first half of the 17th century (Allatius 1645: 126–29; AL2 in Greenfield 1989: 90).
- ¹³ Cf. also “Some old women in Apeiranthos recall that they used to read the *yalou* prayer [*kharti tsi yalous*] so that the exotika would not come to strangle their children at night” (Stewart 1991: 101).
- ¹⁴ For the relationship between the exorcisms and the standard worship see Daniélou 1961: 1995–2004. For the Church’s official statement regarding charms and exorcisms see Κουκουλές 1948: 46–47, 240–41 and Παπαδόπουλος 1926: 232–233.
- ¹⁵ See Goody 1989: 16; cf. “The nineteenth century as well as the early part of the 20th teem with evidence indicating that the priests themselves were the performers of these practices and that they were also the holders of black magic scripts as well as medical manuscripts” (Passalis 2011b: 5, 6).
- ¹⁶ The name Ιαλλού [Iallou] is connected etymologically from the noun γιάλος [gialos= seashore, beach], defined as a residence of elves and demonic spirits.
- ¹⁷ The dissemination and extensive use of the word is illustrated by a number of derivatives (nouns and verbs), such as (Α)γελλούδα/Γιαλλούδα [(A)gellouda/Gialluda] (ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλούδα), Γιαλλουδάκι [Gialloudaki] (ibid., s.v. Γελλουδάκι), Ελλούι [Elloui] (ibid., s.v. Γελλούδι), γιαλλουδιάζω /γιαλλουδιασμένος [gialloudiazō, gialloudiasmenos] (ibid., s.v. γελλουδιάζω), Γιαλλούρα [Gialloura] (ibid., s.v. Γελλούρα) etc.
- ¹⁸ ΙΑ, s.v. Γελλού. See also Αικατερινίδης 1990: 237 and Oeconomides 1965: 328–29.
- ¹⁹ Cf. for relevant testimonies in areas where the tradition of Gellou remains alive: “Some old women in Apeiranthos recall that they used to read the *yalou* prayer (*kharti tsi yalous*) so that the exotika would not come to strangle their children at night” (Stewart 1991: 101); see also Στέλλας 2004: 137.
- ²⁰ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²¹ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²² The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.
- ²³ The connection of Gellou with reptiles and snakes is widely spread. In many literary traditions Gylou responds to Michael’s question
- “[t]hat she enters into houses as a snake, and as a serpent and a winged lizard and that she drinks women’s milk that she claws at the eyes at the eyes of small children

and she strangles infants, she hurls fruit down trees and she dives into the sea and pull many under so that they drown” (Stewart 1991: 101).

²⁴ The translation in English from the Greek text is mine.

²⁵ Where the symbol | appears in the article, it denotes change of verse in case of a rhythmical registered oral charm.

²⁶ In almost all mentioned charms against a dangerous reptile it is worth noting the connection between Gellou and St. George, who according to Orthodox illustrations, is portrayed riding a horse and killing a serpent with his spear; for the correlation between St. Sisinnios and St. George see Κουρίλας 1957: 49–50 and Ήμελλος 1965: 48–49.

²⁷ In incantations against nightmare Gellou is, also, included among factors related to its emergence (Karpathos, Μιχαηλίδης–Νούρος 1932: 160).

²⁸ The examination of this issue is challenging due to the lack of a full compilation and publication of Greek incantations. Yet, we will attempt to the best possible extent an accurate insight based on a collection of 4000 incantations in my personal archive. Indisputably, future research and the discovery of additional charms could throw further light on the issue.

²⁹ These are nonsensical words which often appear in charms against the evil eye or to cure various diseases of the eye. For their meaning see Πασσαλής 2000: 295, 296 and Passalis 2012: 12.

³⁰ In an equivalent variant (Crete, Πάγκαλος 1983: 363–64) this fact is integrated in the narrative, as it is stated that the female demon invaded from κότσια τω μπεγιριώ (the legs of horses).

³¹ The previous charm is portrayed as an independent one. However, the same charm, except for trivial differences, is evident in the last part of another incantation against the evil eye (Χριστοδουλάκης 2011: 273–274).

³² A similar incantation against disease caused by malevolent spirits (αερικό), following the same pattern, the female figure is called Φασκατίδα (Faskatida, went with clean and combed hair [...] Christ encountered her [...], my translation) (Megara, Βλάχου 1959: 549–50).

³³ “Εξεκίνησε ο βαμός, ο δαρμός, | ο καταποντισμός, | τη κακής ώρας ο γιος, | να πάει στα όρη στα βουνά, | πάνω στσι μαδάρες, | οζά να ξελερώσει, | βούγια να ξεζελώσει, | δεντρά να ξερριζώσει, | αλώνια να ξεσταλικώσει | και τη καλής μάνας το γιο να βρη να θανατώσει. | Και ο Χριστός τ’ απάντηξε στο δρόμο που πορπάθιε | κι εντός τον αναρώτηξε και λέει του [...]”

(There he goes, vamos (=evil eye), darmos, | the disaster, | the cursed moment’s son, | to reach the mountains, on steep bushy areas, | to take off animals’ bells and destroy them, | to unyoke oxen, | to uproot trees | to destroy grains, | to find and kill the good mother’s son. | Then, Christ met him on his way and instantly asked him [...]) (Against evil eye, Πάγκαλος 1983: 359–60);

“Ο φταρμός επήγαινε κι ο Χριστός του ’πάντηξε. | –Πού πας φταρμέ, πρικοφταρμέ; –Πάω να βρω άγκουρα να μαράνω, | λιγερή να καψοφλοήσω, μωρά παιδιά να ζεματίσω [...]”

(While ftarmos was going ahead, Christ met him. | – Where are you going, Ftarme, bitter Ftarme? – I am going to find children to wither, | a pretty girl to burn | to flame, |

to scorch babies [...]) (Against evil eye, Crete, Φραγκάκι 1949: 48–49);

“Ο θαρμός, ο καϊμός, | τη ξαναστροφης ο γιος, | επήγαινε | στα δίστρατα στα τρίστρατα. Οι Άγιοι Σαράντα τον συνάντησαν και τον ρώτησαν [...]”

(Tharmos, kaimos (torture), the odd mother’s son, | off was going | to crossroads. | When Agioi Saranta (forty saints) encountered him and asked him [...]) (Against wounding and the evil eye, County Kidonia Crete, Βαρδάκης 1926–28: 246);

“Ως εκίνησ’ ο φταρμός, ο καημός... Αϊ Γιώργης, Αϊ Γιαννης κι Άγιος Παντελέημος του ’παντήξανε και του λένε [...]”

(As ftarmos, kaimos set off... St Georgios, St. Ioannis and St Panteleimonas met him and told him [...]) (Against evil eye, Crete, Παπαδάκη 1938: 520);

“[...] λουλλδάν απάντησε. Ο Χριστός το ρώτησε(v) [...]”

(Christ encountered Loulldan and asked [...]) (Salakos Rhodes, Παπαχριστοδούλου 1962: 74–75);

“Χαρκάς, περνάει, πάνω ζωσμένος, κάτω ζωσμένος, | ανάποδα καβαλλικεμένος [...]”

(Charkas goes by armoured all over his body, | riding the horse backwards [...]) (Lefkes Paros, Κορρές 1966: 113–14).

At this point it is essential to emphasize that, according to the evidence we have, the pattern of the encounter of a sacred assisting persona with a male wicked demon is more widespread and found in incantations against the evil eye spell.

³⁴ The main characteristic of the rhythmic structure is the lack of a common rhythm that would fit all verses.

³⁵ Regarding the dissemination of Gellou traditions and exorcisms during Venetian era see Κουκουλές 1940: 10 and Παπαδάκης 1976: 118.

³⁶ Cf. “Durant l’époque Byzantine, Gylou est une démone puissante, un être surnaturel à part entière, contre lequel il existe des moyens apotropaïques, tandis que les Géloudes sont des femmes mortelles a pouvoirs surnaturels, des sorcières, qui peuvent être punies. Demone et mortelles partages cependant la même fonction qui consiste à attaquer les enfants” (Patera 2006: 324). For the associations between the story of Gylou and the evil eye see Sorlin 1991: 413–414; Patera 2006: 321–324.

³⁷ This ritual relies on the stabbing of an onion with seven reeds and is accompanied by the following words: “Θα καρφώσω τη Γελλούδα, τη φρυδού [...]” (I shall stab gellouda, fridou [...]) (Sklavi Sitia, Crete, Αικατερινίδης 1990: 252).

³⁸ See also for this type of amulet and pendants Schlumberger 1892: 73–93; Bonner 1950: 211; Russell 1982: 543; Barb 1972: 343–357; Matantseva 1994: 110–121.

³⁹ For similar illustrations on an amulet from a Roman graveyard in Bulgar-Keui of Kyzikou, see Dorigny 1891: 287, 291; Perdrizet 1903: 46–47. Cf. also a fresco of fifth-seventh century in the monastery of St. Apollo in Bawit of Egypt depicting St. Sisinnios spearing a female demon with an eye thrust by three swords (Clédat 1906: 79–80; Hugué 2007: 298).

⁴⁰ Cf. Perdrizet 1903: 47–48, especially p. 49, where another amulet with an evil eye and almost identical illustrations is presented. See also Perdrizet 1922: 27.

⁴¹ Regarding the association of hatred with the evil eye spell see also Perdrizet 1900: 293.

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Haralampos Passalis is currently employed as a teacher of Ancient and Modern Greek Language and Literature at the Intercultural School of Evosmos–Thessaloniki (Greece) and has also been working as a researcher at the Centre for the Greek Language-Department of Greek Medieval Lexicography (Thessaloniki) since 1998. He is a member of the compiling team for the Dictionary of Medieval Vernacular Greek Literature 1100–1669 (Λεξικό της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής Δημόδους Γραμματείας) [vols 15 (2003), 16 (2006), 17 (2011), 18 (2013), nineteenth (2014)] published by the Centre for the Greek Language in Thessaloniki. Personal research interests mainly focus on Vernacular Folk Literature and Tradition as well as on the magico–religious system of Greek Traditional Culture.

BOOK REVIEWS

Tatiana Panina. *Slovo i ritual v narodnoi meditsine udmurtov* [Word and Ritual in Udmurt Folk Medicine]. Izhevsk: Udmurt Institute of History, Language and Literature, 2014. 238 pp. ISBN 978-5-7659-0795-5

The researches into Udmurt charms and prayers published by Tatiana Vladykina, Vladimir Vladikin and Vladimir Napolskikh during recent decades have been intriguing. Now those who know Russian can have a more detailed overview of the Udmurt charming tradition. Tatiana Panina's monograph "Word and Ritual in Udmurt Folk Medicine" (*Слово и ритуал в народной медицине удмуртов*) is based on fieldwork and published materials. The heading refers to the intentional complexity of the book, a desire to view, besides the textual side of the charms, also practices associated with them. Timewise the analysed material dates back to the 18th century, while the most recent texts originate in the fieldwork in 2003. T. Panina explains the background on some Udmurt concepts (*pell'as'kon, kuris'kon*) and discusses charms as rhythmically organised texts with a certain psychological and functional orientation: they are meant to influence the outer world to produce the desired result. In her monograph the author uses different folkloristic methods: comparative-typological, synchronic descriptions, comparative-historical method, semantic analysis and the methodology of ethnolinguistics. This is inevitable in the case of a genre with variegated content, structure and ritual practice.

Due to the linguistic-cultural specific features, confessional circumstances (long-term ethnic belief, existence in the intersection of Christianity and Islam), and traditions of neighbouring peoples from different language families the material is fascinating and complex. The expelling of diseases is the most extensive sphere of application of charms, which involves the aetiologies of diseases and a myriad of treatment models, not to mention that the sphere itself covers everything from hygiene to illnesses, and from cure to social welfare. Panina defines healing rituals as a complete cultural system, as part of the Udmurt traditional worldview system, which helps to disclose the codes for verbal and non-verbal texts. The author brings to the fore the personal level of rituals and discusses the levels of space and time, attributes and actions in practices and verbal charms. She also analyses colour symbolism, and for the first time ever discusses the role of foreign (Russian) verbal charms and Christian prayers in the Udmurt tradition, which so far have deserved little attention.

As texts, religious views and activities are treated in an intentionally syncretic manner, the book enlightens us about the main facets of folk medicine,

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Rita Balkutė (ed.). *Galia užburti: kenkimo magija 1982–2012 metų užrašuose* [The Power of Magic: Harmful Magic in Recordings from 1982–2012]. Vilnius: R. Balkutės fondas, 2013. 752 pp. ISBN 978-609-95585-0-9 (Maria Zavyalova)

T. A. Agapkina, A. L. Toporkov, *Vostochnoslavijskie zagovory: Materialy k funkcional'nomu ukazatelju suzhetov i motivov. Annotirovannaja bibliografija* [East Slavic Charms: Materials for a Functional Index of Plot Structures and Motifs. An Annotated Bibliography]. Moscow: Indrik, 2014, 320 pp. ISBN 978-5-91674-322-7 (Will Ryan)

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Charms Sessions at the International Medieval Congress (July 7-10, 2014, Leeds, United Kingdom) (Svetlana Tsonkova)

INTRODUCTION

The fourth issue of the journal *Incantatio* continues publication of the research articles based on the presentations at the Charms Symposium of the 16th Congress of the ISFNR (in Vilnius, June 25–30, 2013), supplementing them with other research articles. The main topics of the current issue include oral and written charming tradition, transmission of charms and their social functioning, as well as social and ethno-medical aspects of charms. The issue starts with papers dealing with the Baltic region and analyzing materials from Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus. In her article, Åsa Ljungström discusses charms' manuscripts compiled in Sandvik Manor, Sweden, during the eighteenth century Sweden, together with the life stories of the manuscripts' owners; the article reveals the biographical and social background to the written charms. The article by Daiva Vaitkevičienė is focused on the social functioning of verbal healing charms and presents the results of the fieldwork carried out by the author in 2010–2012 in the Lithuanian community of Gervėčiai, Belarus. The regional problematic is further dealt with by Tatsiana Volodzina, who has, upon special request from *Incantatio*, submitted a paper on the unique disease *kautun* (*Plica Polonica*), which is well-known across the cultural area comprising Lithuania, Belarus, and Poland. The article is amply illustrated by authentic narratives recorded by the author during her fieldwork and which describe the curing of this disease by charming practice in contemporary Belarus. Aigars Lielbārdis in his turn introduces two sides of the Latvian charming tradition: the oral and the written, giving special attention to the written books of the Latvian charms *Debesu grāmatas* (“Books of Heaven”) and tracing the route of their spread in Latvia. Continuing the theme of written charms, Laura Jiga Iliescu introduces the Central European analogue of the Latvian ‘Books of Heaven’ as they exist in Romania; her article focuses on the apocryphal “Legend of Sunday”, also known as “The Epistle Fallen from Heaven”, one copy of which was carried along by a soldier during the First World War. Last but not least among the research publications of this issue is a broad and exhaustive study by Haralampos Passalis dealing with “The Sisinnios Prayer” and discussing oral and written aspects of this interesting narrative in the Greek tradition with special attention paid to the oral tradition.