

## SLOVENE ORAL INCANTATIONS: TOPICS, TEXTS, AND RITUALS

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### Introduction

While healing and harming by professional conjurers was as common in Slovenia as in other parts of medieval Europe, there is no known Slovene textual evidence of incantations available today from earlier than the seventeenth century. To be sure, Matičetov (1948: 29) notes that in 1583 one Pavel Bizancij, a bishop's assistant, reported about *zagovori* used in the Gorica district; but Bizancij's notations have unfortunately been lost. These incantations were used by certain women to cure people and animals: their method was to draw a circle around the afflicted and measure them with a magic rod (*s čarovniško mero*) and pronounce *molitve*.<sup>1</sup> And the next oldest-known Slovene-language incantation, a charm against snakebite, was inscribed on a blank page between two printed pages in a German calendar from about 1641: the original is missing, but a copy made by Fran Levstik in 1884 is kept in the Arhiv Slovenije.<sup>2</sup> Another incantation from the seventeenth century, one to prevent male impotence, is now housed in the Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti. But, beginning in the eighteenth century, ever more charms were written down and published in folk remedy collections (*bukve* 'books'), patterned after numerous German *volksmedizinische Heilbücher*.

Milan Dolenc (1975) has carefully detailed the production and preservation of 160 Slovene collections, which include numerous magic incantations and their rituals.<sup>3</sup> Incantations of this kind are not limited to the most remote villages of Slovenia; Matičetov (1951) has documented two instances of their use in *belles lettres*, and it may be assumed that their presence is more widespread than is generally supposed for the relatively advanced society of Slovenia today.

Southern Carinthia and the Škofja Loka region were especially productive areas for written charms. It is therefore not surprising that their application was discussed in Valvasor's monumental work (1689).<sup>4</sup> Štrekelj (1904-07) published eighteen texts at the beginning of the present century, and since then Barlè, Grafenauer, Košir and especially Möderndorfer have treated the subject in detail. Many *zagovori* housed in archives in Ljubljana and elsewhere in Slovenia remain unexamined, however. Whereas ritual incantations from most South Slavic regions have been analyzed in Western journals,<sup>5</sup> Slovene charms have not yet been discussed in English. The present examination is intended as an introduction to the topics and to representative texts of oral incantations in Slovenia, and to the rituals which accompany their performance.<sup>6</sup>

### Baroque Practices

Although Valvasor did not provide the texts of magic incantations, he did describe a remedy for snake and scorpion bites. In his mildly ironic manner, he noted that "the Almighty Creator [*allmächtige Schöpffer*] generously gave our land a large number of snakes and vipers of which, both great and small, there is an abundance" (459). As they caused numerous injuries, Valvasor elaborated on one common cure by explaining, for example, that if a person killed a live snake and ate its heart, and then drank a spoonful of fresh water, no snake would be able to bite him for the rest of his days. He even admitted that he tried this on many people and stated that they were then charmed against snakebite.



He wrote that certain artists [*Künstler*] claimed that they could cure snakebite with a ritual called *Sympathia*, but he condemned “that art as the masterwork of the Devil himself” [*ihre Kunst (hat) keinen anderen Meister als den Teufel*, 460].<sup>7</sup> Reading his description of the procedure, one may perhaps agree. The victim was to send for “Satan’s naturalist” [*teufflischer Naturalist*], and was told to stand quietly, while the conjurer used a knife to inscribe a circle round his right foot. Then the healer would add some magic words outside the circle and, after stirring up some of the dirt, would give it to the snakebite victim in a spoonful of water; when the patient began to vomit violently, the poison was presumed to have been expelled. But Valvasor did not inform his readers what those magic words were, for “this *Sympathia* is surely powerfully devilish, and the effect comes from the Master” [i.e., Devil] “who, like the Serpent of Hell, mortally wounds the soul of the one who cures him of the real snakebite. . . . Therefore I curse such an unsanctified *Sympathia* and all other things of the same stamp” (461).

On the subject of conjurers—the purveyors of folk healing and harming—Valvasor noted that on the Velika Slivnica (northern) side of Cerknjško jezero one could see witches [*Hexen*] at night dancing “their foul dances” in the form of “tiny flying lights” (633). In other passages he informed the reader that the witches conspired to steal babies and eat their hearts during their magic ceremonies [*Zauberey*] (460); they used special herbs and, in a pact with the Devil, concocted a magic salve to enable them more easily to fly off or be carried by their “black master” [*schwartzter Meister*] to their “accursed witches’ dance” [*verfluchter Hexen-Tanz*] (359). He particularly condemned more ordinary women who used a special herbal root called *satirion* to entice a man:

“Young women who have more desire than modesty and purity are especially prone to that root. They use it so that young men run after them and put out their impure flames [*ihre unkeusche Flammen*]. For that purpose they charm a root at a certain time with diabolical words. Like a mare or bitch in heat, [a girl] carries the root on her person and hypnotizes young men so that the boys [*die Buben*] follow her everywhere just like a weasel or a hunting dog tracks wild game, for the charm has enticed them and blinded them” (357-58).

Valvasor’s righteous condemnation notwithstanding, the use of magic charms and potions persisted in Slovenia until well after World War II and, according to some scholars, they are still to be found today in some remote villages.<sup>8</sup>

### Special Terminology.

There are a number of Common Slavic roots whose reflexes in Slovene indicate healing and harming by magic incantations. The most basic is *baj-*, meaning ‘speak:’ the curing or spelling action is called *bajanje* and involves pronouncing special magic words (*besede*). These are often completely artificial and are uttered in such a way that no outsider can understand them; only the afflicted persons can hear them, but they often do not comprehend the words’ meaning. Incantations are most often identified as *zagovori*, *zapretki*, *zarotitve*, and *molitve*. In the Slovene-speaking part of Southern Carinthia villagers talk of ‘counting down’ (*odmodlijo*, *doumodlijo*, *odžebrajo*, *doužebrajo*), a term for incantations that use the reverse counting format that is discussed below. The conjurer—i.e., the man who has this special knowledge—is most often called *bajavec* or *bajalec*; Novak (1960: 262) cites *bajarica* as a term used in Prekmurje for a female conjurer. Still other terms with (probably) the same root are *bali* ‘conjurer,’ an archaic designation for the more modern *zagovornik* or *zagovarjavec*;<sup>9</sup> *bajanica*, a special wooden wand used in



the curing ritual (Novak 1960: 262); *bajalica* 'divining rod,' and *bajaničar/bajaličar* 'diviner, water-finder.'

A similarly ancient term derives from the Proto-Slavic \*čar 'magic charm, spell, incantation', which may or may not be related to Latin *carmen* and English *charm*. We thus find the verb *čarati* 'to cast a spell;' *čaranje*, *čarovnija*, *čarovništvo* 'sorcery, witchcraft;' and other terms for 'conjuror,' *čarovnik/čarovnica* and *čarodej*. An unrelated term with the same meaning, but perhaps even more widespread, is the term *coprnik/coprnica* which stems from Middle High German [MHG] *zouber* 'magic.' The term *lekar*, from Gothic *lēkeis*, is no longer connected with charming, being now used to mean 'doctor' (cf. *lek* 'medicine' and *lekarna* 'pharmacy.') Another borrowed term for 'conjuror, fem.' is *štriga*, from Italian *strega* 'witch,' most commonly used in Istria and also along the Dalmatian coast.

Novak (1960: 262) notes that in the northeastern part of Slovenia there are also several terms deriving from Common Slavic verbal root \*vort 'turn,' cf. Slovene *vračati* 'to (re)turn, restore' and *vračiti* 'to cure': compare *vrač*, *vračnik*, *vračitelj*, *vračarica*, and *vračelja*, all of which refer to village healers and charmers, those occupied with *vraštvo*. Likewise, from the Common Slavic stem \*věd- 'know' we find another term for 'conjuror,' *vedež*, a person with a special knowledge of herbs, amulets, and incantations who, for a price, will identify just who put a spell on a client. Möderndorfer (1964: 8) adds *galsti* and also *gatar* from *gatati* 'to divine, interpret, predict the future.' Finally, we should also mention *arcat*, another now archaic term, from MHG *arzet* 'doctor', and the widespread *doktor/dohtar*, from Latin via German.

## Applications

Incantations may be used for a variety of health problems involving both humans and livestock. They generally fall into three categories: (1) external physical injuries; (2) internal ailments and psychological problems; and (3) social relations and occupations. Among the most frequently-published are charms for a sprained ankle, or other joint [*izvin*, *zvin*], toothache [*zobobol*], the swelling or bloating of some part of the body [*otok*, *oteklina*], rheumatism and gout [*protin*, *skrnina*], erysipelas (a reddish inflammation) [*pšen/šen*], gangrene [*prisad*], burns [*opeklina*], tuberculosis [*jetika*], scrofula [*ramar*], warts [*bradavice*], styne [*ječmen*], and miscellaneous other eye and ear infections. Moreover, there are incantations to ease menstrual pain; to attract or to repel lovers; and to cure impotence in humans or livestock. There are also those to induce cows to bear calves, and to start or stop giving milk; those to make crops grow (or, conversely, to destroy a neighbor's crop); to implore rainclouds to disperse before creating hail; and to ensure success in hunting and fishing. Some of the most representative are those to heal diseases thought to be caused by someone with the power of the 'Evil Eye' (*urok/vurok/vörok*; *hud/oster/slab/trd/čuden pogled*; and *grde/hude/hudobne/zločeste oči*), and those to heal snakebite wounds (*kačij pik/ugriz*); other afflictions, especially erysipelas and warts, have a large number of incantations which are performed by healers and believed by the folk to be effective.

The types of applied magic include (1) sympathetic magic, which is based on the folk belief in a connection between objects of daily life and spirits or mysterious otherworldly forces; (2) imitative magic, in which the conjurer depends on the similarity of the ritual action and the cause or cure for the illness; and (3) transferral of the disease, or the spell, out of the afflicted person's (or animal's) body to someone or somewhere else, usually to mythological, distant deep caves or to steep cliffs, dense forests or very high mountains,



where nothing is as it is in the village.

The *bajanje* process itself is rarely limited to the magic words. It includes rituals using various herbal preparations made especially from garlic, onion, wormwood, horseradish, pepper, linden, elderberry, sage, camomile, mint and rosemary; many others could be added, e.g., sauerkraut, beetroot, rhubarb, etc.. These form the base of potions for the afflicted to drink, for incense burned in ritual pots to heal the patient and to drive away evil spirits or anyone thought to possess the ability to cast a spell. Möderndorfer (1964: 17-18) notes that over 500 varieties of vegetation (*rastline*) are used in Slovene folk medicine, and that they are applied both internally and externally. Among the most common products used are wine (19 1/2%), oil liniments and salves [*maščobe*] (14%), dairy products (12%), honey (8%), and brandy (6%).<sup>10</sup> Magic wands from certain woods (especially hazel, hawthorn, elder and willow) and iron (knives, axes, hearth chains [*verige*] used to hang pots over the fire, sickles and scythes) are thought to possess apotropaic power and are regularly used in healing rituals. Other frequent components of these kinds of ceremony are mirrors, for it is thought that spirits fear their reflections, and circles drawn around victims, for it is believed (cf. above) that spirits cannot enter such “enchanted places.”<sup>11</sup>

### Charm Texts

Although there is no documentary proof in the form of extant manuscripts, it is generally held that Slovene magic incantations originated in pre-Christian times, that some were either conscious translations or adaptations of Germanic charms practised by their geographic neighbors, or even were part of the common Indo-European heritage (Grafenauer 1937). As a result of recent research in Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian and Russian charm structures (Conrad 1983, 1987, 1989), it may be said that Slovene incantations are on the whole not borrowed but belong to Common Slavic types, originating therefore in the pre-Christian era. This having been said, it must also be admitted that almost all Slovene charms published to date contain Christian elements: e.g., appeals to the Virgin Mary or to Jesus for help in curing a given affliction; narratives with one or more saints as *dramatis personae*; and the closing ratification (see below) “May God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost help you! Amen.”

Common Slavic charm structure has been shown to be bipartite, i.e., to consist of a narrative portion followed by a (pre-Christian) expulsion formula. However, the briefest—and perhaps oldest—incantations often consist only of the expulsion formula, a command that shames the spirit or disease to make it leave the victim immediately and go to the distant other territories, mentioned above, where nothing is the same as in the peasant’s world. Consider, for example, two charms collected in 1979-80. The first, a charm against a sore on the cheek or other similar skin disease, known as *lišaj*, was recorded in Dulle/Dellach, a village in the Zilska dolina/Gailtal in Carinthia:

Ljšaj, ljšaj,  
idi nazaj,  
fuj, fuj, fuj!  
Sram te bodi,  
fuj te bodi!  
Petka sa méso jedva!<sup>12</sup>

Sore, sore,  
go back,  
foeey, foeey, foeey!  
Shame on you,  
foeey on you!  
The curse’s gone from the flesh!

The conjurer’s accusatory stance and affirmation that the personified spirit has been removed reinforce the victim’s belief in the charm’s efficacy. The healer then spits on the



sore, makes the sign of the cross and ratifies the charm with the ritual phrase *Pomaj ti Bog Oča, pomaj ti Bog Sin in sveti Duh!* (Kumer 1981: 98-99).

The second (Kumer 1981: 99) is an incantation against *skrnina*:

Ti čudna skrnina,  
hudna devjina,  
idi na strme skalé,  
na vesoke goré,  
tam ti piskej,  
tam ti griži,  
pa mene ne griži več!<sup>13</sup>

You, horrible gout,  
terrible wench,  
go to the steep cliffs,  
to the high mountains,  
there you can squeal,  
there you can bite,  
but don't bite me any more!

The attributes *čuden* and *hud* are frequent in charms against diseases which are basically incomprehensible to the afflicted; other common attributes are *bel* 'white' for diseases of the eye, and *črn* 'black' for those involving decayed or rotting skin.

Perhaps the oldest pre-Christian formula is that involving the reverse counting, or the 'counting down/off' of a spell that has been induced by someone with the power of the Evil Eye. Zablatnik (1982: 20-21) offers a typical example (but many others with minor variations could be offered as well):

Urokov je devet;  
ni jih devet,  
jih je koj osem;  
ni jih osem,  
jih je koj sedem;  
ni jih sedem,  
jih je koj šest;  
ni jih šest,  
jih je koj pet;  
ni jih pet,  
so koj štirje;  
niso štirje,  
so samo trije;  
niso trije,  
sta koj dva;  
nista dva,  
je koj eden;  
niti enega ni,  
prav nobenega ni. Amen.

There are nine spells;  
not nine of them,  
there are only eight;  
not eight of them,  
there are only seven;  
not seven of them,  
there are only six;  
not six of them,  
there are only five;  
not five of them,  
there are only four;  
not four,  
there are only three;  
not three,  
there are only two;  
there are not two,  
there's only one;  
there's not even one,  
truly not even one. Amen.

As this charm demonstrates, there are conventionally believed to be nine *uroki*, Evil Eye spells; hence the reason for 'counting down' from nine to one. In southern Slovenia, on the other hand, the spells are often perceived as pairs, called *urošnjak* and *urošnica* in Bela Krajina, among other regions (Möderndorfer 1964: 349, 362). Consider the following:

Urošnjak je na pragu,  
urošnica pod pragom,  
ako si urošnjak,  
izpal ti kriljačiček,  
ako si urošnica,  
izpal ti venčiček!

The spell is on the threshold,  
his wife under the threshold,<sup>14</sup>  
if you are a spell  
may your cap fall off,  
if you are his wife  
may your wedding crown fall off!



This charm structure is common to most Slavic nations, and is cited here as an example typical of those applied to counter the effects of the Evil Eye. It consists of identifying and locating the spells, plus the command for them to be symbolically harmed. In other Slavic languages the harm may be far more explicitly serious, as will be suggested below.

The Evil Eye spell is blamed especially for babies' headaches (and migraines among adults), for children's colic, or generally for any ailment suffered by young and old, both human and animal. It thus poses an overwhelming threat to the well-being of the family and farmstead. It is therefore common Slavic folk custom to be spare with praise for the newborn; if, for example, anyone should see a baby child, a lamb, a calf or a foal for the first time, they should not comment on how beautiful it may be. If the visitor is thoughtless enough to do so, the remark must be countered with the immediate response: *Ne bodi mu urok!* or *Ne bodi mu škoda!* Instead of praise, the visitor is expected to make unpleasant comments about the newborn (whether human or animal), such as *Ti grdoba!*, or to spit three times and say *Puj, puj, kak si grdi!* (Möderndorfer 1964: 350). Other protective devices are the use of various herbs, especially garlic, which is rubbed on the baby's chest and/or placed in its diapers; a red thread which is hung over its head; and the censing of certain smoked herbs and grasses round the cradle.

A ritual for determining whether or not someone has put a spell on the newborn is that of *gašenje oglja* [extinguishing the coals] in water that has been blessed by the parish priest. Coals from the open hearth are dropped in the water and, depending on whether or not they surface, the conjurer can determine if the child has been subjected to someone with the power of the Evil Eye. The number of coals tested varies from village to village, but it is usually an uneven and "sacred" number such as three, five, seven, or nine. The resulting diagnosis also varies, e.g., if the coals do not rise it may be a sign that the spell is cast; or if they rise it may be a sign that the illness is more serious and the victim must be taken to a doctor.<sup>15</sup> After the extinguishing ceremony the afflicted person or animal is given some of the water to drink, or is bathed in the water.

Another charm against the power of the Evil Eye is far more threatening (Štrekelj 1904-07 III: 210):

Vúrok teče po stezici,  
bučo nosi na glavici.  
Poknile mu črne oči,  
Kdo je leto dete vročil!

A spell runs along a narrow path,  
carries a pumpkin on its head.  
May his dark eyes burst,  
Who this child did curse!

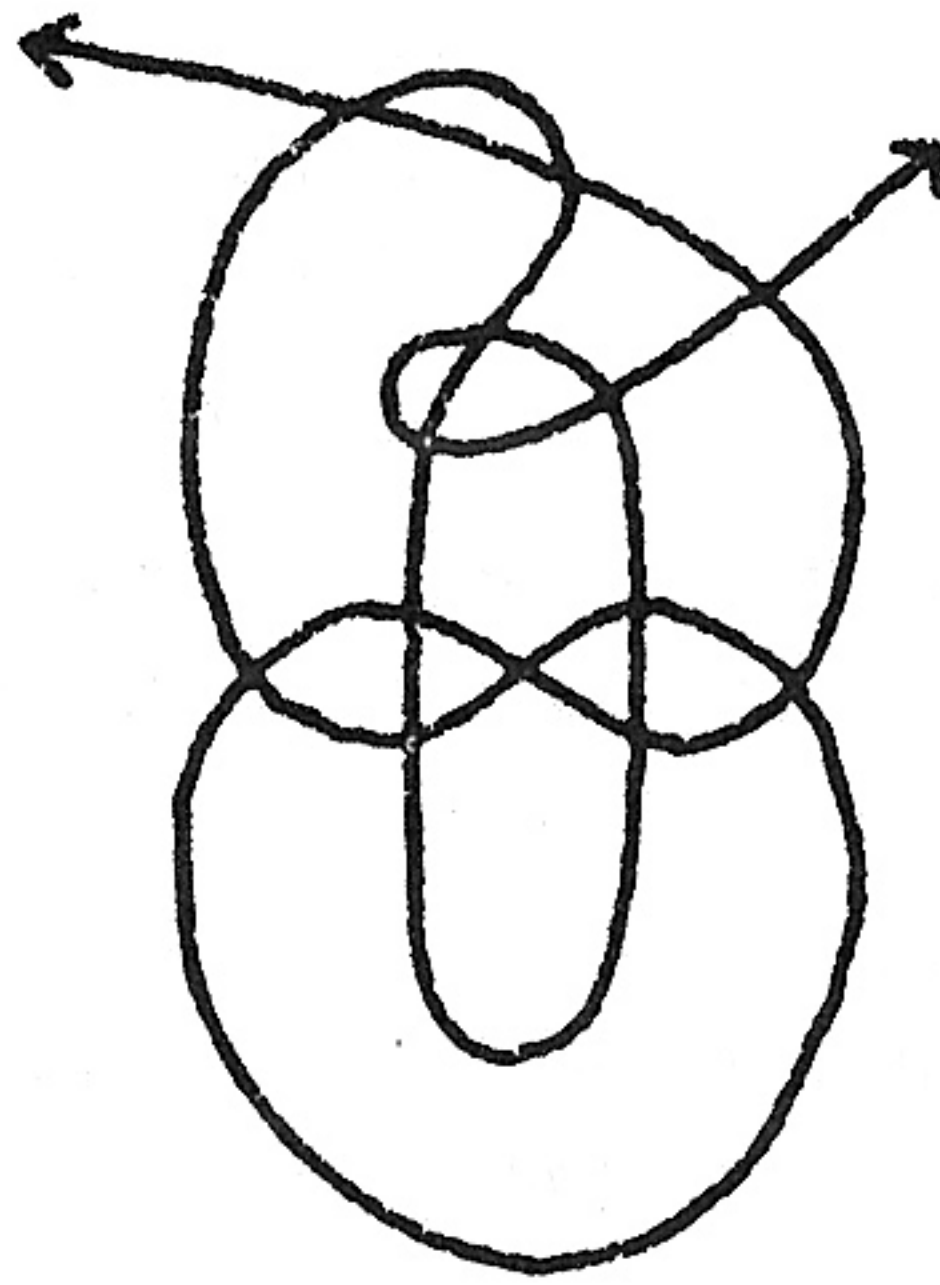
The component formulae found in this incantation are common to other South Slavic languages; both the introductory narrative setting the scene, and the curse placed on the perpetrator, are standard. But, at least in published sources, Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian destruction formulae are more explicitly gender-determined; for example, instead of the volition that the "eyes burst" there is often the injunction that the "balls burst" or the "breasts burst" of the man or woman who cast the spell, or that the "pussy burst" if it was cast by a young girl.<sup>16</sup>

The defences against the Evil Eye are varied but consistent within the South Slavic territories. First, one must avoid old and ugly persons, especially those with pitch-black eyes (cf. *črne oči* above), or those with green or even yellow eyes. Likewise, persons with overly heavy eyebrows are thought to possess the special powers of the Evil Eye. Radešček (1984: 309) notes that if a mother spots such a person approaching her child, she sprinkles the visitor with holy water or, in extreme cases, throws a bucket of water on the suspected witch before she reaches the door. Second, there is the *živi voz* [living knot], which—



when tied properly—will come undone with only a tug on the ends of the string; like the knot, so also will the evil disappear.<sup>17</sup>

Kako se naredi živi voz, ponazoruje  
naslednja skica:



Thus far we have treated magic incantations without appeals to Christian figures for assistance. Yet the vast majority of Slovene charms printed thus far do contain appeals of this kind. These may be very simple, as in the following nineteenth-century incantation against erysipelas (a reddish inflammation of the skin; Štrekelj 1904-07 III: 210):

Huda kri,  
bežè ti;  
Ježùšova kri,  
wostanè ti!

Evil blood,  
run away;  
Jesus' blood,  
stay!

In this charm the conjurer merely addresses the affliction directly, and then calls on the power of the Savior for help. Štrekelj informs us that in addition to this appeal, the person with erysipelas must pronounce the Lord's Prayer in the name of Jesus' wounds. Möderndorfer (1964: 41) offers an even stronger charm against this affliction:

Šièn, ti hočeš biti lièp,  
pa grd bodi!  
Ti hočeš biti črnjev  
pa črn bodi!  
Bog oče ga razženi,  
Bog sin ga razženi  
in Bog sveti Duh ga razženi!

Red spot, you'd be pretty,  
well, be ugly!  
You would be red,  
well, be black!  
God the Father drive it away,  
God the Son drive it away,  
and God the Holy Spirit too!

Here the structure is somewhat different: after addressing the illness directly, the conjurer assures the afflicted that the Trinity will banish it; in doing so she gives him hope and the will to be well.

There is a large number of *zagovori* against erysipelas, and they are found in all parts of the Slovene-speaking territory. But in addition to these two representative types, the counting down formula is also used against erysipelas: *Šenov je devet, jih ni devet, nih je le osem, . . . je le eden, ni nobenega* (Möderndorfer 1964: 42).

An incantation against scrofula will illustrate the banishment of diseases to mythological lands:



Bodi ramar, ali ramarka,  
 pojdi na javor,  
 čez javor na list,  
 čez list na planino,  
 kjer noben zvon ne zvoní,  
 nobena rit ne sedi,  
 noben ogenj ne kuha,  
 noben usta ne jedo.  
 Tam ti prebivej,  
 tu nimaš kaj iskati!

Be you male or female, scrofula,  
 go up a maple tree,  
 from tree to leaf,  
 from leaf to mountain,  
 where no bell does ring,  
 no butt does sit,  
 no hearth-fire does cook,  
 no mouth does eat.  
 There you stay,  
 here you've nought to seek!

This charm is performed five times as the conjurer touches the spot, and is followed by the threefold pronouncing of another formula: *Jaz te (za)govorim v imenu Boga očeta in Sina in svetega Duha, amen!* (Möderndorfer 1964: 129).

The use of scatological words and phrases not normally associated with "polite society" is another common feature of Slavic charms.<sup>18</sup> In the charm against scrofula, use of the word *rit* 'ass' lends a threatening posture to the ritual. Möderndorfer (1964: 130) provides another example, this one more explicit:

Bodi ramar ali ramarka  
 pojdi ven iz tega človeka  
 v planine,  
 s planine v zelenico,  
 kuhaj brez ognja in brez vode,  
 jej brez lušti,  
 seri brez riti,  
 ti ramar me v rit piši.  
 Pojdi ven, pojdi ven!

Be you male or female scrofula,  
 go you out of this man  
 to the mountains,  
 from the mountains to the green forest,  
 cook without fire or water,  
 eat without desire,  
 shit without an ass,  
 you, scrofula, piss up my ass.  
 go out, go out!

The conjurer's daring use of such normally forbidden words in what is a form of sacred ritual is another means of increasing the afflicted's confidence in her, and at the same time builds up his belief in the charm's efficacy. Once again, the incantation is normally closed with an appeal to the Trinity, so as to seal its effect "for ever."

It is believed that in the folk mind invocation of both mythological (pagan) and Christian images doubles the power of magic incantations. It is, however, still an open question as to the degree of true Christian belief involved, or whether appeals to Christian saints are merely superficial layers over original pagan structures. We may cite two charms against snakebite as examples. The first (Štrekelj 1904-07 III: 207) begins with a narrative calling forth the image of a mythological location and a Christian saint (here called Irmbas, but—according to Štrekelj—intended to be St. Bass), who is either powerless or unwilling to aid the victim. But, as in countless such charms, the Virgin Mary comes along and makes everything right:

Stojí, stojí, silna skala  
 Na ti skali leži Irmbas.  
 Mati božja pridi k njemu:  
 Stani gori, ti Irmbas,  
 Pomagaj temu človeku,  
 če je vgrizen al popaden  
 od tega črva podzemelskega!

A mighty cliff does stand,  
 On that cliff lies Irmbas.  
 The Mother of God comes to him:  
 Get up, you Irmbas,  
 Help this man  
 if he's bitten or attacked  
 by this underground worm!



The second also calls to mind a mythological location and a saint who is not doing his job; therefore, the conjurer appeals to the Virgin and to the Holy Trinity:

Tam stoji zlata gora  
Za zlato goró  
    stoji zlata miza,  
Za zlato mizo spí sv. Šenpav,  
O pridi, mati Marija devíca!  
Reci temu črvu,  
naj gre ta strup...

There stands a golden peak,  
Beyond the golden peak  
    stands a golden table,  
At the golden table sleeps St. Paul,  
O come, Virgin Mary Mother!  
Tell this worm  
to let this poison go...

whereupon the conjurer spits or blows three times over her right shoulder, and then adds: *Kakor gre ta sapa proč od mene!* and seals the charm with the formulaic appeal to the Holy Trinity (Štrekelj 1904-07 III: 208).

Incantations may be used in the face of inclement weather as well as in cases of diseases from spells. The final text to be cited here is one to prevent stormclouds from producing hail, which could destroy the farmer's crops. Cited in several Slovene-language studies, it goes as follows:

Čàràñ woblak  
bodè krotak,  
pojde na vsoče gore,  
wobvarè nam žitnò polje!  
Ljubè woblak,  
bodè krotak,  
kokàr je Ježuš bil,  
kò je za nas  
kàrvavè pot potil!

Black cloud,  
be mild,  
go to the high mountains,  
protect our field of grain!  
Dear cloud,  
be mild,  
Just as Jesus was,  
who for us did  
sweat the bloody sweat!

Hail is a disastrous natural phenomenon for farmers' livelihood, and charms such as this one are not the only preventative measures to be taken. In addition to magic incantations, iron implements with sharp points were once placed so that their points faced the sky; three-legged stools were also placed upside-down in the farmyard. In some villages church bells are still rung. Rifles were once used to fire bullets into the air to break up hail-forming clouds; and more recently, in many areas of Yugoslavia, there are government-supported rocket stations whose duty is to send charges into the air to disperse such threats to agricultural enterprises. Thus, despite the transition to more modern methods, the underlying traditions endure.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Research conducted thus far suggests that many traditional beliefs are still alive, if on a much smaller scale in our own times than in ages past. Human desires and hopes of countering the effects of the unknown are some of the consistent features of life. It is widely recognized that a belief in the supernatural continues in many parts of the world, and this belief can be found in the Slovene lands as well. Magic incantations, whether of pre-Christian origin or predominantly Christian in content, continue to be collected in Slovene-speaking territory. They have in common a normally bi-partite structure; references to devils or saints; mythological locations; sets of accompanying rituals (such as extinguishing coals and spitting three times); apotropaic objects (vegetables, iron, etc.) used in the conjurer's performance; and the final appeal to the Holy Trinity for ratification of the desired result. Amen.



## NOTES

1. *molitev* (fem.) normally signifies a Christian prayer, but the term is also one of those common among villagers for a basically pre-Christian magic incantation which also may contain references to the Virgin Mary, Jesus, and Christian saints—from a long list which includes, especially, Št. Jurij, Št. Peter, and Št. Bass. On the sex of conjurers, see note 9.
2. The earliest-known charm found on Slovene-speaking territory is a Latin inscription to soothe toothache, which dates from the twelfth century. Contained in the *Gregorius Magnus Codex*, it is now preserved in the Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana.
3. Dolenc describes the extant collections, and notes their dates of origin and their present locations.
4. Valvasor noted the use of magic in cases of snakebite and other ailments, but did not provide actual texts of ritual incantations. Quotations and page-references in this article are from the German facsimile edition of 1969; all translations into English are by the present author.
5. See Kerewsky-Halpern & Foley (1978), Foley (1981), Obrebski (1977), and Conrad (1983, 1987). Conrad (1989) has also extensively surveyed Russian incantations.
6. Lubinko Radenković, the Yugoslav scholar who has treated charms in the greatest detail (see Radenković 1982), is preparing a detailed analysis of Slovene archival materials.
7. *Künstler*, 460. The word *Künstler* today means 'artist', but in Valvasor's usage it is closer to 'clever person,' 'trickster,' and 'shaman.'
8. See Makarovič 1982: 398; Matičetov 1948: 30; Legiša & Gopan 1956 I: 86; Dolenc 1975: 256; Radešček 1984: 30-4; and Zablatnik 1982: 17-18.
9. With respect to the use of masculine and feminine words for 'conjurer,' it may be pointed out that in Slavic lands there are both male and female healers and harmers, but in fact most of them are post-menopausal women (who, incidentally, jealously guard their knowledge secret until near death). In this article, conjurers are referred to, arbitrarily, as females, and the subjects of their incantations as males.
10. It has been pointed out that some of these, especially oil and wine, and probably honey as well, occur in the *New Testament* as medications. There are very likely more Christian elements in Slavic folk medicine than have been generally acknowledged.
11. See especially Möderndorfer (1964) and Radešček (184) for copious details on the variety of afflictions and remedies, many of which are found even today; in these works, the phrase *še danes* often recurs.
12. *petka* is not found with meanings other than "a [group of] five" or "a little heel" in *SSKJ* or in Pleteršnik 1894. However, Skok (1972 II: 648) notes that Kajkavic and Čakavic dialects of Serbo-Croatian have the verb *spetiti* (a loan from Rumanian) meaning 'curse' or 'charm'.
13. The texts cited here are exactly as in the published sources; deviations from standard orthography therefore represent dialect differences.
14. According to common Slavic folklore, the threshold of a farmer's dwelling is—together with the hearth—one of the two most common locations where spirits are thought to reside, and where rituals are performed.
15. For details, see Möderndorfer 1964: 352-55.
16. See Conrad 1983, 1987 for more specific information.
17. The diagram is from Möderndorfer 1964: 357 ("Kako se naredi živi voz").
18. Albeit few are printed with the specific terms identified: editors most often use the first initial followed by the appropriate number of dots to indicate the word.
19. The single most valuable source for further study of this topic is Möderndorfer 1964; see especially the bibliographic section (*Seznam virov*), 415-31.

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Abbreviations: ČZN = *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje*  
 SEEJ = *Slavic and East European Journal*

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**POVZETEK****SLOVENSKI LJUDSKI ZAGOVORI:  
NJIHOVE TEME, BESEDILA IN OBREDJA**

*Namen članka je predstaviti teme, besedila in obredja, ki spremljajo "čarobno" zdravljenje/urokovanje v slovenskem ljudskem izročilu, vključuje pa tudi zgodovinski pregled slovenskih ljudskih zagovorov, njih zapisovanje in objavljanje. Avtor obravnava izraze in nazive za rotitve, uroke in zagovarjavce, v glavnem izvedenke iz glagolov bajati, čarati, vračiti, zagovarjati, ali besede izposojene iz sosednih kultur, n.pr. arcat, corpnik/coprnica, štriga. Za tem je v članku govor o običajnih obredjih zoper posledice urokov, zoper telesne in duševne motnje in o posebnih "čarovnih" varovalnih pripomočkih. Ob analizi izbranih tekstov avtor pokaže, da je njihova struktura lahko enočlenska, zgolj z izganjalno formulo, ali dvočlenska, z uvodno zgodbico in izganjalno formulo, starejša s predkrščanskimi elementi, ali mlajša prehajajoča v krščanski eksorcizem.*