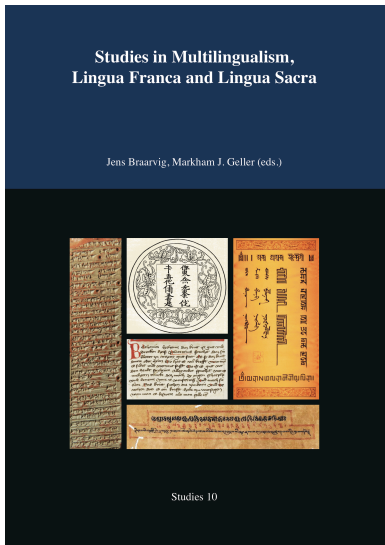


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## Studies 10

*Florentina Badalanova Geller:*  
What Language Does God Speak?



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## Chapter 5

### What Language Does God Speak?

*Florentina Badalanova Geller*

на майка ми, за чийто рожден ден не можах да си дойда тази година

#### 5.1 *Lingua Sacra Equated*

The statement that for Jews, Christians and Muslims “the language of God” is conventionally identified with their respective *lingua sacra*—that is, with the language of their own Holy Scriptures—is a commonplace one.<sup>1</sup> However, if we take into consideration the vernacular interpretations of either the Biblical or the Quranic narratives, which have been circulating among Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities within and/or outside the “Holy Land(s)” of the Abrahamic faiths, the picture is entirely different. Storytellers often identify the “divine proto-language,” the language of their Holy Book(s), with their native tongue, which is then implicitly recognized as sacred.

The empirical data registered during anthropological, ethnographic and folklore field research, conducted over the last two centuries among traditional societies in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere, is indicative of this connection. Its analysis reveals a fascinating phenomenon. The unlettered “people of the Book,” who could not read the scriptural text, nevertheless sung and recounted what they imagined to be the “Bible.”<sup>2</sup> Unlike its canonical counterpart, this unwritten Holy Writ was as intangible as it was incorporeal. Its oral versions were perpetually reassembled at each new performance. In fact, it was the Bible ever imagined, but never held. Rather than as a book, it was perceived as a collective intellectual construct existing only as a virtual scriptural corpus. At vernacular level the *Folk Bible* routinely operated as a metaphorical device achieving stability and harmony in both the macrocosm and the microcosm. It was envisaged as the ultimate customary codex of rules for public and private life. In folklore tradition, Biblical patriarchs and matriarchs were habitually perceived as almighty ancestors, shielding those invoking them from all kinds of natural disasters, social calamities, personal misadventures, health problems and misfortunes. The use of the Biblical onomasticon in traditional spells, incantations and charms accompanying protective rituals, healing customs, and related practices is particularly significant. In all of

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<sup>1</sup>This article incorporates results of the author’s earlier publications on the topic of vernacular renditions of some Biblical and Quranic narratives; see Badalanova (1994; 1997–1998; 2001; 2002a,b; 2003; 2008) and Badalanova Geller (2008; 2010).

<sup>2</sup>See in this connection the discussion in Mochul’skiĭ (1886; 1887); Gaster (1887; 1900; 1915); Dähnhardt (1907; 1909); Utley (1945); Tolstaya (1998); Nagy (1986–1988; 2006; 2007). For a typological analysis of multilingual transmissions of Bible-related narratives in non-European traditional societies (with special emphasis on indigenous mythologies and folklore of Western American Indians, after their conversion to Christianity), see Ramsey (1977). On similar processes characterizing the domestication of Islamic textual traditions among the indigenous Gayo communities in highland Sumatra (Indonesia), see Bowen (1992, 495–516).

these, the names of Biblical figures serve as verbal amulets providing the ultimate antidote against hardships and turbulences, regardless of the nature of their etiology.<sup>3</sup>

A similar stance towards the Quranic corpus was attested among some Muslim communities—both Sunni and Shia—in the Balkans<sup>4</sup> and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the early 1950's, while describing certain idiosyncratic features of the Alevi (*Bektaş* and *Kizilbaş*)<sup>6</sup> folk customs and oral tradition, the ethnographers V. Marinov, Z. Dimitrov and Iv. Koev, who conducted field research at the time in the village of Sevar (North–Eastern Bulgaria), emphasized in their report (published in the celebrated *Transactions of the Ethnographic Institute and Museum* in Sofia) that a specific cluster of songs—which the local people designated as the “*Quran*”—was sung at various types of social gatherings observed by the community.<sup>7</sup> It was further noted that each household in this Muslim village had a musical instrument, whilst at least one member of the family—regardless of whether they were male or female—was trained to play it. Particular attention was paid to the description of the content of some of the so-called “*Quran*” chants, as well as the means of their oral transmission. Thus, after reporting that the local *Aliani* (that is, Alevi) *Kizilbaş* singer of tales had learned the rhymes from his grandfather, Ibish Murtazov, the ethnographers offered a summary of one such poem, sung during the *mohabed* [мохабед] social gatherings:

The singer also sung one wise song of *Tarikat*, in which it was said that man was created from four components: earth, fire, air, and water.<sup>8</sup> Four books speak about what is known about air, earth, *Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, righteousness and truth. *Tarikat* is a burning fire, and wealth in material goods was given by Adam to mankind, whereas reasoning was given by Allah. When one goes towards truth, one makes sacrifices. At the end of the song, a question was asked about what is known regarding the destiny of each human being.<sup>9</sup>

Певецът изпя и една мъдра песен за *тарикат*, в която се казва, че човек е създаден от четири неща: пръст, огън, въздух и вода. Четири книги отговарят какво знаят за въздуха, земята, за шариаха, за тариката, за правдата и истината. *Тарикат* е горящ огън, имането—материалните блага били

<sup>3</sup>See below (section 5.4 and section 5.5); see also Part 1 of the Appendix (p. 153ff.).

<sup>4</sup>See Georgieva (1991); Lozanova (2000; 2002; 2003; 2006); Mikov (2005; 2007); Stoyanov (2001; 2004). See also the discussion in Utley (1968); Schwarzbaum (1982); Calder (1988); Bowen (1992); Dundes (2003).

<sup>5</sup>On the “narrators for the common folk” (*quşşās al-‘āmm*) as “popular theologians” consult the discussion in the *Introduction* to the English translation (by W. M. Thackston) of the eleventh century collection of the *Tales of the Prophets* attributed to Muhammad ibn Abd Allah al-Kisai (Thackston 1997, xvii–xxiv, xxviii). See also Schwarzbaum (1982, 9, 11–12, 62–75).

<sup>6</sup>On Alevi communities and their social organization see Georgieva (1991); Shankland (2003; 2006, 19–26, 67–129, 134–146, 185–206) and Gramatikova (2011). See also Olsson, Özdalga, Raudvere (eds.) (1998) and Dressler (2013). Further on Islamic heterodox traditions see Birge 1937; Melikoff (1992; 1998); Mikov (2005; 2007) and Norris (2006); on Alevi poetry see Dressler (2003).

<sup>7</sup>Excerpts of the Sevar *Quran* spiritual stanzas are published in the present volume; see Chapter 6. Similar vernacular usage of the term “*Quran*” among the *Kizilbaş* communities in the Rhodope mountains, South-Eastern Bulgaria, was noted by Frederick de Jong (1993, 206–208).

<sup>8</sup>According to the Alevi anthropogonic scheme, “the four basic cosmic elements, water [*Şeriat*], air [*Tarikat*], fire [*Marifet*] and earth [*Hakikat*]” are related “to the four levels of being [*ervâh*] in Man: mineral [*ruh-i cismanî*], vegetable [*ruh-i nebatî*], animal [*ruh-i haywani*] and human [*ruh-i insani*]. When all four *ervâh* are annihilated and replaced by the *ruh-i safî* (the pure spirit) the stage of the Perfect Man [*insan-i kâmil*] has been reached” (Jong 1989, 9). Further on the “four doors of enlightenment” (*Şeriat*, *Tarikat*, *Marifet* and *Hakikat*) in Alevi tradition, see Shankland (2003, 85–86, 187). See also the discussion in Crone (2012, 483–484).

<sup>9</sup>The author’s translation.

дадени от Адам на човека, съзнанието—от Аллага. Когато се отива към правдата, дават се жертви. На края в песента се запитва какво се знае за съдбата на всеки човек.<sup>10</sup>

This kind of sacred vocal music was traditionally performed by either male or female members of the *Aliani Kizilbaş* community, as there were no gender restrictions imposed upon those singing the “wise chants of *Tarikat*”,<sup>11</sup> significantly, the above information was given by no one else but the local Head of the Village Council [*Председател на Селсъвета*], Hyusein Merdanov.<sup>12</sup> Most remarkably, it was also *comrade* Merdanov who testified that “these songs are called by our people *Quran*” [*тези песни нашите ги наричат Куран*].<sup>13</sup> Obviously, in the above phrase this term did not refer to the Muslim Holy Book but rather to Islamic folk poetry, and in particular to religious songs on spiritual themes. Needless to say, no one in the local villages actually possessed a copy of the Quran, just like their Christian counterparts had no Bibles, and both terms “*Quran*” and “*Bible*” in these contexts refer to the *idea* of the book rather than to the book *per se*. These imagined “scriptures” were orally performed rather than being held and read, with their *libretti* imprinted in the collective memory of the community. Not only did they co-exist intertwined at a popular level, but they also produced a certain overarching hypertext—multilingual and polyphonic—reflecting the intangible folklore traditions of the three Abrahamic faiths. Those recounting them believed firmly that their verbally transmitted stories, inherited from ancestors, stem straight from their respective Holy Book(s)—be it the Bible or the Quran. Indeed, the vocal “folk scriptures” were considered by illiterate believers to be the ultimate source-compendium revealing the divine truth about the origins of the Universe and mankind, and the wisdom behind the interdependent existence of the macrocosm and the microcosm. Elsewhere I have argued that some types of vernacular counterparts of Holy Writ show cognizance of the logistics involved in the unfolding of the proto-Biblical oral hypertext from which the canonical corpus eventually sprang,<sup>14</sup> I have further argued that vestiges of this oral *Vorlage* can be traced in the rabbinic tradition (Midrash), in Jewish and/or Christian apocryphal literature (e.g. *The Book of Jubilees*, *The Life of Adam and Eve*, *The Apocalypse of Enoch*, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*, *The Apocalypse of Elijah*, etc.) and historiographical works (e.g. Flavius Josephus’ *Judean Antiquities*, *Byzantine Universal Chronicles*, etc.), and last but not least, in Islamic exegetical writings (e.g. *Tafsir*, *Qisas al-Anbiya*, etc.).

The academic discourse dominant today is that there are no surviving vernacular parallels to the ancient proto-Biblical oral corpus; yet, at the same time, it is taken for granted that certain literary parabiblical compositions (such as *The Book of Jubilees*, *The Apocalypse*

<sup>10</sup>See Marinov et al. (1955, 111) and Badalanova Geller (2008, 3).

<sup>11</sup>For a thorough analysis of the semantic coverage of the term *Tarikat* (frequently used in conjunction with the term *Şeriat*) among the Alevis see Shankland (2003, 84–89, 99, 112–113, 116–118, 121, 139–140).

<sup>12</sup>In Bulgaria, during the Soviet period, this top-rung position in the local government was usually assigned to a Communist Party member.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Marinov et al. (1955, 112).

<sup>14</sup>See earlier discussion in Badalanova (2008) and Badalanova Geller (2008). On orality and Biblical textuality see Kelber (1983); Aune (1991); Andersen (1991); Ruger (1991); Elman and Geršoni (2000); Kawashima (2004); Bauckham (2006); Grafton and Williams (2006); Hasan-Rokem (2009, 29–55); Sabar (2009, 135–169) and Yassif (2009, 61–73). On traces of oral traditions in parabiblical writings see Mochul’skiĭ (1894); Flusser (1971) and Adler (1986–1987; 2013). On Biblical folklore see Niditch (1985; 1993; 1996; 2000); see also Kirkpatrick (1988), as well as Brewer (1979) and Rose (1938). Dundes (1999), on the other hand, suggests that *Holy Writ* is, in fact, oral literature and advocates that the Biblical corpus should be considered “as folklore”; a similar approach is employed by him in the analysis of the Quranic text; see Dundes (2003).

of *Enoch*, *The Life of Adam and Eve*, *Judean Antiquities*, etc.) represent important source material for understanding, for instance, the socio-cultural context of the Dead Sea scrolls and, respectively, significant aspects of the proto-Biblical oral traditions. And here we encounter an acute epistemological paradox. Although a vast number of recently recorded folklore accounts provide strikingly close parallels to some of the above-mentioned apocryphal compositions and chronographic works, oral sources are regarded as less reliable than written ones. While it is considered to be methodologically sound to approach parascriptural *written* compositions as prestigious and trustworthy compendia of ancient oral legends representative of the no-longer extant nascent Biblical proto-corpus, *oral* sources are excluded from the scope of matter-of-fact textual evidence.

Then again, the analysis of a parabiblical oral corpus (which has been registered by folklorists, ethnographers and anthropologists during the last two centuries) shows that verbal counterparts of Holy Writ may still preserve the collective memory of the earliest stages of its pre-literary existence; furthermore vernacular attestations of Biblical narrative tradition suggest that the canonical scriptural text has coexisted for centuries with its clandestine, constantly evolving multilingual twin, the *Folk Bible*; and since this oral Writ was rendered by storytellers in their vernacular indigenous tongue, the latter was respectively considered to be the language spoken by God. Indeed, God and his people are imagined to have been speaking the same language.

Thus among Orthodox Russian peasants it was maintained that God speaks Russian; accordingly, it was believed that the language spoken in Eden was also Russian; hence by extension, the first people, Adam and Eve, became Russians. This concept was implied in a number of traditional religious tales and songs.<sup>15</sup> According to one of the most popular folklore spiritual stanzas [духовные стихи],<sup>16</sup> *The Rhyme of the Book of the Dove* [Стух

<sup>15</sup>They were performed by a particular social subclass of *wandering blind minstrels* [калеки переходящие].

<sup>16</sup>The term used in vernacular genre taxonomy to designate this type of religious poem/song is “psalm” [псалма]; see Sumtsov (1888, 36); Speranskiĭ (1899, 7–9, note 5) and Fedotov (1991, 36). Significantly, “the Russian Tsar” *David Eseevich / Avseevich* [Давид Есеевич / Асеевич] (that is, “David, the son of Jesse,” to whom the authorship of the Psalter is traditionally attributed) features in many such chants as the “key-interpreter” of divine wisdom encapsulated in the allegorical language of the texts; see Mochul’skiĭ (1886, (16: 4): 216); Bezsonov (1861, 269–278) (texts № 76, 77). On the other hand, among Slavonic scribes the Psalter was often referred to as “Glubina” [Глубина], that is, “depth”; see Mochul’skiĭ (1887, (17:1): 138–139). Furthermore the same term was likewise employed to label *The Discussion Between the Three Saints* and *The Apocalypse of John* apocryphal writings. The use of similar genre taxonomy in relation to the Psalter on the one hand and Slavonic parabiblical literature [апокрифическая Библия] and oral spiritual stanzas [духовные стихи] on the other suggests that the latter were perceived as vernacular counterparts of Scriptures; see Mochul’skiĭ (1887, (17:1): 131–132, 136, 138–139; 1887, (18:3): 90–91). See also the following note.

о Голубиной книге],<sup>17</sup> a firm statement is made that the peasants of Holy Russia are direct descendants of Adam and Eve:

От того колена от Адамова,	From the very knee/loin of Adam himself,
От того ребра от Евина,	From the very rib of Eve herself,
Пошли христиане православные,	Sprang Orthodox Christians,
По всей земли Святорусския. <sup>i</sup>	Around all the land of Holy Russia. <sup>ii</sup>

Table 1: <sup>i</sup>See Danilov (1938, 274).

<sup>ii</sup>See Badalanova (2008, 183) and Russell (2009, 178).

The motif of Adam and Eve as the ultimate ancestors of Orthodox Christianity,<sup>18</sup> and indeed of Holy Russia,<sup>19</sup> is likewise attested in other versions of the *The Rhyme of the Book of the Dove*; in one of them an elaborate statement explaining the genesis of social institutions and class stratification is presented:

Оттого у нас в земле цари пошли	This is how the Tsars of our land sprang
От святой главы от Адамовой;	From the holy head of Adam;
Оттого зачадилась князья-бояры	This is how noble princes came to be
От святых мощей от Адамовых;	From the holy relics of Adam;
Оттого крестьяны православные	While the Orthodox peasants [sprang]
От свята колена от Адамова. <sup>i</sup>	From the very knee/loin of Adam. <sup>ii</sup>

Table 2: <sup>i</sup>Mochul'skii (1887, (17:1): 178).

<sup>ii</sup>Author's translation.

<sup>17</sup>The formulaic phrase *Голубиная книга* may be rendered in some versions of the poem as *Глубинная книга*, considering the specific semantic diapason of the Russian form for “depth” [*глубь*], meaning both “profundity” and “wisdom” (see the discussion above), the connotation of the term *Глубинная книга* may be thus construed accordingly as “the Deep / Innate / Profound / Unfathomable / Impenetrable / Incomprehensible / Secret Book”; indeed, the spiritual poems marked by this title contain elaborate cosmogonies and anthropogonies relating profound “holy secrets” of Creation of the Universe and Man. They are written in a mysteriously sealed divine Book which descends from Heaven to Earth. Then again, as pointed out by James Russell, the form “dove” [*голубь*], “referring presumably to the Holy Spirit, may have been a *narratio facilior* for an original ‘depth’ [*глубь*]”; see Russell (2009, 142). Following this line of argument, it may be suggested that the stock phrase *Голубиная книга* may also be interpreted as “The Book of the Holy Spirit.” Therefore, in the current text I am tempted to interpret the concept of “deep” (as applied to knowledge) as “spiritual wisdom.” See also the discussion in Rozhdestvenskaya (2000, 394). On the other hand, Istrin had argued that the Slavonic “*глубина*” was most probably a domesticated version of the Greek term *Μαργαρίται*, which was conventionally used to designate either the cycle of John Chrysostom’s homilies, *Adversus Judaeos* (the first translations of which appeared among the Balkan Slavs no later than the fourteenth century), or other related exegetical compilations. Indeed, in Slavonic tradition the term *глубина* was part of a specific terminological cluster within the corpus, used interchangeably with titles such as *Маргарит*, *Жемчуг*, *Маргаритъ Златоустовъ*, *Жемчюгъ Златоустовъ*, *Жемчюжная Матица*, *Златая Матица*, etc.; see Istrin (1898, 478–489). Further on the content of *The Rhyme of the Book of the Dove* see Mochul'skii (1886; 1887); Lincoln (1986, 3–12, 21–25, 32, 144–145).

<sup>18</sup>See also in this connection the discussion in Turilov and Chernetsov (2002, 47).

<sup>19</sup>Further on the conceptualization of Russia as a “Holy Land” see Uspenskiĭ (1996, 386–392).

Significantly, a strong phonetic similarity exists between the Russian words denoting “peasant” [крестьянин] and “Christian” [христианин].<sup>20</sup> Indigenous folk etymology conventionally interprets this resemblance in a symbolic way; according to this type of vernacular axiology, it is only the peasantry [крестьянство] who should be considered the genuine, true receptacle of Christian faith [христианство]. Hence the language of the Orthodox peasantry is regarded as the ultimate speech of both Adam and Christ, “the New Adam.” A similar belief anchors anthropogonic accounts recounted in other Slavonic vernaculars. According to this type of the *Folk Genesis* stories, after having crafted man in his own image and likeness and appointed him to be the master of the Universe and the sovereign of “every living creature that moves on the ground”,<sup>21</sup> the Creator blows the breath of life not into Adam’s nostrils,<sup>22</sup> but into his mouth, thus vivifying him, and transforming him not just into a “human being” originating from the dust of the ground (= Latin *humus*), but into a “speaking creature.” In this way Slavonic anthropogonies define Adam’s tongue as a divine product originating from the Holy Spirit; as such it claimed to have emanated directly from the lips of the Creator.<sup>23</sup> Indicative in this connection is the fact that, according to vernacular Slavonic etymology, the ethnonym “Slavs” (Proto-Slavonic \**Slověninъ* / \**Slověne*) derives from the lexeme “word / speech”; that is to say, Slavs are the people “who have the ability to speak.” And, of course, there are also those who do not possess this skill. They are “the Other.” This concept was further developed into a powerful messianic idea—that Slavs are a “People of the Word (of God),” whose destiny is marked by the divine protection of Christ the *Logos*.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, as indigenous historical sources indicate, foreigners were considered to be “dumb / mute / tongue-tied” (Proto-Slavonic \**něтъ*; Church Slavonic *нѣмъ*; Bulgarian *ням*; Serbo-Croatian *нем*; Russian *немой*; Ukrainian *німий*; Polish *niemy*, etc.); indeed, the Slavonic ethnonym applied to designate the German-speaking people (Proto-Slavonic \**něтьсь*) stems from the same semantic cluster.<sup>25</sup>

Then again, a similar—but much more extreme and hostile—axiological model in designating “the Other” is employed by Procopius of Caesarea (500 CE–c. 560 CE) in his *History of the Wars* (7–8), where the word used to denote the Slavonic tribes—the then restless pagan neighbors of Byzantium—was identical with that used to denote “slaves” [= Σκλάβοι, Σκλαβηνοί, Σκλαυηνοί, Σθαβηνοί, Σκλαβίνοι]. Hence a powerful ethnic stereotype was coined. Slavs are slaves. *Nomen est omen*. What remains is “history” which has to fulfil this “prophecy.”

The latter case—which is far from unique—not only shows how ethnonyms may be employed as a powerful ideological weapon; it also demonstrates how ethnicity may be

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Fasmer (1986–1987, (2), 374–375) and Uspenskii (1996, 387).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Gen* 1: 26–28.

<sup>22</sup> As in *Gen* 2:7.

<sup>23</sup> A similar approach to the origin of human speech—from the breath of God blown into the human mouth—is attested in the apocryphal *Apocalypse of Enoch* (*I Enoch* 14: 2–3).

<sup>24</sup> Together with the interpretation of the autonym “Slavs” as the “People of the Word/Logos,” in many Slavonic sources (and especially those composed during the Romanticism) there circulated another ethnocentric etymological construct based on the phonetic similarity between the ethnonym *Slověninъ* (var. *Slavěninъ*) / *Slověne* (var. *Slavěne*) and the lexeme denoting “glory” (*slava*). Hence the ethnonym “Slavs” was interpreted as the “Glorious People”; see Ivanov and Toporov (2000, 418). It was employed as a powerful rhetorical device in home-spun publicist writings and political pamphlets concerned with issues related to independence movements, especially among the Balkan Slavs in the period of their National Revival.

<sup>25</sup> See also the discussion in Ivanov and Toporov (2000, 417–418).

further harnessed as a means of multilingual socio-political propaganda. Indeed, ethno-etymologies provide virtually limitless possibilities in this direction.

A similar phenomenon is observed in medieval European vernaculars; thus the expletive “bugger,” which is conventionally used to denote sodomy, is in fact a derivate from Anglo-Norman *bougre*, which, in turn, comes from the Latin *Bulgarus*,<sup>26</sup> a name given to the members of the Bulgarian dualistic (Gnostic) heretical movement of the *Bogomilism*<sup>27</sup> (whose followers in Italy and France are known as Cathars, Albigensians, Patharens); they were accused of performing illicit practices, both religious and sexual. Thus the semantic coverage of the otherwise neutral ethnonym “Bulgarian” was not only radically altered (and, apparently, irretrievably adapted by popular culture, as modern lexicographic data indicates), but also ultimately transformed into a derogatory, stigmatizing term with acutely negative connotations. The troubled history of the *Bulgarus* (that is, the Bulgarian) heresy of *Bogomilism*, most fiercely refuted by Church authorities in medieval Europe, is compressed within its multilingual social memory; its adepts were callously persecuted and, when caught, mercilessly tortured and executed. The core of their teaching was shaped by the idea that only the celestial—spiritual and intangible—realm belongs to God, while the terrestrial—tangible and carnal world, along with ecclesiastical and state institutions, belongs to God’s adversary, the Devil. It is therefore understandable why, from the point of view of both the Church clergy or government officials, the public humiliation and moral disgracing of the *Bogomils* appears to have been even more important than their physical extermination. What was at stake, of course, was the very reputation of their religious teaching and the contagious principles of their anti-ecclesiastical and anti-state ideology; and this is when and where the sophisticated *modus operandi* of discrediting their ethics and moral values was set into motion, both on behalf of the Church and the State. The designation of what the authorities stigmatized as religious deviation was transformed into a label of abominable sexual aberration. The *Bogomils* are not only portrayed as a sacrilegious sect performing blasphemous religious rituals, but also as individuals of bestial carnal conduct and a demonic social profile.

As far as the actual heresiological term *Bogomil* is concerned, it is, in fact, an eponym associated with the legendary tenth century leader of the aforementioned Bulgarian dualistic movement who, according to the contemporary historiographical sources, was called *Bogomil* / *Bogumil* (Medieval Bulgarian *Богоумиль*).<sup>28</sup> The latter is a Slavonic calque of the Greek / Byzantine Theophilus (Θεόφιλος), deriving from the lexemes θεός (“God”) and φιλία (“love”). As such, it appears to be a theophoric appellation, the meaning of which may be rendered simply as the “Love of God,” or “Loved by God.” Needless to say, this particular meaning of the (most probably assumed) name of the charismatic heresiarch *Bogomil* / *Bogumil* was transparently clear to his contemporaries, regardless of whether adherents or adversaries. It was an ethnohermeneutical weapon used in his struggle against both the Orthodox Church and the State establishment; the actual name of the Priest, *Bogomil* / *Bogumil*, further implied that the creed preached by him was endorsed by God Himself.

<sup>26</sup>See Partridge (1966, 66).

<sup>27</sup>See Radchenko (1910); Ivanov (1925); Obolensky (1948); Turdeanu (1950); Dimitrova-Marinova (1998); Stoyanov (2000); Szwat-Gylybowa (2010); Tsibranska-Kostova and Raykova (2008) and Bozhilov, Totomanova and Biliarski (2012, 23–49).

<sup>28</sup>See Davidov (1976, 39).



It was exactly this reading of the name of the immanent heresiarch which was targeted by the medieval Bulgarian writer Cosmas the Presbyter in his famous treatise *Sermon Against the Newly-Appeared Bogomil Heresy*.<sup>29</sup> While addressing his audience, whom he endeavored to convince that the Bogomil doctrine was nothing else but an evil heretical teaching, he thought it important to point out that the name of its founder, *Bogomil*, should not be interpreted as “the one loved by God (*Богоумилъ*),” but rather as someone “who, in fact, is not loved by God” [*а по истинѣ реци богунемилъ*]. The might of scholastic rhetoric utilized by Cosmas the Presbyter as an antidote to the mythopoeic mechanisms of vernacular Christianity, and the very code of its dualistic ethnohermeneutics, was harnessed in this propaganda machine run by the Orthodox Church.

As pointed out above, in the West the term *Bogomil* was substituted by the ethnonym *Bulgarus*, due to common knowledge that the heresy designated by it had the land of Bulgarians as its birthplace. The subsequent semantic transformations of this word, and especially the adoption of its negative connotations and turning it into an expletive, show how ethnic and religious stereotypes coined in the Middle Ages survive in the multilingual collective memory of modern Europe.

## 5.2 Claiming Lingua Sacra in Vernacular Traditions

The analysis of the vernacular thesaurus employed in parabiblical oral heritage provides fascinating results. Of particular importance is the corpus of the *Folk Genesis*, as attested among peasant Christian communities in Europe and elsewhere. Those storytelling the Bible consider themselves to be “a chosen people,” while their native tongue is distinguished as the language of Holy Scriptures; accordingly, their native landscapes are identified as the Holy Land.

Indicative in this respect are some folklore counterparts of the Biblical account about the creation of woman,<sup>30</sup> as recorded among Bulgarians. Thus, after naming all the animals brought before him, Adam took a nap; it was then, during this slumber that the Matriarch was fashioned by God; the first man called upon her as soon as he woke up. The words he uttered while approaching her were, “Come, come here, as you are dear to my heart!” [*Ела! Ела! Че си ми скъпа на сърцето!*]; then again, in Bulgarian the articulation/vocalization of the imperative form of the verb “to come”—“ela!” [*ела!*]—phonetically resembles the name of the first woman; in the local dialect, it is pronounced as “Eva” [Ева]. Thus the name of Eve is bound to the exclamation “come!”; respectively, the name of the first woman is perceived as a vernacular anthroponymic reference to the language of Creation,<sup>31</sup> imagined to be identical with that of the storyteller.

A similar rendition of the legend about the origin of the name of the “mother of all living,” Eve, was registered among other Slavonic communities. According to one such an account,<sup>32</sup> God conceives the idea of giving the lonely Adam a companion by taking the ninth rib from the sleeping man, forming from it woman and putting her next to him. When

<sup>29</sup>See Kiselkov (1942 [1921]) and Popruzhenko (1936, 1–80).

<sup>30</sup>*Gen* 2: 18–24.

<sup>31</sup>See *SbNU* 8 (1892, 180–181), text № 2 (*Адам дава име на сички божи творения*) and Tsepenkov (2006 (4), 19–20), text № 9. See also Badalanova Geller (2010, 40–42).

<sup>32</sup>Recorded by Dobvol'skii in the second half of the nineteenth century in the former Smolensk Gubernia of the Russian Empire; see also the next note.

Adam awakens, he exclaims: “Lo and behold! What is the meaning of all this? I was one when falling asleep, and now there are two of us!” [*Е-во! Што такая значитъ? Лех я адин а теперь ужю двоя!*]. In the local dialect the expression “Lo and behold” is pronounced as “E-vo!”: hence the name “Eva” (Eve). Having heard Adam’s exclamation, God decides to name the woman after it [*Гаспотъ и ни пирияниу названия Адамавий жаны—так и засталась ина Ева*].<sup>33</sup> As pointed out by Vladimir Dal’ in his *Interpretative Dictionary of Vernacular Russian* [*Толковый словарь живого великорусского языка*], “e-va” [*e-va*] is a typical Russian vernacular expression used either as an interjection, or as a demonstrative pronoun.<sup>34</sup> Obviously, according to the above quoted legend, the name of the first woman is believed to have originated from the exclamation which the Russian-speaking Adam utters when he sees her for the first time.

A similar example of ethnohermeneutical decoding of the name of Eve is attested among the Ukrainians. According to one such anthropogonic legend, man was created from earth, whereas woman was made from the willow tree, which in the narrator’s mother tongue is called “iva” [*ива*]; hence the name of the first woman, *Eva* (Ева) is imagined as a derivate from the name of the willow [*ива*] tree from which her flesh was believed to have originated.<sup>35</sup> Then again, the storyteller of this legend imagined the language of Creation to be identical with his local dialect.

A similar idea is represented in some Slavonic legends about the origins of the dog. According to these texts, dogs are believed to have sprung from Cain’s dead body—hence the phonetic similarity between their “language” and the name of the Biblical character from whose flesh they originated. While “speaking,” they are believed to be calling his name. Thus the sounds of dog’s barking (rendered by the storytellers as “Kaine! Kaine!”) are perceived as a vocative form of the name of Cain [*Каин*] (pronounced as “Kain”).<sup>36</sup>

Another example of deciphering the “language” of animals through parabiblical oral tradition is presented by the cluster of legends about Jesus’ crucifixion and “frog speech.” Thus, according to one such account, when Christ was about to be put on the cross, a helpful frog hatched a plan to prevent it from happening and tried to save the Saviour; it stole the nails needed for the Crucifixion and dropped them into a nearby river. When asked where they were hidden, the frog replied, saying: “The cr-r-r-rab took them!” And although the brave frog managed only to postpone the sufferings of Jesus but not prevent them, it was in fact the only creature trying to impede the Crucifixion. This is why, legend maintains, the frog is blessed to dwell in water forever and to enjoy divine protection: whoever harms it is cursed by the Lord, and as for those who dare kill a frog, they are severely punished and their mothers would suffer sudden death.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, even Aetiological legends about the local landscape are considered to be stories coming straight from Holy Scripture; vernacular legends about the Flood were among the most popular of folk narratives. During research trips in the villages of Eastern Europe over the last 30 years, I recorded different variations of this particular theme. According to one such story, Noah the cooper was told by God to build a barrel and not an Ark,

<sup>33</sup>See Dobrovol’skiĭ (1891, 235).

<sup>34</sup>See Dal’ (1880 (1), 513): *восклициание изумленья, а иногда и указания: вот где, погляди-ка: напр. Ева где лежит во.*

<sup>35</sup>See Tolstaya (1998, 32).

<sup>36</sup>See Shapkarev (1973, 267) (*Пак за кучинья-та и за Каинья*).

<sup>37</sup>See Badalanova (1994, 18–19) (text № 35).

where he, his family and all the animals were to live while the Flood covered the Earth for years and not for days. Significantly, an ancient predecessor of this concept is attested in a Babylonian tablet from c. 1800 BCE, as recently published by Irving Finkel,<sup>38</sup> according to which the Flood hero saved mankind in a “coracle,”<sup>39</sup> a barrel-shaped vessel, rather than the conventional three-level boat image of the Ark, as described in *Genesis*.

Over the many years of my field research I kept encountering the same type of narrative over and over again in different villages. As a rule, the storytellers insisted that the Flood had taken place in their own vicinity; some even showed me the place where Noah’s Ark was believed to have landed.<sup>40</sup> (A similar case is represented by legends binding the story of the wife of Lot, who was turned into a pillar of salt within the local landscape). To return to the Flood story, as attested in the Balkans, in some cases the Biblical Patriarch was given a typical local (Bulgarian, Serbian, etc.) name, thus becoming an honorary ancestor of the village in which the Flood story was narrated. In the account of another storyteller, a peasant woman Zonka Ivanova Mikhova (born in 1909 in North-Western Bulgaria), the Biblical legend of Noah and the Flood becomes an etiological story that explains the origins of Bulgarians. In her version, once on land Noah planted a shoot which a bird from the Ark had brought back to him, and grapes started to grow from it:

And the grapevine had grapes but they were still green, not yet ripe. He ate from it and said: “No, you can’t eat that!” And when they were ripe, he pressed them and drank wine from them. And he drank and drank, and had more than enough, and got drunk and lay down to sleep. He had taken his clothes off as well. And one of his sons came, and said: “Look! My father is naked!” And the other said: “Forget about him! It’s well deserved—he was so greedy he drank himself to death!” And he woke up and said that he who said that his father should sleep, he will be blessed. Wherever he goes, he will be happy. He who said that his father was naked, he will roam and roam, and never find peace to settle! He will have nothing! [...] And the one who obeyed his father, he was the forefather of the Bulgarians.<sup>41</sup>

The above quoted oral tale also shows how the *Folk Bible* accommodated indigenous ethnohistory. In this way, *Genesis* (or rather the verbal icon of *Genesis*) is built into the real life of a village community and the legends concerning Old Testament characters become indigenous aetiological texts. In this regard, the vernacular renditions of the saga of Abraham are indicative (see below).

<sup>38</sup>See the discussion in Finkel (2014).

<sup>39</sup>Coracles were still being used in Iraq until the 1930s.

<sup>40</sup>Related accounts are published by some Russian folklorists; see for instance the legend recorded in the village of Knyazhevo [Княжево] in the Tambov region of the Russian Federation by S. Dubrovina (2002, 3) from the local storyteller Sergey Fedorovich Mazaev [Сергей Федорович Мазеев] (born 1915) and his wife Evdokiya Yakovlevna Mazaeva [Евдокия Яковлевна Мазеева] (born 1916).

<sup>41</sup>The original Bulgarian text was published by the author; see Badalanova (1993, 147).

### 5.3 Domesticating the Bible and Quran Through the Meta-Language of Ritual: The Theologeme of the Filial Sacrifice in Abrahamic Religions

The narrative about the (interrupted) filial sacrifice, as found in the Bible<sup>42</sup> and the Quran<sup>43</sup> is considered to be the kernel of the most fundamental ritual celebrations, shared by all three Abrahamic religions.<sup>44</sup> Christians recall the filial sacrifice at the Eucharist, Jews remember the *Aqedah* (or, the “tying of the sacrificial lamb”) at Rosh Hashonah, and Muslims refer to the same account at the feast of Id al-Kabir (known as *Kurban Bayram*). Furthermore, the vernacular oral redactions of the Abraham Saga can be looked upon as “living antiquities,” or fossil texts reconciling the three faiths; in other words, these types of folklore textual clusters do not merely represent theological divergences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also exemplify their common origins. Thus, among Jews and Christians it is maintained that the chosen son was Isaac, whereas among Muslims the opposite belief prevailed, that it was Ismail. Therefore, Christian and Jewish communities identify themselves with the offspring of Isaac, whereas Muslim communities—with the descendants of Ismail, respectively. Correspondingly, the question regarding the language in which God spoke to Abraham also becomes a hot topic; the answer varies according to the native tongue of the storyteller. On the other hand, in the Balkans (where the present author conducted field-research) Christians and Muslims employ the same term—*Kurban*—to indicate the ritual sacrifice of a lamb (or other animals) during their most important annual religious festivals.

Thus in Christian folklore, as registered among the Southern Slavs, the songs of “Abraham’s sacrifice” [“Жертва Аврамова”] anchor the traditional *Kurban* ritual setting.<sup>45</sup> On this day, the oldest man of each family in the village where the celebration takes place presents an offering to God, thus allegorically re-establishing the bond between his home and the household of the Biblical patriarch. Vernacular exegesis transforms the scriptural narrative into a ritual scenario; significantly, the culmination of the Abraham Saga—the filial sacrifice “freeze frame”—is conventionally depicted in the local churches—either on the altarpiece (as an icon or plinth-panel), or in the nave (as a fresco) (see Figures 1 and 2). It is believed that those who are symbolically partaking in the scenario of the Old Testament drama by performing the sacred ritual of *Kurban* sacrifice would be blessed—like *Abraham*—with “descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand of the seashore.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Gen 22: 1–19.

<sup>43</sup>Surah 37:99–110.

<sup>44</sup>See Calder (1988); Firestone (1989; 2001); Popova (1995); Badalanova (2001; 2002a; 2002b); Noort and Tigchelaar (2002) and Kessler (2004).

<sup>45</sup>See *SbNU* 1 (1889: 27), text № 4; *SbNU* 2 (1890: 22–25), texts № 1, 2, 3, 4; *SbNU* 3 (1890: 38); *SbNU* 10 (1894: 11–12), text № 3; *SbNU* 27 (1913: 302), text № 211. See also Miladinovtsi (1861), text № 29; Bezsonov (1864, 12–31), texts № 531, 532; Zhivkov and Boyadzhieva (1993 (1), 364–373), texts № 484–494; see also Part 2 of the Appendix (p. 160).

<sup>46</sup>See *Gen* 22: 17.



Figure 1: Abraham's sacrifice. Fresco from the Dragalevtsy Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Bulgaria (1476). Photo FBG.



Figure 2: Abraham's sacrifice. Painted panel of the iconostasis of the Church of Saint Athanasius in the Village of Gorna Ribnitsa, South-Western Bulgaria (1860). Photo FBG.

Then again, the vernacular Slavonic and Balkan terminology related to the *Kurban*<sup>47</sup> ritual—also called in some areas *оброк / обрѣк*<sup>48</sup> (‘offering,’ ‘oblation,’ ‘sacrifice’), *заниѣ*<sup>49</sup> (‘covenant’), *цѣрква / църква*<sup>50</sup> (‘church’), *храм*<sup>51</sup> (‘temple’), *крѣст*<sup>52</sup> (‘cross,’ ‘crucifix’), *молитва*<sup>53</sup> (‘prayer,’ ‘devotion,’ ‘invocation,’ but also ‘litany’ and ‘communion’), *служба*<sup>54</sup> (‘service,’ ‘ceremony,’ ‘observance,’ ‘worship’), and even *литургия*<sup>55</sup> (‘liturgy,’ ‘sacrament’)—suggests that this custom is perceived as a functional counterpart of the Eucharist. In this, the lamb is understood to be a divine substitute for Isaac, whereas the image of Isaac becomes a proto-icon of Christ, the “Lamb of God.” The fact that in Slavonic languages an unequivocal similarity exists between the word denoting “lamb” [*агне*] (which is related to the Church Slavonic *агнѣ, агньць*),<sup>56</sup> and the liturgical formula “Lamb of God” [*Агнецъ Божий*], is indicative.<sup>57</sup> This similarity, from the point of view of ethnohermeneutics, is quite significant. It illuminates the vernacular postulation that the *Agnus Dei* [*Агнецъ Божий*] is indeed the sacrificial lamb [*агне*], and vice versa, each lamb presented as a *Kurban* [*Курбан*] offering by the paterfamilias is seen as an earthly embodiment of the “Lamb of God.” In other words, God the Son is thought to take on the appearance of a lamb and be sacrificed by the Father. In this way, it is held that Christ touches the realm of men. His blood is thus dropping onto the earth, flowing out from the body of the slaughtered lamb, and those who partake in the mystery of his sacrifice will be redeemed. This is how, to the horror of the local priests, folklore exegesis revealed the mystery of the Eucharist and connected it, in a matter-of-fact way, to the ritual of the *Kurban* feast. Strikingly, it is regarded by those participating in it as a sacred undertaking embedded in the Biblical paradigm of righteous behaviour as established by Abraham. The folklore interpretations of this saga reveal the implicit mechanisms of interconnection between the high ecclesiastical canons and the low system of popular faith, and indeed the idea that “God speaks our language.”

Thus, the life of Abraham and his offspring is shared by the village community; the sacrifice of Isaac appears to be re-experienced each time, bringing to life the commitment to the Biblical event and the destiny of Abraham who becomes a “relative,” and, of course, “ours” by nationality. The substitution in some songs of the name of the Biblical patriarch with Slavonic names is significant: Stoian, Lazar, Ivan, etc. In this way the Biblical narrative is transformed into folk-memory. *Genesis* is built into the real life of the village community and Old Testament legend becomes folkloric aetiological text.

<sup>47</sup>See Gerov (1897, (2), 433); Andreychin et al. (1963, 355); Marinov (1981, 84, 145, 344–352, 367–368, 605–616, 713, 721–722; 1984, 566–579).

<sup>48</sup>See Gerov (1899, (3), 308); Andreychin et al. (1963, 507) and Marinov (1981, 84, 85, 348–352, 720–723; 1984, 571–579).

<sup>49</sup>See Čajkanović and Đurić (1985, 317–318).

<sup>50</sup>See Gerov (1904, (5), 527–528); Andreychin et al. (1963, 993) and Marinov (1981, 145–147, 344–345, 350–351).

<sup>51</sup>See Marinov (1981, 347–349).

<sup>52</sup>See Gerov (1897, (2), 424).

<sup>53</sup>See Gerov (1899, (3), 78).

<sup>54</sup>See Gerov (1904, (5), 194); Andreychin et al. (1963, 846) and Marinov (1981, 344–345, 713–720; 1984, 85–86, 553–565).

<sup>55</sup>See Gerov (1899, (3), 15).

<sup>56</sup>See Georgiev et al. (1971, 3–4).

<sup>57</sup>See Bonchev (2002, (1), 22) and Fasmer (1986–1987, (1), 61).



Figure 3: Ibrahim's Sacrifice. Persian, provenance unknown. Photo FBG.

As for Islamic vernacular legends about the ritual of the Great Sacrifice, both narrators and audience alike regard them as oral counterparts of the Quran, with the storytellers considered to be transmitters of Prophetic revelation. It is worth noting that the actual term “Quran” refers to the concept of “recitation,” while Allah is considered to be the “Speaker.” Furthermore the traditional Muslim folklore corpus contains numerous renditions of legends which have parallel attestations in some Islamic exegetical writings, such as *The History of*



*Prophets and Kings (Tarīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk)* by Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī (839-923 AD), *The Lives of the Prophets (Arā'is Al-Majālis Fī Quiṣaṣ Al-Anbiyā')* by Abū Ishāq Ahmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Thālabī (died 1036 AD), the *Stories of the Prophets (Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā')* by Nosiruddin Burhonuddin Al-Rabghūzī (thirteenth–fourteenth century), and others. Although it is possible that manuscripts containing (fragments from) the above mentioned compositions were in circulation in the Balkans during the Ottoman period, it would be more plausible to consider that these types of narratives drew upon common sources of parascriptural traditions orally transmitted by generations of storytellers over a wide geographical landscape, of which the Balkans were just a part. This kind of data will be analyzed elsewhere.

As for the functional parameters of folklore counterparts of the Quranic account of the filial sacrifice, they remained constant.<sup>58</sup> Whatever way it is narrated, the story of Abraham (whose name now changes to *Ibrahim*) validates the main custom of Muslim communities—the annual ritual slaying of the lamb or ram at the end of the Ramadan fast, on the feast day traditionally called *Kurban-Bayram* (see Figure 3).<sup>59</sup> In fact, it is believed that it was at the end of the month of Ramadan when the Quran was revealed to Mohammad. To sum up, vernacular renditions of the Bible and the Quran clearly spell out the crucial concept that, the comprehension of the “Word of God” does not necessarily require reading or writing skills, and literacy is not a pre-condition for its transmission.

It is significant for our line of argument that some peculiar motifs in the filial sacrifice story (but surprisingly absent from the canonical narrative), which feature prominently and systematically in parabiblical Jewish writings from the Hellenistic period, are also attested in medieval Slavonic apocryphal writings and in contemporary Slavonic and Balkan Christian and Muslim folklore. One such detail concerns Isaac’s request to be bound by his father before being slaughtered on the altar as a sacrificial offering to God.

The earliest attestation of this motif can be traced back to the Dead Sea scrolls texts; it is found in the so-called *Pseudo-Jubilees* account from Qumran, Cave 4, 4Q225, Fragment 2 (4QPs-Juba 2 column i [7–14], column ii [1–14], dated to the second century BCE:

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col. i

- 7 And [Abraham]  
 8 be[lieved] God, and righteousness was reckoned to him. A son  
 was born af[ter] this  
 9 [to Abraha]m, and he named him Isaac. But the prince  
 Ma[s]temah came  
 10 [to G]od, and he lodged a complaint against Abraham about  
 Isaac. [G]od said  
 11 [to Abra]ham, ‘Take your son Isaac, [your] only one, [whom]  
 12 [you lo]ve, and offer him to me as a burnt offering on one of the  
 [hig]h mountains,  
 13 [which I shall point out] to you.’ He aro[se and w]en[t] from  
 the wells up to Mo[unt Moriah].
- 

<sup>58</sup>Cf. Badalanova Geller (2008, 30–78).

<sup>59</sup>See in this connection the discussion in Delaney (1991, 298–303).

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col. ii	14 [ ] And Ab[raham] raised 1 [his ey]es, [and there was a] fire; and he pu[t the wood on his son Isaac, and they went together.] 2 Isaac said to Abraham, [his father, ‘Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb] 3 for the burnt offering?’ Abraham said to [his son Isaac, ‘God himself will provide the lamb.’] 4 Isaac said to his father, ‘B[ind me fast’] <sup>i</sup> 5 Holy angels were standing, weeping over the [altar] 6 his sons from the earth. The angels of Mas[temah] 7 rejoicing and saying, ‘Now he will perish.’ And [in all this the Prince Mastemah was testing whether] 8 he would be found feeble, or whether A[braham] would be found unfaithful [to God. He cried out,] 9 ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Yes?’ So He said, ‘N[ow I know that] 10 he will not be loving.’ The Lord God blessed Is[aac all the days of his life. He became the father of] 11 Jacob, and Jacob became the father of Levi, [a third] gene[ration.] <sup>ii</sup>
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Table 3: <sup>i</sup>This hypothetical restoration of the text (with a reference to the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*) is explained in Fitzmyer (2002, 218); the “plausibility of this reconstruction,” however, is challenged by Kugel who provides arguments against it and offers an alternative reading (Kugel 2006, 86–91, 97). See also VanderKam (1997, 241–261).

<sup>ii</sup>See Fitzmyer (2002, 216–217). See also the discussion in Fitzmyer (2002, 218–222, 225, 228–229).

As shown above, the motif of “Isaac as a willing victim” plays a significant role in the *Pseudo-Jubilees* account of the *Aqedah*; in this way the act of the filial sacrifice acquires important new overtones. The emphasis shifts from father to the son; Isaac is not just a passive victim, but becomes the active protagonist of the Abraham Saga; the role of the son in the trial intensifies and becomes equal to that of his father; Isaac’s character becomes even more dramatic than that of Abraham; in fact, the story about the filial sacrifice is converted into a story about a self-sacrifice, with Isaac being transformed into the main focus of the drama. The narrative reaches its climax when the weeping of “the holy angels,” who stand next to the altar on which the father is about to slaughter his son, is interrupted by the voice of God, ordering Abraham to halt the sacrifice of Isaac.

A similar line of argument is observed in some midrashic sources (such as *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer*, dated to the eighth-ninth century), in which Isaac asks his father Abraham the following:

“O my father! Bind for me my two hands, and my two feet, so that I do not curse thee; for instance, a word may issue from the mouth because of the violence and

dread of death, and I shall be found to have slighted the precept, ‘Honour thy father’ (Ex.20:12.)” He bound his two hands and his two feet, and bound him upon the top of the altar, and he strengthened his two arms and his two knees upon him and put the fire and wood in order, and he stretched forth his hand and took the knife [...]”<sup>60</sup>

A similar scenario is revealed in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (on Genesis 22)*. Having arranged the setting for the burnt offering, Abraham places Isaac on the altar, on top of the wood. Yet when the patriarch puts forth his hand and takes the knife to slaughter his son, Isaac speaks up and, as in the midrashic account of *Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer*, asks his father to tie him firmly, so that he does not struggle, thus causing a blemish in his offering:

“Tie me well lest I struggle because of the anguish of my soul, with the result that a blemish will be found in your offering and I will be thrust into the pit of destruction.” The eyes of Abraham were looking at the eyes of Isaac and the eyes of Isaac were looking at the angels on high [...]”<sup>61</sup>

Almost identical wording is employed in *Targum Neofiti* to render the story of the filial sacrifice:

And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son Isaac. Isaac answered and said to his father Abraham: “Father, tie me well lest I kick you and your offering be rendered unfit and we be thrust down into the pit of destruction in the world to come.”<sup>62</sup>

It is rather astonishing that the motif of Isaac’s request to be bound by his father before the sacrifice, first attested in Qumran, appears in Christian oral ritual songs and Muslim legendary narratives, performed some 20 centuries later. This suggests that the stream of traditions, which characterises parabiblical texts not found in the canonical corpus itself, is surprisingly durable and stable, crossing linguistic, cultural and religious boundaries over lengthy periods of time. Multilingualism acts as a mechanism of the transmission of knowledge within the three Abrahamic faiths, thus forming a common environment for such subtle transfers.

#### 5.4 *Onomastica Biblica* as Ethnobotanical Taxonomy

The vernacular ethnobotanical thesaurus contains a rich corpus of herbal designations related to the name of the first man, Adam; obviously, the belief in their healing properties stems from the implicit association with him. One such phytonym, “Adam’s Tree” [*Адамово дерево*]<sup>63</sup> denotes the evergreen *Myrtus*, considered to be a powerful source of revitalization

<sup>60</sup>The fragment quoted above follows the English translation of the original, as presented in the third part of the Appendix in Manns (1995, 200–201).

<sup>61</sup>Translation by M. Mahler; see Manns (1995, 186).

<sup>62</sup>The above fragment is quoted after McNamara’s translation of the original Aramaic text into English, as published in the first chapter of the Appendix in Manns (1995, 188).

<sup>63</sup>See Dal’ (1880–1882, (1), 5).

in Slavonic ethnomedicine and ethnopharmacology. There is also “Adam’s Beard” [*Адамова борода*],<sup>64</sup> a renowned herb with roots believed to have originated from the beard of the Biblical patriarch. Incidentally, the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus called it *Asclepias*, after the name of the Greek god of healing, due to its folk-medicinal uses. It is hardly a coincidence that among Russians, the ultimate aphrodisiac, *Mandrake*-root, is known as “Adam’s head” [*Адамова голова / глава*],<sup>65</sup> suggesting potency which comes from being the father of mankind and having the entire world as progeny. This plant, also administered to ease childbirth, was believed to be responsible for reversing sterility caused by evil spells. Moreover, the plant was used for healing various kinds of wounds. According to the nineteenth century Russian ethnographer M. Zabylin, the wondrous “Adam’s head” (along with other medicinal plants believed to have the power to counteract malevolent forces) was still in demand among his contemporaries; it was possible to acquire it easily at a number of street-markets in Moscow:

Against witchcraft some herbs may be used, such as wormwood, nettle and the *plakun*-grass; these, together with “Adam’s head” and “Peter’s cross” may be purchased in [the markets in] the area of the *Moskvoretsky Bridge* and the *Glagol* [neighborhood] at a good price.

Против колдунов и ведьм употребляли траву черныбыльник, крапиву и плакун-траву, которая и сейчас в Москве имеется, вместе с Адамовой головой и Петровым крестом у Москворецких ворот и на Глаголе продается за хорошую цену.<sup>66</sup>

A brief survey of internet sources indicates an abundant corpus of rather curious popular manuals describing the properties of “Adam’s head,” along with the necessary rituals accompanying its proper harvesting and usage. One such source is Andrey Romanovsky’s booklet entitled, “*Magic properties of herbs: Unique rituals for love, health, wealth and success, attributed to some great psychics, wizards, healers and Kremlin doctors*” [*Магические свойства трав. Уникальные ритуалы для любви, здоровья, богатства и успеха от великих экстрасенсов, знахарей, целителей и кремлевских врачей*], even available on a special website.<sup>67</sup> In this curious herbal manual the reader is advised that

practically all the components of magical recipes may be acquired in the shops or in the market; if one cannot find them there, they will be available in specialized shops. One should also remember the internet-shops, in which anything imaginable can be ordered.

Практически все из компонентов магических рецептов можно приобрести в магазине или на рынке, в крайнем случае, в специализированном магазине. Кстати, нельзя сбрасывать со счетов и интернет-магазины, в которых можно заказать все что угодно.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup>See Dal’ (1880–1882, (1), 5) and Hrinchenko (1927, 4).

<sup>65</sup>See Dal’ (1880–1882, (1), 5); Ryan (1999, 176, 271); Ippolitova (2002b, 425–426; 2002a, 446) and Chasovnikova (2003).

<sup>66</sup>See Zabylin (1880, 241).

<sup>67</sup>See [http://fictionbook.ru/author/andreyi\\_romanovskiyy/magicheskie\\_svoystva\\_trav\\_unikalnyie\\_ri/read\\_online.html](http://fictionbook.ru/author/andreyi_romanovskiyy/magicheskie_svoystva_trav_unikalnyie_ri/read_online.html), accessed April 7, 2017.

<sup>68</sup>See footnote 67.

Incidentally, the first item in his list of recommended herbs is, of course, “Adam’s head,” which is supposed to “guarantee omnipotence and invincibility” [*дарующая всемогущество*]. The elaborate instructions for both root-cutters and users are likewise presented. These types of online sources could be considered as samples of contemporary urban folklore, which so far has been neglected by those studying popular culture of post-Soviet Russia.

As advised by yet another website,<sup>69</sup> an additional “Adamic herb” called “Adam’s root” [*Адамов корень*] is recommended as a remedy against paralysis, epilepsy, impotence, cardio-vascular and infectious diseases, eye problems, a virtual panacea for all kinds of ailments; the potential buyers are further instructed that it can be purchased online; “the price for 55 milliliters is only 250 RUB.”

Phytonyms such as “Adam’s rib” [Ukrainian *Адамово ребро*],<sup>70</sup> “Theotokos’ plant / flower” [Bulgarian *Богородиче, Богородичен бурен, Богородична трева, Богородично биле, Богородицино цвете*; Russian *Богородичная трава*; Serbian *Богородичина трава*],<sup>71</sup> “Theotokos’ hand” [Bulgarian *Богородична ръка / ръчичка*; Russian *Богородицина ручка*; Serbian *Богородичина рука*],<sup>72</sup> “John the Baptist’s flower” [Serbian *Ивањско цвеће*],<sup>73</sup> “Saint Peter’s Cross” [Russian *Петров крест*; Serbian *Петров крст*],<sup>74</sup> to mention just a few among many, represent but a fraction of the vast thesaurus of Bible-related ethnobotanical taxonomy; widely attested in Slavonic ethnomedicine and ethnopharmacology, these vernacular terms denote plants which are believed to possess healing and protective powers stemming straight from the Word of God. These types of ethnobotanical *thesauri* may be considered as a Rosetta stone for decoding the *modi operandi* of the transmission of esoteric knowledge in the Mediterranean region—the cradle of the Abrahamic faiths—and elsewhere. In this type of traditional cultural milieu, vernacular folk etymologies function as hermeneutical devices. This kind of data will be analyzed elsewhere.

### 5.5 Biblical Ancestors as Agents in Magic Spells

Then again, both Adam and Eve are mentioned in traditional folklore magical love-attraction spells, probably based on them being the first couple and thus initiating marriage and sexual union. In one such special spell<sup>75</sup> recited over the food and drink to be consumed by the female object of desire, mention is made of the male client’s wish to acquire “Adam’s covenant” [*Адамов закон*] and “Eve’s love” [*Еввина любовь*], while the match-maker is an anonymous old woman authorized by the Lord and the Virgin Mary to act as a facilitator of the supplicant’s request; she is spinning (like the ancient Greek *Moirae*) in a cave, sitting on a golden chair between three gates. She prays to Jesus and the Virgin Mary on the client’s behalf, so that the heart and soul of the lusted-after woman would boil and burn after him,

<sup>69</sup><http://lechattravy.ru/lekarstvennye-travy/lechattravy-ru-adamov-koren-tamus-50g-458>, accessed April 7, 2017.

<sup>70</sup>See Hrinchenko (1927, 4).

<sup>71</sup>See Georgiev et al. (1971, 60–61); Gerov (1895, (1), 54); Dal’ (1880 (1), 105); Čajkanović and Đurić (1985, 35–36, 259) and Ippolitova (2002b, 428; 2002a, 448).

<sup>72</sup>See Sumtsov (1888, 151, 158–159); Gerov (1895, (1), 54); Marinov (1981, 618); Dal’ (1880 (1), 105) and Čajkanović and Đurić (1985, 301).

<sup>73</sup>See Čajkanović and Đurić (1985, 104–105).

<sup>74</sup>See Ippolitova (2002a, 443) and Čajkanović and Đurić (1985, 191).

<sup>75</sup>Recorded in the Novgorod Gubernia of the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century by N. Chernyshev and published by L. N. Maykov in his famous collection of Russian spells (Maykov 1869, 13–14) (see text № 1 in Part I of the Appendix, p. 153ff.).

like a spring in summer boiling beneath the earth. Just as it is impossible to live without bread, salt, and clothing, it should be equally impossible for her (the object) to exist without him (the client). Just as it is impossible for a fish to live on dry land without cold water, so it should be unbearable for her to live without him. Just as it is difficult for an infant to live without his mother and the mother without the infant, so should it be difficult for her (the love-object) to live without him (the client). Just as a bull jumps on a cow and the cow raises her head with her tail up, so may she (the love-object) run and search for him (the client), without fear of God or shame before people, so that she may kiss his mouth and embrace him and indulge in copulation with him.<sup>76</sup> Just as beer-hops wind around the rod under the sun, so should she be wound around him. Just as the morning dew longs for the sun to come through the mountains, she should be longing for him, every day and every hour. The love spell ends with the formulaic expression “both now, and ever, and unto the ages of ages, amen” [*ныне и присно и во веки веков, аминь*] which is traditionally used in Eucharist prayers to terminate the *Gloria Patri* doxology.<sup>77</sup>

On the other hand, recent surveys of Russian magic folklore<sup>78</sup> point out that there is a cluster of incantations related to ethnomedical practices, in which Adam is perceived as the ultimate healer, able to cure various kinds of ailments such as bleeding wounds, scarlet fever, alcoholism, tooth-ache, and hernia.<sup>79</sup> In the latter case, the practitioner is supposed to invoke as allies the “faithful martyr” Saint Antipas and the twin brother-physician-saints Cosmas and Damian, so that they may act on behalf of the client and facilitate his healing; they, in turn, call upon the dead Adam, whose body is resting in a holy church located on a divine island in the Blue Sea. The text maintains that Adam neither hears the ringing of the church bells nor the singing of the church choir, and, most importantly, does not suffer from either hernia or any other disease.<sup>80</sup> At this point, Adam’s virtual relics [*моуци*] confirm that he is free of any ailments—be it in the head, in the veins, in the stomach, in the joints, in the ears, in the eyes, in the teeth; then, finally, the practitioner promises that from now on the body of the client should recuperate, and no longer suffer from hernia:

May in the same way the servant of God (say the name) did not feel in himself,  
in his white body, hernia, from now until forever, for all ages.

Так же раб божий (имя рек) не слышал бы в себе в белом теле ходячей  
грыжи, отныне и до века, век по веку веков.<sup>81</sup>

The concept of the pain-free body of the dead ancestor, who continues to protect his progeny and take care of their health problems, is likewise attested in traditional Russian spells against toothache. As pointed out by Yudin, the role of the “heavenly dentist” may be attributed not only to the forefather Adam, but also to Noah [*Ной*], who is invoked when one suffers from “tooth niggle” [*зубы ноют*].<sup>82</sup> Other Biblical Patriarchs (such as Abra-

<sup>76</sup>Cf. Faraone (1999, 168) on Greek magic spells which cause a woman to lose her sense of shame.

<sup>77</sup>For similar oral love-inducing spells (*заговоры приворотные, присушки и любжи*) see Maykov (1869, 7–24) (texts № 1–33). See also the discussion in Toporkov (2005, 28–45, 110–141, 153–182).

<sup>78</sup>Consult the monographs of A. Yudin (1997), V. Klyaus (1997) and others.

<sup>79</sup>See Yudin (1997, 69–70).

<sup>80</sup>Adam’s name is habitually mentioned in a similar context in other healing incantations against hernia and toothache.

<sup>81</sup>See Maykov (1869, 54) (text № 123).

<sup>82</sup>Due to the folk etymology of Noah’s name, which is considered to be related to the verb “*ныть*,” which in Russian means “to ache”; see Yudin (1997, 71).

ham,<sup>83</sup> Isaac<sup>84</sup> and Jacob,<sup>85</sup> as well as the “righteous sufferer” Job<sup>86</sup>) may also function as protectors against dental problems. Surprisingly enough, the role of tooth-healers is often attributed to Cain and Abel,<sup>87</sup> who are believed to be located on the moon; and although in folk narratives<sup>88</sup> and apocryphal tradition the spots on the moon are traditionally perceived as an astral icon of the fratricide murder-episode, this detail is totally omitted in incantation texts. Instead, a simple statement is made about two brothers on the moon who do not suffer from dental problems. Accordingly, a specially recommended incantation is to be chanted three times towards the moon by those in need, while putting a finger on the tooth in pain and praying as follows: “I look at the moon, and in this moon there are the two brothers, Cain and Abel. Just as they don’t suffer from toothache, so may I not suffer from toothache.” For a complete recovery it is strongly advised that the ritual be performed when the new moon appears.<sup>89</sup>

Then again, a survey of traditional Russian medical incantations points to the distribution of healing specializations among various Biblical prophets, patriarchs and kings; thus Abraham and Elijah (along with the Virgin Mary and the apostle Simon the Zealot) are responsible for a good harvest of curative herbs and other medicinal plants [*При собирания целебных трав*].<sup>90</sup> Those suffering from evil eye invoke the Prophet Elijah<sup>91</sup> and King David,<sup>92</sup> while spells against the child-stealing witch (without any implicit reference to the name of Lilith, however) include the names of Elijah and David, occasionally accompanied by the Christian saint Sisinius.<sup>93</sup> David heals snake-bites and helps when children suffer from insomnia.<sup>94</sup> As for the 12 (or 77) fevers [*трясовицы*]<sup>95</sup> considered by folklore legends to be the offspring of either Cain or Herod, these can be chased away by the Archangel Michael, or “the handsome Joseph,”<sup>96</sup> or King David,<sup>97</sup> or the Prophet Elijah, or Saint Sisinius;<sup>98</sup> the latter is among their preferred protagonists in iconographic tradition. Recently discovered birch bark texts from the fourteenth century provide one of the earliest written attestations of this type of text in Russian apocryphal prayers.<sup>99</sup> In charge of bleeding wounds are Jacob, Solomon<sup>100</sup> and Elijah,<sup>101</sup> along with King Ahab, Elijah’s

<sup>83</sup>See Yudin (1997, 68–69).

<sup>84</sup>See Yudin (1997, 71).

<sup>85</sup>See Yudin (1997, 68).

<sup>86</sup>See Yudin (1997, 72).

<sup>87</sup>See Yudin (1997, 220–221) and Klyaus (1997, 133).

<sup>88</sup>For Bulgarian tradition see *SbNU* 11 (1894: 83) (text № 3); for Ukrainian tradition see Bushkevich (2002, 11–12); for Polish tradition see Bartmiński and Niebrzegowska (1996, 162, 166).

<sup>89</sup>See Maykov (1869, 38) (text № 79).

<sup>90</sup>See Maykov (1869, 103) (text № 253) and Yudin (1997, 69).

<sup>91</sup>See Maykov (1869, 82) (text № 209) and Yudin (1997, 72–73).

<sup>92</sup>See Yudin (1997, 137–138).

<sup>93</sup>As shown by M. Gaster (1900), J. Spier (1993) and others, similar attestations of this type of incantation can be found in Jewish magic texts, as well as in Aramaic magic bowls. See also the discussion in Detelić (2001) and Badalanova Geller (2015).

<sup>94</sup>See Yudin (1997, 137–138).

<sup>95</sup>See Ryan (2006).

<sup>96</sup>See Yudin (1997, 140).

<sup>97</sup>See Yudin (1997, 138).

<sup>98</sup>See Veselovskii (1886) and Smilyanskaya (2002, 154–155) (texts № 1748–7, 1748–8).

<sup>99</sup>See Gippius (2005).

<sup>100</sup>See Yudin (1997, 138–139).

<sup>101</sup>See Yudin (1997, 72–73).

adversary, who himself died from injuries sustained during the battle at Ramoth Gilead.<sup>102</sup> The latter case is of particular importance for the current discussion, since it shows how the *Folk Bible* domesticates the scriptural narrative and transforms it according to its own agenda.

Finally, there are prophets and kings who are believed to be able to deal with all kinds of ailments; thus Enoch annihilates all diseases by simply shooting them,<sup>103</sup> and Solomon by subduing them; the latter motif most probably stems from Solomon's portrayal as master of the demons,<sup>104</sup> which is attested in the Babylonian Talmud as well as in the Palaeic cycle concerning *Solomon* and *Kitovras* [*Соломон и Кумоврас*].<sup>105</sup>

On the other hand, the scope of protective functions attributed to some Biblical figures goes far beyond healing rituals. Thus the prophet and the wonder-worker Elijah is petitioned in collective litanies and rain-making ceremonies (implicitly referring to the Biblical narrative of his having stopped and/or obtained rain in *3 Kings* 17 and 18). He also features in incantations against fire, due to his reputation as someone who may call down blazes from heaven, as in *3 Kings* 18: 36–39 (see also Figures 4 and 5).<sup>106</sup>

King David was to be invoked by herders and shepherds while encountering difficulties in managing their livestock; praying to him helps to calm down cows or sheep which refuse to be milked. This belief is probably based on the image of the young David as a harpist who was able to soothe his flock through his music.<sup>107</sup> Intriguingly, David's help is also sought when a bull has problems in mating with a cow.<sup>108</sup> The latter motif could have reflected David's reputation as a renowned lover who knew how to tame the object of his desire, namely the beautiful Bathsheba, who had to be won over despite being married to another man.<sup>109</sup> This type of incantation combines specific vernacular interpretations of various characterizations of David in the Bible, thus shaping a verbal icon of the ideal ruler, whose exuberant masculinity guarantees the prosperity of his kingdom. His son Solomon, on the other hand, helps in treasure hunting;<sup>110</sup> this popular belief is most probably based on the tradition of his command of esoteric knowledge and dominion over demonic forces.<sup>111</sup> Unsurprisingly, Solomon is also invoked in incantations on behalf of anyone going to a court of law, a practice most probably based on his reputation as a wise and fair judge.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>102</sup>Cf. *3 Kings* 22: 34–36: But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded." All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town. Every man to his land!"

<sup>103</sup>See Yudin (1997, 71).

<sup>104</sup>On Solomon's wondrous exploits and his image as *magus*, conjurer and esoteric king see Torijano (2002).

<sup>105</sup>See Tikhonravov (1863 (1), 254–258).

<sup>106</sup>Significantly, the folk image of the Prophet Elijah as "the master of celestial fire" is further enhanced by numerous vernacular renditions of the canonical narrative maintaining that he was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven, in a fiery chariot to which horses of flames are harnessed (*4 Kings* 2: 11). The motif is also attested in iconography.

<sup>107</sup>In Slavonic apocryphal writings and oral tradition (legends, incantations and spells) David also comes to be regarded as an exorcist, perhaps because of his ability to expel evil spirits by his music (cf. *1 Samuel* 16: 14–23); see also Speranskiĭ (1899, 13).

<sup>108</sup>See Yudin (1997, 137).

<sup>109</sup>Cf. *2 Samuel* 11.

<sup>110</sup>See Maykov (1869, 106–107) (text № 265) and Yudin (1997, 138).

<sup>111</sup>For similar patterns in other traditions see Meyer and Smith (1999, 45–46) (text № 21).

<sup>112</sup>See Maykov (1869, 149–150) (text № 342).





Figure 4: The Holy Prophet Elijah in his fiery chariot ascending to heaven. Miniature from the illuminated Ms copied and illustrated by the Bulgarian priest Puncho (Поп Пунчо). The Ms is kept in the Bulgarian National Library under record № 693 (1796). Publication courtesy of the Bulgarian National Library. Photo FBG.



Figure 5: The Holy Prophet Elijah in his fiery chariot ascending to heaven. Fresco from the open gallery of the Rila Monastery, South-Western Bulgaria (1847). Photo FBG.

As noted by Viktor Zhivov,<sup>113</sup> this kind of practices reflect the existence of a certain “Russian jurisprudential dualism” [*русский юридический дуализм*], which may be regarded as a civic counterpart to religious and cultural dualism. In this kind of context, law courts in general may be perceived as personifications of demonic powers. Thus, in juridical vernacular incantations, magistrates appear to be symbolically equated with diseases or evil spirits;<sup>114</sup> accordingly, the antidote against them is similar to that used in healing spells. According to Zhivov, the folklore “incantations protecting against judges” [*заговоры против судей*]<sup>115</sup> indicate that in medieval Russia, the very procedures of the law court were “perceived as demonic activity” [*суд рассматривается как бесовское действие*]. Unsurprisingly, the absolute lawful protector on which the defendant could rely upon was believed to be the righteous King Solomon, who can occasionally be replaced by the Biblical Patriarch and trickster, Jacob.

On the other hand, those embarking on a journey may pray either to Jacob or to Joseph (who was sold by his brothers as a slave and taken away from his homeland); this kind of incantation most probably reflects not only Jacob’s own travels from Canaan to Padan-Aram, after having defrauded his twin brother Esau of his birthright, or Joseph’s forced exile to Egypt, but also, and most importantly, the motif that the journey was safely accomplished. In fact, the incantations associated with “going to a law court” and/or “embarking on a journey” have a rather similar structure; this is also the case with apocryphal tradition. As pointed

<sup>113</sup> See his seminal article “History of Russian Law as a linguistic and semiotic problem” (Zhivov 1988).

<sup>114</sup> A similar typology of “magistrate” demons (*galli*) are known from Mesopotamia; see Geller (2011).

<sup>115</sup> See Zhivov (1988, 116, note 83).

out by Yatsimirskii in his seminal work, *On the History of False Prayers in South-Slavonic Literature*, this type of “false prayer” is mentioned in various *Indices of Prohibited Books* under the rubric *The Book of the Traveller* [*Книга путник*];<sup>116</sup> among the names most often quoted in apocryphal writings, apart from Jacob or Joseph, are those of Jesus, Joseph and Mary (due to the association with the Gospel narrative about their flight to Egypt). Occasionally, however, Abraham and Sara may be invoked, due to their adventures in Egypt.<sup>117</sup> As for versions marked by the name of Jacob (and Joseph), Yatsimirskii just briefly mentions that this particular type of “prayers for those setting off in a journey” [*молитвы в путь идущим*] is also attested in the Greek apocryphal tradition. The Slavonic redactions, on the other hand, start with the formulaic invocation, “The Lord, our God, true and living, help Jacob in his journey!” [*Господи, Боже наш, истинный и живой, путешествовавший угоднику своему Иакову!*]; when written down as an amulet, this kind of prayer may be worn during the journey as a protection against misfortunes.

Last but not least, there are special incantations intended to blunt the weapons of one’s opponents, and in these the name of the Jacob features prominently once more, perhaps because of his successful wrestling with an angel and at the same time averting the anger of his threatening brother Esau when returning to his homeland. One final point: a survey of Slavonic vernacular incantations indicates that Biblical matriarchs are hardly ever invoked; “the mother of all living” Eve is usually mentioned in connection with Adam, while “the mother of a multitude of nations,” Sarah, only appears in association with Abraham. This phenomenon, in turn, reflects some specific features of the patriarchal model of social organization.

In general, however, the perception of Biblical figures in all aspects of healing and magic rituals, including the characterization of evil spirits, the identification of benevolent powers against demons, and even the names of *materia medica*, shows just one example of the penetration of Biblical *nomina sacra* into the culture of the Byzantine commonwealth.

## 5.6 Imagining the Voice of God

Following the template of Biblical cosmology, according to which thunder and lightning may be identified as God’s attributes,<sup>118</sup> parabiblical vernacular traditions recycle a similar pattern; thus in Slavonic and Balkan apocryphal writings and folk legends the voice of God is metaphorically described as thunder harnessed in a fiery chariot.<sup>119</sup> This type of description is commonly attested in erotapokritic compositions; one such case is presented in *The Discussion Between the Three Saints (Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom)*:

[Saint] John said, “From what are thunder and lightning created?”—[Saint] Basil said, “The voice of God is embedded in a fiery chariot and thundering angels are fixed to it.”

[Іоаннъ] р[ече]: Отъ чего громъ и молнія сотворена бысть?—В[асилій]

<sup>116</sup>See Yatsimirskii (1913, 76–92).

<sup>117</sup>As cited in *Gen* 12:10–20.

<sup>118</sup>Cf. *Exodus* 19: 19; *Psalms* 104: 7; *Job* 36: 32; 37: 2, etc.

<sup>119</sup>Parallel traditions exist, according to which thunder is produced by the wheels of the chariot of the Prophet Elijah rolling in the heavenly firmament, whilst lightning originates from his whip. These will be analyzed elsewhere.

р[ече]: Гласъ Господень въ колесницѣ огненной утвержень и ангела  
гр(ом)ная приставлена.<sup>120</sup>

In *Slavia orthodoxa* (and especially in Russian tradition), the metaphorical identification of thunder as the Word of God yields powerful acoustic imagery, which is rather palpable in sacred vocal performances, where the lowest possible register of the male voice (*basso profundo*) is considered to be the most powerful and beautiful. The specific aesthetics of Russian Orthodox liturgical music are manifested through this aural hallmark. The lower the voice of the singer, for instance, the closer it is to the (imagined) voice of God. This is also perhaps why the Russian Orthodox liturgical chant is bound to the lower registers, in contrast to Western Church music (e.g. Gregorian chant), in which the singing of the choir is supposed to be angelic-like, with a distinctive high-pitched voice.<sup>121</sup>

### 5.7 God's Speech Depicted

Visual counterparts of Holy Scriptures represent yet another code of transmission of the “Word of God”—the non-verbal one. These show how Old and New Testament narratives were to be “read” and construed by both the icon-painters and illiterate believers. As pointed out by St. Gregory the Great (d. 604 CE) “the pictorial representations had been made for the edification of an unlearned people in order that, though ignorant of letters, they might by turning their eyes to the story itself learn what had been done”:

For to adore a picture is one thing, but to learn through the story of a picture what is to be adored is another. For what writing presents to readers, this a picture presents to the unlearned who behold, since in it even the ignorant see what they ought to follow; in it the illiterate read. Hence, and chiefly to the nations, a picture is instead of reading.<sup>122</sup>

Indeed, the rustic *Homo legens* lacked scribal eloquence yet could “read” the “sentences” of icon-painting, not envisaged as an act based upon the knowledge of letters. Without being familiar with the alphabet, believers were able to “read” the Bible by gazing at the icons and frescoes, which were in fact perceived as depicted Scriptures. Images “painted in venerable places” were likened to silent storytellers revealing the Word of God to all those ignorant of letters. Furthermore, this type of visual narrative was regarded as a sacred text laid open on the walls of the churches, chapels, shrines and monasteries, thus inviting the illiterate to learn through the story of a picture. Accordingly, an icon was thought to be a written—i.e. verbal—text composed in an ideographic manner. As such, religious artefacts are perceived as tangible impressions of both the “voice” of God and the “image” of God. At the same time, the iconographic language of indigenous painters absorbs the idiosyncratic

<sup>120</sup>See Pypin (1862, 169).

<sup>121</sup>I am indebted to Boris Uspenskii for this idea; on the aesthetics of the low bass (*basso profundo*) voice in Russian musical culture see Uspenskii (2001, 292–293). It should be pointed out in this connection that in classical Russian opera, the role of the male protagonist is usually designated by the lowest vocal range within the modal register (bass), and that of the male antagonist—by the highest male voice within the modal register (tenor). This type of voice designation is totally opposite to Western opera, where the roles of the protagonists tend to be played by tenor singers whilst those of the antagonists by bass singers.

<sup>122</sup>Cf. *Dialogues of Saint Gregory*, Book 11, Epistle 13.

features of local traditions; thus most of the Old and New Testament characters—from the ploughing Adam and spinning Eve, to the shepherds venerating the Infant Jesus, and the lamenting women next to the Crucifixion—are dressed as local peasants. Furthermore, Jesus is often depicted against the habitual landscape, with neighboring valleys and mountains in the background, familiar to both the indigenous icon-painters and storytellers. In fact, in many remote villages of Bulgaria, local Christians could see one typical scene in the frescoes of their small churches—“Jesus sleeping in the Balkans” [*Исус спи на Балкана*] (see Figure 6). Indeed, “our” birthplace becomes the homeland of God, born among us, as one of us. What other language could He possibly speak if not “ours”?



Figure 6: Jesus asleep in the Balkan Mountains. Fresco from the Church of The Holy Prophet Elijah in the village of Bogoroditsa, South-Western Bulgaria (1884). Photo FBG.

## Appendix

The text below follows the following conventions: [ ] indicate conjectural additions in the English translation.

### Part 1: Biblical Onomasticon in Oral Incantations, Charms and Spells

#### Text № 1: Love-attraction spell (charm to dry one up; erotic enchantment)

*To be recited over food or drink which is to be given [secretly] to the woman/maiden to be behexed, or over her footprints.*

O Lord God, Christ—bless!

I, the servant of God, So-and-so, after my having blessed myself, will set off, and having crossed myself, I will go from the dwelling through the doors, and then through the courtyards and gates, into the pure fields. In the pure fields, in the green bushes, in the seashore there is a cave; in this cave, an elderly woman is sitting on a golden chair between three gates. I, the servant of God, So-and-so, pray to her:

“O you elderly, senior woman, you are endorsed by the Lord and the Most Holy Virgin, to enlighten me, the servant of God, So-and-so, about Adam’s Covenant; put into the desired heart of the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, the love of Eve towards me, the servant of God, So-and-so.”

And then the old senior woman, merciful, sweet-hearted, the gold-footed one,<sup>123</sup> is dropping the silk yarn and silver spindle and begins to pray to Christ, Heavenly King, and to the Virgin, the Queen Mother, so that she may insert desire into the heart of the servant of God, So-and-so.

As the white spring is boiling under the earth ceaselessly in the Summer, so may the heart and soul of [the female] God’s servant, So-and-so, boil and burn after me, the servant of God, So-and-so.

As no man can live without bread, without salt, without garments, without sustenance, so in the same way may the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, not be able to live without me, the servant of God, So-and-so.

As it is hard for fish to live on dry banks without cold water, so may it be for the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, without me, the servant of God, So-and-so.

As it is hard for an infant to live without his mother and for the mother without her child, may it be equally hard for the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, to live without me, the servant of God, So-and-so.

<sup>123</sup>Lit. golden-mortar one; most probably, the Russian noun *чмо́на* (= “foot”) is misspelled and rendered as *чму́на* (= “mortar”), due to the phonetic resemblance of the latter with the verb *чму́нать / чму́нить* (= “to step”), derived from Church Slavonic *чжнѣти*. The latter is also related to Greek forms *στέμβω* (“step on,” “walk over”) and *ἀσπεμφής* (“invincible”).

As bulls jump on the cow or as the cow raises her head on the Feast Day of St. Peter and curls her tail, so may it be in the same way that the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, run and search for me, the servant of God, So-and-so, without fear of God or shame of people. May she kiss me in the mouth, embracing me with her arms and make love.

As hops are twisting around the stick according to the sun, so in the same way may the [female] servant of God, So-and so, twist around me, the servant of God, So-and-so.

As the morning dew blossoms, longing for the red sun to come from the high mountains, may also the [female] servant of God, So-and-so, in the same way long for me, the servant of God, So-and-so, every day and every hour, now and always, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

### **Приворотный заговор (присушка, любжа)**

*Наговаривается на пищу или питье, которые дают привораживаемой, или на след ее.*

Господи Боже, благослови Христос!

Стану я, раб божий (имя рек) благословясь, пойду перекрестясь, из избы дверьми, со двора в ворота, в чистое поле. В чистом поле, в зеленых кустах, в поморье стоит вертеп; в том вертепе сидит матерая жена на золотом стуле между трех дверей. Молюся я, раб Божий (имя рек) до ней:

“Ты старая матерая жена, тебе дано от Господа и от Пресвятыя Богородицы ведати меня раба Божия (имя рек) Адамов закон, Еввину любовь, вложи желанное сердце рабе Божией (имя рек) по мне, по рабе Божиим (имя рек).”

И тут старая матерая жена милостивая, милосердная, золота ступа, покидает шелковый кужелек, веретенце серебрянное, молится Христу Царю Небесному, Богородице, Матери Царице, вкладывает желанное сердце рабе Божией (имя рек).

Как кипит под землею летом беспрестанно белой ключь, так бы кипело, горело сердце и душа у рабы Божией (имя рек) по мне, по рабе Божиим (имя рек).

Как всякой человек не может жить без хлеба, без соли, без платья, без ежи, так бы не можно жить рабе Божией (имя рек) без меня, раба Божия (имя рек).

Коль тошно рыбе жить на сухом берегу, без воды студенныя, так бы тошно было рабе Божией (имя рек) без меня, раба Божия (имя рек).

Коль тошно младенцу без матери своей, а матери без дитяти, толь тошно рабе Божией (имя рек) без меня, раба Божия (имя рек).

Как быки скачут на корову, или как корова в Петровки голову закинет, хвост залупя, так бы раба Божия (имя рек) бегала и искала меня, раба Божия (имя рек), Бога бы не боялась, людей бы не стыдилась, во уста бы целовала, руками обнимала, блуд сотворила.

И как хмель вьется около кола по солнцу, так бы вилась, обнималась около меня, раба Божия (имя рек).

Как цвела утренная роса, дожидаясь краснова солнца из-за гор из-за высоких, так бы дожидалась раба Божия (имя рек) меня, раба Божия (имя рек), на всякий день и на всякий час, всегда, ныне и присно и во веки веков, аминь.<sup>124</sup>

**Text № 2: [Spell] for hernia (“white” hernia, or “collar” / “harness”)**

*To be recited three times; each time after the recitation [the healer] should spit three times.*

Having blessed myself, I, the servant of God, will set off, and having made the sign of a cross, will go from the dwelling through the door, and from the courtyard through the gates, to the pure field, via the road along the blue sea.

In the blue sea, there is a holy island of God. On this holy island of God is a holy Church of God. In this holy Church of God there is the Lord’s throne. On this throne of the Lord’s sits the Holy Martyr of Christ Antipas,<sup>125</sup> who is a healer of dental pain, along with saints of Christ, the unmercenary [physicians] Cosmas and Damian [see Figure 7].<sup>126</sup>

[Hereby I pray:] “Please heal the suffering and [illness of] tooth pain, and ‘white’ hernia.” And then the Most Holy Martyr of Christ Antipas said, “In this Church of God is Adam’s corpse. Adam’s corpse does not hear the chiming of the bells or church-singing; nor does this, his white corpse, sense ‘walking’ hernia.”

The dead corpse of Adam answers, “I don’t hear the chiming of the bells or church-singing, neither do I sense the ‘walking’ hernia in my white body, either in my nape, or in my sinews, or in my belly, or in my joints, or in my bones, or under my skin, or in my ears, in my eyes, or in my teeth.” So in the same way may the servant of God, So-and-so, not sense in his white body the ‘walking’ hernia, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

**От грыжи: белой грыжи или хомута**

*Произносится трижды и за каждым разом трижды сплевывается*

Стану я, раб Божий, благословясь, пойду, перекрестясь из избы дверьми, из двора воротами, во чистом поле путем дорогою, по край синя моря.

<sup>124</sup>Recorded in the Novgorod Gubernia of the Russian Empire by N. Chernyshev and published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 13–14) (text № 11).

<sup>125</sup>Saint Antipas of Pergamum / Pergamon was martyred during the reign of Domitian (in c. CE 92). As pointed out by Hastings (1898, 107), “according to one form of his Acts (quoted by the Bollandists from a Synoxarion), he prayed that those suffering from toothache might be relieved at his tomb.” Saint Antipas is commemorated April 11th.

<sup>126</sup>Saints Cosmas and Damian were twin brothers and physicians, who did not accept payment for their services. In the Orthodox tradition there are three different sets of saints by the same names: Cosmas and Damian of Cilicia, Arabia (feast day October 17); Cosmas and Damian of Asia Minor (feast day November 1); Cosmas and Damian of Rome (feast day July 1). They are conventionally depicted holding medicinal boxes and cross-shaped spoons for dispensing remedies.



В синем море есть святой Божий остров; на святом Божьем острове святая Божья церковь; в той святой Божьей церкви есть престол Господень, на том престоле Господне есть священномученик Христов Антипа, исцелитель зубной, и безсребренники Христовы Козьма и Дамиан.

“Исцелите скорбь и болезнь зубную и грыжу белую.” И речет священномученик Христов Антипа: “Есть в той Божьей Церкви Адамово тело, не слышит Адамово тело звону колокольнева, пения церковнаго, в белом теле ходячей грыжи.”

И отвечает мертвое тело Адамово: “Я не слышу звона колокольнева, пения церковнаго, в белом теле ходячей грыжи, тильной, жильной, пуповой, суставной, становой, подкожной, ушной, глазной, зубной.” Так же раб Божий (имя рек) не слышал бы в себе в белом теле ходячей грыжи, отныне и до века, век по веку веков. Аминь.<sup>127</sup>



Figure 7: The twin brother-physician-saints Cosmas and Damian. Fresco from the Church of St. George in the city of Kyustendil, South-Western Bulgaria (1878–1882). Photo FBG.

### Text № 3: [Spell] against toothache

I, the Servant of God, So-and-so, having blessed myself, shall set off and, having made the sign of a cross, shall exit from the dwelling through the doors and from the courtyard through the gates. I will go out to the wide street and will look and stare at the bright new moon.

<sup>127</sup>Recorded in the Olonetsk Gubernia of the Russian Empire by E. Barsov and published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 54) (text № 123).

In this new moon are two brothers, Kavel',<sup>128</sup> and Avel'.<sup>129</sup> Just like they don't feel pain and stinging in their teeth, so may my teeth, of the servant of God, So-and-so, feel neither pain nor stinging.

### **От зубной боли**

Стану я, раб Божий (имя рек) благословясь, выйду перекрестясь, из избы дверьми, из двора воротами. Выйду я на широкую улицу, посмотрю и погляжу на млад светел месяц.

В том младу месяцу два брата родные: Кавель да Авель. Как у них зубы не болят и не щипят, так бы у меня, раба Божия (имя рек), не болели и не щипели.<sup>130</sup>

### **Text № 4: [To be recited] when collecting healing herbs**

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,<sup>131</sup> amen. O Lord and the Mother of God, the Most Holy Virgin Theotokos, and the Holy righteous Father Abraham, bless me. I came to you to ask for permission to pick herbs for whatever benefit against all kinds of sickness, for all Orthodox Christians.

The Holy righteous Father Abraham was ploughing the fields, Simon the Zealot [see Figure 8]<sup>132</sup> was sowing it. [The Holy Prophet] Elijah was watering it. And the Lord was helping. The sky is father while the earth is mother. Please O Lord, bless this herb, to be collected for all kinds of benefits, for all Orthodox Christians. Amen, amen, amen.

*When you go to collect these herbs, you must make six prostrations at home and six prostrations in front of the herb.*

<sup>128</sup>That is, Cain. The name of the firstborn of Adam and Eve is transformed into the fictitious anthroponym *Kavel'* [*Кавель*] which is phonetically linked to the name of the name of the second son Abel (pronounced in Russian as *Avel'* [*Авель*]).

<sup>129</sup>That is, Abel; see the previous note.

<sup>130</sup>Recorded in the Arkhangel'sk Gubernia of the Russian Empire by P. Efimenko and published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 38) (text № 79).

<sup>131</sup>Used in the incipit of this spell is the *Trinitarian formula* (referring to the three persons of the Christian Trinity); cf. *Matthew* 28:19 ("Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.").

<sup>132</sup>Simon the Zealot (Zelotes) was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus; cf. *Luke* 6:15, *Acts* 1: 13.

### При собирания целебных трав

Во имя Отца и Сына и Святого Духа, аминь. Благослови, Господи, Мать Божия, Пресвятая Дева Богородица и святой отец праведный Абрам, я пришел к вам испросить у вас дозволение мне трав сорвать на всякую пользу и от всякой болезни всем православным христианам.

Святой праведный отец Абрам все поле орал, Симеон Зилот садил, Илья поливал, Господь помогал. Небо—отец, а земля—мать. Благослови, Господи, эту траву рвать на всякую пользу всем православным христианам. Аминь (трижды).

*Когда идешь траву рвать, нужно сделать шесть поклонов дома и шесть при самой траве.*<sup>133</sup>



Figure 8: Simon the Zealot (Zelotes). Fresco from the Church of St. George in the city of Kyustendil, South-Western Bulgaria (1878–1882). Photo FBG.

### Text № 5: [To be recited] while searching for treasure

On the seven hills of Zion stands a stone stele; and on this stone stele there is a sealed book, fixed with an iron padlock, locked with a golden key. On these seven hills of Zion, on this stone stele, the most wise King Solomon himself put a sealed book, fixed with an iron padlock and locked with a golden key.

<sup>133</sup>Recorded in Voronezh County of the Russian Empire by M. Popov; published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 103), (text № 253).

I will bow before the most wise King, having armed myself with God's word, and with this book will I find my way to treasure hidden in the earth, and with God's blessing I will go excavating. Grant me—So-and-so—O Lord, to be rid of evil adversaries and to extract gold from the earth for good deeds, to please little orphans, to build God's temples, to distribute [it] among poor brethren, and for me, So-and-so, for honest business and trade.

### **При отыскивании кладов**

На семи горах на Сионских стоит великий столб каменный; на тем столбе каменном лежит книга запечатана, железным замком заперта, золотым ключем замкнута. На семи горах на Сионских, на столб тот каменный положил книгу запечатану, железным замком заперту, золотым ключем замкнута сам премудрый царь Соломон.

Я премудрому царю поклонюся, Божиим словом вооружуся, в книге той о покладах земных справляюся, с благословением на рытву отправлюся. Подаждь, Боже, мне (имя рек) приставников злых от поклажи отогнати, злата из земли на добрыя дела взяти, сиротам малым на утешение, Божиих храмов на построение, всей нищей братии на разделение, а мне (имя рек) на честну торговлю купецкую.<sup>134</sup>

### **Text № 6: [To be recited] when one goes to those in power or to pacify judges**

I, the servant of God, will set off towards judges and officials; may their tongue be like an ox's, their heart be like King David's, may Solomon, the hand of the Saviour, be our judge.

As a dead person lies in the damp earth without moving his legs, without speaking with this tongue, and without causing evil with his heart, may, in the same way, judges, officials, enemies and foes not speak with their tongues, may they not create trouble with their hearts, may their legs not move, may their hands not rise, may their mouths not open, may instead their blood coagulate, may their eyes blur and be covered with darkness, and may their heads fall off their shoulders.

### **На подход ко властям или на умилоствление судей**

Пойду я, раб Божий, к судьям и начальникам; будь их язык воловий, сердце царя Давида, рассудит нас царь Соломон, Спасова рука.

Как мертвый человек в сырой земле лежит, ногами не движет, языком не говорит, сердцем зла не творит,—так бы судьи, начальники, враги и супостаты языком не говорили, сердцем зла не творили, ноги бы их не подвигались, руки не подымались, уста бы не отверзались, а кровью бы они запекались, очи бы у них помутилися, темнотою покрылись, с плеч буйна голова свалилася.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>134</sup>Recorded in Simbirsk County of the Russian Empire and published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 106–107) (text № 265).

<sup>135</sup>Recorded in Simbirsk County of the Russian Empire by V. Yurlov and published by L. N. Maykov (1869, 149–150) (text № 342).

**Part 2: *Aqedah* in folklore tradition****Text № 1: The young fellow Abraham**

- [1] The young fellow *Avram* [Abraham] is walking round the courtyard  
 Wringing his icy hands,  
 Shedding tears like rain,  
 And praying to God:
- [5] “Oh, God, oh, dear God!  
 You have given me everything, God,  
 There is only one thing you haven’t given me—  
 A male offspring from my heart,  
 To walk around the courtyard,
- [10] To say ‘Mother!,’ and ‘Father!,’  
 To go then to the field,  
 To go to the field and plough it,  
 To fetch a cartful of firewood,  
 Of firewood, and of flour!
- [15] Give me, My Lord, give me  
 An offspring from my heart,  
 To walk around the courtyard,  
 To say ‘Mother!,’ and ‘Father!,’  
 To go then to the field,
- [20] To go to the field and plough it,  
 To fetch a cartful of firewood,  
 Of firewood, and of flour!  
 I vow to slaughter him as a *kurban* sacrifice  
 To the Lord God and to Saint *Georgy* [George]!”
- [25] God stood there listening,  
 And they had an offspring from the heart,  
 And christened him, and named him after Saint *Georgy*.  
*Georgy* grew, and grew up,  
 And became a fifteen-year old.
- [30] And they sent him to the field,  
 To the field, to plough it,  
 To fetch a cartful of firewood,  
 Of firewood and of flour.  
 When he came back home,
- [35] His mother was baking loaves,  
 Baking them and weeping.  
 His father was whetting knives,  
 Whetting them and weeping.  
*Georgy* said to his mother:
- [40] “Mother, my dearest mother!  
 Why are you baking white loaves,  
 Baking them, mother, and weeping?  
 Why is father whetting knives,

- Whetting them and weeping?  
 [45] Tomorrow is the good day of Saint *Georgy*,  
 Everybody is joyful,  
 Why are you so woebegone?”  
 His mother said to *Georgy*:  
 “Don’t ask me *Georgy*, don’t ask me,  
 [50] But go and ask your father!”  
*Georgy* approached his father  
 And said to him, asking him:  
 “Father, my dearest father!  
 Why are you whetting those knives,  
 [55] Whetting them and weeping,  
 Instead of whetting them and singing?  
 Why is mother baking loaves,  
 Baking them and weeping,  
 Instead of baking and singing?  
 [60] Tomorrow is the good day of Saint *Georgy*,  
 Everybody is joyful,  
 And why are you so woebegone?”  
 “*Georgy*, my one and only!  
 How could I whet them and sing,  
 [65] Since your father has vowed  
 To slaughter you as a *kurban* sacrifice  
 To Our Lord, to Saint *Georgy*?”  
 “Father, my dearest father,  
 Tie my hands securely,  
 [70] My hands, father, and my legs—  
 Lest I could reach anything with my hands,  
 Lest I could move my legs!”  
 His father tied his hands,  
 His hands, as well as his legs,  
 [75] And when he reached for his head,  
 God descended from Heaven,  
 God—Saint *Georgy* himself,  
 And He held out his hand  
 And said to him:  
 [80] “Stop, *Avram*—what have you done?  
 A man is not to be slaughtered  
 As a *kurban* sacrifice to God, to Saint *Georgy*!  
 A lamb is to be slaughtered instead!”  
 The father untied his child’s hands,  
 [85] His child’s hands, as well as his child’s legs,  
 And went and caught the best ram,  
 The ram with nine bells,  
 And slaughtered him as a *kurban* sacrifice,  
 And his kith and kin got together,

- [90] And they ate and drank for three days,  
 [91] Praising the Lord God and Saint *Georgy*!

That is why the feast day of Saint *Georgy* is celebrated, that's why a lamb is slaughtered as a *kurban* sacrifice to God and for good health and a rich harvest.

### **Млад Аврам**

- [1] По двори ходи млад Аврам  
 И кърши ръки като лед  
 И рони сълзи като дъжд,  
 Па се на Бога молеше:  
 [5] “Бре Боже, бре мили Боже!  
 Всичко ми, Боже, отдаде,  
 Само ми едно не даде,  
 От сърце мъжка рожбица,  
 По двори да ми походи,  
 [10] ‘Мамо!’ и ‘Татко!’ да рече,  
 Че на нива да иде,  
 На нива оран да оре,  
 Кола дърва да докара,  
 Кола дърва и кола брашно!  
 [15] Отдай ми, Боже, отдай ми,  
 От сърце рожба да видя,  
 По двори да ми походи,  
 ‘Мамо!’ и ‘Татко!’ да рече,  
 На нивата да отиде,  
 [20] На нива оран да оре,  
 Кола дърва да докара,  
 Кола дърва и кола брашно!  
 Курбан ще да го заколя,  
 На Бога, на свети Георги!”  
 [25] Де стоял Господ, та слушал,  
 От сърце рожба родиха,  
 На свети Гьорги кръстиха.  
 Расъл ми Георги, порасъл,  
 По на петнайсе години.  
 [30] Че го на нива пратиха,  
 На нива оран да оре,  
 Кола дърва да докара,  
 Кола дърва и кола брашно.  
 Кога си у дома дойде,  
 [35] Майка му пече хлябове,  
 Хем ги пече, хем плаче.  
 Тейко му остри ножове,  
 Хем остри, тейно, хем плаче.

- Георги си майци думаше:  
 [40] “Мамо льо, мила мамо!  
 Що печеш бели лябове,  
 Хем ги печеш, мале, хем плачеш?  
 Що тейно остри ножове?  
 Ем остри тейно, ем плаче?”
- [45] Утре е личен Гергьовден,  
 Сичките ора—радостни,  
 Пък вие жалби жалите?”  
 Мама си Георги продума:  
 “Немой ме пита, Георги ле,  
 [50] Иди попитай тьяна си!”  
 Георги при тейно отиде  
 И си на тейно продума:  
 “Тейне ле, милинкин тейне!  
 Що остриш тия ножове,  
 [55] Хем остриш тейне, хем плачеш,  
 Та ги не остриш да пяеш?  
 Що мама пече лябове,  
 Ем ги пече, ем плаче,  
 Та ги не пече да пяе?”
- [60] Утре е личен Гергьовден,  
 Сичките хора—радостни,  
 Пък вие жалби жалите?”  
 “Георги, един на татко!  
 Как да ги остря и пяя,  
 [65] Тейно те беше обрекъл  
 Курбан да си те заколи  
 На Бога, на свети Георги!”  
 “Тейне ле, милинкин тейне,  
 Хубаво ми вързи ръките,  
 [70] Ръките, тейне, ногите,  
 Със ръки да не пофана,  
 Със ноги да не помръдна!”  
 Тьяно му вързал ръките,  
 Ръките, още ногите,  
 [75] Таман му глава закърши,  
 Спусна се Господ от небо,  
 Господ—сам си свети Георги  
 И му ръката пофана,  
 И му е дума продумал:  
 [80] “Бре стой, Авраме, що стори!  
 Човек се курбан не коли  
 На Бога, на свети Георги,  
 Ами се коли агънце!”  
 Тейно му ръки отвърза,



- [85] Ръките, още ногите,  
 Па фанал най баш овена,  
 Овена с девет звънеца,  
 Та си го курбан заколил,  
 Че си е родата посъбрал,  
 [90] Три дена яли и пили  
 [91] За Бога, за свети Георги!

Затуй се тачи Гергьовден! Затуй се коли агънце—курбан на Бога, за здраве и берекет.<sup>136</sup>

### Abbreviations

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<i>AEH</i>	Acta Ethnographica Hungarica. Magyar Tudományos Akadémia (Budapest), Akadémiai Kiado, Vol. 1–, 1950–.
<i>BF</i>	Български фолклор. Институт за фолклор при БАН, София, Кн. 1–, 1975–.
<i>Le Muséon</i>	Le Muséon: Revue d'Études Orientales. Louvain-la-Neuve, T. 1–, 1881–.
<i>SbNU</i>	Сборникъ за народни умотворения, наука и книжнина, Кн. 1–27, 1889–1913; Сборник за народни умотворения и народопис, Кн. 28–, 1914–.
<i>SMS</i>	Studia mythologica Slavica. The Institute of Slovenian Ethnology at ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana, and the Department of Linguistics of the University in Pisa, T. 1–, 1998–; from 1999 onwards it is published in cooperation with the University of Udine.

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<sup>136</sup>The text was recorded by the author in July 1977 in the village of Glavan, Stara Zagora region (Bulgaria). The account was given by Stana Bozhkova Vlaeva, a peasant farmer with no formal education who was born in 1915 in the same village.

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