18.00 – 18.45 ***Plenarsitzung (Session Pleniere)***
Semmelweis-Bibliothek und -Archiv fur Geschichte der Medizin
(1023 Budapest, Torok utca 12.)
Vorsitz (President de seance): Andrea Barta

Isabel Grimm-Stadelmann, LMU Munich

No Hocus-Pocus!
The Influence of Ritual Healing and Oral Traditions on Byzantine Medicine

Ritual healing, folk traditions and herbal wisdom as well as the knowledge of the use and value of certain medicinal plants which had been passed down for centuries, mostly within families, had a significant influence on the "rational" medicine of the Byzantine era. Numerous medical manuals and therapeutic formularies contain references to the existence and appreciation of such traditions. Particularly in the field of Byzantine therapeutic literature, there is a wealth of manuscripts still remaining entirely unexplored and unresearched. In the relevant catalogues these textual witnesses mainly appear under the collective term *Iatrosophia* and they are very often focussed on specific local areas. Traditional physicians and 'empirical' healers are by no means charlatans and fraud, but, on the contrary, representants of a very long and dynamic cultural heritage. They often are referred to as "root-cutters" (ῥιζοτόμοι) or *Kompogiannites* (κομπογιαννίτες), because they emphasise in their therapeutic approaches the distinctive features and characteristics of native plants and minerals: for example, the Epirote *Vikogiatroi* (Βικογιατροί), who make use of the specific medicinal plants of the Vikos Gorge situated in the Pindus mountains. Drawing on selected textual examples but also on eyewitness accounts, my lecture will present the local lore and empirical healing traditions of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period, as well as some of the charismatic folk healers associated. Particularly in today's society, there has been a significant rise in demand for complementary therapeutic approaches and natural healing which, ideally, are intended to complement and enhance conventional medical treatment, with the psychological factor also playing a crucial role. Therefore, it is likely to be of equal interest to both medical professionals and humanities

scholars to examine some of these traditions, as well as their origin and further development, in more detail.