

## Preface

Dear readers,

*this new issue of EJOSS completes the dossier on the gentle and ecumenic tale of the Seven Sleepers. We can be really proud to have hosted very valuable contributions on such an interesting and meaningful topic. Normally the book review is collocated after the articles, however in this case it is part of the dossier and we preferred not to detach it from the other papers. This second monographic number on the Seven Sleepers legend mainly focuses on its intangible and tangible heritage concerning mostly the Christian traditions.*

*The first contribute highlights the connections between the Ephesian story and the magic tradition by exploring either magic amulets which portray the seven youths (or their names engraved) or charms and prayers invoking them. The author of this article, Augusto Cosentino, traces the development of this legend from the religious field to its incorporation in magical folklore. Particularly, he analyses the magical practices in Islamic and Anglo-Saxon traditions and the significance of the number seven with its broader implications in religious and magical symbolism, through a cross-cultural comparative perspective. He investigates the use of the Seven Sleepers' names in protective charms and healing practices, focusing on their application in sleep-related issues and general healing. Moreover, he highlights how the divinely-induced sleep that preserves the youths for centuries, resonates with similar motifs in various cultural traditions, from Greek mythology to Norse legends and fairy tales. The elements of the preservation of the Sleepers' bodies and the miraculous nature of their outdated coins contribute to the legend's supernatural aura and provided a foundation for later magical interpretations and practices.*

*The second article concerns the Georgian literature regarding the Seven Sleepers and it fills the gap left by the scholar Ignazio Guidi in his work *Testi orientali inediti sopra i Sette Dormienti di Efeso*. In Georgia this legend is known as the "Seven Infants of Ephesus" and despite its extensive analysis across various religious and cultural contexts, the Georgian perspective has largely been overlooked. The author of this contribute, Laura Mafizzoli, examines the place of the Seven Sleepers' legend in the Georgian cultural context, specifically how the legend is represented to the wide public and how it is studied by the contemporary Georgian scholars such as the philologist Nanobashvili. Even if Mafizzoli, in her field research in Tbilisi, did not find any rituals and acts of veneration related to the Seven Sleepers on their commemorative dates (August 4th and October 22nd), she came across two ecclesiastical magazines that reveal a vernacular veneration. Therefore, she reflects on the profound syncretism of the Georgian version of the Ephesian tale which synthesises elements from Medieval European, Syriac, and Coptic traditions, while blending theological, liturgical, and cultural aspects.*

*The third contribute sheds light on the role of the Turkish Syriac Saint (Mor) Abhay related to the Seven Sleepers within the context of Mardin (a multi-cultured and multi-religious city in South-eastern Turkey) Syriac culture. Mor Abhay, originally from Rekman village in the Mesopotamian region of Mardin, was the special metropolitan of the Roman emperor Theodosius II in Constantinople. This Syriac saint who founded his monastery in the area of Tur Abdin, one of the foremost spiritual centers of Eastern Christianity since the 6th century, witnessed the miracle of the Seven Sleepers' awakening. The author of this article, Hatice Kübra Uygur, through the methodology of field research, analyses the local Syriac version of the Seven Sleepers tale known as "Yemliho and his Companions". Particularly, within the Christian community of Syriacs the telling of stories and the recitation of psalms lend significance to this narrative in the liturgical context. The Metropolitan of Diyarbakır-Mardin, Saliba Ozmen emphasises the importance of the psalm dedicated to Yemliho and his friends which is attributed to Mor Jacob of Sarug.*

*The issue is integrated by an intriguing paper which brings us to current times. So as to recall that our journal is opened to contributions where the past matches the present and where the present is scholarly discussed.*

***The editor-in-chief Prof. Fabio L. Grassi, PhD***

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