

Stoikheion, stuha, zduhač: guarding spirits, weather magicians and talisman magic on the Balkans

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Introduction: questions explored

The present study¹ aims to explore certain past beliefs held by a range of peoples living on the Balkans concerning guarding spirits and magicians, as well as specific, related notions of the soul. The last vestiges of such beliefs have even been recorded most recently by collectors. The phenomena in question are linked together primarily by terminology, more closely the partially shared word-stock of *stoikheion/stihio/stuha/zduhač* etc. which refer to these magicians and guarding spirits; terms like *telesma/tellestim/talasom* etc. which exist in parallel and which denote the spirits of places or guarding spirits, and words used in certain languages with the meaning of ‘shadow’ which may refer to the ‘free soul’ of magicians or ordinary mortals lingering on after death but can equally well denote guarding spirits. A further important thread connecting the phenomena under examination is that both spirits and magicians are in close connection with the dead – the spirits of places usually emerge from the souls of the dead; at the same time, often they are the guarding/helping spirits of magicians. At the same time, they often act as guarding/helping spirits of the magicians. Certain scholars of folk belief on the Balkans have traced this terminology back through the modern Greek term *stahia/stihia*, meaning the spirit of places or guarding spirit to the ancient Greek term *stoikheion*. It was believed that these words had made their way to some South Slavic languages of the Balkans either directly from (medieval) Greek or through Albanian mediation (Albanian *stih*).²

Having examined all of these connections I began to suspect that in the background of the above described phenomena which form parts of the rural culture of the modern age we might find certain traits of the elite magical practice of Byzantine *talisman magic* that had trickled down to popular culture and which linger on practically to this very day, keeping alive some unusual phenomena which are ‘at odds’ with the traditional culture of the peoples in question.

The extremely wide-spread practice of Byzantine talisman magic in late antiquity and the Middle Ages was based on a view widely held by Babylonian and Egyptian astrology and also by Greek philosophy starting from Plato whereby the stars are inhabited by gods or demons, the elements also have their spirits/demons and the zodiac or the planets are also inhabited by demons which have the power to influence people. By performing the right kind of magical practices humans can also influence the spirit world, they can invoke them by using the prescribed magical methods and impose their will upon them. Neo-Platonism further enriched these views (the demons or ‘decans’ partly turned into angels, a heavenly hierarchy emerged, etc.), which also lived on in the cosmology of the Middle Ages. The other factor which led to the emergence of talisman magic was the notion of *sympatheia* whereby

¹ The research resulting in these findings was funded by The European Research Council as part of the seventh term of the European Community (2007-2013) based on Research Agreement ERC 324214.

² Folklore researchers from the Balkans as well as by Bulgarian linguist Ute Dukova have written on the Greek origin of the word was explored by (from Middle Greek form *telsem*, directly or indirectly through Turkish), the identity of guarding spirits called in two different names also in latter-day folklore (primarily in Greek and Bulgarian; as well as in Romanian but represented by fewer data); and with the identical meaning of the word groups *stoikheion* and *telesma*: Lawson 1910: 255–257; Blum–Blum 1970; Arnaudov 1967: 129, 303–304; Nicoloff 1983: 60; Dukova 1970: 235; Troeva 2009; Muşlea – Birlea 1970: 229–235; Schneeweiss 1961: 11, 26; Abbot 1903: 249–257; Plotnikova 1998; Elsie 2001: 241–242.

everything in the universe (planets, elements, lifeless matter, plants, animals, numbers, letters, etc.) is connected with everything. The magician creating the talisman had to operate with this network of connections, taking into consideration the agreements of these ‘sympathies’, using the methods, places, times and materials prescribed by them.

Talisman magic was a wide-spread procedure of *theurgia* (the ‘white’ magic of the Neo-Platonic tradition). Most surviving data describing it (primarily a rich array from Egypt) speak of enclosing bits of writing, letters or magical signs inside objects. However, the ‘branch’ which interests us at this point, that with an astronomical context, enclosed not objects inside the talismans but demons called down from the stars or planets (star demons, *decans*). This included both benign and malevolent spirits, after invoking them by magical prayers or amulets. Besides star demons and the spirits of the planets, the magician engaged on talisman magic could, by employing manipulation through astrological ‘sympathies’, invoke the spirits of the elements (e.g. the demons of the air or the winds or water spirits) or any other demon, and lock them inside objects.³ This is how the talisman developed, which contained, as it were, the power of the demon in question and was used for a wide variety of magical purposes (healing, securing a long life, vanquishing enemies, arousing love, gaining release from prison or arresting malevolent demons). The talisman could also be used as an amulet protecting the person or the community, alternately it could become a guarding spirit owing to the demon contained in it.⁴

In his large-scale summary of late Byzantine demonology Richard Greenfield tracked all shades of meaning and all variants of the word *stoikheion* through antiquity and the Middle Ages. Both he and other scholars before and after him who studied the Byzantine roots of the spirit world marked by words such as *stoikheion*, *telesma* etc. have remarked that the words *telesma* (‘talisman’) and *stoikheion* (‘spirit of the elements’) were being used with the same meaning (talisman); as well as the fact that the word *stoikheion* also had or acquired a secondary meaning of ‘celestial body’.⁵ This meaning of the word was also brought in connection, both by Greenfield and others, with astrologically inspired talisman magic – this was indicated also by the related meaning of the word *telesma*. Anna Tóth writes, using 6th century Byzantine sources, about the late-Byzantine practice of making talisman statuettes called *stoikheion*, as ‘guarding spirits’ protecting towns. She also refers to the astrological context of making these statuette talismans and the connection with talisman magic. Summarising the varieties of meaning for the word *stoikheion*, she states that it acquired the meaning of ‘primordial element in philosophy’, ‘letter’, ‘celestial body’, ‘demon’ and, finally, statue.⁶ Speaking of the changes of meaning of the same word, Greenfield also emphasises the meaning ‘spirit of the elements’ and ‘spirit of the air’/‘spirit of the wind’ (*pneuma*), which changed in the late Byzantine period to ‘(guarding) spirit of a place’ or ‘spirit living in an object’. This fact again refers to the connection with talisman magic. A further significant element from our point of view in the developmental history of this word is that by the late Byzantine period *stoikheion* meant not only the spirit of places or a spirit locked inside a talisman, but also a spirit living inside a person. Greenfield mentions a specific piece of data about a malevolent magician referred to by this phrase who vanquished all of his enemies and

³ A most illustrative description of all of this is offered in *Salomon's Testament*, written by an Alexandrian Jewish author in Greek, probably in the 3rd century, which states that King Salomon takes advantage of the motley host of demons he had summoned in service of building the temple in Jerusalem. The demons summoned include star demons under the name *stoikheion* – precisely seven of them, just like the stars of Ursa Major, as well as spirits of the elements, wind demons, all of these in a highly negative context as malevolent demons, occasionally bearing the various names of Christian devils (McCown 1922; Salomon's Testament 2003; Alexander 2003).

⁴ Kákósy 1978: 273–291; Greenfield 1988: 194–195; Szónyi 1998: 118–121; Tóth 2010: 80–83.

⁵ Dieterich 1925; Blum 1946; Burkert 1959; Greenfield 1988: 190–195, 231–236; Diels 1899.

⁶ Tóth 2007; 2010: 76–79.

is the embodiment, as it were, of evil *stoikheion*.⁷ Another factor relevant to the considerations to be discussed below is that according to Walter Burkert the word *stoikheion* also had the meaning of ‘shadow’⁸ (which, as we shall see demonstrated below, can also mean a ‘shadow soul’). In one of her previously quoted works Anna Tóth points out that there have been data ever since the 8th century to indicate that other types of demons such as the *biothanatos* (the living dead) or, to use a longer word-form, the *biaio-thanatos*, i.e. the souls of people who had died a violent death, were also locked inside talismans. According to the principles of the magic of late antiquity these demons could be coerced to serve practically any purpose (and could also be ‘created’ by murder).⁹

Researchers of Byzantine magic, having limited knowledge about ethnographic phenomena of the modern era, were unable to explain all the contemporary terminological parallels, and it is in this field that I shall attempt to go one step further. I should first and foremost like to outline the above mentioned connections, understand their background so far as possible and decipher the kind of relations that obtained in the background of such magicians and spirit beings. This terminology may be traced back to late antiquity – but does this mean certain continuity throughout the ages for each of these phenomena? And do the semantic diversions in the groups of names related to *stoikheion* and *talesma* point toward related phenomena? Despite research into antecedents and parallel research I hope to be able to say something new by highlighting the connections discussed below. I trust that my paper will clarify distinctions between concepts such as *double soul*, *living soul* – *free soul* which are often used in a simplistic manner by research, on the other hand it will hopefully bring further depth and nuance to our understanding of the magicians of the Hungarians and of the peoples of the Balkans. I have accorded less attention here to differences between local variants or to their proportions when compared to other terms, nor is this made possible by a database with certain relative shortcomings.

My research material comes from papers and studies on Romanian, Greek, Albanian, South Slavic and possibly Western Slav guarding spirits, on sacrifices offered to them, from literature on weather magicians and from data published in various contexts on so-called building sacrifices.¹⁰ As regards magicians, besides Carlo Ginzburg’s grand-scale summary and Gábor Klaniczay’s Hungarian contributions which supplement and modify our knowledge on the subject,¹¹ my own investigations were also helpful so far as they concerned weather magicians on the Balkans and in Central and Eastern Europe, and the Hungarian *táltos*.¹²

⁷ Greenfield 1988: 192–193; 231–233.

⁸ Burkert 1959: 187–195.

⁹ Tóth 2010: 83.

¹⁰ Guarding spirits, place spirits: Greek: Rodd 1892: 148–149; Lawson 1910: 275–291; Stewart 1991: 102–103; Greek-Macedonian: Abbot 1903: 257–259; Bulgarian: Marinov 1914: 222–223; Arnaudov 1924, 1967; Romanian: Pamfile 1916: 246–255; Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970: 229–235; Macedonian: Vražinovski 1995: 73–82; Serbian and Balkans in general: Zečević 1981: 109–113; Plotnikova 1998; Albanian: Elsie 2001: 241–242. *Weather magicians*: Balkans in general: Moszyński 1934: 652–654; Burkhart 1989, 83–84; Petrović 2004; Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian: Jagić 1877; Chloupek 1953; Bošković-Stulli 1960: 284–286; Đorđević 1970: 237–250; Tolstoj–Tolstaja 1981; Zečević 1969; 1981: 149–151; Romanian: Gaster 1983; Albanian: Hahn 1854, 163; Lambertz 1922: 102–114; Čabej 1966: 368; Dukova 1970: 235; Elsie 2001: 74–77. In many cases I refer to these already processed and published data instead of citing the original sources directly as the latter would far exceed the present frames. Except for the Hungarian data I did not actually access the original sources – partly due to shortcomings in my language skills. I was able to read translations of the Romanian, Polish, Serbian, Bulgarian, Croatian and Slovenian works indicated in the bibliography, as well as further works that these refer to, nevertheless my familiarity with the material is necessarily uneven and less satisfactory in some fields than in others.

¹¹ Ginzburg 1966; 2003 [1989]; Klaniczay 1984.

¹² Pócs 1989, 1998, 2002a, 2017a.

Spirits of places, guarding spirits

Over a large area of the Balkan the etymologically related words of *stoikheion*, *stihio*, *stuha*, *zduhač* etc. are used to refer to *guarding spirits* related to places (houses, areas), families or communities and, as I have mentioned, at many places also the weather magicians. The term has a broader meaning than ‘guarding spirit’ and does not always square with the terminology of magicians (e.g. Romanians and Albanians use different words to refer to similar types of magicians). Besides, as I have indicated, the guarding spirits mentioned here are also marked with a different terminology besides the group of words related to *stoikheion* – I refer to the word *talisman*, which is used primarily by Greeks and Bulgarians but also occurs among Romanians, Serbs and Macedonians (*telesma*, *tellesma*, *tellestim*, *talsom*, *talāsam* – Greeks also use it with the primary meaning of *talisman*).

Let us first look at the specific meanings of the words belonging to this group. To start with the relatively more exceptional cases, Romanian *stahia*, *stafia* and Aromanian *stihio*¹³ refer to malevolent ghosts that had arisen from dead persons of no status (unburied, unbaptised etc.). Albanian *stihí*, *stihía*¹⁴ are fiery dragons or snakes guarding treasure in the underworld (Bulgarian *talāsam* can also mean spirits guarding buried treasure). Serbian and Southern Croatian *stuha*, *zduhov*, *zduhač*,¹⁵ are not only the most widespread terms for weather magician – less commonly they also refer to house spirits, more commonly to the guarding spirits of areas, villages or flocks of livestock, and these terms are also used to denote the protecting or helping spirit (supposedly living inside) of *stuha* magicians – we shall say more about this later. Bulgarian *stiia*, *stihia* and *talāsam* and their variants,¹⁶ Serbian *talason*,¹⁷ Macedonian *tolosom*,¹⁸ modern Greek *stoikheia*, *stikhio*, *telesma*¹⁹ and Greek-Macedonian *stoikheia*²⁰ all uniformly mean the place-bound guarding spirits of families, houses, farmsteads or public buildings, but can also refer to ‘spirit of the elements’.

According to the beliefs of these peoples every major built structure such as a watermill or bridge, as well as buried treasure has a spirit of its own. Indeed, in many areas every village has its guarding spirit which will protect homes and families against various misfortunes, disasters coming from the outside and against diseases. This spirit can show itself to humans in many different forms. Changing from region to region it may be a dog, wild boar, sheep, goat, buffalo, ox, hedgehog, snake, dragon or even the ghost of a child, woman or old man with a long beard appearing as a shadow. The most common form, however, is that of an Aesculapian snake which lives in the wall or often next to the oven and moves in and out through the chimney. It prevents buildings from collapsing, wealth from being stolen, humans from becoming ill. It is harmless and will only torture or chase away internal and external thieves damaging the family assets (although on occasion we come across mentions of malevolent house spirits). Snakes living in the house enjoy particular respect. It is usually considered a sin to drive away the family snake from its dwelling. Anyone who kills it by accident has to expect that their hair will fall out or even a family

¹³ Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970: 229–235; Pamfile 1916: 248–255; Elsie 2001, 242.

¹⁴ Elsie 2001, 241–242; Çabej 1935: 565; Hahn 1854, 164.

¹⁵ Schneeweiss 1961: 11, 26; Elsie 2001: 242.

¹⁶ Marinov 1914: 212–219; Arnaudov 1924; 1967: 132–133; Dukova 1970: 235; Nicoloff 1983: 60; Georgieva 1985: 105–108; Troeva 2009; Plotnikova 2008. (Its further names are: *saibiia*, *domakin*, *namestnik*, *stopan*, *stopanin*.)

¹⁷ Zečević 1981, 109–110.

¹⁸ Vražinovski 1995: 73–82.

¹⁹ Lawson 1910: 255–287. Greek: Blum – Blum 1970: 303–304. Schmidt 1871: 189; Greenfield 1988: 231–236.

²⁰ Abbot 1903, 249–257.

member might die. (Bulgarian belief has it that the hedgehog protecting the house must not be killed, either.)

The guarding spirit also had some slightly less common functions. Some Serbian and slightly more Bulgarian data affirm that such spirits used to protect the land or the plough-fields from hailstorms or the flocks from wolves. According to Greek and Bulgarian beliefs they had some water spirit traits or variants: the Bulgarian water creatures named *stihia* or *stia* are evil – they drown people who venture onto the water. Lawson notes in connection with Greek *stoikheia*, Abbot about Greek-Macedonian equivalents and Georgieva about Bulgarian spirits that they can be considered spirits of the elements – according to the relevant beliefs they represent all four elements,²¹ i.e. are creatures of wind, water, earth or fire. Greenfield describes spirits under the name *stoikheion* or *pneuma* among the ‘alternative traditions’ of the Byzantine demonology of the late Middle Ages (and their variants that turned into Christian devils).²²

The function of ‘spirit of the elements’ most commonly manifests amidst storm battles. Greek data have it that the outcome of a battle between the *stoikheion* of the two clans or, in Serbia, between the *stuha* of two villages will decide the weather for an area (thunderstorms, hail, drought, cold winter etc.). Spirit battles for the weather may be fought by spirits of the air or wind, by ‘watery’ spirits (related to precipitation such as rain or hail) or of ‘fiery’ character (related to lightning) as weather demons – the last group having their constant dwelling place in the storm clouds. Beliefs of spirit battles may also be related to any of the other functions of guarding spirits, such as protecting the family or buildings, plough-fields or pastures. The battles are fought against spirits of other areas or hostile demons attacking local objects. According to Bulgarian data, for instance, spirits in the form of a dog fight battles against the enemy assaulting the house likewise in a dog shape; the plough-field is attacked by hostile snakes and protected by the locals’ own snakes; the treasure spirit engages in battle with whoever snatches the treasure and tries to strangle them, while Romanian *stafia* protects its own house from ‘evil souls’.

There were beliefs all over the examined area of the Balkans claiming that these spirits had arisen from the souls of the ancestors – from the ‘good dead’ who support their own community. By contrast, data which state that the spirits of the ‘evil dead’ (people who had died without the required rites of passage, had been murderers, died a violent death,²³ or the lingering souls of the unburied dead who never reached the other world) live in certain buildings – they tend to be hostile or ambivalent to the family. They might also behave as regular malevolent spirits, producing poltergeist phenomena. These include Romanian *stafia*, *stahia*, *stacia* which are often the spirits of desolate, disused structures such as mills or other public buildings (here the meaning is ‘shadow’), but Greek-Macedonian *stoikheia* and North Bulgarian *talasum* also have an aspect of this kind. In the role of ‘spirits of the elements’, i.e. as beings that regulate the weather, they also have a great deal to do with the ‘evil dead’ – in several Southern and Eastern Slavic areas the souls of the unbaptised dead turn into cloud souls who regulate the weather, while people who had died a violent death turn into expressly malevolent storm demons who bring hailstorms.²⁴

Close relations with the dead and the ancestors is characteristic of house spirits not only in this region – similar data may be quoted from almost the whole of Europe in connection with house spirits from the unbaptised dead, suicides, the unburied and other

²¹ Lawson 1910: 287; Abbot 1903, 249; Marinov 1914: 212–219.

²² Greenfield 1978: 230–232.

²³ Schmidt 1871: 189.

²⁴ For more on this see Pócs 2002b, with further bibliographical data. On the Slavic data material see: Moszyński 1934: 681–683; Bošković-Stulli 1953: 338; Schneeweiss 1961: 5–6; Filipović 1969; Zečević 1981: 123–125, 165–166; Tolstoj–Tolstaja 1981: 103; Georgieva 1985: 102–103; Tolstaya 2001; Lehr 2009.

irregular deaths. It has also been generally characteristic ever since antiquity to believe in the ancestors protecting the house or the family in the form of a snake.²⁵ As regards the connection between the spirits of the elements and the dead, data of water spirits coming from persons who had died an unnatural death are also known all over Europe. Data of wind demons arising from the soul of the ancestors or the spirit of the dead as demons of the air have also existed since late antiquity both in the pagan and then the Christian context.²⁶

Data are more scarce concerning the way in which spirits of the fields, waters or flocks emerge. In the case of homes, churches, monasteries and other public buildings or of bridges the most common manner is some form of *building sacrifice* by which they ritually ‘create’ the place-bound, benevolent guarding spirit of the building and of the people dwelling therein. Such rites are known among the Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks and Romanians alike²⁷ and are essentially identical. There are two main forms of this ‘sacrifice’:

1.) When the foundation stone for a new house is laid or a building process is completed or when people move into a new house they offer a sacrifice which is not addressed to anyone in particular, given, as it were, to the future guarding spirit. In a curious manner it is the spirit of the sacrificial animal that turns into the guarding spirit of the house. This is usually a hen or cockerel, a dog, cat or lamb which is killed in the new house or built into the structure during construction. According to certain variants or legends, tales or ballads the hero was built into the wall alive during construction, but there is no living belief or rite indicating any such practice in the present or the past.²⁸

2.) Another manner of using a living person for a sacrifice seems to have been applied in the Eastern Balkans even in the recent past and this is the process of ‘measuring in’ the shadow. This fairly simple act, believed to be lethal by its practitioners, meant that during the building process they would ‘steal’, i.e. measure unnoticed, the height of a person or even a child passing by and project this height onto the wall with an object (or the shadow was cast onto the wall in the first place). This measure would then be built into the wall (or the measuring instrument, the stick or rope would be walled in). This way they ‘created’, as it were, the guarding spirit of the building or the family – the soul of a person having been bound and locked inside the house. The person himself or herself was to die soon (usually within 40 days) and their soul, locked inside the wall, would become the spirit of the house, church or bridge, usually appearing in the shape, as we mentioned above, of a human, animal or, particularly, an old man. In Plovdiv, for instance, belief has it that ‘if they are building a bridge or anything else, it will not be solid and lasting unless they catch a shadow’; ‘they will measure somebody’s shadow and that will hold the bridge’. The person will waste away and die (usually within 40 days). The person’s death was a sign that the building would be solid. Once built into the house in this manner, the soul of the dead person would be tied to the building forever. Similarly to other persons who had died an irregular death, they could not go to heaven. Mihail Arnaudov quotes from a description from 1846:

²⁵ On Mediaeval German material concerning the helping and assaulting guarding spirits emerged from ‘good’ and ‘evil’ dead see Lecouteux 1987: 233–243. The present frames do not permit me to enumerate the existing rich European bibliography, I merely refer to two studies containing a rich and extensive body of material: Lindig 1987; Linhart 1995.

²⁶ For spirits of the air, winds and thunderstorms in the context of late antiquity and early Christianity see Rohde 1925: I. 248–249; Franz 2006: II. 21–73; Moszyński 1934: 651; Zečević 1983; Hart 1988: 89–135. There is no room here to include the extensive bibliography available on watery spirits, a topic slightly more remote from our present subject matter, so by mentioning these data I merely wish to indicate just how widespread the phenomenon is.

²⁷ See the sources quoted in connection with place spirits.

²⁸ Cf. Arnaudov’s comprehensive study from 1924 on ‘the walled-in woman’, in which he briefly presents the narrative fictions which appear in the epic genres.

There exists [...] a belief in Bulgaria whereby no major building will stand for a long time without a *talasăm*, therefore when they are laying the foundations the builder tries to take the measure of some passer-by with a string (or thick cotton) or, in the worst case, the shadow of their height. As soon as he had taken the measure of the person's height or shadow, he will place the string into a special box prepared for the purpose, which they will deposit in the foundation of the house. The people believe that once this is done and 40 days have gone by the person whose measure they took will die and then begin to haunt in different forms, and do this from 8 o'clock in the evening until 3 in the morning. This ghost is called *talasăm*. This kind of human measure is usually placed inside large stone bridges, big houses, churches, *djamins*, minarets, baths and forts. If the builder fails to take the measure of a human being, he will take it of an animal which they then kill.²⁹

Such customs were widespread among Greek, Romanian and Serbian people, too. Certain data show that the Greeks willingly measured the shadows of Jews or Muslims into the wall as a sacrifice to the guarding spirit called *stoikheion*.³⁰ It must be mentioned in this connection that according to Serbian belief the measured shadow of strangers turns into a malevolent spirit.³¹

These data indicate that sacrifice offered to a long-established guarding spirit of a building can also be the symbolic human sacrifice of measuring a shadow.³² As regards sacrifices offered particularly to these spirits, in some Romanian and Bulgarian areas we find that the spirit is given genuine food to eat – e.g. the snake living in the house is regularly offered milk or a sacrificial feast is held by killing a black hen or other animal and offered to the Bulgarian *talasăm*: while the feast a portion is placed on the stove for the spirit. This usually takes place on the memorial feast of a dead family ancestor related to the house spirit, such as a dead father or grandfather, but it can also happen when family prosperity or business takes a turn for the worse or if illness appears in the family.

Beliefs in house snakes known all over Central and Eastern Europe are indubitably related to these motifs of house spirits from the Balkans. According to such beliefs³³ in every house (under the doorstep, in the wall, under the stove, in the courtyard) there lives a snake endowed with particular qualities (colour or sound) which must not 'a child is feeding the snake with milk' or 'you must not kill the house-snake, because that be destroyed and which is attributed belief *topoi* which are wide-spread all over Europe (would mean the death of a family member).³⁴ Among the Hungarians and to the West and North of them these are not 'living beliefs' and have had no particular function in the life of the communities as far back as we can detect, nor was the snake seen as a protecting spirit. This latter act is a real

²⁹ Arnaudov 1924: 250. (Based on the Hungarian translation by Lenke Csíkhelyi.) Further Bulgarian data are to be found at many loci in Arnaudov 1924. Greek data: Lawson 1910: 289; Romanian data: Pamfile 1916: 248–255. For a brief summary of the building sacrifice in Europe, the types of sacrifice and the two variations according to purpose see Seligmann 2001: 376–379. See also: Kretzenbacher 1961: 243 (this author explores beliefs on measuring 'the shadow soul' in the context of the divine healing shadow).

³⁰ Rodd 1892, 148–149.

³¹ Zečević 1981, 110.

³² Anna Tóth examines the Greek ballad on building the bridge at Arta and it is in this context that she summarises data from antiquity on the building sacrifice and the two purposes of such sacrifice: 1.) the sacrifice is demanded by the spirit (*stoikheion*) of the river in exchange for building the bridge; or the sacrificed person himself or herself becomes a *stoikheion* (Tóth 2010, 73–82). This kind of duality is thus observable even in ancient data, but Tóth considers the latter form to be more recent – based on her data it cannot be traced back further than the Imperial Period.

³³ See Pócs 2012: chapter *Háziszellem: házikigyó [House Spirit, House Snake]*.

³⁴ See the legend material of the Balkans: Zečević 1970; 1981: 106–113. For Czech and general European data: Klimová-Rychnová 1973; for a review of German legends: Lindig 1987: 65–88.

sacrificial rite which reflects profound belief in house spirits – compared to this, feeding the house-snake regularly with milk appears a mere routine habit. Clearly we are witnessing secondary beliefs that had arrived from the Balkans but become hollow in the process.

Weather magicians under the names *stuha/sztuva/zduhov/zduhač*

Weather magicians bearing the same names (or names of identical etymology) of *stuha*, *zduhač* etc. were active in the Southern Serbian and Southern Croatian areas, as well as in the territory of Bosnia Herzegovina. Acting as religious/magical specialists of their community who also filled other functions (they could, for instance, be healers or diviners) they secured favourable weather for the village, and did this through maintaining a ritual relationship with the hostile storm demons that lived in the storm clouds and brought storms or hail: they used to fight ‘soul battles’ against them in an otherworld of storm clouds. I have written in detail about these magicians in several papers, most recently in connection with the related traits of the Hungarian *táltos*,³⁵ therefore here I only mention the details that concern our topic closely. Field work and collections from the past century show that in some places these weather magicians filled genuine communal functions as recently as 70-80 years ago, and practiced their profession as weather magicians. Their memory was preserved by a rich narrative tradition over the greater part of the Balkans. In the same Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian territory there were weather magicians that were able to drive storm clouds and were referred to by names other than the *stuha/zduhač* word family. These names were either related to the words *cloud* or *wind*, such as Serbian *oblačar* meaning ‘cloudy’, Serbian meaning ‘windy’ *vetrovnjak*, *vjetrovito*, *vetrovjaci*, *edogonja*, *vjedogonja*, Croatian *vremenjak*, *vjetrogonja* used in Bosnia or Crna Gora, or Croatian *oblakovoditel* and Serbian *gradobranitel* meaning ‘cloud driver’. These names refer to the nature of these magicians being related to the wind, storm or water, as well as to their similarities and relations with storm demons, in other words to their relation, of the ‘spirits of the elements’, with the spirits of the air (wind) and of the ‘upper’ waters (rain clouds). Narratives describe them as essentially ‘double’ beings who possess both human and spirit traits.³⁶

Certain types of the magician referred to as *zmej* in Bulgarian, *zmaj* in Serbian and *zmija* in Macedonian (possessing dragon, snake or eagle ancestors and able to turn into a snake or dragon), and of the Hungarian *táltos*³⁷ could also be storm magicians of similar characteristics. Community specialists of this kind have also been described in the Northern parts of Eastern Europe. The South Polish names of *chmurnik* and *planetnik*, *obłocznik* in the Beskids in Silesia and the Ukrainian term *planitnik* mean ‘cloudy’ and these appellations suggest a similar range of magical activity as that known from the Balkans. Admittedly in these areas we are seeing only a narrative tradition, even in the first half of the past century.³⁸ Similarly, a purely narrative tradition is what we are witnessing in the case of such weather

³⁵ Pócs 1989; 2002a; for more detail on storm magicians see Pócs 2017a.

³⁶ The most important comprehensive data publications on storm magicians are the following: Moszyński 1934: 651–654; Đorđević 1953: 237–250; Bošković -Stulli 1960: 284–286; Zečević 1981: 149–151; Tolstoj – Tolstaja 1981; Burkhart 1989: 83–84; Petrović 2004; Plotnikova 2008.

³⁷ For data on the dragon magicians *zmei*, *zmai* etc. see: Marinov 1914: 207–209; Vakarelski 1969: 233–234; Dukova 1970: 235–238; Đorđević 1953: 248; Zečević 1981: 63–85, 149–151; Vražinovski 1995: 37–46. For a summary on these magicians, with further bibliographical data on the Hungarian ‘dragon’magician see: Pócs 2014a.

³⁸ On weather magicians among the Eastern and Western Slavs see Udziela 1898, Hnatjuk 1904: 372–375; Moszyński 1934: 651; Lehr 2009, 310–311. Similar magicians, mentioned in Russian sources, might be Western Russian *oblakoprogonnik* and *oblakogonitel* (‘cloud driver’; Tolstaya 2011); I have no information about the details of their activity. On the *garabonciás* see: Jagić 1877, Holló 1934; Erdész 1984: 114-138; Pócs 1988; 2005; Marks 2008. On the *şolomonar*: Gaster 1883; Taloş 1976.

magicians as the Hungarian/Croatian *garabonciás/grabancijaš* or the Romanian *șolomonar*. Their legends attribute them, among other things, traits similar to those of the *stuha*. The *stuha/zduva* etc. terminology does not occur in their case, nevertheless their wind or storm-related traits and their double, half spirit, half human, nature do bring them into relation with the windy *stuha/zduva* magicians of the Balkans. In the following section we are going to concentrate on the figure of the *stuha/zduva/zduhač*, since our main themes here are related to these names (for simplicity's sake I shall refer to them by their apparently most widespread Serbian name as *stuha*); with regard to magicians who pursued similar activities but were referred to by different names I shall merely quote a few illustrative examples.

In his role as weather magician, the *stuha* stands before us as a figure who, owing to his demonic nature, can identify with storm demons and temporarily turn into a spirit.³⁹ His unique double nature, his 'windy' character gives him the capability to access the cloud otherworld in spirit, 'in his soul', and there fulfil his role as mediator toward the storm demons. Some of the narratives collected in the past century report that in the role of weather magician when a hailstorm was approaching this kind of magician would retreat from the community, fall into a trance, and then his soul, 'his shadow' (which is described as 'light', 'translucent' or, according to other data, as similar to wind, vapour or fog) leaves his body and rises to the clouds, turning, as it were, into the wind itself and flying along with it (in other words the part of his soul which 'flies out' turns into a spirit of the wind and the storm, i.e. of the elements of air and water). Engaging in the spirit battles of storm demons, often guided by the village's own, 'good' storm demons, he wages war on the hostile demons. With joint force they dispel the hail and the hostile storm demons from under their own village and drive the hail clouds toward the opposing areas (e.g. the neighbouring village).

Other descriptions (in a far higher number of cases) describe the magicians' ascent to the storm clouds as a scene where the magician accesses the cloud otherworld along with the wind, the descending fog or vapour. When the storm comes, he disappears from sight of the onlookers in the bodily sense inside the cloud or fog – the storm cloud had 'snatched him', then once the storm has been assuaged, he returns to the ground. Southern Hungarian *táltos* or *garabonciás* also have traits of this kind. They access the cloud otherworld with the fog, storm cloud or the vapour of the rainbow, they are often seen damp, with water dripping from their clothes. The *táltos* of Bática, for instance, was sucked up into the clouds by the rainbow, then he would descend back on earth with the cloudburst, once again in a human shape – he followed the circulation of water. A *táltos* from the village of Taktaszada was reported to have predicted the storm and

...we laughed. Then all of a sudden indeed it began to grow cloudy. *He was no longer with us. He had vanished.* We looked up, holding on... Well, they were in a terrible big fight up there, you see, with the dragon, and the rain was pouring down terribly. And that lad, you see, he did not come back. He was away for a week. [then] he came back all torn and ragged...⁴⁰

Sándor Bálint reports that a *táltos* at Tápé was travelling on a wagon with his relatives to the fair at Szeged and along the way he predicted the arrival of a storm.

³⁹ On such traits of double beings, e.g. in the context of fairies, see Pócs 2014b. Most recently Anna Plotnikova has written briefly on the *stuha* and related 'wind magicians'; in her characterisation bearers of names like *stuha* are humans who can turn easily into spiritual beings and who, at the same time, are guarding spirits living in the clouds that bring thunderstorms. (Plotnikova 2008).

⁴⁰ Szabó 1975: 231. (My emphasis – ÉP)

...then uncle Pista said, ‘you should pull off to shelter straight away, for there is a vast big cloud coming from over there at Dorozsma.’ They looked around but by this time uncle Pista had vanished from the wagon, they could not see him anywhere [...] There was a terrible big storm, a terrible strong wind started, the rain was pouring down. [...] Suddenly, it all cleared up. They crept out from their shelter. They saw uncle Pista returning in a terrible state. He became so ill that he could not even move. He had been fighting against some *táltos*, against a hostile *táltos* gang...⁴¹

The same image also appears in the narratives as a metaphor for the final death of the weather magician. There are also faint traces that there might have existed the notion of some kind of first, initiating ‘journey’ to the cloud otherworld – this is also described in Serbian narratives collected in the early 20th century, as being ‘snatched’ by a raincloud or a stormy wind and disappearing in the cloud or fog.

The idea of disappearing in fog or a cloud, characteristic of human-spirit double beings, seems widely known in this region – but let us add that this is the case on a territory far wider in Southeast and Central Europe than the area marked by the use of the group of names related to *stuha*. (Narratives about the magicians also contain other motifs of ascent to the clouds and other upward movements as legend *toposes* [topoi?] the *garabonciás* or *táltos* climb trees, or up to steeples or rooftops and ascends to the sky that way, etc.).⁴²

The double nature of the *stuha* and their fellow magicians, half human and half spirit (of the water or the air) has been described in many different ways by various authors. Some researchers clearly report the *stuha* to have been clearly a spiritual being or a guarding spirit, which can appear in both an animal and a human form.⁴³ Đorđević emphasises that alongside being human, the *stuha* guards his surroundings as a guarding spirit from all ills whether visible or invisible.⁴⁴ Zečević believes the *stuha* to be the earthly alter-ego of a storm demon.⁴⁵ As we have seen, the guarding spirits of places are also known by identical names – thus besides appearing in the sources as spirits independent of the *stuha* magician, they also appear as the spirit form of the magician or his demonic self. As a parallel to all of this let us mention that speaking of Bulgarian guarding spirits Arnaudov mentions that according to certain data the ‘place spirits’ called *sajbija* or *domakin* also appear as ‘secret personal force’ living inside people.⁴⁶ Other data vaguely indicate that the guarding spirit *stuha* is a patron and helper of the magician *stuha*, so in these cases the magicians bear an identical name with the guarding spirits which act as their patrons, help them or behave as their alter-egos. The most obvious example for the helping spirits of magicians are so-called *zduhač animals* which fight alongside the human *zduhač* in the battle of storm demons, at the same time they are the guarding spirits of the flocks, too, in that they battle against the similar, hostile spirits of the opposing side in order to protect the flocks. At the same time, independently of the soul battles of magicians, battles fought by the guarding spirits of two neighbouring areas, flocks or villages either in storm clouds or on the ground have been recorded in the entire area where terms such as *stuha* etc. are prevalent. These battles to repel assault are fought to secure good weather or the good of the community.⁴⁷

According to certain views the magician and his guarding spirit become one: Bulgarian data say ‘there is a guarding spirit living inside him’, the Serbian *zduhač* ‘is not

⁴¹ Bálint 1980: 460. (My emphasis – ÉP)

⁴² See data in the Archive of Hungarian Folk Belief (Magyar Néphit Archivum) groups *Táltos* and *garabonciás* (*Táltos; Garabonciás*), as well as Pócs 2012: chapters *Táltos* and *Garabonciás*.

⁴³ E.g. Plotnikova 2008.

⁴⁴ Đorđević 1953: 244.

⁴⁵ Zečević 1983: 219.

⁴⁶ Arnaudov 1967: 132.

⁴⁷ Plotnikova 2008; Schmidt, 1871: 189.

alone, he has the power of a *zduhač*, 'there is a tremendous soul living inside him, which helps him in everything'.⁴⁸ In other words the spirit of the magician identifies with his guarding spirit, and owing to the spirit living with/inside him he becomes able to rise and fly to the clouds. The 'tremendous soul' living inside him is the storm demon, the spirit of the air flying with the wind, which will lift him up, too, and turn him into a spiritual being that can fly. Others claim that the spiritual power living inside him renders him stronger than other humans, indeed, invincible. One piece of data collected by Đorđević states that it is not his own soul that flies out of the *zduhač*'s body when the storm approaches, but 'some kind of soul is dwelling inside his soul which steps out of them while they are asleep and flies along with the winds...' ⁴⁹ The Christian variant of the helping/guarding spirit also appears in our research material – in Đorđević's interpretation here the duality of man and demon means that the *stuha* also has a guardian angel who stands by him as a helping spirit, but he himself, being half a demonic being, can become a guarding spirit. In other cases it is the devil that calls him, 'initiates him' and gives him a devilish soul.⁵⁰

Some publications presenting South Slavic or similar Polish and Ukrainian storm magicians describe them as figures who are sometimes storm spirits and at others merely humans with 'windy' or 'watery' qualities. There is also a view whereby they permanently live up among the clouds and only occasionally descend among humans. As spirits, they are creatures that blow winds or fly in the wind; they are 'spirits of air' or appear as 'watery spirits' of rain/hail; while as humans they carry the attributes of these spirits who strive 'upward', to the otherworld of winds, storms and the 'upper waters'. According to one data item from Herzegovina the *stuha* is someone who 'is mostly at home during the day, working like anyone else, but in the night he flies about with the other *stuha* in the hills and blows down on the houses of those people that he wants to take revenge on'.⁵¹

There are two more important aspects we must highlight about this varied world of guarding spirits. One is that in this area we also come across guarding spirits of similar character being referred to by words meaning 'shadow' (Bulgarian *sianka*, Greek *iskios*, *isklos*⁵² etc.). The name of Romanian house spirit *stahia/stafia* is also known to mean shadow and the shadow soul of people who died without a burial rite according to authors publishing the relevant Romanian data.⁵³ This, as we know, is also a term in this region for souls that leave the body, and it may even be related to the idea of guarding spirits 'created' by measuring the shadow: the act of measuring the shadow into the wall is based on a very concrete idea of the 'shadow soul'. Speaking of *stuha* magicians, Đorđević says, they have a 'translucent shadow' and this is why they can rise high with their shadow, i.e. in their soul, to the scene of the storm battles,⁵⁴ and this is also why they can identify with storm demons. Discussing contemporary Greek beliefs Eva and Richard Blum repeatedly mention 'the light-shadowed ones', *elaphroiskiotis* – beings born at times of transition or currently existing in a transition period, typically persons with no status (e.g. mothers in childbed or the dying), who by being in a liminal state gain the capacity to see ghosts and demons and to be transported by these, in other words they win the possibility of visions and 'soul journeys'.⁵⁵ It is not clear how far this handful of Serbian and Greek data point at any kind of general notions, nevertheless I believe that they go back to an idea whereby the light-shadowed ones or those

⁴⁸ Đorđević 1953: 241–249,

⁴⁹ Đorđević 1953: 238. (Translation by Olga Kovačev)

⁵⁰ Đorđević 1953: 240, 249.

⁵¹ Đorđević 1953: 243. (Translation by Olga Kovačev) This form of communication, the magician who vanishes in the clouds, is one I discussed in a brief study recently, exploring a few concrete examples: Pócs 2016b.

⁵² Marinov 1914: 212; Lawson 1910: 288.

⁵³ Muşlea – Bîrlea 1970: 229.

⁵⁴ Đorđević 1953: 238.

⁵⁵ Blum – Blum 1970: 42, 49–51, 237–239, 298–300.

with a translucent shadow partly belong to the otherworld – they become half shadow and thus they strive upwards to an ‘upper’ otherworld; just like the *zduhač* who rise to the storm clouds owing to a ‘higher power’ living inside them.

We can see from the above that boundaries between a human *stuha* and his guarding spirit or calling spirit are not sharp. While the duality of man and spirit appears in one fused unit, at the same time these ‘ascending’ magical spirits also give us an example of a different kind of union between body and spirit or the boundaries of the two becoming blurred. As I have mentioned above, descriptions of rising to the clouds or disappearing in the fog speak of disappearance in the physical, bodily sense – if the magician rises in the air, he will actually disappear for a while. ‘Journeys’ to the other world may take place in either the bodily or the psychological sense according to several folklore narratives on other themes known from the region. More precisely, there is no sharp dividing line or distinction made between experiencing the otherworld in body or in spirit. What might appear as a contradiction to the theoretical mind is resolved in popular notions that display diffuse boundaries between body and soul, this world and the otherworld and demonstrate that humans can easily cross these boundaries in body and soul alike and these two parallel worlds merge into each other from time to time.

As regards the parallel presence of the motif of ‘disappearing in the body’ and bodily transportation to the other world on the one hand and the notion of the ‘soul journey’ on the other, I strongly suspect that statements like ‘he falls into a trance and his soul leaves his body’ are etic formulations, perhaps from elite (Christian) literacy, of emic categories related to ‘bodily disappearance’. To put it crudely, in the light of the above data, the idea of ‘the invisible soul’ which flies out of the body seems to be a researchers’ construct.

If we wish to place the archaic form of communication here described into some kind of known etic frame of reference, it is not shamanism that we need to think of, as several researchers have done,⁵⁶ but much rather of divine/demonic *possession*. The phenomenon is similar to the levitation experience known from Christian notions of possession, whereby people possessed by God or the devil rise up or are transported to heaven by heavenly beings. It is no accident that a Greek priest, quoted as an informant by the Blums, associated the occult capacities of persons *with a light shadow* with the idea of possession – he believes that these people, having become possessed by a good spirit are ascending toward heaven.⁵⁷ It is obvious, however, that in this case the Christian idea of possession by a divine or demonic being was only in a secondary correspondence with the archaic notions of a living being turning into a spirit⁵⁸ which are, in turn, also related to the idea that humans and their guarding spirits can become one and there is no sharp dividing line between the soul/spirit of individuals with special traits which can propel them to otherworldly dimensions and their guarding or helping spirits which can become separated from them or act independently (e.g. the *zduhač*-animals).

Talisman magic and weather magicians

As I mentioned in my introduction, my suspicion (whereby the phenomena here described must in some way be related to the talisman magic practiced by the Neo-Platonic, hermetic elite magicians of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages) took its departure primarily from the double meaning of the (originally Greek) terms *stoikheion/stihio/stuha/zduhač etc.*, as well as from the terms *telesma/tellestim/talansom etc.*

⁵⁶ See e.g. Closs 1971; Zečević 1978.

⁵⁷ Blum – Blum 1970: 300–304.

⁵⁸ The Blums also make a distinction between the ideas of ‘becoming a demon’ and ‘being possessed by them’ even if they do not go on to explicate the nature of this difference: Blum – Blum 1970: 55.

which are used in parallel with these for naming the guarding spirits and which thus declare the place-bound guarding spirits to be talismans. This means that as a result of changes of meaning that took place in Byzantium, objects which protect people or towns are called *talisman* or *stoikheion*, similarly to guarding spirits protecting major communities or families. This parallel has persisted up until the 20th century and, as we have seen, ethnographic data from the 19th and 20th century also use the derivatives of the word *stoikheion* to refer to magicians who protect the community and partially identify with the protecting spirits.

The third point I observed was that the custom of *measuring a shadow* showed considerable correspondance with this practice of making *talisman* (it is worth recalling that the word *stoikheion* meant shadow in the first millennium or that the *stuha* have a ‘shadow soul’). The fact I cited from Anna Tóth’s study whereby *biothanatoi*⁵⁹ in late antiquity were locked inside a talisman, and the variants ‘created’ by murder, also appear to be important parallels to the popular practice of talismans created by building sacrifice, as well as to the views on storm demons emerging from persons who had died a violent death.

The most important element in these analogies is the figure of the *stuha/zduvač/zduhač* magician – they are said to have some kind of ‘higher power’ living inside them and thus they can become spirits of the air, wind demons or guarding spirits; standing before us almost like human talismans. We may recall in this respect the 10th century magician described by Greenfield who had a *stoikheion* demon living inside him which gave him power over his enemies...

Accounts of the ascent of magicians speak of notions of the body and soul which are more archaic than Byzantine talisman magic and their prevalence is broader in both space and time than the areas where the heritage of talisman magic was preserved (we also encounter these in the fairy beliefs of the area under examination, and as I mentioned above, also in the context of further types of storm magicians; on the other hand they also appear in another, remote and very broad area of Eastern Europe). Thus it is certain that we cannot speak of Byzantine talisman magic as the point of origin which ‘provided the idea’ for these notions, but it is also clear that the ‘popular’ and ‘elite’ traditions were in close interaction in several respects. The idea that the rituals and beliefs of modern age weather magicians have Byzantine connections is rendered more probably by the fact that the terminology of the *stoikheion* word group was applied to weather magicians mostly in the area which has yielded ancient and mediaeval data testifying to talisman magic for manipulating the spirits of the elements and of the stars – weather magicians surrounded by like beliefs had a different name outside of the direct area of influence of the Byzantine territory. We cannot see clearly the way in which the terminology related to *stoikheion* and *telesma* (talisman) and the notions of guarding spirits associated with these (and with the celestial bodies) came to be interconnected with the terms and notions of ‘shadow’ and the traditions of the magical spirit rising to the clouds. Notions about the spirits of the elements are extremely widespread and it is also a universal trait to envisage the human spiritual substrate or ‘soul’ as a shadow. These images and the notions related to the duality/identity of man and spirit, to the ‘upward striving’ of double beings, to demons summoned into talismans and to weather magicians who became identical with a ‘higher power’ (spirit of the air, storm demon) were similar systems of ideas which allowed for all kinds of interactions between the elite magical practice and the ‘popular’ notions which probably existed in the Byzantium of late antiquity. (It is possible that the missing link might be provided by data on the *nephodioktai* ‘cloud drivers’) mentioned by 5th-7th century Greek authors or on *tempestarii*, *tempestatum ductores* (‘storm drivers’) mentioned in 6th-9th century laws and decrees, if only they were less short-spoken about the way in which these cloud-driving weather-magicians actually operated.⁶⁰ It appears

⁵⁹ Tóth 2010: 83.

⁶⁰ For a summary of these sources see: Franz 1909: II. 27–37; Harmening 1979: 247–250.

that in the South-Western areas of the Balkans the impact of Byzantine learned magic and astrology became accreted over the archaic notions of demon-human double beings and even provided a loan-name for these figures. The same might be the source through which spirits that protect the house and the property came to be called ‘talisman’, and perhaps even of the methods for making talismans by measuring a shadow. The latter, however, might have been a popular practice existing in parallel with the elite practice and relying on the same principles.

Talisman magic is a learned mediation technique for establishing contact between the heavenly/spiritual sphere and the earthly/human sphere. In this it is similar to the popular techniques of weather magicians. This kind of parallel may have allowed for certain connections and borrowings between these two worlds which probably also had some written channels, since, at least in the second millennium, there existed a great many sources that mediated to the whole of Europe the legacy of ancient Greek magic and the Oriental magic and astrology which originally served as its foundation and re-invigorated it later. One such important mediating source was a bulky Arab book of magic called *Picatrix*, a great summary tome on magic, astrology and the making of talismans. This book served as a channel through which an orientalist variant of Neo-Platonism and late hermetic thought became transferred to Europe. This book describes the making of talismans in the spirit of the sympathetic beliefs of late antiquity, focussing on the influence of the planets and on talismans that make use of the strength of the stars. The Arab version which emerged in the 10th-11th century was translated into Castilian and Latin. Scholars studying this book of magic speak of MSs used continually in 16th-17th century Europe.⁶¹ Data on the broad-ranging use of *Picatrix* support the assumption that certain phenomena related to *stoikheion* and *talisman* in Byzantine magic persisted in the magical practice of Central Europe on the elite, court and university scenes even up to the 18th century, and that this type of magician was also accorded the terminology associated with the word *stoikheion* in the area of influence of Mediaeval Byzantine magic. Whether it had any specific effect on popular practice we cannot know. There is, however, a remarkable element I wish to mention in this respect which is an interesting parallel concerning the special capabilities of weather magicians as they are known to us from folklore collections (rising to the clouds through the special force residing in the magician and received from the spirit world). Chapter 6 of *Picatrix* speaks in a pseudo-Aristotelian quote about some wise men (philosophers) who gain their knowledge through a universal nature-spirit connected with the stars (*pneuma* – „Perfect Nature”, „vollkommene Natur” according to the English and German translations of the text); e.g. it is from this spirit that the king of the Persians learnt how to be invincible. The book also contains the incantation which summons the spirit of the star – in this the sage asks the star to lend him its strength, grow along with him and dwell in his heart.⁶²

Naturally, there may have been other written sources which mediated to the illiterate strata the teachings of ancient and mediaeval astrologically inspired magic through elite magicians.⁶³ There are plenty of belief data even outside of our present topic which prove that it is fair to assume that these books of magic influenced popular belief and rural practice. Data

⁶¹ Ritter – Plessner 1962; Kákósy 1978: 273–274; Szónyi 1998: 118–121; Láng 2007: 70; 2008; Greer – Warnock 2011.

⁶² In Chapter 6 of *Picatrix* we read, ‘Ich rufe euch, ihr kräftigen pneumatischen erhabenen Geister, die die Weisheit der Weisen die Klugheit der Klugen und das Wissen der Wissenden sind..... bringet mich eurer Führung nahe, leitet mich mit eurer Weisheit, unterstützt mich mit eurer Kraft, wohnt auch in meinem Herzen und trennt euch nicht von mir.’ (Ritter – Plesner 1962: 200–201). In the introduction to this same edition H. Rotter expresses his conviction that this is the appearance of the personal guarding spirit known from the Greek thinkers – the Socratic *daimonion*, as he says, ‘in hermetischer Einkleidung’ (Ritter – Plesner 1962: LVI).

⁶³ William Ryan, for instance, mentions a number of manuals used in the territories of Eastern Christianity (Ryan 1999: 377–404)

from Hungarian folk belief such as identifying the *lidérc* and the *garabonciás* with the stars, repeated mentions that the *garabonciás* and *táltos* were born under certain animal signs of the zodiac, their striving toward the stars, their ‘lunacy’ and those *táltos* who practice star divination; the astrological knowledge of the Romanian *şolomonar* weather magician acquired from Salomon the magus;⁶⁴ souls or angels living in the stars; the Virgin Mary living in the moon; identifying the dead with the stars, prayers addressed to them or to the stars (this last is represented, for instance, by specific determined prayer texts offered in the Picatrix)⁶⁵ – all of this must testify not to some kind of specific Romanian or Hungarian devotion to the stars or the moon, but much rather to the trickle-down influence of courtly and university-based magicians and their manuals to ‘the people’. An even more specific relationship may be suspected between popular belief and talisman magic if we think of those witches from Thessaly or latter-day Bulgaria who pull down the moon.⁶⁶ Moreover, we can quote a data item from the Ukraine which states that witches were in the habit of stealing the stars from the sky, this being the reason why they would climb, head down, up the roadside crosses. They would then guard the stolen stars, along with the rain and hail, in covered pots on their stove.⁶⁷

The sole reason why I quoted this last handful of data was to show that it is justified to assume that the parallel phenomena discussed in the present paper may in some cases point to a genuine connection which may have existed between elite magical practice and the popular tradition. These ‘astronomical’ beliefs known all over Southeast and Central Europe do actually deserve far more than the fleeting mention we may accord them here and I am hoping to discuss them in a separate study.

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⁶⁴ For more on this see, e.g., Kretzenbacher 1968: 120–121.

⁶⁵ I have no space here to enumerate the extensive documentation of this belief material; on *táltos* who divine from the stars see Pócs 2016a.

⁶⁶ Already Aristophanes wrote about Thessalian witches who pull the moon down and lock it in a box (*Clouds*, 749–752). See also Dickie 2001: 103; Phillips 2002: 378–379; Georgieva 1985: 24.

⁶⁷ Kurotschkin 1996/92: 196.

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