

This area was, as we have seen, ancient Celtiberian land tardily and very superficially Romanized. Could anything be more reasonable than to suppose that the Cantabrians and Celtiberians preserved a great part of their epic tradition, which later came to form part of the basis of the Castilian epic? Is the Cantabrian-Celtiberian combination in the least Romanized parts of the Peninsula the reason why only Old Castile inherited and continued the epic tradition of the Goths? As we shall see later, Ramon Menendez Pidal seems to have sensed this, though he was little informed concerning Celtic studies.

Referring to the Christianization of the Peninsula, Adolfo Salazar says:

"... the pagan customs fought a delaying action, retreating to inaccessible corners in some cases; in others to a curious phenomenon of persistence which is today collected as "folklore" and which, in its poetic and musical aspects had tenacious guardians among the bards and jongleurs." (144)

Speaking of the Northwest of the Peninsula, including Old Castile, said customs would be Celtic, as Salazar seems to suggest by his use of the Celtic word "bard". The Celtic musical heritage of the Northwest of the Peninsula is patent to everyone, to all who have heard Irish, Scottish and Breton bagpipes and also Gallego and Asturian bagpipes. A song of the Scottish Highlands, Bluebells of Scotland (the words appear to be of the period of the Jacobite Wars, of the end of the 17th and the 18th Century, although, as we shall see, the music may be older) has a melodic

line identical to that of a Gallego bagpipe tune, *Alborada de Veiga*. The tempo is different in the two works, but the melody of the Scottish song was probably originally a bagpipe tune to which words were added later. The change from the bagpipes to the human voice must inevitably change the tempo. Also, there is an Asturian dance tune played on the bagpipes (I am not certain, but believe it is called *Jota Asturiana*) which has the same melodic line as the Scottish Highland song The Nut-Brown Maiden. Anyone who has heard Aires de Galicia and Hymn of the Ancient Kingdom of Galicia played on the bagpipes would swear that hee was hearing music from the Scottish Highlands. I am not speaking of similarity, but of identity. Any Scottish Highlander who hears said Gallego works would swear on his heather, thistle, tartan, whiskey and on the memory of Kenneth MacAlpin, William Wallace, Robert Bruce, Montrose, Bonnie Prince Charlie and Rob Roy MacGregor that he was hearing the traditional music of some Highland clan. Interestingly, the music of the Asturian bagpipes reminds one more of Ireland than of Scotland. Many Asturian bagpipe tunes remind one of Irish works such as The Kerry Dance, The Lark in the Morning or An Poc ar Buile. It is enough to make any Irishman proclaim "the pipes are calling" and take a drink of whiskey for nostalgia. During the Spanish Civil War Irishmen and Highland Scots who came to Spain to fight on the Nationalist side spent hours listening to Gallego and Asturian bagpipes. As we shall see later, Celtic musical modes were used also in Hispano-Muslim music. (See Chapter 4)

Jose Caso Gonzalez has noted that many Asturian traditional songs have the same melody as traditional songs of the Auvergne, and says that a common Celtic base is the only explanation for this phenomenon, since the resemblance is too close to be a coincidence (145). A song is a "marriage" of poetry and music. The relation between the words and music of a song is very close. The tempo and the melody are closely related to the theme of the song (happy, sad, etc.), the tempo and rhythm to the metre of the words (or lyrics) and the melody with the rise and fall of the voice produced by the pronunciation of the words. The melody is also closely related to the strophic structure of the song. If the Celtic musical strain, apparently so strong in the Northwest of the Peninsula, had not brought with it a certain literary influence, it would be very strange indeed. The topic, which is a link between the problem of a Celtic substratum in the French and Castilian epics and the problem of a Celtic substratum in the Provençal troubador verse and the folkloric or traditional songs of France and the Iberian Peninsula, is outside the limits of this chapter (See Chapter 3). Our theme at the moment is the epic rather than the lyric. As noted before, we will return to this topic. Who can doubt that the Spanish Celts had their "faith" and "filid" or bards as well as their pipers? Ramón Menéndez Pidal noted that Old Castile, cradle of the Castilian epic, has a Cantabrian-Celtiberian base rather than an Iberian (whatever that means) base, and believed that perhaps this fact is the origin of the strong and original character of Old Castile, and of its

hegemony in the Christian Reconquest and of the fact that the Castilians were the only people who inherited the heroic poetry of the Goths. Perhaps this affirmation is related to something that don Ramón says in another part of the same work, that the epic is a creation proper to the Aryan (in this case it would be more accurate to say Indo-European) peoples: Indo-Aryans, Iranians, Greeks, Germans and Celts(146). Of course, Greeks and Germans, while Indo-Europeans, are not Aryans. All Aryans are Indo-Europeans, but not all Indo-Europeans are Aryans. I have no doubt whatever that don Ramon was right as far as he went, but I wish to carry the idea a bit further. The original base of Old Castile was Celtiberian, very thinly Romanized. Later Old Castile was heavily occupied by the Visigoths, though without exterminating nor displacing the Celtiberian population. Later, at the time of the repopulation of these lands which had been devastated by two centuries of border warfare against the Muslims. a new Celtic stratum, even less Romanized, the Cantabrians, occupied Old Castile. In other words, in Old Castile the Visigoths were sandwiched between the Celtiberians before them and the Cantabrians after. Thus, Old Castile was not only very Visigothic but also very Celtic, and it is this fact which cause Old Castile to have the strongest (though not the only) epic tradition in the Penninsula, and caused the Castilians to be the only people who inherited and continued the heroic poetry of the Goths.

The French and Castilian epics have at least two basic characteristics which are absent in the purely Germanic epics,

such as Beowulf, the Nibelungenlied and the Viking sagas:
chivalry and the strong sense of honor, cornerstone of the moral
system of Druidism. Says Henri Hubert:

"...principle of the moral life of the Celts, honor in
this refinement of the moral of honor was a principle of
civilization whose development was not detained by the
political fall of the Celtic societies. The Celts passed
it on to their descendants." (147)

Anyone who knows the Celtic epic, whether Irish or Welsh-Breton,
knows that honor and chivalry are two of its basic themes. Louis
Charpentier has noted the similarity between certain aspects of
the Rule of the Templars (written by St. Bernard of Clairvaux) and
the chivalrous rules of the Order of the Red Branch of pre-
Christian Ireland (mentioned in the Ulster Cycle and a few other
sources). The same author has noted that, although many have
looked far indeed for its origins, the Code of Chivalry of
Medieval Europe is almost entirely contained in the Ulster Cycle,
exception made of specifically Christian elements (148).

Many have noted that the ancient Celts and Rajputs coincide
almost exactly in their virtues and their defects. As William
Crooke says in his introduction to Tod's Annals and Antiquities of
Rajasthan:

"There is much in their (the Rajputs') character
and institutions which reminds us of the Gauls as
pictured by Mommsen in a striking passage" (149).

There is a very close parallel between the resistance of the Celts
to the Romans and the resistance of the Rajputs to the Muslims.

The Celts, though weakened by their own disunity and

exaggerated individualism, resisted the Romans with desperate bravery, particularly in Spain fighting to the death, their women committing suicide rather than be dishonored and enslaved. We have already spoken of honor and chivalry in connection with the Celts. Crooke briefly remarks how the disunity of the Rajputs fatally weakened them (150). As Ashvani Agraval notes:

"They (the Rajputs) lived and died for their clan, then for their king and last for their country"(151)

Very Celtic indeed.

In chivalry and sense of honor the Rajputs very closely resemble the Celts. The struggle of the Rajputs in favor of Dara Shikoh, son of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan, reminds us forcefully of the struggle of the Irish and Highland Scots in favor of the Stuarts. This is briefly described by Waldemar Hansen:

"Rajasthan (literally "the abode of kings") had a history of heroism and chivalry dating back to the legendary days of the Indian epics. From deserts and hill ranges petty Rajput chiefs came, together with the grand rajahs of Jaipur, Statem, Jodhpur and Udaipur; all of them brought clansmen into battle with them. Recklessly courageous, proud and with a high sense of honour, Rajputs fought against overwhelming odds. The men wore yellow robes of self-sacrifice, while their women often committed acts of suttee, dying in flames in order to avoid capture or disgrace."(152)

In spite of vast distances and centuries of separation, the kinship between the Celts and the Rajputs is evident.

In respect to honor and chivalry as in so many others, the Celtic epic is much nearer to the Indo-Aryan and Persian epics

than to the Germanic epic. In the Germanic epic the themes of chivalry and honor (in a much broader sense than pure vengeance) are virtually absent. It is interesting to note here the existence of a parallel between the Latin Carmina Campidoctoris of the Cid and the Arthurian Cycle. In these carmina, the Cid has the image of a dragon painted on his shield (153). In the Arthurian Cycle, King Arthur as well as his father Uther Pendragon bear a dragon on their banners, from whence the Welsh name "Pendragon", though in this case it is perhaps more likely that the use of the dragon as a heraldic motif is of Visigothic origin. In the Shah Namah of Firdausi, Kai Khusrau bears the image of a dragon on his banner as his heraldic device. So, King Arthur, Kai Khusrau and El Cid all used the dragon as their heraldic symbol.

Although one may perhaps say that it reinforced the Celtic substratum, the Welsh-Breton influence is visible only in details: the Castilian epic is not a copy of the Arthurian Cycle. The Arthurian Cycle is too late, at least in its French recensions, to form part of the substratum of the Castilian epic, and too different to have been a direct source. The Breton influence no doubt entered Castile by way of the pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James in Santiago de Compostela and the crusaders who came to Spain to fight against the Muslims, the same as the French influence with which we shall now deal. At this point it should be noted that there are indeed connections between the Arthurian Cycle on the one hand and the Spanish or Castilian epic tradition on the other, but this is a case of common origins rather than

direct influence.

For some time it was believed that the Castilian epic is derived from the French. This theory has since proven untenable. Nevertheless, no one doubts that the French epic tradition did to some extent influence the Castilian. Ramón Menéndez Pidal has written a great deal on this topic (154). As Menéndez Pidal noted, three cases of French influence in the Cantar de Mio Cid are perfectly clear: the repetition of the word *tanto* ("so much") the prayer of dona Ximena in verses 330-365 and the expression *llorar de los ojos* (to weep from the eyes) repeated several times in the Cantar. Here I wish to note that the Cantar de Mio Cid is one of the more recent Castilian chansons de geste. To my knowledge, neither Menendez Pidal nor anyone else has shown nor even suggested any French elements in the earlier Castilian chansons de geste (perhaps we should use the Spanish *cantares de gesta*), such as those concerned with Fernan Gonzalez, founder of Castile or with the Seven Princes of Lara.

In reference to the Cantar de Mio Cid, it appears to me that Menendez Pidal is right, that the French influence, like the Breton, is present only in details, not in fundamentals.

The Cantar de Mio Cid is not an imitation of the Arthurian Cycle nor of the Chanson de Roland. The Cantar de Mio Cid, like the Chanson de Roland, contains historical material, non-historical or novelistic material and material which belongs in the category of fantasy, but the proportions are reversed between one and the other. The Cantar de Mio Cid ("Cid" is a title derived

from the Arabic *Sayyid*: the proper name of Mio Cid was Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar), is fundamentally historical; elements of fantasy are extremely rare, and it is necessary to search in a great mass of historical material in order to find a few novelistic pieces. In the Chanson de Roland, on the other hand, it is necessary to search among a mass of novelistic and fantastic material in order to find a few grains of history.

The metre of the Chanson de Roland is regular and elegant, that of the Cantar de Mio Cid is very irregular, perhaps because it was written by someone who thought in terms of musical notation rather than a literary metre. The Roland of the Chanson is a "superman" hero; el Cid, in contrast, is so human a hero that some have denied that he could be considered an epic hero at all.

As Menendez Pidal has said:

"One may recognize in the Cantar a base of native poetic tradition and a form somewhat renovated by French influence." (155)

The Mozarabs (Arabic: *must-Arab*, = "half-Arab") were the Spanish Christians who continued to live under Muslim rule. Some, including Julian Ribera, have suggested a Mozarabic epic tradition as the source of the Castilian epic. The existence of said epic or of at least a sort of popular narrative poetry among the Mozarabs would not be surprising, since that part of Spain which was under Muslim rule was in its major part occupied by the Celts and entirely by the Goths (to avoid confusion, the Goths were divided into two parts, the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, only the

Visigoths coming to Spain; all Visigoths are Goths, but not all Goths are Visigoths), two peoples who had a strong epic tradition.

There are also more positive proofs of the existence of a Mozarabic epic; one of them is the legend of don Roderick (or "don Rodrigo" in Spanish; here is a curious case of a Visigoth with a Celtic name, perhaps the result of the presence of Irish priests and scholars in Visigothic Spain) or the Loss of Spain.

Various versions of this legend exist, due in part no doubt to the existence of factions among the Mozarabs, some of whom were partisans of Roderick, the last Visigothic king, while others favored the sons of Witiza, the penultimate.

On the death of Witiza, the Visigothic senate chose Roderick as king, passing over the sons of Witiza. Count Julian was commander of the garrison at Ceuta across the Straits from Gibraltar (there is disagreement as to whether he was a Visigoth or a Byzantine). In any case, the key to the whole affair is that Julian, either as partisan of the sons of Witiza or as servant of the Emperor in Constantinople, was in a case a partisan of the sons of Witiza, and his actions were intended to topple Roderick from the throne and reinstate the line of Witiza. The whole business has a very Byzantine flavor, and one is inclined to suspect that the sons of Witiza represented a pro-Byzantine faction, while the partisans of Roderick were anti-Byzantine. In any case, Count Julian is an historical figure, not a poetic invention.

Julian sent his daughter, Florinda, to Toledo, capital of Visigothic Spain, to be educated. At this point the versions diverge. One version, no doubt that of the partisans of Roderick, says that Florinda seduced the king. Another version frankly accuses Roderick of rape. Florinda, whether victim or strumpet, wrote to her father claiming that she had been "corrupted" by Roderick. Certainly not the first nor the last time that a woman seduced a man one day and accused him of rape the next, as one version has it. Julian came to Toledo, using some pretext to take Florinda back to Ceuta. After returning to Ceuta, Julian used the (Byzantine?) fleet in the port to transport the army of Tarik (158) the Berber to Spain. The rest is history. All the figures of this legend, except possibly Florinda, are historical. From various sources it is known that the defeat of Roderick at the hands of Tarik the Berber at the fatal battle of the river Guadalete was due to the defection of the followers of the sons of Witiza. What we have here is obviously an attempt, with or without Byzantine participation (though the whole affair reeks of Byzantine diplomacy and scheming) to reinstate the line of Witiza on the throne, which attempt miscarried with disastrous results. The incident of the seduction of Florinda is poetic invention.

This legend is cited in the Pseudoisidorian Mozarabic Chronicle (156). Anseis of Carthage (12th Century) a French chanson de geste, is a paraphrase of the same legend, and in the same century it appears in the Chronicle of the Moor Razis

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(translated to Castilian in the 14th Century) where it has a

marked character of a chanson de geste and where Marcelino Menendez Pelayo observed the presence of assonant rhymes (157). In the Sarracen Chronicle of Pedro del Corral and in the Romancero are episodes which do not figure in any chronicle. In summary, as Manuel de Montuliu has said:

"... only by admitting the previous existence of various chansons de geste on the theme of don Roderick may we discover a satisfactory solution to the problem." (158)

Ramon Menendez Pidal has dealt with the theme of the Legend of don Roderick without entering in the polemic concerning the existence of a Mozarabic epic, and the reader may judge for himself.

Besides the facts, cited above, Menendez Pidal (159) affirmed that the Chronicle of Silos, which introduced legendary and novelesque elements concerning Roderick and Witiza unknown in Castile before the 12th Century, is Mozarabic (whether partly written in al-Andalus or entirely written in Silos by Mozarabic monks is not known). In the same vein Menendez Pidal noted (160) the close parallel between the legend of Ermanaric, (Gothic *Airmnareiks*; note Celtic element *reiks*, meaning "king": Old Norse; *Jormunrekkr*) a great Gothic king in what is now the Ukraine in the 4th Century AD (a Gothic epic partly preserved in a Viking saga) and the legend of don Roderick. Note that the legends of Ermanarick, *Airmnareiks* or *Jormunrekkr* on the one hand and

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Roderick in which the sins of a king bring vengeance down on himself retribution on him and his people appear more Iranian than

Germanic. We will speak more concerning this later. The similarity to the Gothic-Viking legend appears in the version of the legend of don Roderick as told by St. Peter Pascual, son of Mozarabic parents, in his Book Against the Sect of Mahomet (161).

Menendez Pidal affirmed without mincing words that the legend of don Roderick is of Mozarabic origin (162), and that it is highly probable that there existed a popular narrative poetry among the Mozarabs (163).

In another place Menéndez Pidal affirms that there existed chansons de geste on the theme of Roderick and Witiza (164), that said legend is proof of the survival of the Gothic chansons de geste even after the Muslim Conquest (165), and that the legend of don Roderick is purely Gothic (166).

The convergence of all these conclusions appears to me to be an affirmation of the existence of a Mozarabic epic, or at least of a popular narrative poetry among the Mozarabs.

If there existed, as appears to be the case, a Mozarabic epic, the probability that it had some influence on the formation of the Castilian epic at some stage of its development at least, is very great. In the time of El Cid and in the time in which the Cantar was written, around 1140 (167), the Mozarabic influence in Castile, Leon and Aragon was very strong because the Almoravid invasion had caused a great migration of Mozarabs and Jews (and even some Muslims) toward the North and because the advance of the

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Christian Reconquest had incorporated territories with a large Mozarabic population, especially Toledo (1086) (where even today

there is a large Mozarabic community which practices the old Mozarabic or Visigothic Rite) and Sarragossa (1118). Also, the principle author of the Cantar de Mio Cid seems to have been from Medinaceli (168), a frontier district not definitively reconquered until 1120. Therefore, said author may well have been a Mozarab born under Muslim rule.

Nevertheless, some questions remain. Did there exist a real epic tradition among the Mozarabs or merely a sort of popular narrative poetry? How strong was the Mozarabic influence in the area Burgos-Lara de los Infantes in the 10th-11th centuries, the place and time where, it would appear, the Castilian epic was born? Here it is well to remember that said area is at once very Celtic and very Gothic, where, as we have seen, the Romanization was tardy and superficial and the Arabic cultural influence very weak. Here the very climate and landscape have a somber, epic quality, very different from the lush, green Santander, Asturias and Galicia or the gentle climates of Andalusia and the Mediterranean Coast. It is "a hard land that produces hard men". This area was also for nearly two centuries a frontier area, a land of constant warfare. There were periods in which the wars with the Muslims were so constant that the knights slept in the corrals with their horses so as to be able to be mounted and prepared to fight at a moment's notice. Old Castile by all logic and from whatever viewpoint - geographical, ethnic or historical -

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would have been and was the part of Spain where the epic tradition was strongest. I see no reason whatever to look outside Old

Castile for the immediate origins of the Castilian epic. In such circumstances it is very difficult to believe that the hypothetical Mozarabic epic had any strong or profound influence on the formation of the Castilian epic. More probable is that, like the French and Breton influences, the Mozarabic influence was in details, not in fundamentals. If anyone affirms the Mozarabic epic to be the source and fundamental inspiration of the Castilian epic (something which I consider to be implausible and improbable "in extremis") this would really be a sort of question-begging, because it would not solve the problem of the origin of the Hispanic epic, since the Castilian and the hypothetical Mozarabic epics are regional branches of the Hispanic epic, as the Ulster Cycle and the Leinster Cycle are regional branches of the Irish epic. To say, for example, that the Ulster Cycle, which appears to be the older of the two, is the source and inspiration of the Leinster Cycle would not solve the problem of the origin of the Irish epic.

In other words even (in spite of all the evidence to the contrary) admitting that the Mozarabic epic is the source of the Castilian epic, it would still be necessary to seek the source from which both proceed. For this reason, the Mozarabic theory as to the origin of the Castilian epic is perfectly compatible with the Celtic, Gothic and Arabic theories. The Mozarabic theory is neither complete nor adequate in itself. Even as a theory it

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cannot stand alone.

Some, especially in the 19th Century, sought the origins of

the Castilian epic in Arabic literature, but the great Arabist Dozy refuted this theory with very weighty arguments. Recently, however, said theory has been revived by Francisco Marcos Marin(169).

Basically, Marcos Marin says that the Arabs have an epic tradition which was known in al-Andalus, and that this tradition plus the *archuzas* (Spanish transliteration of *arjuza*) produced an epic in Andalusian Vulgar Arabic, which in turn had a great influence on the formation of the Castilian epic. Sr. Marcos Marin attempts to prove this theory by way of many supposed Arabic characteristics in said epic. I find the book of Marcos Marin to be the fruit of ample research, lucidly written and demonstrating great culture and erudition. Nevertheless I do not find it wholly convincing.

The epic is characteristic of the Indo-European peoples, and the Romans (we know nothing of the other Italic peoples in this respect), lacking an epic tradition, are virtually the only important exception securely known. The epic is not characteristic of the Semitic peoples. The epic of Gilgamesh, written in Accadian (a Semitic tongue) is only a recapitulation of various works in Sumerian, a non-Semitic tongue (170). Perhaps the books of the Old Testament Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and 1st & 2nd Kings form the work nearest to an epic which exists in a Semitic language. The reason for this fact is not known.

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Sr. Marcos Marin believes that the pre-Islamic Arab legends constitute an epic (171) and explains the fact that said legends

do not conform to the normal or Indo-European concept of the epic (which he calls "The Occidental Concept", as though the Iranian and Indo-Aryan epics were "Occidental") by the fact that the pre-Islamic Arab world was magical in place of religious in the strict sense (172) and says that said Arab epic disappeared in Islamic times because of contacts with more advanced civilizations, i.e., the Syro-Byzantine and the Persian (173).

I know the legends of Antara, and to me they appear to be not an epic but a collection of romances or ballads of historical-legendary theme. The great orientalist Reynold A. Nicholson concurs with my opinion (174). The Persian nationalists, knowing how proud the Arabs are of their poetry, have severely criticized the poverty of narrative verse in Arabic literature and its total lack of an epic (175). The great Hungarian Islamist Ignaz Goldziher (176) said that the Arabs have no epic tradition. Goldziher cited the Arab historian ibn al-Athir (died 1234), highly esteemed by Goldziher as a literary critic, in support of this idea.

Obviously, the opinion of ibn al-Athir in this field must carry more weight than that of a Persian who does not like Arabs.

Ibn al-Athir, as a good Arab, praises the Arabic language and literature. Nevertheless, he admits that Arabic literature has no epic tradition, and confesses that in this respect Persian literature is superior, since the Persians have a very great epic

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tradition. He speaks with admiration of the great work of the Persian epic poet Firdausi (60,000 lines of 16 syllables each) and

laments that the Arabic language and literature have nothing comparable. Not that ibn al-Athir was an Iranophile. In one place he says that even though the Arabic language and literature have no epic tradition, the value of the Persian language and literature compared with that of the Arabic language and literature is less than a drop of water compared with the sea, not exactly the opinion of a friend and admirer of the Persians. For this very reason his opinion in reference to the fact that the Arabic language and literature have no epic tradition must carry a great deal of weight. If the Arabs once had an epic tradition, as Marcos Marin says, why was it not developed and cultivated in Islamic times? The great and nearly miraculous Arab conquests of the 7th and early 8th centuries which were a *jihad* or sort of holy war, must necessarily have provided first-rate raw material for an epic cycle, and no one can say the Arab-Islamic society was "magical" in place of religious. The idea that close contacts with the Persians and Byzantines destroyed the Arab epic tradition is inadmissible; rather, if there had existed any epic tradition among the Arabs said contacts would have represented a great spur and stimulus for its development and cultivation. The Persians have one of the most (perhaps the most) extensive and varied epic traditions known. The Byzantines knew well the works of Homer and developed their own epic cycles, which reached full development in the 11th Century with the epic of Diogenes Akritas. Charles Diehl

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affirms that:

"...(this epic poetry) was inspired by the greatness of

the Christian faith, its triumphs and sufferings, and by the sentiments and passions of the people. This poetry, whose form and language were new, was firmly rooted in the Byzantine soul, it was, in truth, as has been said, the blood and spirit of Christian Byzantium."(177)

Says Albert B. Lord concerning the epic of Diogenes Akritas:

Diogenes Akritas seems to have been a historical person of the eighth century of our (Christian) era. The epic about his ancestry, birth, marriage, adventures, and death survives in five Greek metrical manuscripts, a Russian prose version dated by Henri Gregoire in the twelfth century, and a late Greek prose version. I shall be concerned primarily with the five Greek metrical versions, all of which are in the vernacular showing more or less archaizing of language and in the political fifteen-syllable metre. Only one of these is dated, O (Oxford), which belongs to 1670 and is the latest manuscript. For the others I follow Henry Gregoire's dating: the earliest is G (Grottaferrata) in the fourteenth century; the other three, A (Athens, formerly Andros), T (Trebizond), and E (Escorialensis), and sixteenth century. E and T are acephalic, and E is in very poor condition, with some lacunae. A and T are divided into ten books; O and G into eight books. E has no book division. The story as told in these manuscripts is essentially the same in all of them, but there is, nevertheless, considerable divergence in the telling. I shall not attempt to prove that any of these manuscripts is an oral text. They have been through the hands of learned men, or at least educated men who knew how to read and write. But I shall suggest tentatively that one of these manuscripts, E, is very close to being an oral text, and that the others have enough oral characteristics to show that there is an oral text behind them and that some signs of oral technique of composition have survived in them in spite of their literary, written, and learned character.

It is by now a truism that no two performances of an oral epic are ever textually exactly alike. Not only is such textual divergence typical and fundamental in oral style, but also, as we have said earlier, if two texts are nearly word-for-word exact, they cannot be oral narrative versions but one must have been either

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memorized or actually copied from the other or from the same original. Let us look at the same passage in the five Greek metrical manuscripts. I reproduce them here from Krumbacher's article, written in 1904, at the same time he announced in Munich the discovery of the Escorialensis. ...

Even from Krumbacher's brief sampling one could see that the Trebizond and Athens manuscripts are almost word-for-word the same. We might justly conclude that these are copies of the same original; and I do not believe that anyone would quarrel with us. We should also say that Oxford is far from the other four, but that Athens, Escorialensis, and Grottaferrata are somewhat alike.

A better idea of their similarity can be obtained from a comparison of somewhat longer passages from the three manuscripts. I have chosen the beginning of the Escorialensis manuscript, which is acephalic.

E 1-17

*"Let clanging and crashing and threats not affright you!
Fear neither death nor anything except your mother's curse!
Beware your mother's curse, but pay no heed to blows and
pain!
If the tear you to pieces, see that you shame us not,
If we should go down!
Let them kll the five of us, and them let them take her!
Only go forth boldly to meet the might of the Emir!
Guard your two hands, and may God help us all!"
And the Emir mounted and set out agsinst him.
He mounted his piebald, star-marked steed.
In the midst of his forehead he had a golden star,
His four hoofs were silver adorned,
The nails in his shoes were of silver,
His tail was stiff with pearls.
Green and red was the eagle that perched behind the saddle
And shaded his shoulders from the rays of the sun.
The lance he wielded was of blue and gold.*

A 324-345

*"Let clanging and crashing and threats not affright you!
Fear neither death nor anything except your mother's curse!
Beware your mother's curse, and do your utmost!
And when all five of you die,
Then let them all take her!
Only go forth boldly to meet the might of the Emir,
With the help of God, who alone has power!
I have faith in Him that you will find your sister."*

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*When he had heard his mother's words, straightaway
He urged on the black horse and set out against the Emir,
And after him his brothers brought up the rear,
Mounted on their fully caparisoned steeds.
And when the Emir saw young Constantine,
The twin brother of the girl, proceeding against him,
He mounted his piebald, star-marked steed.
In the midst of his forehead he had a golden star,*

*His four hoofs were silver adorned,
The nails in his shoes were of silver.
Green and red was the eagle that perched behind the saddle,
Painted it was with pure gold.
His weapons shone like the rays of the sun,
And his lance gleamed like Venetian gold.*

G 134-164

*Saying, "No wise, brother, let the shouts affright you
Nor ever shink, nor let the blows appal you;
If you see the sword naked, give not way,
Or anything more terrible, never fly;
Heed not your youth, only your mother's curse,
Whose prayers supporting you, you shall prevail.
God shall not suffer us ever to be slaves,
Go child, be of good heart, fear not al all."
And standing towards the east they called on God;
"O Lord, never allow us to be slaves."
Having embraced they sent him forth, saying,
"Somay our parents' prayer become your helper." He mounting on
a black, noble horse,
Having girt on his sword, took up the lance;
He carried his mace in the mace-holder,
Fenced himself all sides with the sign of the Cross,
Impelled his horse and rode into the plain,
Played first the sword and then likewise the lance.
Some of the Saracens (Arabs) reviled the youth:
"Look what a champion is put out to fight
Him who great triumphs made in Syria."
But one of them a Dilemite borderer
Spoke softly to the Emir a word like this:
"You see him spurring, and how cleverly,
His sword's parry, the turning of his lance.
All this exhibits skill as well as courage;
See then you meet the child not carelessly."
Forth came the Emir riding upon a horse,
Most bold he was and terrible to view,
His arms were glittering with sunny rays;
The lance he wielded was of blue and gold.*

(Mavrogordato translation, pp. 11-12)

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Is it not easy to understand these three as copies from the same original. Could they be closely related oral versions?

The textual differences between E, A-T, and G in many passages look like the textual differences between oral versions of an oral poem. Let us apply the formula test to these Diogenes Akritas texts.

The passage in Chart XIII is from the Athens manuscript and shows that on the basis of its nearly

five thousand lines there is a fair number of formulas in the sampling. ...

An analysis of parts of Grottaferrata shows some tendencies toward formulization but the vocabulary differs. ...

But generally speaking one does not find formulas so readily in Grottaferrata as in Athens. If one proceeds by the method of taking a common word and listing all lines in which it is used in the manuscript, one seems to find fewer repetitions of phrase and consequently greater variety of phrasing in Grottaferrata than in Athens.

But the really significant test is not whether one can find formulas or repeated phrases in a manuscript, but rather how frequent they are in any given passage. Chart XIV is a sample of a passage of Grottaferrata (4,180-4,186) analyzed for formulas, using only the Grottaferrata manuscript itself for material. This can be compared with the preceding chart for the Athens manuscript. A look at this passage and at the notes verifies our feeling that although there are formulas in the manuscript, they are not all-pervasive as in a true oral text.

The Escorialensis, in spite of its roughness and brevity, presents us with a number of formulas. Here are some typical formulas from Escorialensis: ...

For comparison with the passages analyzed for formulas from the Athens and Grottaferrata manuscripts, the passage from Escorialensis (lines 1274-1280) similarly analyzed will be useful. It is worth stressing that Athens has 4778 lines, Grottaferrata 3709, and Escorialensis only 1867 lines. The analyses in each case are based only on material from the manuscript from which the passage is taken. Because of the frequency of formulas in the evidence presented here, in spite of the limited amount of material for analysis, and because of the irregularity of the lines in the manuscript itself, I might tentatively suggest for consideration by the specialists that Escorialensis may be an oral manuscript unskillfully written down from dictation. It is instructive to compare the irregular lines in Escorialensis with the recited texts

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in Parry and Lord, Volume II. ...

Turning next to the test of enjambement, one sees necessary enjambement frequently in the Oxford manuscript of Diogenes Akritas, which dates from 1670 and is in rhymed couplets. Both the rhyme and the enjambement point here to a "literary" text.

*When the Saracens (Arabs) saw how the Emir
Was being overcome and covered in the mound of earth,
They ran and took him, in order that him might not slay*

*Constantine and put him into the mound of earth;
So straightway they took up his body. "Do not wish
More, my lord, to go and do battle with Constantine.
Only be reconciled with him, if you can, that you may have
Rest and freedom from fear whatever may befall."
When the Emir recovered his senses, he feared lest
He might be dispatched by Constantine to the midst of the
depths
Of Hades, and he trembled and for this reason sat
Upon his horse and quickly returned to the army.
And he turned back the fleeing and he affrighted
Constantine, and began to taunt him with words.*

On the other hand the following example from the Athens manuscript, dated by Henri Gregoire in the sixteenth century, shows the kind of unperiodic enjambement we have seen in Slavic examples earlier:

*When Diogenes saw him, he spoke to the girl:
"My dear, you see the Saracen pursuing us;
Pay heed now, my lady, to how I shall deal with him."
He raised the sweet maid and put her upon the ground,
While he himself mounted and took up his spear,
And he set out to meet him and confronted him,
And first he addressed him: "Saracen, receive my blow!"
And he hurled his spear at his head,
Straightway he killed him and his horse,
And he went back again to the girl.
And another thirty youths came up,
Riding and on foot they came toward him,
And they cried out and shouted and made a great din.*

In respect to enjambement, therefore, the Athens manuscript might be oral, but this feature, unlike formulaic structure, is far from being sufficiently decisive for us to call this manuscript oral. All we can say is that it is not the same kind of "literary" style as that of the Oxford manuscript. Indeed, the Oxford manuscript is the only Diogenes Akritas manuscript that has a predominance of necessary enjambement. All the other manuscripts exhibit the

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unperiodic, adding, style of oral poetry. This feature as we have said before, is symptomatic, however, rather than decisive because it persists into written poetry.

The variations in thematic mixture among the manuscripts of Diogenes Akritas are but further proof that somehow or other we are dealing with oral tradition. Perhaps the most characteristic result of thematic mixture is the narrative inconsistency. Two themes that do not go together are for one reason or another placed together in the same poem. The following examples are from the Grottaferrata manuscript. In the

story of the Emir, the brothers search for their sister in the heap of slain maidens and conclude that she has been killed. Their hearts filled with vengeance, they return to the Emir's tent. But their words to him are simply:

*Give us, Emir, our sister, or else kill us.
Not one of us without her will turn home,
But all be murdered for our sister's sake.*

Only in an oral poem could such inconsistency be found. I submit that no literary poet would commit so obvious an error. Another example is found when the Emir receives the letter from his mother, asking him to return to Syria. The Emir goes to his wife, and she agrees to go with him. But a few lines later, after the theme of the brothers' dream has intervened, the singer has already forgotten the agreement of the wife, and the Emir departs alone, giving his wife a ring. This certainly looks like oral construction. Examples could be multiplied, but these are sufficient to indicate that here too on the level of thematic structure our manuscripts of Diogenes Akritas exhibit some of the characteristics of oral poetry.

And why should they not? Henri Gregoire, William J. Entwistle, and others have all indicated that Diogenes Akritas was formed from oral ballads. If this is true, it should not be surprising to find oral characteristics in the epic. I think, however, that there is reason to hold another view, namely that the epic of Diogenes Akritas was from its inception a single, unified oral epic, and that the so-called Akritic ballads are not survivals of elements that went into the making of the Diogenes Akritas but should perhaps be thought of as existing side by side with it.

It is customary to think of Diogenes Akritas as a double romance, and to suppose that the tale of the Emir, Diogenes Akritas' father, was a separate story and that the tale of Diogenes Akritas became attached to it in a very natural way, making the exploits and

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marriage of the son follow chronologically the marriage of the father. I should like to suggest that there is something more than this which connects these two parts of the epic. The key, I think, is to be found in the character of Diogenes Akritas. His youthful precocity, his learning, his hunting of wild beasts, his encounter with the dragon, his saving of maidens, and even his death mark him as a particular kind of hero. The pattern of his life and adventures can be found in many other epics (such as the Arthurian Cycle and the Shah Namah), such as the Serbocroatian epics of Zmaj Ognjeni Vuk and the Russian Vseslav Epic.

There is always something special about the birth of these heroes that explains the particular role and mission which they are to fulfill in their lives. In almost every case, they are the offspring of man and god or of man and animal. Volx Vseslav'evich's mother is human, but his father was a snake. Only in the Serbocroatian tale are both parents human. But even here the birth of the wondrous hero is greeted by cosmic disturbances as in the Russian tale. The legend of Alexander of Macedon belongs in the same category. The birth of these heroes explains their character; for they are the result of the union of two disparate elements. I might even be so bold as to suggest that the name Diogenes indicates even more than the fact that his mother was Christian and his father Muslim. But be that as it may, the tale of Diogenes' birth and of his antecedents is an integral part of the epic. The astrological prologue of Book I of the Athen manuscript, with its emphasis on the maiden and her destiny fits the idea. Much has been blurred by the processes of oral tradition; the significance of the connection has vanished, but the connection itself has remained in the fact of the so-called double romance.

In the story of Diogenes himself, Henri Gregoire, with the help of the Russian version, has indicated the importance of the Philopappas episode in connection with the abduction of Eudokia. And William J. Entwistle has brilliantly indicated in the last article that he wrote, published posthumously in the Oxford Slavonic Papers, that there must be a connection between the abduction and the death of Diogenes. Unfortunately, one must disagree with Mr. Entwistle, one of the most learned and astute of ballad scholars, in his conclusion that Diogenes Akritas was composed from separate ballads. It is ironic that he himself was furnished material for the opposite theory.

If one cannot reconstruct an original text, and if one cannot reconstruct with any degree of exactness the myriad thematic complexes which the poem has shown in

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the past, one can, I believe, reconstruct a basic form, a more or less stable core of the story. No matter how fluid the song content may be, there is always this stable core of narrative or of meaning that distinguishes one song from another. In the case of Diogenes Akritas, it is the age-old tale of the demigod who lives a wonder-working life among men, who champions and saves, but who has within him a mortal element which leads inevitably to his death. The tale of Diogenes must begin with the story of the marriage of his mother and father; it must as inevitably end with the hero's death. Indeed, I would suggest that this epic has tenaciously survived, even when misunderstood, because of the basic

grandeur of the myth.

But the epic of Diogenes in time went through the many sea-changes inherent in oral composition and recomposition. I do not think that we should conceive of these as Henri Gregoire does as redactions of an original text or as *remaniements*. How then are we to envisage the composition of the several manuscripts which we possess? I think we may justly hazard the opinion that the Escorialensis manuscript is directly from oral tradition; and at the other end of the spectrum, that the Oxford manuscript is a literary reworking from some previous manuscript of the song, presumably one like the Grottaferrata, which is also divided into eight books. Certainly behind these two manuscripts, Grottaferrata and Athens, is an oral form of the story, as we have indicated above. It might be that this oral form was written down and formed a canonized text for singers who were like the rhapsodies of ancient Greece (as opposed to its *aoidoi*) or like the *narodni guslari* of (the former) Yugoslavia. It would not be inconsistent with the facts, I believe, to suppose then that (1) Escorialensis is a rhapsode version and (2) Grottaferrata and Athens are rhapsode versions that have been retold once more by a man whose repertory of tales included as well the current romances of chivalry, and who has attempted to relate the story of Diogenes as a romance. Yet, these romances may also be from an oral tradition, and the wedding here of epic and romance are not really separate genres, but actually the same genre of oral narrative poetry. In a chivalric and religious age the older heroic epic naturally assumes the coloring of its age, and the oral style allows for change, for multiplication of incident, and for general expansion.

Only when these versions exist on paper can we speak of the learned editor who has divided the tale into books, eight or ten as the case may be, and

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provided these books with introductions as in the Athens manuscript. Our texts have been touched up to look like Homeric epic as it existed in Alexandrian manuscripts and later editions. To this editor would certainly be due the references in the text to Homer and the "shield of Achilles" type of description of Diogenes' palace. Yet even the little introductions and the "learned" references are done in a style almost indistinguishable from the rest, by analogy with the patterns and rhythms of oral poetry; for vestiges of this method of composition survive for a long time into the age of writing.

H.J. Chaytor has told the fascinating story of medieval man's laborious reading aloud of manuscripts, making them out letter for letter and word for word. And when man wrote in his vernacular, his thought processes,

his method of composing vernacular poetry by theme and formula changed but slowly. Much of the outward mechanics of the oral style, as we have seen, persisted in written poetry, and thus the boundary between the two became and remained blurred to all but the initiate. One should not, however, mistake ambivalence for transition. We know now that the author (and I use the word advisedly) of the "transitional" has already crossed the border from oral to written. It may not be possible in the case of many of our medieval texts to know with certainty whether we are dealing with an oral or a written product, but we may reach a high degree of *probability* in our research; especially if we realize the certainty that it is either the one or the other.

In Conclusion

Yet after all that has been said about oral composition as a technique of line and song construction, it seems that the term of greater significance is *traditional*. Oral tells us "how", but traditional tells us "what", and even more, "of what kind" and "of what force". When we know how a song is built, we know that its building blocks *must* be of great age. For it is of the *necessary* nature of tradition that it seek and maintain stability, that it preserve itself. And this tenacity springs neither from perverseness, nor from an abstract principle of absolute art, but from a desperately compelling conviction that what the tradition is preserving is the very means of attaining life and happiness. The traditional oral epic singer is not an artist; he is a seer. ... His balances, his antitheses, his similes and metaphors, his repetitions, and his sometimes seemingly

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willful playing with words, with morphology, and with phonology were not intended to be devices and conventions of Parnassus, but were techniques for emphasis of the potent symbol. Art appropriated the forms of oral narrative. But it is from the dynamic, life principle in myth, the wonder-working tale, that art derived its force. Yet it turned its back on the traditional significance to contemplate the forms as if they were pure form, and from that contemplation to create new meanings.

The nontraditional literary artists, sensing the force of the traditional material whence his art was derived, but no longer comprehending it, no longer finding acceptable the methods of the traditional, sought to compensate for this lack by intricacies of construction created for their own sake. The old patterns were not only thus given new meanings, but a kind of complexity, which could be attained only through

writing, was also cultivated as an end in itself. When we look at oral poetry and observe init something that looks like these new forms and complexities, we may be deluded. Enamored of the meretricious virtues of art, we may fail to understand the real meaning of a traditional poem. That meaning cannot be brought to light by elaborate schematization, unless that schematization be based on the elements of oral tradition, on the still dynamic multiform patterns in the depths of primitive myth."(178)

Albert Bates Lord also dealt with the epic of Diogenes Akritas in relation to the Serbo-Croatian epic:

"This paper was inspired by an article by the eminent Byzantinist Henri Gregoire. Published in 1949, the article, entitled "Le Digenis russe", established the priority of the Russian versions of the Diogenes Akritas poem over the Greek versions. Gregoire demonstrated that the two extant Russian texts are drawn from Greek manuscripts earlier than any of those that have survived and also that the Pogodin and Tixonravov texts come from separate Greek originals. In presenting his proof Gregoire brought forth many details that excited my interest because they called to mind details and situations in Serbo-Croatian epic poetry. I have here set down my comments on three of these points.

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Aornos

Diogenes, enamored of the daughter of the Strategos, breaks into the courtyard of the Strategos' palace and calls to him and to his sons to emerge. When the Strategos is informed of this, he cannot believe that any man would dare to enter his courtyard, where "not even a bird dare approach in flight." This detail of the bird does not occur in any of the Greek manuscripts of the epic of Diogenes Akritas, but is in the Tixonravov manuscript of the Russian version of the story. This was pointed out by Gregoire, who also noted the same detail in one the Akritic ballads, in which a Saracen boasts that he has been guarding the River Euphrates for forty years, and "not a single bird has flown over it, nor has any man passed it." This is a striking poetic detail, and Gregoire cites it as part of his proof that the Russian Diogenes is close to the folk tradition of Akritic ballads.

A similar passage concerning a place that is so

well guarded that not even a bird could pass it occurs in two other folk traditions that are contiguous with the Greek. One of these is Turkish, the other is South Slavic. The Turkish prose romance of Sajjid Battal, according to H.L. Fleischer, was given its present form between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries A.D., although the hero himself may have lived in the ninth century. In the Turkish romance we read: "He also sent a letter to Sumbath ben Iljun and to Kalb ben Sabah that they should fortify the mountain passes and kill, or rather, send to the Emperor, everyone whom they found. This they did, and so strong were their fortifications that not even a bird could pass." And shortly thereafter we read again:

One day Sajjid was sitting with his friends when Iahja ben Mansir came through the door, and when Sajjid asked him, "Whence came you?" he replied, "From Rumelia. All the mountain passes there that are in the Emperor's possession have been closed and fortified; in each pass he has stationed ten to twenty thousand men and given the order that not even a bird shall pass."

In Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian epic the same legend is found. The song "Marko Kraljevic and Musa Ksedzhija" in one Bulgarian version has a passage very close to the selection just given from Sajjid Battal. Musa has blocked all the roads to the coastland, so that "not even a bird could pass through."

In a Muslim epic collected by Milman Parry in 1934 in Novi Pazar, the hero, Gol Alija, had become a haiduk
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and had taken refuge in a cave on Mount Golesh. "Then he put the mountain under his order. No bird even dared to fly across it; how then would any human being dare to pass through?" the same theme is repeated twice in the course of the song. A messenger is sent to Alija with a letter, and a sentinel challenges him: "Ill-begotten one, who are you here on the mountain? You know that there is no passing through here. It is now twelve years that even the birds have not flown over here, to say nothing of heroes on this earth." Finally, when the messenger approaches the cave itself, he hides behind a fir tree and cautiously holds out the letter. The haiduk sees it and says to his lieutenant: "hearken to me, Orlan the standard-bearer! Birds have not flown over here, to say nothing of heroes upon this earth, for twelve years now. Here is a letter behind the dry fir tree. Who has brought it? Who is walking about here?"

Thus in three folk traditions, Greek, Turkish, and South Slavic we find the same ornamental ornithological detail of birdless places.

Such birdless regions are found also in the writers

of ancient Rome. In the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid the entrance to Avernus is described as follows:

There was a wide-mouthed cavern, deep and vast
And rugged, sheltered by a shadowed lake
And darkened groves; such vapor poured from those
Black jaws to heaven's vault, no bird could fly
Above unharmed.

From the *apparatus criticus* of R.G. Austin's edition we learn that some of the manuscripts add the line: "Hence the Greeks have named this place 'Aornos' (Birdless). This is folk etymology, of course. Lucretius in his De Rerum Natura gives us further information about the Avernian regions.

Now attend, and I will explain what nature belongs to those various regions which are called Avernian, and their laked. In the first place, their name Avernian has been bestowed upon them because of their character, being dangerous to all birds, because when they come in flight over against these places, forgetting their oarage of wings and slackening their sails, headlong they fall to the ground with soft necks outstretched, if it so happens that the nature of the place allows it, or into the water, if it happens that a lake of Avernus lies below. Such a place is close by Cumae, where mountains, filled with black sulphur, smoke, all covered with hot springs. There is another within the
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walls of Athens, on the very crest of the citadel, by the temple of fostering Tritonian Pallas, whither hoarse crows never wing their way, not even when the altars smoke with offerings, so carefully do they flee, not as the Greek poets have sung from the bitter wrath of Pallas because of that vigil of theirs, but the nature of the place does the job itself.

In Virgil and Lucretius, then, Avernus means "Aornos", "Birdless". Yet it is from neither of these authors that we might expect the idea to have entered Greek, Turkish, or Serbo-Croatian oral tradition, although it seems clear that they all reflect a belief that "aornos", "birdless", means "unapproachable".

The Greeks applied folk etymology to a Sanskrit word *avarana*, which was the name of an impregnable rock fortress in India on the Indus River. The men of Alexander of Macedon called it Aornos when they laid siege to it in 326 B.C., and legend had it that even Hercules had not been able to take it. We can carry back the ideas that an "impregnable" and "unapproachable" place is "birdless" to at least the fourth century B.C. The idea may be traced still further back, however. It

may be that in Alexander's time it was already known to Greek oral tradition.

In Homer's Odyssey Circe advised the hero of the dangers that would beset him and his men when they leave her island; first they will meet the Sirens, and then, after your men have brought the ship past these, what is to be your course I will not fully say; do you yourself ponder it in your heart. I will describe both ways. Along one route stand beetling cliffs, and on them near the mighty waves of dark-eyed Amphitrite; the blessed gods call them the Wanderers. This way not even winged things can pass - no, not the gentle doves which bear ambrosia to father Zeus, but one of them the smooth rock always draws away, though the father puts another in to fill the number.

There was clearly something more than a natural phenomenon embedded in the traditional image of the place so awful that not even a bird could fly over it to account for its appearance in the Homeric poem, in Virgil and Lucretius, in Byzantine and modern Greek, Turkish, and South Slavic. Perhaps Virgil has given us the clue in indicating that the birdless place marks the entrance to the realm of death and of the dead. There is a continuity here from ancient times to the present and, even in our brief sampling, a geographical distribution from India to the Near East and the

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Mediterranean.

Griffins

The Serbo-Croatian epics are rich in details of clothing, arms, and horses. It is reasonable to suppose that this is in no small part due to Byzantine influence. In the Muslim Yugoslav poems such descriptions, of course, have been elaborated by addition of details that belong specifically to the life of the Sublime Porte. The number of words of Turkish origin in these passages bears witness to this fact. But underneath even these the ceremonial ornateness of Byzantium and its love of vestiture almost literally shine through. Have the Yugoslav generations of singers devised these passages of description from what they saw in Byzantium or from what was brought from Byzantium into the Balkans? Or have they taken over at least some details from a contact with Byzantine folk epic? The answers are, of course, affirmative in both cases, but the second question deserves special attention.

In the poem of Diogenes Akritas, after his youthful "initiatory" hunt and a bath, the hero is prepared by his father for return to his mother. In his analysis of the verses that tell of the ritual dressing of the heron

at this point, Gregoire discusses the parts of his vestments that are described in the Russian version and in the Greek manuscripts. First the young Diogenes puts on a light undergarment against the cold, and then a red (or balck in the Russian version) vest or doublet with golden sleeves that are encrusted with pearls (or precious stones). His collar is decorated with amber and sea shells, the buttons are large pearls, and the buttonholes are embroidered with pure gold. He then puts on the breeches of fine brocade ornamented with griffins; his boots are decorated with gold and precious stones, and his spurs shine with emeralds. This is a composite picture.

Compare with this the raiment of another youthful hero as he is prepared by his mother to appear before his father for his parental approval on setting out on his first important mission. The South Slavic hero is Smailagic Meho, and the song is the tale of his wedding.

First of all his mother put upon him linen of finest silk cloth. Every third thread in it was of gold. Then she gave him a silken vest, all embroidered with pure gold. Then she gave him a silken vest, all embroidered with pure gold. Down the front of the vest were buttons

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fashioned of gold pieces, a row which reached to his silk belt. There were twelve of them, and each contained half a liter of gold. The button at his throat shone even as the moon, and in it was a full liter of gold. The vest had a gold-embroidered collar and the two wings of which were fastened by this button. At the right side of the collar, above the button, was the likeness of Suleiman the Magnificent and on the other side was that of the imperial pontiff of Islam. Then she put on him his silken breeches, which had been made in Damascus, all embroidered in gold, with serpents pictured upon his thighs, their golden heads meeting beneath his belt and beneath the thong by which his sword was hung. ... [here follows a description of the pistols and sword] Upon his shoulders was a silken cloak, its two corners heavy with gold. Gilded branches were embroidered round about and upon his shoulders were snakes whose heads met beneath his throat. Down the front hung four cords, braided of 'fined gold, all four reaching to his belt of arms and mingling with his sword-thong, which held his fierce Persian blade.

Then with an ivory comb his mother combed out the sheaf-like queue and bound it with pearl. She put on him his cap of fur with its twelve plumes, which no one could wear, neither vizier nor imperial field marshall nor minister, nor any other pash save only the alaybey under the sultan's firman. ...

[Finally she] put on him his boots and leggings and

sent him to his father.

This same amazing song from a Yugoslav Muslim begins with a gathering of the lords of the Border. The singer describes them as they sit and boast.

About their necks were collars of gold fastened beneath the throat by a clasp, and all the clasps were of 'fined gold. ... each man's cap upon his brow was of sable, and on his heroic shoulders was gold embroidery like branches, and along his arms were braided snakes whose heads met beneath his throat; one would say and swear that they were living. ... They wore breeches of finest make; the cloth was dark, and the gold shone brightly. Along their legs golden branches glistened, and on their thighs were braided snakes whose heads met beneath the belt of arms.

In another passage from a different singer the snakes' heads are placed below on the knees and their effect is described:

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When he gave her the richly made breeches, there were serpents braided along the legs, their heads resting on the knees. When he walked, the serpents opened their jaws. One would say that they were living. When he walked, the serpents opened their jaws. One would say that they were living. When he walked the serpents clamped their jaws, and anyone who was not of strong mind would have lost his reason.

These snakes are, of course, the griffins of the Byzantine epic, elaborated and made dramatic. The light undergarments, the vests with embroidered sleeves, the collar, and the buttons are Byzantine also. Everything is adorned with pure gold (*od suhoga zlata* or *od Chistoga zlata* in Serbian, *chthadou Chdusou* in Greek; *sukhim zlatom* in Russian).

Weddings and Rescues

The two preceding sections have concerned themselves with ornamental details in the Diogenes Akritas and in Serbo-Croatian epic. They show, I believe, a close relationship between the two epic traditions. The number of such details could be multiplied, and the number of traditions could be broadened to include other Near Eastern and Middle Eastern traditional epics. Other parallels in the story elements and in their structure can be adduced as well.

Songs of bride stealing and of rescue from captivity are the warp and woof of many oral epic

traditions. In essence, of course, they are merely two sides of the same coin. The hero sets out to obtain something; in one case he wishes to capture a maiden; in the other he wishes to free someone from captivity. In both cases there are opponents. Nothing could be simpler; yet the possibility for variety is great.

The Diogenes Akritas poem contains several instances of bride stealing and of rescue. The exact number depends upon the text used and upon the scholar's interpretation of a few of the episodes. The two most obvious wedding songs in the compilation that makes up this poem are the story of the emir and the tale of the wedding of Diogenes. Somewhat hidden are the wedding themes in the encounter between Diogenes and Maximo the Amazon and in the Philopappos episode, if one considers the latter as separate from the hero's wedding song. The rescue theme is clear in the story of the daughter of Haplorrhades, told by Diogenes, but it is also to be found in the story of the emir.

The emir's story, indeed, is instructive, because it is a wedding song of bride stealing that becomes a
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rescue tale with a peculiar twist. The emir is a worthy man even if not a Christian and his capture of the maiden begins like a Muslim wedding song as told by a Christian. The point of view is only partly that of the emir. Very soon, however, the perspective becomes fully Christian and attention is focused on the girl's mother and on her brothers and their pursuit. We are in a rescue song. It is clear that the brothers must save their sister from falling to the lot of a Muslim. In the single combat scene the situation is ambivalent. Neither side must lose; both sides must win. This is accomplished by the conversion to Christianity of the emir and all his men. This ambivalence and the change of faith of the bridegroom make this a very strange tale from the standpoint of the Serbo-Croatian epic wedding songs. It is strengthened by the sequel of the conversion of the emir's mother. This is, or at least becomes, a nonheroic episode.

I know of no parallel to this story in South Slavic epic. There the characters are either good or bad - yet the stories are quite complex. South Slavic epics frequently combine wedding and rescue songs. The hero sets out to rescue his friend from captivity and is helped in this by the captor's daughter, whom he takes with him and later marries. This is true, for example, in the story of "Hasan of Ribnik Rescues Mustajbey". Sometimes there is a double wedding in the Muslim songs, in which the hero gains two wives, as in "The Wedding of Chejanovic Meho". Here one wife is gained without any opposition, whereas the other must be fought for. There are frequent conversions in these songs but they are on

the part of the bride, never on that of the bridegroom. Moreover, the pursuers are always worsted, killed, or put to flight.

Similarly, in a rescue song there is never any ambivalence. The pursuers overcome the captors, never come to terms with them. There are many instances of brothers rescuing a sister. This is especially true in the Muslim tradition, in which the famed brothers Mujo and Halil Hrnjichich often set out in pursuit of their much sought-after sister.

The story of the emir reflects a period of expansion of Christianity, an era of mass conversions. Many of the South Slavic Muslim epics are set in the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, and are thus pictured as coming from a time when, as the poems themselves say, "the empire of the Turks was at its height, and Bosnia was its lock, its lock and its golden key." The conflict was waging back and forth across the borders. The tone of the Byzantine epic is closer to that of Sajjid Battal, except that the

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stories are told from the Christian point of view.

These three analyses provide a modest demonstration of how fruitful the comparative study of Byzantine Greek and Serbo-Croatian oral epic traditions can be."(179)

In summary, the conditions of the Arab-Islamic world after the time of the great Arab conquests were optimum for the development of epic verse, but said development did not occur, which is conclusive proof of the absence of an epic tradition and the non-existence of the slightest tendency toward this sort of literature among the Arabs. For an example of what I am saying, note that the Byzantine epic, which as Mr. Lord has shown, is a true epic in every sense of the word, was born and cultivated on the frontier between the Empire and the Caliphate, but only on the Byzantine side; the Arabs on the other side of the frontier produced nothing comparable.

As Charles Diehl indicated, and Mr. Lord affirms, the epic of Diogenes Akritas cannot be considered a continuation of the

ancient Greek Homeric epic. As the name *Akritas* indicates, the Byzantine epic was born in southeastern Anatolia., which was Hellenized to some degree, but not Greek or Hellenic in its origins. Various pre-Hellenic peoples of central and eastern Anatolia no doubt had their own epic traditions, not derived from the Greek. The Galatians were Celts, so it may be taken for granted that they had an epic tradition of their own. In various places I have read that to this day the Turkish dialect spoken in central Anatolia contains Celtic words, which indicates that the

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Galatians were never completely Hellenized, and that they must also have resisted Turkification. Descendants of the Alans lived in the Caucasus, and they most certainly had a strong epic tradition, as we have noted, which was later absorbed into the Persian epic. The same is no doubt true of the Kurds. The Phrygians, like their Thracian and Illyrian kinsmen, in all probability also had their own epic tradition.

Someone once criticized me for saying that the epic is something exclusive to Indo-European peoples; I never said nor even though any such thing, it is simply that non-Indo-European epic traditions are not relevant to our topic.

I have said that the epic is not natural to the Semitic peoples, including the Arabs. Ergo, the Arabs brought no epic tradition with them to Spain. If there existed epic poetry in Muslim Spain, it must have proceeded from non-Arabic sources, conceivable Byzantine or Persian, more likely Hispanic.

To summarize, Francisco Marcos Marin in his work cited in

this chapter, has only proven that there exists a bare possibility that Arab elements may, but only may, be present in a few details - though not in fundamentals - in the Spanish or Castilian epic, nothing more.

The word *archuza* or *arjuza* is derived from *rajaz*, an Arabic metre (180). *Rajaz* is a Classic Arabic metre, and is therefore quantitative. It is short, having only 2 or 3 feet per hemstich, 4 or 6 feet per line. In contrast to the other Classic Arabic metres, in which only the first line of the poem has an internal

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rhyme, in the *rajaz* metre every hemstich is rhymed, or, in other words, each line has an internal rhyme. In consequence, in Classic Arabic verse the *rajaz* is used mainly in short works (181), since it is far from easy to write a long monorhymed poem with short lines in which each line has an internal rhyme.

The Hispano-Arabic *arjuza*, though *rajaz* in reference to the number of feet per hemstich and line, is not the same as the classical *rajaz*. The *arjuza* is a sort of narrative verse in which each line has an internal rhyme, but the rhyme of each line is independent, in other words the rhyme scheme is *aa\bb\cc*, ad infinitum. Therefore, in spite of its metre, the *arjuza* is fundamentally that which is called in Persian *mathnawi* (pronounced "masnavi"). *Mathnawi* means narrative verse in which there are no internal rhymes, but in which the rhyme changes every two lines, once again the rhyme scheme *aa\bb\cc*, ad infinitum. Said literary form is indigenous to Persia, and may be pre-Islamic (182). In conclusion, the *arjuza* is a *mathnawi* of historical theme written in Arabic

using the rajaz metre. It is interesting to note that the mathnawi form has had an enormous diffusion in the West, and has been used by the Archpriest of Hita and Chaucer among others. To what extent all this proceeds from Celtic, Persian or Hispano-Arabic sources is a question which does not concern us at the moment.

In Muslim Spain the arjuza was used as a sort of rhymed chronicle. Various fragments have survived. That which Marcos Marin is mainly concerned with is a considerable piece of 445

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lines written by ibn ar-Rabbihi and which, dealing mainly with the campaigns of Abd ar-Rahman II against Omar ibn Hafsun, is sufficient to cause us to lament that which has been lost (183). Admitting that the arjuza does not in itself constitute an epic, Marcos Marin notes elements which are not those of a mere rhymed chronicle, and which might inspire the creation of a real epic. The reader may read the arjuzas in the book of Marcos Marin and judge for himself. It should be noted that unrhymed Arabic chronicles contain many novelesque and sensational elements, "strong" adjectives and panegetics of important people, since in contrast to the majority of Medieval Christian chronicles, they were not written by monks. It should also be noted that the arjuzas are written in Classic Arabic. The great majority of the population of Muslim Spain, Mozarabs, Muslims and Jews, either continued to speak the Romance language spoken in that area before the Muslim conquest, called by the Arabs *Lisan al-Ajjam*, i.e., "the non-Arabic language", or spoke a colloquial Arabic full of

Romance words, more different from Classical Arabic than Italian is from Latin. The fact of being written in a language incomprehensible to the majority of the population of Muslim Spain must have been a barrier to the popular diffusion of the arjuza, as well as the limited circulation of books caused by the absence of the printing press. The rajaz metre is classic, and therefore could have passed neither to Romance nor to Andalusian Vulgar Arabic. The Classic Arabic metres are quantitative, while the metres of Romance and Andalusian Vulgar Arabic are, like the

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Celtic metres, syllabic-accentual. The contrast between the Classic Arabic metres and the metres of Romance and Andalusian Vulgar Arabic has been well explained by the great Spanish Arabist Emilio Garcia Gomez (184).

The arjuza or mathnawi rhyme scheme is very well adapted to narrative verse, of which fact there exists an abundance of proofs in many languages, and may have passed to a sort of popular narrative poetry - it exists in this form in the U.S. - in Romance or Andalusian Vulgar Arabic and from there to the Archpriest of Hita and Chaucer, but it did not pass to the Castilian epic.

It must also be noted that the Arabs in the East even with stimuli far more powerful than the Andalusian *arjuza*, developed no epic tradition. If there existed an epic tradition in Muslim Spain - and I do not deny said possibility - the arjuza is not, in my opinion, sufficient to explain it.

I have noted before the strong possibility that there existed a Mozarabic epic, or at least a sort of popular narrative verse

among the Mozarabs. I am therefore disposed to believe that it is possible that there existed a Muslim epic in al-Andalus in Romance or in Andalusian Vulgar Arabic mixed with Romance words, successor to the Mozarabic epic recited and/or written in a syllabic-accentual metre very different from the Classical Arabic metres, analogous to the poetry of the Cordoban poet ibn Quzman. Said hypothetical epic may have taken the rhyme and, perhaps, some of its content from the arjuza, or it may have done no such thing. Its fundamental origin would be Hispanic, not Arabic, for reasons

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given above. Being a product of Muslims, though they be *Mawalīs* or *Muladis*, i.e., Spaniards converted to Islam, it no doubt contained certain Arab-Islamic elements. Not one sample of this hypothetical epic has survived so far as I am aware, but in the circumstances this cannot be taken as proof that it never existed. On page 207 of his book cited above, Marcos Marin gives a list of supposed Arab characteristics present in the Castilian epic. In said list I have encountered only one characteristic which could be qualified as neither Celtic nor Germanic nor Iranian: the "I" or frequent use of the first person singular by the hero, something which I am certain one does not find in any Indo-European epic save the Castilian. Giving a name and almost a personality to the sword and horse of the hero may appear to be something strange and exotic, but in the first instance it is sufficient to remember the sword Durendal of Roland and the sword Excalibur of King Arthur. In the Persian epic Shah Namah written by Firdausi, Rustam, the principal protagonist, has a horse named

Rakush, which means "brilliant" in Persian), who is almost a personality in his own right (185).

Below is what the Shah Namah by Firdausi says concerning Rustam's horse Rakhsh or Rakhush, translation by Dick Davis:

Zal (father of Rustam) said to Rustam, "you have grown so tall,
Your cypress body towers above us all.
The work that lies ahead of us will keep
Our restless spirits from their food and sleep;
You are still a boy, not old enough to fight,
Your heart still looks for pleasure and delight,
Your mouth still smells of milk, how can I ask
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You to take on this seasoned warrior's task,
To fight with lion warriors, and beat
Them back until they scatter in defeat?
What do you say to this? What will you do?
May health and greatness always partner you!"
And Rustam answered Zal: "Pleasure and wine,
Feasting and rest, are no concern of mine -
Hard-pressed in war, or on the battlefield,
With God to aid me, I shall never yield.
I need to capture with my noose a horse
Of mountain size and weight, of mammoth force,
I need a crag-like mace if I am to stand
Against Turan, defending Persia's land.
I will crush their heads with this tremendous mace
And none shall dare oppose me face to face -
Its weight will break an elephant, one blow
From it will make a bloody river flow."

Zal was so moved by his son's words that his soul seemed about to leave his body.

Zal had all the herds of horses that were in Zavolestan, as well as some from Kabul, driven before Rustam, and the herdsmen explained to him the royal brands that they bore. Whenever Rustam selected a horse, as soon as he pressed down on it, the horse's back would buckle beneath his strength, so that its belly touched the ground. But then a herd of horses of varying colors from Kabul was driven past him, and a gray mare galloped by; she had a chest like a lion's, and was short-legged; her ears were pricked like glittering daggers, her fore and hindquarters were plump, and she was narrow-waisted. Behind her came a foal, of the same height and breadth of chest and rump as his mother, black-eyed and holding his tail high, with black testicles, and iron hooves.

*His body was a wonder to behold,
Like saffron petals, mottled red and gold.*

Rustam watched the mare go by, and when he saw the mammoth-bodied foal he looped his lariat, and said, "Keep that foal back from the herd." The old herdsman who had brought the horses said, "My lord, you cannot take other people's horses." Rustam asked who owned the horse, since its rump bore no trace of any brand. The herdsman said, "Do not look for a brand, but there are many tales told about this horse. No one knows who owns him; we call him 'Rustam's Rakhush', and that is all I know. He has been ready to be saddled for three years now, and a number of nobles have chosen him; but when ever his mother sees a horseman's lariat she attacks

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like a lioness." Rustam flung his royal lariat, and quickly caught the horse's head in its noose; the mother came forward like a raging lioness, as if she wanted to bite his head off. But Rustam roared like a lion, and the sound of his voice stopped the mare in her tracks. She stumbled, then scrambled up again and turned, and galloped off to join the rest of the herd. Rustam tightened the noose and pulled the foal toward himself; he pushed down with all his hero's strength on the foal's back, but the back did not give at all, and it was as if the foal was unaware of Rustam's hand. Rustam said to himself, "This will be my mount; now I can set to work. He will be able to bear the weight of my armor, helmet, and mace, and my mammoth body." He asked the herdsman, "Who knows the price of this dragon?" The herdsman replied, "If you are Rustam, then mount him and defend the land of Iran. The price of this horse is Iran itself, and mounted on his back you will be the world's savior." Rustam's coral lips smiled, and he said, "It is God who does such good works."

He set a saddle on Rakhush, and his head whirled with thoughts of war and vengeance. He opened Rakhush's mouth and saw that he was a swift, strong, courageous horse. Each night Rustam burned wild rue before him to ward off evil; from every side Rakhush seemed to be a magical creature, swift in battle, with large haunches, alert and foaming at the mouth.

*Rakhsh and his noble rider seemed to bring
To Zal's reviving heart the joy of spring.*

Zal opened the doors to his treasury and distributed gold coins, careless of today and tomorrow.

In the 8th Century the stable of Rakhsh in Seistan was still

shown to visitors (186). The fact that the owner of Rakhush is Rustam is important, because it indicates that this is something which may have passed to the Castilian epic by way of the Alans and the Goths. This will be fully discussed below. Urismag, a hero of the Nart Cycle, has a horse named Durdura (187). The Nart Cycle is the epic of the Ossetians, an Iranian people of the North Caucasus who appear to be descendants of the Sakas, possibly of

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the Alans in particular (188).

The Celtic, Germanic and Iranian peoples have ancient and extensive epic traditions, in contrast to the Arabs, so I am therefore more inclined to attribute a Celtic, Germanic or Iranian origin rather than an Arabic origin to a given characteristic of the Castilian epic in doubtful cases. The Hispano-Muslim epic, if it existed, could not have been a purely Arab product, and no doubt contained more Celtic, Germanic and Iranian elements than Arabic ones due to its Hispanic origin.

In summary, I believe it to be possible that there existed a Hispano-Muslim epic, but if it existed it must have been more Hispanic, and, therefore, Celtic, Gothic and Iranian, than Arabic. Its influence on the Castilian epic, if any, must have been, like the French and Breton influences, in details and not in fundamentals.

The long debate as to the origin of the Castilian epic in large part at least seems to be ended. There seems to be general agreement that Ramon Menendez Pidal was right in attributing a Visigothic origin to the Castilian epic.

First, lets us speak of the Goths themselves, who they were, from whence they came.

Says T.D. Kendrick:

"In early historical times there were three main divisions of the German peoples. In the first place, there were the North Germans of Scandinavia, whose history, since it is they from whom the Vikings are sprung, will be the main interest of this chapter; and there were also East Germans - an offshoot from the

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North Germans - and the West Germans. ...

...The East Germans were a branch of the German peoples who migrated, probably at some period about or (most likely) after 500 BC to the lands between and around the (river) Oder and the (river) Weichsel, and who pressed southwards during the following two centuries along these rivers until they approached the foothills of the Carpathians. This folk, whose progress was not stayed by the frontiers of the Roman Empire, could expand their territory almost at their will, and they were thus able to preserve, in contrast to the West Germans, their accustomed pastoral life of their race.

Most of the East Germans were of Scandinavian origin, and their migration to the Continent during the pre-Roman Iron Age is the counterpart of that noticeable deterioration of the Scandinavian culture during this period to which archaeology can bear witness. Among these emigrants were many folk from the island of Gotland, the Lombards from Scania, the Burgundians from Bornholm, and the Rugians from Rogaland in south-west Norway; but the best known of them were the Goths whose original home was situated in the northern provinces (Oster and Vastergotland) of Gotland in Sweden (not the island of Gotland). The East Germans also included in their number the Vandals, a name perhaps bestowed in north-east Germany on a large group of emigrants from Denmark, the Gepids, and Heruls, these last-named folk being distinguished from the other migrants by the fact that while a section of them followed the Goths to south Russia (and Ukraine) a large body of them remained in their Danish home (probably south Jutland and Fyen) so that they still counted in the ensuing centuries as a people of the north until they were conquered by the invading Danes.

The tendency of the East Germans in the third and fourth centuries was to advance slowly into Europe, moving chiefly in a south-easterly direction towards the Black Sea. Here in southern Russia (and Ukraine) lay the

new territory of the Goths, and it was here that these people divided into two great bodies, the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths, a division that was no doubt governed by the order of the arrival of the successive migrating bands (as we shall see, a study of Indo-European philology and linguistics casts doubt on this being the only cause of the Ostrogoth - Visigoth division; Kendrick seems to forget that the Germanic peoples are only a part of the great family of Indo-European peoples). And it was from this region that was launched the great Gothic attack on the Roman Empire that began about AD 247.

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The migration of certain sections of the Scandinavian peoples across the Baltic Sea in the pre-Roman Iron Age and at the beginning of this era is not a happening that must be regarded only as a curious and isolated episode in the early history of the north. For it was, in fact, a prelude to, if not actually a part of, the larger and much more significant movement of the German peoples that took place in what is commonly called the Migration Period." (189)

Note that Kendrick supports the theory as to the Scandinavian origin of the Goths, something supported by linguistic and onomastic evidence.

Says Jordanes a 6th century Italo-Ostrogothic historian concerning the Goths:

"Now from this island of Scandza (the Scandinavian Peninsula was then thought to be an island), as from a hive of races or a womb of nations, the Goths are said to have come forth long ago under their king, Berig by name".(190)

For a very long time, Jordanes was taken at his word. However, in recent years archaeologists have cast doubt on the veracity of Jordanes, at least concerning the Scandinavian origin of the Goths.(191) Now, I cannot claim to be a professional archaeologist. Nevertheless, it seems to me that theories based exclusively on archaeological finds which seem to cast doubt on the words of Jordanes, and also on those of Theoderic the Great

(or Theoderic the Amal, or Thiudereiks the Amalung), who, like Jordanes, was a Goth, contain a great many arbitrary conclusions based on scanty and even ambiguous data, a tendency to generalize hastily from archaeological data which is not only scanty but is contradicted by data from other sources, id est, literary,

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onomastic and linguistic. It is notorious that, in most cases, it is impossible to determine the ethnic composition of a people from archaeology alone, something which is perfectly logical, elementary common sense. Among said archaeologists, I also note a superior attitude, to the effect that; "We are modern, we know everything, while Jordanes and Theoderic the Great were ancient ignoramuses who lived before the scientific method (supposedly omniscient and infallible) and who therefore knew nothing". Of course, the archaeologists are affirming the counterintuitive thesis that the ethnic composition of a people can be proven by archaeology alone.

Now, Jordanes and Theoderic the Amal were far closer chronologically to the events about which we are talking, and were themselves Goths. Ergo, Jordanes and Theoderic the Amal (or Thiudereiks the Amalung) no doubt had access to Gothic traditions and perhaps documents which have long since been lost. Therefore, unless solid and incontrovertible evidence to the contrary is presented, I am inclined to take them at their word. Also, there is other evidence, though not derived from archaeology, which supports the opinion of Jordanes and Theoderic the Amal.

Firstly, Jordanes was very well informed concerning the

Scandinavian Penninsula and its peoples, of which he shows very considerable knowledge:

"This island (Scandinavia was then thought to be an island) lies in front of the river Vistula, which rise in the Sarmatian mountains and flows through its triple mouth into the northern Ocean in sight of Scandza (Scandinavia), separating Germany and Scythia.

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The island has in its eastern part a vast lake in the bosom of the earth, whence the Vagus river springs from the bowels of the earth and flows surging into the Ocean. And on the west it is bounded by the same vast unnavigable Ocean, from which by means of a sort of projecting arm of land a bay is cut off and forms the German (Baltic) Sea. Here also there are said to be many small islands scattered round about. If wolves cross over to these islands when the sea is frozen by reason of great cold, they are said to lose their sight (from snow blindness?). Thus the land is not only inhospitable to men but cruel even to wild beasts.

Now in the island of Scandza, whereof I speak, there dwell many and diverse nations, though Ptolemaeus mentions the names of but seven of them. There the honey-making swarms of bees are nowhere to be found on account of the exceeding(ly) great cold. In the northern part of the island the race of the *Adogit* live, who are said to have continual light in midsummer for forty days and nights, and who likewise have no clear light in the winter for the same number of days and nights. By reason of this alteration of sorrow and joy they are like no other race in their sufferings and blessings. And why? Because during the longer days they see the sun returning to the east along the rim of the horizon, but on the shorter days it is not thus seen, the sun shows itself differently because it is passing through the southern signs, and whereas to us the sun is seen to rise from below, it is said to go around them along the edge of the earth. There are also other peoples. There are the *Screrrefennae*, who do not seek grain for food but live on the flesh of wild beasts and birds' eggs; for there are such multitudes of young game in the swamps as to provide for the natural increase of their kind and to afford satisfaction to the needs of the people. But still another race dwells there, the *Suehans*, who, like the Thuringians, have splendid horses. Here also are those who send through innumerable other tribes the sapphire-colored skins to trade for Roman use. They are a people famed for the dark beauty of their furs and, though living in poverty, are most richly clothed. Then comes a throng of various nations, *Theustes*, *VAGOTH*, *Bergio*, *Hallin*, *Liouthida*. All their habitations are in

one level and fertile region. Wherefore they are disturbed there by attacks of other tribes. Behind these are the *Ahelmil*, *Finnaithae*, *Fervir* and *GAUTIGOTH*, a race of men bold and quick to fight. Then come the *Mixi*, *Evagre* and *Otingis*. All these live like wild animals in rocks hewn out like castles. And there are beyond these the *OSTROGOTHS*, *Raumarici*, *Aeragnaricii*, and the most
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gentle *Finns*, milder than all the (other) inhabitants of Scandza. Like them are the *Vinovilith* also. The *Suetidi* are of this stock and excel the rest in stature. However, the *Dani*, who trace their origin to the same stock, drove from their homes the *Heruli*, who lay claim to preeminence among all the nations of Scandza for their tallness. Furthermore there are in the same neighborhood the *Grannii*, *Augandzi*, *Eunixi*, *Taetel*, *Rugi*, *Arochi* and *Ranii*, over whom Roduulf was king not many years ago. But he des[is]ed his own kingdom and fled to the embrace of Theoderic the Amal (Thiudereiks the Amalung), king of the Goths, finding there what he desired. All these nations surpassed the Germans in size and spirit, and fought with the cruelty of wild beasts." (192)

Also note that, in his description of the Scandinavian Peninsula and its peoples, Jordanes names three peoples who most certainly appear to be Goths, i.e., *Vagoth*, *Gautigoth* (about whom we shall have more to say later) and *Ostrogoths*.

Ironically, once the Goths have left Scandinavia, Jordanes and the modern day archaeologists are in full agreement. Says Jordanes:

"As soon as they (the Goths) disembarked from their ships and set foot on the land, they straightaway gave their name to the place. And even today it is said to be called *Gothiscandza*." (193)

Now, this is precisely the area of the so-called "Wielbark Culture", which the archaeologists identify with the Goths. Note that were it not for Jordanes, the archaeologists would have no motive whatever to identify the "Wielbark Culture" with the Goths.

Says Irmengard Rauch:

"The Gothic historian Jordanes in his De Origine Actibusque Getarum of 551 AD names the continental (remember, for Jordanes the Scandinavian Peninsula was (604)

an island) homeland of the Goths *Gothiscandza*, reconstructed as **Gutisk + andja*, id est, 'Gothic end or coast', often identified with the Polish *Gdansk* (and *Gdynia*). Says D.H. Green (Language and History in the Early Germanic World, Cambridge, England, 1998, p. 166):

'For Jordanes the Vistula represents the starting-point for the Goths continental migration as much as for modern archaeology, which identifies the Wielbark Culture, situated between the Oder and the Vistula, with the Gothic settlement.'"(194)

As Herwig Wolfram notes, the very name *GOTH* seems to indicate Scandinavia, specifically southern and central Sweden, as the original homeland of the Goths:

"The Gothic name appears for the first time between AD 16 and 18. We do not, however, find the strong form *Guti* but only the derivative form *Gutones*. Both Latin and Greek authors spoke of the *Gutones* until the middle of the second century AD. The Greek geographer Ptolemy, who mentions this people for the last time around 150 (AD), was also aware of a people called *Guti* on the island of Scandia. Between him and the sixties of the third century no contemporary source mentions a tribal name that could be 'Gothic'. In 262 (AD) Shapur I 'the Great' had the famous trilingual inscription carved, and in it there appear Germanic and Gothic peoples among the Roman troops he defeated in 245. From the year 269 comes the oldest Latin-Roman evidence for the Gothic name: at that time Claudius II assumed the triumphal name Gothicus. The same period also witnessed the appearance of the first Greek text mentioning the Goths. In other words, around 270 a people bearing the name Goths was noticed by the Persians, the Romans and the Greeks. The early epigraphic sources in particular used the strong form *Gut(th)-*, which had replaced the weak form *Gutones* for good. Both forms, however, have in common the stem *Gut-* which is also attested by the vernacular tradition in the words *Gutthuida* (Land of the Gothic people) and **Gutans* (Goth). From around 300 we find in the ancient languages almost exclusively the spelling *Go(th)-*.

The chronology of the names causes difficulties because the strong name forms of the Scandinavian *Guti*

as well as those of the Pontic *Guti-Goths* are attested later than their weak derivation, the name *Gutones*. This last name contains the suffix *-one*, which can

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express contradictory meanings. Accordingly, it is linguistically possible to see in the *Gutones* either the 'young' Goths or the 'Great' Goths. Historically there is evidence both for the second, boastful name (in that the *Gutones* had a strong kingship) and against it (in that the Goths were at their first appearance a dependent people and when last mentioned still a small people).

Classical geography of the first century after Christ knew a continental river that flowed into the Baltic Sea and was called *Guthalus*. If a Gothic river is meant, the name presupposes the strong *Gut-* form, attesting it on the continent; but the name is also found as the Swedish *Gotaalv*, as the river of the Scandinavian *Guti-Goths* is called. Procopius, who is the first to speak of the *Gauts* in Thule (Far North, obviously Scandinavia), knows about the veneration of Ares, now writes about it as if he is speaking of the Scythians, Thracians, Getae, or even the Goths themselves. A similarity between the Goths and the *Gauts* is probably also expressed by the tribal name *Gautigoths*, which appears in Cassiodorus's (and Jordanes's) Scandinavian list of peoples.

What the names Goth and Gaut actually mean, how they are related, and how they differ are popular topics of etymological discussion. The aim of the scholarly efforts is 'to make understandable the uses of **gautaz*, which means 'the oen who pours out' - derive from the Scandinavian river that drains the huge lake Vener (or 'Venern', a large lake in southwestern Sweden) into the *Kattegat* (arm of the North Sea, between Sweden and the peninsula of Jutland), or are the Goths and Gauts the 'men' or even the 'stallions' in the sense of 'seed spreaders'? Or are the Gauts and Goths perhaps the sons of *Gaut*, the god of war, who is the leader of war bands both in Scandinavia and in Germania? Since the Gothic tradition provides evidence for all of these interpretations, to select one and exclude the other is arbitrary. But of greater historical importance than etymology is the linguistic insight that 'the tribal name *Goths* means the same as *Gauts*.' (195)

In other words, there is much evidence that the name *Goth* indicates a Scandinavian origin, and nothing that contradicts it.

William H. Bennett obviously agrees with Wolfram:

"The Gothic historian Jordanes (551 AD) says that his people, led by a King (named) Berig, sailed 'ex Scandza insula' (from the island of Scandinavia) to *Gothiscandza*, probably the area about the lower Vistula. Overpopulation was probably a motive for this emigration, but an added factor may have been flooding of the Gothic homeland. Geological considerations suggest that the Baltic (Sea) was still a lake before the first millennium BC, and that great floods attacked the Baltic coastline as erosion gradually joined the lake to the North Sea where now are the straits of Skagerrak and the Kattegat."(196)

There exists a great abundance of place names which indicate the former presence of the Goths in southern Sweden. There is, of course, the famous island of *Gotland* in the Baltic Sea precisely between southern Sweden and the aforementioned *Gothiscandza*. In southern Sweden itself place names which recall the presence of the Goths abound. As William H. Bennett noted:

"*Ostergotland* (eastern Gothland) and *Vastergotland* (western Gothland) in southern Sweden and the island of *Gotland* still retain the name of the Goths."(197)

There is also the famous city of Gothenburg (Swedish: *Goteborg*), through which passes the river *Gota*. Herwig Wolfram mentions the river *Gotallv*, also in southern Sweden.(198) Finally, the whole southern division of Sweden is called *Gotaland*, and comprises the twelve counties of *Alvaborg*, *Blekinge*, *Goteborg* and *Bohus*, *Gotland*, *Halland*, *Jonkoping*, *Kalmar*, *Kristianstad*, *Kronoberg*, *Malmohus*, *Ostergotland*, and *Skaraborg*.

As we shall see, the Goths remained in contact with their Scandinavian homeland for a very long time, even after they were long settled on the shores of the Black Sea. Also, the Goths pioneered a route "from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea" which

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would later be followed by the Vikings who founded the first Russian or East Slav state with first Novgorod and then Kiev as its capital.

The first Russian or East Slav state was founded by three Viking brothers, i.e., Rurik (Old Norse: *Hroerekr*), Sineus (Old Norse: *Signiutr*) and Truvor (Old Norse: *Thorvadr*), with Novgorod as its capital. Sineus (Old Norse: *Signiutr*) and Truvor (Old Norse: *Thorvadr*) dies soon afterwards. Two of Rurik's (*Hroerkr*) men, Askold (Old Norse: *Hoskuld*) and Dir (Old Norse: *Dyr*) took control of Kiev, which became the capital. Rurik (*Hroerekr*) died in 879 and was succeeded by a relative named Oleg (Old Norse: *Helgi*), who ruled as regent for Rurik's (Old Norse: *Hroerekr*) son Igor (Old Norse: *Ingvar*). Askold (Old Norse: *Huskuld*) And Dir (Old Norse: *Dyr*) were killed in battle in 882 and Oleg (Old Norse: *Helgi*) became effective ruler of the first Russian or East Slav state with its capital at Kiev. Oleg (*Helgi*) died in 913 and was succeeded by Igor (Old Norse: *Ingvar*), son of Rurik (Old Norse: *Hroerekr*). Until after the death of Ivan IV "the Terrible" at the end of the 16th century, the tsars of Russia all claimed descent from Rurik (*Hroerkr*) the Viking, who had followed the route "from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea" pioneered by the Goths.

There are also linguistic proofs of the Scandinavian origin of the Goths.

The Gothic language holds a unique place within both the

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Germanic languages and the broader Indo-European family. As

William H. Bennett says:

"The archaism of Gothic (the language) is ascribable not only to the age of its records but also to the fact that it became separated from the other Germanic dialects at a very early period; Gothic shows no traces of some developments that appear in all other known Germanic languages."(199)

Obviously, there are some difficulties involved in the exact classification of Gothic within the Germanic branch of the Indo-European languages. Once again, we turn to William H. Bennett:

"East Scandinavian survives in Swedish, Danish and Gothlandic, and West Scandinavian in Norwegian, Faroese and Icelandic.

Scandinavian is classified as North Germanic, and English, Frisian, Dutch-Flemish, Low German and High German as South (or West) Germanic. Gothic, which shows some marked similarities to Scandinavian, is often included in North Germanic, though some scholars believe that the distinctive characteristics of the (Gothic) language warrant its being classified separately as East Germanic."(200)

The fact that the Gothic language is far closer to the Scandinavian or North Germanic languages than to the South (or West) Germanic tongues, so much so that some scholars classify Gothic among the North Germanic or Scandinavian languages is virtually inexplicable unless one assumes that Scandinavia is the original homeland of the Goths.

A few things must be made clear. The Gothic language is somewhat different from Old Norse, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or Icelandic. At no period in their long history could the Goths even remotely be called "Vikings". By the time that the Goths were living on the shores of the Black Sea, they had been subjected to

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intense Celtic and Iranian influences, so that there was virtually

nothing Germanic about them save their language, and even this contained a great many Celtic, Iranian, Slavic, Greek and Latin words. To refer to the Goths as "Vikings" or "Swedes" is like referring to the Byzantines as "Turks" or the pre-Roman, Celtic Britons as "English" or "Anglo-Saxons".

In spite of what we have said above, it is nevertheless true that the Goths when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea still maintained contacts with their ancestral homeland in the Scandinavian Peninsula. As we have also noted in another place, the Goths invented the *Runic* alphabet, which fact caused Jordanes, himself a Goth, to exclaim:

"The Goths have always known the use of letters."

As we shall see, the fact that Ulfilas (Gothic: *Wulflein*) made use of runic letters to represent sounds not found in Latin or Greek when he devised an alphabet for the Gothic language, is yet another proof that runes were a Gothic invention, as Ulfilas' (or *Wulflein's*) alphabet is of such an early date.

Obviously, Jordanes had no doubt as to the Gothic origin of the Runic or *Furtharc* alphabet.

Says Claiborne W. Thompson:

The word *rune* is employed by modern scholarship to denote a letter of the *Runic* (Old Norse: *Furtharc*) *alphabet*, a system of writing native to Scandinavia, (Anglo-Saxon) England, and continental Germanic-language-speaking areas. The use of runes, attested as early as the second century, predated the introduction of the Latin alphabet among these peoples; in some places (notably Scandinavia) runic writing continued to be used alongside Latin through the late Middle

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Ages. More than 5,000 runic inscriptions are known today, and while many of these are obscure or stingy in their informational content, others are primary sources

of inestimable value to the study of ancient Germanic and Old Scandinavian culture.

The early history of the word *rune* reveals a semantic field associated with fourth-century Gothic, where *runa* was the translation of the Greek word *mysterion*, and in Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German (*Althochdeutsch*) it can refer to secret, private conversations, suggesting that runes were, at least in the early period, an esoteric cultural artifact in the possession of a small elite within the tribe. In the inscription themselves the word occurs first in the singular on the Norwegian stone from Einang (ca. 400):

"(Go)dagastiz drew the rune:",

Where it is difficult to tell whether the word is used in the sense of "runic letter" or "secret message".
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Note that the element *God* or *Goda* in the name *Godagastiz* very likely means "Goth", and that said inscription was found in Scandinavia.

Runes in the Gothic language have indeed been found.(202)

Runes have always been considered to have a magical quality. In The Elder Edda, of which we shall have more to say below, the god Odin says:

It is time to declaim from the seat of the sage,
By the well of Destiny:
I saw and stayed silent, I saw and I pondered:
I listened to the speech of men;
I heard runes discussed, nor did they omit interpretation,
A the High One's (Odin's) hall ...

Runes must you find, and the meaningful symbols,
Very great symbols,
Which the mighty sage stained,
And the great poets made,
And a runemaster cut from among the powers:

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Odin among the AEsir, and for the elves Dead-one,
Dawdler for the dwarfs Asvid for the giants;
I have cut some myself.

Do you know how to cut (runes)? Do you know how to read (runes)?
Do you know how to stain(runes)? ...(203)

*She called herself Sigrdrifa, and she was a Valkyrie;
she said that two kings had been fighting: one of them
was called Helm-Gunnar, who was old and the greatest of
warriors, and it was to him that Odin had pledged the
victory, but:*

'the other was called Agnar, Auda's brother,
Whom no one wanted to help.'

*Sigrdrifa felled Helm-Gunnar in the battle, but Odin
struck her with a sleep-thorn in revenge for this saying
that she should never again gain victory in battle, and
saying that she must be married. 'But I told him that I
had taken a vow against marrying any man who knew fear.'
He [Sigurd] spoke up and asked her to teach him wisdom,
since she had news from every world. Sigrdrifa said:*

'Beer I bring you, apple-tree of conflict,
Blended with might and powerful glory;
It is full of spells and healing charms,
Fine incantations and runes of delight.

Victory-runes you must know if you want to have victory,
And cut them on the hilt of your sword;
Some on the sword-rings, some on the sword-plates,
And twice invoke Tyr's name.

Ale-runes you must know if you want not to be beguiled
By another's wife that you trust;
One must cut them on a horn and the back of the hand,
Marking "Need" (N-rune) on the nail.

The cup must be signed to guard against ill,
And leek cast into the liquid;
But I know that for you there never shall be
Mead blended with malice.

Protection-runes you must know if you want to protect
And release children from women's wombs;
One must cut them on the palm and cast them on the limbs,
And then ask *disir* for help.

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Sea-runes you must make, if you want to keep safe
Sail-steeds (ships) out on the waves;
One must cut them on the prow and the rudder's blade
And pass fire over the oars;
No breaker is so steep, nor waves so blue,
That you will not come home from the ocean.

Limb-runes you must know if you want to be a leech
And know how to investigate wounds;
One must cut them on the bark and the wood of that tree
Whose branches bend to the East.

Speech-unes you must know if you want no one
To pay you back harm with hate;
One winds them around, one weaves thm around,
One sets them all together,
At the meeting where men must
Go to full-blown courts.

Thought-runes you must know if you want to be
More strong-minded than any man;
He read them, and he cut them,
And he thought them up: Hropt (Odin),
From the liquid, which had leaked
From Heiddraupnir's skull
And Hoddrofnir's horn. (204)

Says Brynhilde the Valkyrie:

Brynhilde said that two kings had fought. One, called Hlamgunnar, was old and was a great warrior, and Odin had promised him the victory, The other was Agnar or Audabrodur. "I struck down Hjalmgunnar in battle, and Odin stabbed me with a sleeping thorn in revenge. He said I should never afterward have the victory. He also said that I must marry. And I made a countervow that I would marry no one who lnew fear." Sigurd said: "Teach me the ways of mighty things."

She answered: "You know them better than I. But gladly I will teach you, if there is anything I know that will please you about runes or other matters that concern all things. Let us drink together and may the gods grant us a fair day, that you may gain profit and renown from my wisdom, and that you will later remember what we speak of." Brynhilde filled a goblet, gave it to Sigurd, and spoke:

Beer I give you,
Battlefield's ruler,
With strength blended
And with much glory.

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It is full of charmed verse
And runes of healing,
Of seemly spells
And of pleasing speech.

Victory runes shall you know
If you want to secure wisdom,

And cut them on the sword hilt,
On the centre ridge of the blade,
And the parts of the brand,
And name Tyr (the rune with the phonetic value "T" was named after
the god Tyr) twice.

Wave runes shall you make
If you desire to ward
Your sail-stteds (ships) on the sound.
On the stem shall be cut
And on the steering blade
And burn them on the oar.
No broad breaker will fall
Nor waves of blue,
And you will come safe from the sea.

Speech runes shall you know
If you want no repayment
In hate words for harm done.
Wind them,
Weave them,
Tie them all together,
At that *thing*
When all shall attend
The complete court.

Ale runes shall you know
If you desire no other's wife
To deceive you in troth, if you trust.
They shall be cut on the horn
And on the hand's back
And mark the need rune on your nail.

For the cup shall you make a sign
And be wary of misfortune
And throw leek into the liquor.
Then, I know that,
You will never get
A potion blended with poison.

Aid runes shall you learn
If you would grant assistance
To bring the child from the mother.
Cut them in her palm

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And hold her hand in yours.
And bid the Disr not to fail.

Branch runes shall you know
If you wish to be a healer
And to know how to see to wounds.
On bark shall they be cut
And on needles of the tree

Whose limbs lean to the East.

Mind runes shall you learn
If you would be
Wiser than all men.
They were solved,
They were carved out,
They were heeded by Hropt (Odin).

They were cut on the shield
That stands before the shining god,
On Arvak's ear
And on Alsvið's head
And on the wheel that stands
Under Hrúgnir's chariot,
On Sleipnir's reins,
And on the sleigh's fetters.

On bear's paw
And on Bragi's tongue,
On wolf's claws
And on eagle's beak,
On bloody wings
And on bridge's ends,
On the soothing palm
And on the healing step.

On glass and on gold
And on good silver,
In ale and in wine
And on the witch's seat,
In human flesh
And on the point of Gaupnir
And the hag's breast,
On the Norn's nail
And on the neb of the owl.

All that were carved on these
Were scraped off
And mixed with the holy mead (the mead of poetry)
And sent on widespread ways.
They are with elves,
Some with the AEsir

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Some with the venerable Vanir,
Some belong to mortal men.

These are cure runes
And aid runes
And all ale runes
And peerless power runes
For all to use unspoiled
And unprofaned,

To bring about good fortune.
Enjoy them if you have learned them,
Until the gods perish.

Now shall you choose,
As you are offered a choice,
O maple shaft of sharp weapons.
Speech or silence,
You must muse for yourself.
All words are already decided.

Sigurd answered:

I will not flee, though
Death-fated you know I am,
I was not conceived as a coward.
I will have all
Of your loving advice
As long as I live. (205)

Note that the name "Brynhilde" is unquestionable a Gothic rather than a Viking name; it means nothing in Old Norse, and it was used among the Ostrogoths in Italy and the Visigoths in Spain, and that in the Viking sagas, Brynhilde is always associated with the Goths. Also note that Brynhilde is a Valkyrie, and as we have said, the Viking Valkyries are derived from the Iranian *Fravashies*, no doubt by way of the Goths. Curiously, the name "Brynhilde" was not deformed in the passage from Gothic to Old Norse, as said name appears in Latin transcription as "*Brunhilda*", as we will see below, while the passage from the Gothic *Airmnareiks* to the Old Norse *Jormunrekkr* is a gross

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deformation indeed. The Latin-alphabet version "Brunhilda" may well be closer to the original Gothic than is the Old Norse "Brynhilde"; in the Latin alphabet, writing "*Brinhilde*" or even "*Brynhilde*" does not pose a problem. May the gross deformation from the Gothic *Airmnareiks* to the Old Norse *Jormunrekkr* be due,

in part at least, to the fact that the element *-reiks* in *Airmnareiks* is Celtic rather than Germanic?

Note that The man who invented the Gothic (as distinct from the Runic) alphabet and translated the Bible into the Gothic language was a Goth named *Ulfilas*, whose name in Gothic means "Little Wolf", which in German would be *Wolfein*. Says Herwig Wolfram concerning Ulfilas and the Gothic alphabet:

"The task of inventing and spreading the Gothic alphabet, which added to its base of Greek characters elements from (the) Latin (alphabet) and **Runic writing**, must have taken some time before he could start the translation (of the Bible). (206)

Since Ulfilas was born in 311 and died in 383, the fact that he used runic letters in the formation of his Gothic alphabet proves beyond a doubt that that runes were used by the Goths in the 4th century, and almost certainly earlier.

Below is a passage from The Saga of the Volsungs (of which we shall have more to say below) which refers to the magical properties of runes. As we shall see below, Gudrun and King Gunnar have close connections with the Goths. The following passage therefore would appear to affirm a Gothic origin for the runes.

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'Now it is said that on a certain night King Atli (Attila the Hun) awoke from his sleep. He spoke with Gudrun. 'I dreamt', he said, 'that you thrust at me with a sword.' Gudrun interpreted the dream, saying that to dream of iron indicated fire and 'your self-deception in thinking yourself the foremost of all.'

Atli then said: 'I dreamt further. It seemed to me that two reeds were growing here and I wanted never to harm them. Then they were torn up by the roots and reddened with blood, brought to the table, and offered to me to eat. I then dreamt that two hawks flew from my

hand, that they had no prey to catch, and thus went down to Hel. It seemed to me that their hearts were mixed with honey and that I ate of them. Afterward it seemed to me that handsome whelps lay before me and cried out loudly, and I ate their corpses unwillingly.' Gudrun said: 'Your dreams do not bode well, yet they will be fulfilled. Your sons are fated to die and many oppressive events are in store for us.' 'Furthermore I dreamt,' he said, that I lay bedridden and that my death had been contrived.'

Now time passed and their life together was cold. King Atli pondered the whereabouts of the hoard of gold that Sigurd had owned, but of which only King Gunnar and his brother now knew. Atli was a great and powerful king; he was wise and had a large following. He took counsel with his men as to which course of action should be followed. He knew that Gunnar and his kin had more wealth than anyone else. He now resolved to send men to meet the brothers, invite them to a banquet, and honor them in many ways. A man called Vingi led King Atli's messengers.

The queen (Gudrun), aware of the king's private meeting with his counselors, suspected there would be treachery toward her brothers. Gudrun cut runes, and took a gold ring and tied a wolf's hair onto it. She gave it to the king's messengers who then departed as the king had ordered. Before they stepped ashore, Vingi saw the runes and changed them in such a way that Gudrun appeared to be urging the brothers to come and meet with Atli. Then they arrived at King Gunnar's hall; they were received well and large fires were built for them. They drank the finest drink with good cheer. Then Vingi said: 'King Atli sent me here to ask you to visit him in great honor and to receive great honor from him, as well as helmets and shields, and a large fief. He declares it best that you succeed him.'

Gunnar turned aside and asked Hogni: 'What shall we make of this offer? He is asking us to accept vast power, yet I know of no kings with as much gold as we have, because we have all the gold that lay on

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Gnitaheath. We have large chambers filled with gold and with the best of edged weapons and all kinds of armor. I know my horse to be the finest and my sword the sharpest, the gold the most precious.' Hogni answered: 'I wonder at this offer, for it is not like him to behave in this way. It seems inadvisable to go to visit him. And when I looked at the treasures King Atli had sent us, I wondered at the wolf's hair I saw tied around a gold ring. It may be that Gudrun thinks he has thoughts of a wolf toward us, and that she does not want us to go.' Vingi then showed him the runes that he said Gudrun had sent them.

Now most people went to sleep, but some stayed up drinking with a few of the men. Hogni's wife, Kostbera, the fairest of women, went and looked at the runes. Gunnar's wife, named Glaumvor, was a woman of noble character. She and Kostbera served the drink, and the kings became very drunk. Vingi, observing their condition, said: 'It cannot be concealed that King Atli is too old and too infirm to defend his kingdom, and his sons are too young and unprepared. Atli wants to give you authority over his kingdom while they are so young. He would be most contented if you made use of it.' It happened that Gunnar by this time was very drunk and was being offered much power. He could also not escape his destiny. He vowed to make the journey and told his brother Hogni. Hogni replied: 'Your word must stand and I will follow you, but I am not eager to make this trip.'

When the men had drunk as much as they cared to, they went to bed. Kostbera began to look at the runes and to read the letters, She saw that something else had been cut over what lay underneath and that the runes had been falsified. Still she discerned through her wisdom what the runes said. After that she went to bed beside her husband. When they awoke she said to Hogni: 'You intend to go away from home but that is inadvisable. Go instead another time. You cannot be very skilled at reading runes if you think your sister has asked you to come at this time. I read the runes and wondered how so wise a woman could have carved them so confusedly. Yet it seems that your death is indicated underneath. Either Gudrun missed a letter or someone else has falsified the runes.' (207)

In summary, in the total absence of evidence to the contrary, it may be accepted as a fact that the Runic alphabet was invented by the Goths.

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In recent years, runes have become somewhat fashionable in recognition of their decorative qualities, at once exotic and mysterious.

In spite of what we have said above, it is nevertheless true that the Goths when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea still maintained contacts with their ancestral homeland on the Scandinavian Peninsula.

As T.D. Kendrick notes:

"As far back as the first century of the Christian era the North Germans had sold furs and amber to the Roma world, and the Vikings in their turn were no strangers to continental trade; but, as of old, their best-organized and most lucrative commerce was that following the great river-routes of East Germany and Russia (and Ukraine) whereby the Goths of the Black Sea had traded with their fellow-Germans of the north, teaching them the new and flashy eastern modes and selling them the precious stuffs and wares of the Orient and of Greece. It was, in fact, a desire to retain and to consolidate this ancient German trade across Russia (and Ukraine) that led to the Swedish settlements on the Volga, the river-way to the Khazar world and the Arabic (and Persian) east, that occasioned the exploitation of the Dnieper basin and the establishment of the Kievan state, and that was the reason for the foundation of Swedish settlements on the (river) Weichsel mouth in the dangerous borderland between the Slavonic Wends and the East Baltic (or Lithuanian) folk."(208)

The Celtic and Iranian origins of Viking art are so obvious that they are taken for granted, and seldom commented upon. It would seem equally obvious that these Celtic and Iranian artistic elements reached the Vikings by way of their contacts with the Goths when the latter were dwelling on the shores of the Black Sea.

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As we shall note later in the present chapter, some see Iranian elements in the Viking sagas, though this is somewhat speculative. In any case, said literary elements must have reached the ancestors of the Vikings by way of the Goths when the latter dwelt on the shores of the Black Sea.

In the 13th century an Icelandic scholar named Snorre Sturlason wrote Heimskringla or The Lives of the Norse Kings which deals with the history of Norway and Sweden up to his own time.

The material dealing with the very early period was no doubt as obscure to Sturlason as it is to us, probably more so. Below is given some very interesting material from the Heimskringla:

"A great ridge of mountains (the Caucasus?) goes from north-east to south-west dividing Sweden the Great from other kingdoms. To the south of the fells it is not far to the land of the Turks (Khazars?) where Odin had great possessions." (209)

Note: "Great Sweden" refers to a Viking kingdom around the delta of the river Dnieper and the Sea of Azov. The eastern neighbors of Great Sweden were the Khazars, a people of Turkic speech.

Sturlason continues:

"This (Scandinavian) Sweden they called the Manheims, but Sweden the Great (Russia and Ukraine) they called the Godheims (God = Goth), about which they tell many tidings. ...

...Odin died in his bed in (Scandinavian) Sweden, and when he was near death he had himself marked with a spear point and dedicated to himself all men who died through weapons; he said that he should fare to the Godheims and there welcome his friends. ...(210)

...Svegdir took the kingdom after his father. He made a vow to look for the Godheims and Odin the Old. He went with twelve men far about the world; he came
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right out into the land of the Turks (Khazars?) and Sweden the Great and found there many kinsmen. On the journey he was five winters, and so he came back and then stayed at home for a while, but in Vanahein he had taken a wife called Vana; their son was called Vanlandi.

Svegdir again went out to look for the Godheims." (211)

It is rather obvious that the element "God" in *Godheims* means "Goths". Clearly a memory of the Gothic kingdom on the shores of the Black Sea had survived.

When all is said and done, one has no alternative but to agree with Herwig Wolfram when he says:

"So why not end the fruitless quarrels and 'believe' Theoderic the Great (or Theoderic the Amal, or Thiudereiks the Amalung), who derives his origins and those of his Goths from Scandinavia?"(212)

Citing Jordanes, Menendez Pidal speaks of the chansons de geste of the Goths while they yet lived in the Black Sea area. Jordanes refers to Gothic songs and tales of *King Berig*, who led the Gothic migration from Scandinavia, *Filimer*, who guided the Goths to the Black Sea, and the deeds of the Gothic heroes *Terpamara*, *Hanala*, *Fritigern* and *Vidigoia*.(213) Menendez Pidal notes that the memory of Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the *Amal* (or *Amalung*), the great "King and Conqueror of Germans and Scythians", lived on in Viking sagas.(214) He might also have mentioned the Gothic chanson de geste Hildebrand, of which more later.

Says Jordanes:

"In earliest times they (the Goths) sang of the deeds of their ancestors in strains of song accompanied by the cithara (a sort of harp or lyre); chanting of
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Eterpamara, Hanala, Fritigern, Vidigoia and others whose fame among them is great; such heroes as admiring antiquity claims to be its own." (215)

In another place Jordanes says:

"But when the number of the people had increased greatly and Filimer, son of Gadaric, reigned as king about the fifth since Berig (who led the Goths in their migration from Scandinavia) - he decided that the army of the Goths with their families should move from that region (on the Baltic Coast). In search of suitable homes and pleasant places they came to the land of Scythia, called *Oium* in that (Gothic) tongue. Here they were delighted with the great richness of the country, and it is said that when half the army had been brought over, the bridge whereby they had crossed the river fell in utter ruin, nor could anyone thereafter pass to or fro, For the place is said to be surrounded by quaking bogs and an encircling abyss, so that by this double

obstacle nature has made it inaccessible. And even today one may hear in that neighborhood the lowing of cattle and may find traces of men, if we are to believe the stories of travelers, although we must grant that they hear these things from afar.

This part of the Goths, which is said to have crossed the river and entered with *Filimer* into the country of *Oium* (Scythia), came into possession of the desired land, and there they soon came upon the race of the *Spali* (Celts? Slavs? Balts? Iranians?), joined battle with them and won the victory. Thence the victors hastened to the farthest part of Scythia, which is near the Sea of Pontus (Black Sea); for so the story is generally told in their early songs, in almost historic fashion." (216)

Commenting on the above, Ramon Menendez Pidal says:

"We have here the fabulous theme of the submerged people or city, whose voices or whose bells may be heard from the bottom of the waters, a legend (or archetype) oft repeated in prose or verse." (217)

E.A. Thompson specifically mentions that the Visigothic hero Vidigoia, who was killed fighting against the Sarmatians, was remembered generations later in songs which the Visigoths sang to the strains of the harp. (218)

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Notes Marija Gimbutas:

"Jordanes names the *Antes* and *Sclavini* as the two main components of the populous *Venedi*, and stresses that both spoke the same language. He locates the *Antes* to the east of the *Sclavini*, between the rivers Dniester and Dnieper. Procopious, who was acquainted with Slavic troops in the Byzantine Army, writes: 'The Sklavini and Antes do not differ in appearance: all of them are tall and very strong, their skin and hair are neither very light nor dark, but all are ruddy of face. They live a hard life of the lowest grade just like the Messagetæ, and are just as dirty as they.'

Many scholars base their classification of the Antes as a Slavic tribe on linguistic grounds. Some see a cognate of *Anti* in the East Slavic tribal name of historical times: *Vjatici* (**Vetici*), which became the Finnish word *venat(j)a*, and the town name *Vjatka*. The tribal name would mean "belonging to the land of Vent-", and it can be linked with *Venēt-*, *Venetī*. Arabic and Persian geographers and historians, such as Dzhjhani, Gerdezi and Ibn Rusta, know the name in the form *Wantit*,

though the spelling varies widely. The Indo-European root *vent- is not uncommon in the Slavic languages. It means "great": and *veshti* "greater", using this root, and it appears in Slavic personal names: Venchiteslav, Venceslav, Vjachslav, Polish *wiecej* means "more".

The *Antes* living in what is now Ukraine were annihilated by the Avars. From the beginning of the seventh century the name *Antes* disappears from history, but the possibility that these people were the ancestors of the historical *Vjatic* cannot be discounted. Russian historians and archaeologists, notably Vernadsky and Rybakov, speak of the *Antes* as the direct ancestors of the Russians.

Jordanes recounts that a populous race of *Venethi* living on the northern slopes of the Carpathian mountains, at the source of the Vistula, were defeated by the Gothic King Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormnarekk*). In another passage the name *Veneti* appears together with those of *Sclavini* and *Antes*. He says that all of them are related, 'of one blood'. The *Veneti* can be regarded as Slavs on the evidence; yet, not all *Veneti* mentioned by the earlier historic records (Herodotus, Tacitus, Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy) can be easily identified with the Slavs. *Enetoi*, *Venedi*, *Veneti* known to Herodotus, Tacitus, Pliny the Elder and Ptolemy, as living on the Vistula, east of the Germanic peoples are not all to be identified as Slavs; some may have been Proto-Illyrians

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or related to them. The name *Veneti* is also known in different regions of the Old Celtic World. These were *Veneti* north-east of the Adriatic who, linguistically, are placed between the Italic and Illyrian groups, and they certainly were not Slavs. *Veneti* is perhaps one of the most frequent tribal names among the Indo-European-speaking peoples. Moszynski (essay: "Przyczynek do tzw. *etnogenezy Słowian*", *Slavia Antiqua*, Tom VIII, 1961, p. 32).

Tacitus' *Venedi* (first century AD) were robber-like vagabonds who carried out raids (*latrociniis pererrant*) in the forests and mountains located between *Peucini* (Germanic *Bastarnae*) in the area of the East Carpathians and *Fenni* in present-day eastern Russia. He says that, in contrast to the nomadic horse-riding Sarmatian tribes, the *Veneti* built houses and fought on foot, equipped with shields (Tacitus: *Germania*, 46).

In spite of the fragmentary nature of the earliest historic records on Slavic tribes, their value is fundamental for a period concerning which there is not much archaeological data available for reconstructing a Slavic culture.

After a long and continuous cultural development in a fixed territory the Proto-Slavic civilization lost its

identity as a result of foreign invasions and occupations. The Iranian-speaking Sarmatians entered from the east, broke the Scythian power and infiltrated even the forest-steppe zone; successive waves of Germanic tribes, Bastarnae, Sciri and Taifali, Goths and Gepids, came from the north-west through the territory of present-day Poland into the Pripet basin, Volynia, Podolia, Moldavia and the Dnieper-Don region. The archaeological picture of the Pontic steppe area was now a melting-pot of elements derived successively from survivals of the Scythian epoch and the Grek cities, the influence of the Roman provinces of Dacia and Moesia, the newly infiltrated Sarmatians, and the Germanic tribes. The Proto-Slavic material culture was all but submerged beneath the avalanche of foreign elements, yet historic records and linguistic evidence show that Slavic tribes were still extant.

The Sarmatians, another group of steppe nomads, infiltrated the North Pontic lands at the end of the Scythian era around 200 BC. Before their massive expansion to the west in the second century BC, the Sarmatians lived beyond the Don. However, they had managed to cross it at some time during the fourth century BC. Their sites are known on both sides of this river. Pliny (VI, 15) already speaks of many Sarmatian tribes west of the Don, and in the first century BC, Agrippa's map shows Sarmatians and not Scythians north
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of the Black Sea and east of the Dnieper. Archaeological remains indicate that they must have reached the bend of the Dnieper around 200 BC. Their early sites are concentrated in the region of the Dnieper rapids, north of the Sea of Azov, and in the Upper Donets basin, where they left more than 50 *kurgans* (burial mounds) of the pure trans-Volga type.

The bulk of the Sarmatian archaeological evidence pertains to the period from the first century BC to the first century AD. In the north-west, Sarmatian tribes appeared west of the Dnieper, south of Kiev, along the rivers Ros', Rosava, Tjasmin, Turja and Vysa. Strabo (63 BC - 23 AD) knew of a number of Sarmatian tribes: Iazygians, Roxolani, Aorsians, Siraces and Alans. During the second century AD they reached Moldavia, the lands of the Lower Danube, the Hungarian grasslands and even Poland. Most of the Sarmatian sites in Rumania and eastern Central Europe date from the third century AD.

The physical presence of the Sarmatians naturally influenced Slavic culture. Linguists and mythologists speak of strong Iranian influences and similarities in the Slavic religious vocabulary. It was during this era that Slavs borrowed from the Iranians the words *bogu* 'god', *raji* 'paradise' and *svetu* 'holy'.

The coming of the Sarmatians put an entirely

different complexion on archaeology north of the Black Sea, including the forest-steppe belt. They had close relations with the cities on the Black Sea coasts and with the Lower Danube region. The contact with the Greek cities resulted in considerable Greek influence on Sarmatian culture and art; Sarmatian elements can be traced in the Bosphorus Kingdom, and Sarmatian names are known from Bosporan inscriptions. It is believed that a part of the Sarmatian nation settled permanently in Greek cities. This element might have been a factor in the process of their barbarization. In time, Sarmatian civilization lost its distinctive traits, and the whole North Pontic region became uniform in its material culture.

The name 'Zarubinet's' comes from the site of that name near Perejeslav Khmel'nitskij. It represents a new cultural complex that appeared on the Pripet and Middle and Upper Dnieper basins around 200 BC. Zarubinet's sites are recognizable by the custom of cremating the dead and by the presence of bronze fibulae of late La Tene (i.e., Celtic) style. Their articulated and predominantly polished pottery differed from the local Volyno-Podolian variety. Their sites spread as far north as the Upper Dnieper and the Lower Desna basin.

The Zarubinet's complex is related to the Pomeranian 'Bell-shaped Grave' (also called 'Pot-covered Urn')

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complex of the fifth century BC. This Pomeranian group, probably of western Baltic stock, dispersed over almost all of Poland and along the Western Bug river during the fourth century BC.

Originally it was believed that the Zarubinet's complex must have been Slavic. However, Kukharenko has shown more or less conclusively that the Zarubinet's complex bears no relation at all to the preceding culture in this region during the Scythian or pre-Scythian era, i.e., with the culture of the 'Scythian farmers' and Chernoles. Genetically it can be affiliated only with the Pomeranian group. The 'Zarubinet's' occupied some Slavic lands but for the most part they inhabited the lands of the eastern Balts and hardly penetrated the territory east of the Middle Dnieper. The majority of Zarubinet's sites date from the period first century BC - first century AD. In the Dnieper area they were probably assimilated by the eastern Baltic tribes (Baltic material appears again in sites of the third and fourth centuries AD).

The Goths, according to the historians, carried out their great migration after AD 166. Their eastern branch the Ostrogoths, reached the northern shores of the Black Sea and conquered Olbia, Tyras and Panticapaeum. In the mid third century they reached the Don. About AD 214 the Goths clashed with the Romans at

the Dacian frontier and soon thereafter conquered Dacia (modern Rumania). The Gothic state flourished for nearly 200 years until the Huns invaded in AD 375.

Archaeological studies have shown that the Gotho-Gepid culture spread from the Lower Vistula basin south-eastwards via eastern Poland up to the Western Bug valley to Volynia and Podolia in the second century AD. The direction of migration is indicated by a chain of cemeteries, isolated graves and finds of a type known as 'Trishin' after a cemetery near Brest-Litovsk containing finds of undoubtedly Germanic character. Gotho-Gepids forced their way through an area between the southern Baltic tribes and the Przewot (Vandal?) group in Poland. In the south they met Dacians and Sarmatians. Jordanes tells us that before the Goths reached the Black Sea they conquered the *Spali*, probably a Sarmatian tribe, with whom the ancient Slavs must have been in close contact. **Spolin* became a Slavic word meaning 'giant'. After about 200 AD, Sarmatian monuments disappeared and gave way to a hybrid cultural complex called 'Chernjakhovo'.

Cherbjakhovo sites of the third and fourth centuries AD are found between the Lower Danube in the south, the forested zone in the north and the River Don in the east.

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These sites show much uniformity over a large area, but they cannot be ascribed to Gothic domination alone. It is unthinkable that the north-western invaders would have exterminated local inhabitants on their arrival, or that they would have rapidly assimilated them. The density of Chernjakhovo sites bespeaks a constant increase in population. In the whole territory, i.e., eastern Rumania and western and southern Ukraine, Slavs, Sarmatians, Hellenized remnants of Scythians, Romanized Greeks, Dacians, and Getae must have lived alongside the new Germanic occupants. A copy of the fourth-century Roman road map known as *Tabula Peutingeriana* shows Dacians, Getae, Venedi and others in the territory between the Dniester and Danube. The Dacians and Getae were native inhabitants; the Venedi ("Venadi Sarmatae"), living north of the Dacians, may have been Slavs. Judging from cemeteries in Moldavia, the Sarmatians were merged with the local Getan population, and had by this time made the transition from a nomadic life to one of agriculture. These ethnically diverse peoples were subjugated by the Goths, who instituted a centralized government. This could have provided the impetus for the unification of the culture over a large territory.

Historical sources provide some clues to the Chernjakhovo sites and their inhabitants. However, during the last decades on the basis of the wide distribution of highly uniform wheel-made pottery and

the fact that the northern limits of Chernjakhovo finds coincide with the border between the forest and the forest-steppe zones, some archaeologists have proclaimed Chernjakhovo sites as Slavic (more precisely, eastern Slavic). It was thought that the Gothic invasion could not be traced archaeologically. To date, more than 1,000 Chernjakhovo sites are known and an enormous bibliography on excavated sites exists. With the accumulation of systematically explored settlements much light has been thrown on the basic features and relationships of this complex.

Scarcely any of the cultural elements we associate with the first millennium BC can be observed during the Chernjakhovo period: no habitation pattern of open settlements, no hill-forts or barrow cemeteries could be found in any area of the Chernjakhovo distribution. Unfortified settlements were now located (even east of the Dnieper) on the slopes of the first level of river terraces or on sandy terraces far away from good farming land. Unlike the Early Iron Age with its hundreds of hill-forts, this period has provided no evidence of a single hill-fort with signs of habitation, not even from the region east of the

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Dnieper where one would expect the least change in habitation pattern and social structure. The excavated village sites in Volynia, Podolia and Moldavia revealed architecture of a type which cannot be related to the Slavic traditions of the medieval period. Villages were remarkable for their size, the largest extending for several kilometres on a river terrace and consisting of as many as seventy houses. Villages in Volynia and Moldavia comprised farmsteads each having from two or three to ten or more buildings designed for different economic purposes: granaries, barns, stables, etc.

The rectangular houses were set above ground and had solidly built walls of wattle and daub. They had perfectly tamped clay floors and some had wooden platforms above the floor. Many of the houses consisted of two rooms; one, for people, fitted with a hearth (sometimes two), the other for animals - a typical Germanic *Stallhaus*. The length of these houses reached 12 metres or more. In the Lower Dnieper and the Lower Southern Bug area, fortified settlements including multi-room masonry structures occurred in the same period. These apparently had been left by 'sarmatized' Greeks. This type of architecture has no affinities either with the architecture in Volynia and Podolia or with that near the Dnieper rapids and in the Middle Dnieper area. The area of the Dnieper rapids contained settlements with semi-subterranean dwellings having twig-woven walls supported on posts, and sometimes with houses built on ground level. The settlement of

Kantemirovka in the Middle Dnieper area contained above-ground houses and Sarmatian-type barrows with inhumation burials in deep pits.

The days of individual slow pottery production were past. Specially trained potters produced pots in large ovens and perhaps sold these vessels in a market. Indeed, pottery is remarkably uniform all over Ukraine, Moldavia, in the Lower Danube region and Transylvania. The potter's craft must have infiltrated northern regions from the south, from the Roman provinces of Moesia and Dacia as well as from the cities on the Black Sea littoral. Scarcely any hand-made pottery was found at the Chernkakhovo sites of Rumania. In the preceding Scythian-Sarmatian era wheel-thrown pottery entered the forest-steppe zone as an import, but now the craft itself penetrated eastern Europe as far as the northern forests.

For the most part, the pots were grey in color, being made of clay tempered with crude sand, and had slightly globular bodies, pronounced shoulders, shallow necks, and out-turned rims. Pithos-type pots were made of a cleaner, finer clay. The better pottery, red,

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orange or yellow in color, occurred in a great variety of shapes: profiled dishes, bowls without handles, bowls with three handles, cups, beakers and elegant jugs. There were also amphorae of Roman type. The most sophisticated types have analogies in the products of the coastal cities and the Roman provinces. In Volynia, the Upper Dniester basin and the area of the Dnieper rapids, the globular types sometimes had a slip of clay tempered with rough sand. The technique again points to north-western influence since it was wide-spread in the Vistula area. The Chernjakhovo ceramic art was a peculiar merger of elements from many sources. The wheel-made pottery can no longer serve the archaeologist as a key artifact having a diagnostic value in helping to establish tribal limits.

The inventories of grave goods show a uniform character in most of the large cemeteries excavated. In rich women's graves there were usually no ear-rings or pins, but the graves contained one or two fibulae, glass, amber or precious stone beads and a comb. In men's graves the items might include a belt clasp, one or two fibulae and a knife. There was an enormous quantity of pots in richer graves. An exceptionally well endowed grave, which was probably that of a Gothic chieftain of the fourth century AD, was discovered in 1935 at Rudki near Krzemieniec in the Tarnopol district of the Upper Dniester area. In a pit more than two metres deep lay an extended skeleton equipped with two silver spurs, a silver knife, several bronze vessels of Roman type, a silver bow fibula, a Roman glass cup,

wheel-made dishes and dice of glass paste.

This complex derives its name from the cemetery at Chernjakhovo, Kiev district, 12 kilometres south of Tripolye. Khvojko discovered the cemetery, excavated in 1900-1901 and dated its 247 graves to the period between the second and fifth centuries AD. Not until 1964 was a detailed excavation report published by Petrov. The cemetery contained both cremation and inhumation burials in more or less equal proportions. In the case of only twenty-four were the furnishings especially rich. Sixty-nine had no grave goods at all. Cremations were either in urns or in pits. All the graves were in a continuous row regardless of whether they were of cremation or inhumation type. The excavators were unable to make any deductions regarding the social or ethnic background from the different burial practices.

During Roman times, in many parts of Europe, bi-ritual cemeteries are known. In Chernjakhovo cemeteries cremation was more common than earlier, than in the later phases, By AD 300 both rites were observed to the

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same extent. In the fourth century inhumation predominated in the Chernjakhovo cemeteries of Rumania and finally superceded cremation. There is no continuity of burial rites during the post-Chernjakhovo times. Early Slavic cemeteries of the sixth and seventh centuries AD were cremation cemeteries and the cremated remains were usually in pits.

Towards the end of the fourth century AD Chernjakhovo settlements and cemeteries quite abruptly disappeared. The rapid change and cultural deteriorization of the area was caused by a stormy invasion by the Huns, Turkic nomads from Central Asia. In AD 375 they conquered the Goths between the Don and Danube, and pushed them toward the Roman borders. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, when the Goths were first defeated by the Huns, they retreated to the Dniester and built a fortified camp near the wall of Greutungii. There again they lost to the Huns and fled to the Danube. Destruction layers have been identified in settlements of the Dnieper region, the steppe and part of the southern forest-steppe area. Marcellinus tells us that this 'unknown race of people from the far end of the earth moved like an avalanche and crushed everything they encountered on the way'. Trade relations with the south were cut off and production centres were destroyed. Some tribes must have been entirely wiped out. Others, like the Goths, migrated to the west or sought refuge in the Crimean Peninsula. Tribes in the forest-steppe area may have saved themselves by hiding in forests. From the end of the fourth and throughout the fifth century AD the ethnic picture north of the Black Sea entirely changed. It was after this turmoil

that slavs appeared in the former Chernjakhovo territory, introducing their own cultural elements which continued into later centuries and spread to the west, south and north.

The contrast in topography, settlement pattern, architecture and burial rites was too great to allow of a continuity of Chernjakhovo culture proper during the period of Slavic migrations. The Chernjakhovo culture was a phenomenon *per se*, a result of broad cultural relationships, flourishing trade, increase of production, fertilization by elements coming from the Roman Empire, fusion of southern, western, northern and eastern cultural elements, and consolidation of political power. The very modest Slavic cultural remains which emerged out of the ruins cannot have been derived from the classical Chernjakhovo complex. We see in these remains a persistence of Early Iron Age traditions which apparently lingered in isolated areas throughout the Sarmatian, "Zarubinetz" (West Baltic)

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and Gothic occupations. There are a few habitation sites and cemeteries dating from the period between the third and fifth centuries AD which may prove, as the amount of available material increases, to have belonged to the true predecessors of the Slavic residue of the fifth to the seventh centuries AD. Only a meticulous study of the micro-evolution of physical types, can shed more light on the problem of what happened to the Proto-Slavs during the Gothic domination. That Slavic tribes did not perish under the Goths is evidenced by historical records. Jordanes recounts that the Goth King Vinitar, soon after his defeat by the Huns, fell upon the Antes and crucified their King Boz along with his son and seventy of his men. This document is of utmost importance since it verifies the presence of numerous Slavs with their tribal organization intact in the territory of Goth domination. Close Germanic and Slavic relations are also illuminated by Old Germanic loan-words in Slavic languages.

The earliest contacts between the Slavic and Germanic peoples date from Chernjakhovo times, but are not restricted to the Chernjakhovo culture area. The Soviet Slavist S. Bernshtein cites as the earliest Germanic borrowings in Slavic two groups of words. Those in the first group were borrowed from the Goths in the Dnieper-Dniester-Baltic area, between the second and fifth centuries (roughly corresponding to Chernjakhovo), those in the second group from Old West Germanic languages in present-day north Germany and Bohemia, in the third and fourth centuries.

The early Gothic group includes a number of domestic terms: *xyzha* - 'house'; *xlevu* - 'stall, stable', perhaps properly a subterranean one, since

Gothic *hlaiv* means 'grave'; *xlebu* - 'bread, loaf'; *bljudo* - 'dish', from the Gothic *biu/s*; *kotilu* - '(copper) kettle'. Also economic terms: *dulgu* - 'debt', and *lixva* - 'interest, profit, usury', from Gothic **leihva* - 'loan'; a verb *xyniti* - 'to deceive', which may have come from the Gothic word for 'Hun'. Military words were: *xosa* - 'raid' from Gothic *hansa* - 'warrior band'; *mechi* - 'sword' from **mekeis*; and **shelmu* (Old Church Slavonic *shlemu*, Old Russian *shelomu*) - 'helmet' from Gothic *helm*, perhaps related to another borrowing of this group, *xulmu* - 'hill, holm'. The exotic animal names *osilu* - 'ass' and *velbođu* - 'camel', ultimately from Latin.

The early West Germanic group has the domestic words *tynu* - 'wall', preserved in such modern place names as the Polish *Yyniec* and the Czech *Karluv Tyn*, from Germanic **tuna* - 'firm fence', and cognate with

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the English 'town'; and *pila* - 'saw' (cutting instrument with teeth; cf. the English 'file', German 'Feile'). Economic terms are: *penedzi* - 'money, silver or copper coin', from the German **pennings* - 'piece of metal used as money', cognate with the English 'penny'; and *myto* - 'duty, tribute, toll', from Old Germanic *muta*. Military words: *vitedzi* - 'knight, hero', from Germanic (Old Norse?) *viking* or *hvetingr*; and *troba* - 'trumpet'. Two religious words, of Greek origin, seem to have entered Slavic in this group, via early contacts with German missionaries: **cirky* - 'church', via Old Bavarian *kirko* from Greek *kyrialkon*; and *popu* - 'priest', probably via Old High German *pfaffo* from Greek *papas*.

According to Bernshtein, Gothic contributed another group of loan words to Slavic in the sixth and seventh centuries; but this was the language of the Moesian Goths, living along the Danube in what is now Bulgaria, while their Slavic neighbors were new arrivals in the Balkan area. This group includes: *vino* - 'wine' and *vinogradu* - 'vineyard'; *smoky* - 'fig', from Gothic *smakka*; *useredzi* - 'ear-ring', from Gothic **ausihriggs*; *skutu* - 'lap' from Gothic *skauts* - 'hem of garment'; and *buky* - 'letter, writing' from Gothic *boka* - 'book'. The first Gothic bishop, Ulfilas (or *Wulflein*) had invented the Gothic alphabet and made their first translation of the Bible in the middle of the fourth century. So it is possible that 'writing', 'priest', 'church' and other religious terms could have entered Slavic from the fourth and fifth centuries from the Goths as well as from the Western Germanic peoples.

Other early Germanic loan words in Slavic, which might have come from east (Gothic) or west are: **pulku* - 'military formation' from Common Germanic **fulkaz* - 'armed troop'; **zheldu* - 'fine, penalty', corresponding to Gothic *gild* - 'tax', Common Germanic **yeldan* - 'to

pay tax'; *kupiti* - 'to buy' via Gothic *kaupon*; *skatu* - 'horned cattle, property, money' from Common Germanic **skattaz* - 'property, possession, wealth'; *nuta* - 'oxen, horned cattle' from Common Germanic 'cattle-property'.

Germanic loan words in Slavic are evidence that the occupiers of Slavic lands acted as donors in a cultural field. The number of Slavic loan words in Germanic languages is insignificant in comparison with the number of Germanic loan words in Slavic. Having political and cultural supremacy over the Slavs, the Goths exercised a strong influence on the material and spiritual culture of their subjects.

To summarise: historic, archaeological and linguistic sources speak of a Slavic element in the old
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Proto-Slavic area. This corresponds in time with the period of the Roman Empire's maximal power. However, political suppression and strong influences from the south and north-west made it impossible for Slavic culture to grow and assert itself. Slavs survived physically and their dormant powers became manifest during the next centuries, the period of Slavic migrations." (219)

In the above, Ms. Gimbutas does not speak of another source of Germanic words in Slavic, namely Old Norse words brought by the Vikings. This, of course pertains to a period much later than what Ms. Gimbutas speaks of, and would refer exclusively - or nearly exclusively - to the East Slavic languages, i.e., Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian; the West Slavic languages - Polish, Czech, Slovak - would be very little influenced by this, and the South Slavic languages - Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian and Bulgarian - not at all. We shall deal with this period in a later chapter, when we deal with Kievan Rus'.

In any case, we can see that there was a connection between the Gothic epic - and therefore the Spanish or Castilian epic - on the one hand and the Slavic on the other. As the close contact between Goths and Slavs occurred at a period before the great Slavic migrations, the division between East, West and South Slavs

had not yet occurred, so all Slavs were affected. The fact the names *Serb* and *Croat* are both of Sarmatian-Alanic, in other words Iranian origin, is also interesting in this respect, for reasons which should be evident.

The Roman historian Priscus, sent as ambassador to Attila the Hun, said:

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"Crossing mighty rivers - namely, the Tisia and Tibisia and Dricca - we came to the place where long ago Vidigoia, bravest of the Goths (Visigoths, to be exact), perished by the guile of the Sarmatians." (220)

In yet another place Jordanes says:

"This name (*Capillati*, from *pillei* meaning "hair style") the Goths accepted and prized highly, and they retain it to this day in their songs." (221)

At the bloody battle of the Catalaunian Fields the Goths sung the praises of Theoderic the Balth, (Gothic *Theudareiks*; note again the Celtic element *reiks*) the heroic Visigothic king, killed in this same battle fighting against the Huns.

Says Jordanes in relation to the above:

"Now during these delays in the siege (at the battle of the Catalaunian Fields) the Visigoths sought their king (Theoderic the Balthi or Thiudereiks the Balthi) and the king's sons their father, wondering at his absence when success had been attained. When, after a long search, they found him where the dead lay thickest, as happens with brave men, they honored him with songs and bore him away in the sight of the enemy (the Huns). You might have seen bands of Goths shouting with dissonant cries and paying honor to the dead while the battle still raged." (222)

At the battle of "the Willows" between Goths and Romans, which took place in Thrace in 377, in the words of Herwig Wolfram:

"This battle song of the barbarians (in the Roman Army) began quietly and gradually swelled to a roar, revealing just how Roman the troops really were. The

Goths struck up a song in praise of their ancestors." (223)

Proof that the Visigoths in Spain continued their epic tradition is the fact that St. Isidore of Seville (6th-7th Centuries) in his Gothic History (224) cites traditions which can only have come from epic sources, and in his Institutionum

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Disciplinae speaks of the Carmina Maiorum (Songs of the Ancestors), apparently the same as the Maiorum Facta and Carmina Prisca of the Goths when they yet lived by the Black Sea, mentioned by Jordanes and the Maiorum Laudes of the Visigoths, and mentioned by Amianus Marcellinus. Proof of the survival of the Gothic epic tradition after the Muslim Conquest of Spain is the legend of don Roderick, the last Visigothic king of Spain.

Jordanes mentions a legend according to which the Goths were held as slaves in Britain or some other island (Gotland?) and were freed by a certain man at the cost of a single horse whose price doubled each day. (225)

The same incident is found in the Castilian epic. In the Poem of Arlanza, which deals with Count Fernan Gonzalez, founder of Castile, the king of Leon desires a horse which belongs to his vassal, Fernan Gonzalez. Gonzalez doubles the price each day until the King of Leon can only pay by freeing Castile from all vassalage to Leon. In the words of the Poem of Arlanza,

"The Castilians were free of the servitude of Leon and the Leonese". The words "free of servitude" are the same as those used by Jordanes in speaking of the Goths (226).

Let us take a brief look at the Goths themselves, probably

the most noble, cultured and artistic of all the Germanic peoples who invaded the Roman Empire.

This is far more complex than might appear at first glance. Who the Goths were in reality varies according to the period of which one is speaking; their long migration not only completely

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altered the culture of the Goths, but even their ethnic composition. The Goths who lived in Scandinavia before the time of Christ were thoroughly Germanic in language, culture and ethnic composition. However, as we shall see, the Goths who fought against the Romans on the Danube frontier could be referred to as "Germanic" only in quotation marks.

Firstly, of all the Germanic peoples, it was the Goths who were most influenced by the Celts. This Celtic influence reached the Goths from two sources, or, perhaps more exactly, at two different times and places. This requires a bit of explanation.

On the first lap of their long trek from Scandinavia to Spain and Italy, the Goths crossed to the south shore of the Baltic Sea. There they encountered the Balts or Lithuanians. The Baltic influence on the Goths was very slight, consisting only of the personal name *Galindo* (227). However, at the same time the Goths came in contact with another people whose influence on them was to be far more extensive.

On the south shores of the Baltic the Goths, along with other Germanic and Baltic peoples, were vassals of a Celtic people known as the *Lugians*. Roman sources sometimes confuse the Lugians with the Vandals. However, they could by no stretch of the imagination

be considered as the same people, since the Lugians were obviously Celts, and the Vandals just as obviously Germans. There is a plausible answer to this confusion.

For a long time the Celts were strongly entrenched in what is now southern Poland, Bohemia and Moravia. This is shown by place

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names as well as by Celtic survivals in numerous other fields. However, this marked the real northern limit of Celtic expansion in Central Europe; beyond was the land of Germans and Balts, shown by the absence of Celtic place names and other survivals in this northern area. One may therefore assume that these Central European Celts for a time established themselves as overlords of the Germanic and Baltic peoples of the area. Though this overlordship was no doubt loose, the superior culture of the Celts did have some influence on their northern vassals. The *Gal* of *Galindi*, name of a Baltic tribe (from whence the Gothic personal name "Galindo") may be Celtic. Also the tendency of the eastern Germans to refer to the Slavs as *Wends* may be a heritage from their former Celtic overlords. Indeed, the name "Vandal", like "Wend" may be a deformed version of the Celtic *Veneti*. Perhaps because of pressure from the Romans and from Germanic peoples to the Northwest, the Central European Celts were eventually unable to maintain their overlordship over their northern vassals. Thus it would not be surprising to find that the Vandals first referred to by the name of their Celtic overlords and later by their indigenous Germanic name; "Vandal" may have a remote Celtic etymology, but the names of the two divisions of the Vandals,

i.e., *Hasding* and at least the *ing* of *Siling* (the *Sil* conceivably could be related to *Siluri*, a Celtic tribe of Great Britain) most certainly do not.

The influence of the Central European or Lugian Celts on the Goths, while not very extensive, is interesting. The Gothic word

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for king is *reiks*, and is attested by the earliest documents referring to the Goths.(228) Now, the word *reiks* bears no resemblance whatever to the Germanic stem for "king" (German *Konig*, Swedish *Konung*, Icelandic *Konungir*), but is obviously cognate with the Gaulish *ric* or *rix*, more distantly to the Gaelic *righ*. This explains why so many Gothic names, such as *Roderic*, *Ermanaric* or (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) *Alaric*, *Athanaric*, *Amalric*, etc. have a strangely Celtic sound or even (such as *Roderic*) are identical to Celtic names.

Some Goths held high positions under Attila the Hun. Among these Goths was one named *Scottas*.(229) This is very nearly identical to the name *Scotta*, famous in the Irish epic and which survives in such names as "Scotia", "Scot", "Scotland" and a long et cetera. There exists a slight possibility that the Gothic name "Scottas" may be of Iranian rather than Celtic origin. The Celtic name "Scotta" is generally believed to be derived from the Iranian "skuth", which means "archer", and is the probable origin of the Greek name "Scythian". The name "Scotta" would therefore be a relic of the time when Celts and Scythians were closely associated. However, by the time of Theodosius I the Scythians had long vanished, and the Gothic "Scottas" is certainly much

closer to the Celtic "Scotta" than to the Iranian "skuth".

Perhaps most interesting of all is the mythological ancestry of the *Amal* or *Amalung*, noblest of the Gothic clans. The son of *Amal*, founder of the clan, is *Hisarna*, a transparently Celtic name which means the "Iron One".(230) This would seem to indicate

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that the Amal clan intermarried with their Celtic overlords and, indeed, derived their nobility, royalty and "charisma" from this connection. One is reminded of the Stuarts, who were mostly Norman by origin, but derived their claim to royalty, to the throne of Scotland, from their connection with the Celtic dynasty of the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, High King of Ireland and legendary founder of Scotland.

However, the Celtic influence on the Goths is much more extensive than this, and refers to a different time and place, to which we shall now turn.

As we said before, of all Germanic peoples it was by far the Goths who had most in common with the Celts. The above-mentioned "Lugian" period is inadequate to account for this, since several other Germanic peoples were vassals of the Central European Celts at this time. As Herwig Wolfram says:

"If, however, the Goths met Celts or Celtic elements mainly on the lower Danube, this would explain the exclusiveness of some Celtic-Gothic connections."
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Little known is this Celtic "rear guard", though of course Celtic place names and Celtic survivals can be found in nearly the

whole Danube basin. This becomes particularly complex when one notes that as far as archaeology is concerned it is often impossible to distinguish between Celtic and Saka remains. The Irish tradition claims that the Celts came from Scythia. As we mentioned before, there are many proofs that this tradition is based on fact, including a number of names of rivers which

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certainly appear to be Celtic, as well as the name of the Western Ukrainian region called "Galicia". As late as the 3rd Century AD, were there still Celtic nuclei, practically indistinguishable from the Sakas in their material culture, in what is now South Russia and Ukraine? Or, did the Saka languages contain Celtic words which were passed to the Goths? Our knowledge of the languages of the Sakas - particularly the Western Sakas - is not so extensive as we would wish, though sufficient to affirm that said languages were Indo-European, specifically Iranian. In the absence of extensive, detailed written documents no answers can be given to the above questions.

In any case, the influence of the Eastern ("Danubian" may not be wholly accurate) Celts on the Goths was considerable.

As we noted in the previous chapter, the Celtic and Saka chiefs wore *torcs* (Gaelic) or *torques* (Latinized spelling of *torc*) as a symbol of authority; also, in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, the nobles of the court of Kai Khusrau are described as wearing torques, as we shall see in Chapter 9. The Gothic chiefs also wore torques as a symbol of authority.(232) The Emperor Theodosius I rewarded the Gothic garrison of Tomi with gold torcs or

torques.(233) In fact, due to the predominance of Alans and Goths among the Byzantine palace guards in the 5th century, the torc or torque became the sign of an officer of the guard in Byzantium.(234) As we noted in the previous chapter, the wearing of torcs or torques as a symbol of command or nobility is a Celtic and Iranian, both Saka and Persian custom, but not Germanic. The

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Gothic word for a circle of wagons - typical of Gothic as well as Saka warfare - is *carrago*. This is obviously a combination of the Celtic *carrus*, i.e., cart, and the Germanic *hago*, i.e., fence. (235) Since this tactic would be most useful on the open steppe, this may indicate the survival of Celtic nuclei in the steppe, the persistence of Celtic words in the western Saka languages, or both.

The Gothic word for "keep" or "citadel" is *kelikn*, from the Celtic *cilicnon*.(236) The Gothic words for agricultural worker, i.e., *magus*; retainer, i.e., *andbahts*; and disciple, i.e., *siponeis* are also Celtic, as are the words for inheritance, i.e., *arbi*; for oath, i.e., *aiths*, marriage, i.e., *liuga*; and obligation or duty, i.e., *dulgs*. (237)

The Celtic connection is yet more extensive; the Goths, like the Celts, feared the falling heavens (238). Also like the Celts, the Goths worshipped the divinized Danube.(239) Of course, the Danube was not the only river divinized by the Celts. As we said before, river names, such as "Don", "Donetz", "Dnieper", "Dniestr" and "Danube" which contain the syllable "Dan" or "Don" are reminders of the aquatic goddess called "Danaan" or "Don" by the

Celts, or "Danu" in the Rig Veda. The various Spanish rivers called "Deva" are also manifestations of this, since "Deva", with a long "e", is the Sanskrit word for goddess. Interestingly, the Gothic name for the divinized Danube is *Donaws*, which bears a striking resemblance to the Rig Vedic *Danava*, i.e., "Child of (the goddess) *Danu*."

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No doubt a specialist in Celtic studies who closely examined the language and culture of the Goths could find yet more Celtisms. From what has been said before, the relevance of these Celtic-Gothic connections to our main topic should be obvious.

Besides the names of rivers, there is also the name of that region of western Ukraine known as "Galicia", not to be confused with the Spanish region "Galicia", though both names are Celtic.

Besides the names of rivers, the name of the region of western Ukraine called "Galicia", and the fact that the name "Cimmerian" very likely has a Celtic etymology, there are other proofs of a strong Celtic presence in the South Russian and Ukrainian steppes, including the Crimean Peninsula. Says Alexander Alexandrovich Vasiliev:

"It is very probable that in their movement from the north of Europe to the south in the 3rd century AD the Goths had met the Celts and forcibly carried along part of them. The Celts had lived in the Carpathian Mountains from time immemorial. According to F. Braun, the Goths and the Gepidae found them (the Celts) still there. Although their history does not mention conflicts with the Celts (though it mentions other contacts), none the less in their (the Goth's) language a trace of their close neighborhood in those parts has been preserved."

Philological comparisons show:

"...the presence of more or less considerable Celtic settlements in the neighborhood of the Gothic region of the second period, i.e., in the South Russian (and Ukrainian) steppes."

In another place the same author (F. Braun) remarks that many Celtic words passed into the Gothic language in the prehistoric period. A. Shakmatov writes that the trend of the Germans (Goths?) southwards induced the Celts to occupy the region along
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the Vistula abandoned by the Germans (hence the quite visible Celtic substratum in large parts of southern Poland); he continues:

'This circumstance does not exclude some other movements of the Celts south or southeast; in the 2nd century BC we see the Galatians (Celts) allied with the Germanic Scirians in South Russia (and Ukraine), where they threatened the Greek colonies.'

We are definitely informed that the Celts participated in the Gothic attacks on the (Roman) Empire in the 3rd 3rd century AD. In his biography of the (Roman) Emperor Claudius Gothicus (268-270) the historian Trebellius Pollio names the Celts among the peoples who invaded the Roman territory together with the Goths; a little below, telling of the victory of Claudius over the Goths, he exclaims:

'What a number of the famous Celtic mares our ancestors saw.'

We notice also the confusion of the Goths with the Celts in later writers. I (Vasiliev) shall give some little-known examples. A western writer of the 6th century, Cassiodorus, in paraphrasing the account cited above of Theodoret of Cyrus on St. John Chrysostom's relations with the Orthodox Goths, calls the latter (Orthodox Goths) Celts. Simeon Metaphrasyes in his Life of John Chrysostom, compiled in the 10th century, also calls the Goths (Scythians) Celts in recording the same episode.

Recently, speaking of the Slavonic tribe of the Antes, A. Shakmatov admits the Celtic origin of this name, though the point is still a matter of dispute. He recalls that a large votive tablet of the the 3rd century AD has been found at Kerch, in which, among many barbarian names of various origins, occurs the name of "Antas Pappiou".

'All these examples, although not definite proof, none the less justify our hypothesis that the Celtic element, in one form or another, penetrated into the

Crimean Peninsula (before the time of the Goths).
If we turn now to the well-proven Celtic geographic nomenclature in Western Europe, we shall see that cities with Celtic names extend from the far West almost to the shores of the Black Sea. It is very well known, for example, that a great many Celtic town names end in "dunum".

In the Balkan Peninsula, besides "Singidunum" (now Belgrade), we find *Novidunum* (*Noviodounon* in (644)

Ptolemy). On the site of the present-day city Isakchi), at the very mouth of the Danube, on its right bank, i.e., quite close to the coast of the Black Sea. There were many towns in Western Europe with the name "Novidunum", and most of them have preserved their original name up to today, though in a changed form.

Another Celtic word exists which has often been used as a component part of geographic names, "duros" or "durus". This word is sometimes found in the second part of a compound geographic name, of which one of the oldest is "Octo-durus", now Martigny, in Switzerland. But this Celtic word often occurs also in the first part of compound geographic names in Great Britain, Ireland, France and Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, on the lower Danube stood the city "Durostorum" (now Silistria), Dorostero, Surostero, Durosteros, "Dopostolos" in Theophanes, "Durustolon" in Leo the Deacon; Derester, Derstr, Derster in Russian annals, etc.

The Celtic word *duro-s*, *duron* signifies "fortress, castle". Perhaps the name of the Gothic center in the Crimea, Dory-Doros-Doras, is this Celtic word "Fortress, castle", which would peculiarly fit its topographic location. For my part, this is only a suggestion thrown out to help explain the puzzling name, and of course, I (Vasiliev) am unable to insist on the correctness or reliability of my hypothesis. I should like to see the Celtologists turn their attention to the geographic names of the Crimea, for they might solve the not uninteresting question of whether or not Celtic elements exist there."(240)

To paraphrase A.A. Vasiliev, I also should like to see Celtologists turn their attention to the Celtic presence in the South Russian and Ukrainian steppes, including Crimea.

We have noted that the Goths, often called "Germans" or "Germanic", were, in reality, very much a polyethnic people, and that the Celts were a most important element in this

polyethnicity, along with Iranians, Balts and Slavs. Therefore, it is most likely that Celtic elements came to the South Russian and Ukrainian steppes including the Crimea, along with the Goths;

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however, this fact does not preclude a far more ancient Celtic presence in this vast area. Certainly the Celts as allies of the Germanic Scirians in South Russia and Ukraine in the 2nd century BC and name "Antas" found in the 2nd century AD inscription found at Kerch are long anterior to the coming of the Goths to the steppes of South Russia and Ukraine. The above, combined with the many river names - Don, Donetsk, Dnieper, Dniestr, Danube - which certainly appear to be Celtic, the name of the Western Ukrainian region of Galicia and the possible Celtic etymology of the name "Cimmerian" all help lend credence and probability to the idea that the South Russian and Ukrainian steppes are the original homeland of the Celts, or at least that the Celts made a very long sojourn in this vast area on their long journey to Central and Western Europe from the place called in Avestan "Aryana Vaeja", the "Homeland of the Aryans". One recalls Henri Hubert's definition of the Celts:

"Aryan tribesmen who crossed half the world."

Both written sources and archaeology appear to confirm that the part of Spain where the Visigoths most thickly settled was in the triangle between Palencia, Toledo and Calatayud (southwest of Sarragossa).(241) Therefore, Old Castile was indeed the most Gothic part of Spain, though, chronologically speaking the Visigoths who settled in this area were "sandwiched" between two

Celtic peoples; the Celtiberians before them and the Cantabrians in the time of Reconquest and repopulation. Old Castile is indeed the most Gothic part of Spain, and among the most Celtic parts as

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well.

In certain chansons de geste of the Castilian epic the Germanic atmosphere is very dense indeed. Particularly in The Traitor Countess and Prince don Garcia, one seems to be breathing the atmosphere of treachery and vengeance typical of the Nibelungenlied. However, in those chansons de geste which deal with Count Fernan Gonzalez, el Cid (Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar), don Roderick and Bernardo del Carpio, the only Germanic elements are really quite superficial, having to do with the Fuero Juzgo, the Visigothic code which continued in force among the Christian peoples of Spain. These latter chansons de geste, with their strong sense of personal honor, loyalty of a man to his family and of a vassal to his liegeland, retribution as distinct from pure vengeance, are quite un-Germanic in their basic themes and values.

An ambiguous case is the chanson de geste of the Seven Princes of Lara. This "dark and bloody tale" in some ways appears quite Germanic, but in other aspects no; we will deal with this in more detail later.

I myself believe that Menendez Pidal was right as far as he went. There are some who will - rightly or wrongly, and I believe wrongly, for reasons which will be explained below - object to Menendez Pidal's theory on the grounds that the proof that the Goths had an ancient epic tradition is inconclusive, as the

surviving Germanic epics, very much including the Viking Sagas, are of course of much later date than the time of the Goths, and, in any case, the Goths are really not so closely kin to the

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Vikings, particularly the Danes and Norwegians who seem to be the principal authors of the sagas.

However, the Langobards or Lombards were contemporaries of the Goths, and there are indeed solid proofs that they had an epic tradition. Paul the Deacon, himself a Lombard, says that the Lombards, like the Goths, came originally from Scandinavia, something which there is no real reason to doubt. Some say that Paul the Deacon was simply repeating Jordanes' account of the origin of the Goths, but there is really no reason to believe this. It would be odd indeed were Paul the Deacon to have copied Jordanes only on this point; in fact, as we shall see, on this point Paul the Deacon was following a purely Lombard source rather than Jordanes, who was a Goth.

Unlike the Goths, the Lombards had little contact with and were little influenced by non-Germanic peoples.

In his History of the Langobards, Paul the Deacon gives an account of the death of the Italo-Lombard king Alboin which certainly appears to come from a saga or chanson de geste.(242)

Briefly, Cunimund, king of the Gepids, made war on the Lombards.

However, with the help of the Avars, Alboin, king of the Lombards, defeated the Gepids in battle, slew Cunimund and made a

drinking cup of his skull.

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We wish to digress for a moment to note that this custom, i.e., making a drinking cup out of the skull of a slain enemy, barbaric as it may seem, was common among many Celtic, Germanic, and Iranian peoples. The Scandinavian toast *skoal*, used to this day, and is the name of a brand of beer, literally means "skull", and originates from the use of said custom among the Vikings. As late as the 16th century, Shah Ismail, founder of the Safavi Dynasty of Persia, made a drinking cup of the skull of Shaibani, Khan of the Uzbeks.(243)

Alboin then married Rosemund, daughter of Cunimund. At a banquet in Verona, Italy, Alboin, apparently a bit tipsy, ordered the cup made from the skull of Cunimund to be given to Rosemund, and invited her to drink merrily with her father. Paul the Deacon, though not of course present at said banquet, testifies that the cup made from Cunimund's skull was shown to him by the Lombard king Ratchis. In any case, Rosemund became so anguished at this that she vowed to kill Alboin, and plotted with Helmechis, Alboin's armor-bearer (*scilpor* in Lombard) and a man named Peredeo, with whom she committed adultery, disguising herself as a serving wench with whom Peredeo was sleeping. Peredeo devised a plan. While Alboin was asleep, Rosemund bound his sword to the bed so that it could not be drawn nor unsheathed, and let in Helmechis the murderer. Unable to draw his sword, Alboin was easily

murdered.

There appears to be a reference to Alboin in the so-called

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"Traveler's Song" or *Widsith*, probably composed about the middle of the 6th century, in other words, roughly contemporary with the event.(244)

It is interesting to note that the names *Peredeo* and *Alboin* both have a strongly Celtic flavor, "Peredeo" closely resembling the Welsh *Peredur*, while "Alboin" closely resembles the Gaelic *Alba*, originally, meaning "sunrise", or, by extension, "East". "Alba" was originally the Gaelic name for all Great Britain, it being east of Ireland, and to this day is the Gaelic name for Scotland. We have noted the survival of "alba" in Old Provençal, with its original meaning of "sunrise". Did the Lombards acquire these Celtic names in the course of their migrations, or did they acquire them in North Italy, either from the Ostrogoths or from the Celtic substratum there?

In fact, it may be considered certain that Paul the Deacon did NOT take his belief in the Scandinavian origin of the Lombards from Jordanes; it is far more likely that he took said idea from an anonymous Latin work called Origin of the Nation of the Langobards, contained in three ancient manuscripts and partially contained in another. This work, called Origo for short, states that the Lombards or Langobards originally came from Scandinavia, and were first called *Winniles*. The date of this work is unknown, but it is certainly older than the time of Paul the Deacon, as he obviously uses it as a source in several places.

Unless one is to implacably insist that the theory of Scandinavian origin must proceed from Jordanes, there is nothing in the Origo

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which seems to proceed from the Italo-Ostrogothic historian. It has been rather convincingly demonstrated that up until it describes events which occurred around the year 500 AD, the Origo is derived from a Germanic epic.(245) Incidentally, Paul the Deacon's account of the death of Alboin differs somewhat from that of the Origo. Now, the death of Alboin falls well within that part of the Origo which is considered to be of purely historical or non-epic origin. Paul the Deacon's account of the death of Alboin has far more of an epic flavor than does that of the Origo.

One may assume that the Lombard epic tradition continued in Italy, and that Paul the Deacon used a saga or chanson de geste as the source of his account of the death of Alboin.

It is therefore demonstrated that the Lombards had a very ancient epic tradition, far older than any which survive in the original Germanic language (the Origo is redacted in Latin), and that this Lombard epic tradition continued among the Lombards in Italy. Though not very closely kin to the Goths, the Lombards were also of Scandinavian precedence.

As Lee M. Hollander notes:

"A Gothic lay about the death of Hamthir and Sorli is known to have existed already in the sixth century."
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In summary, to affirm on chronological grounds that the Goths could not have had an epic tradition is demonstrably false, another example of the torpid, idiotized positivism or blind,

closed-minded, irrational skepticism of many of those who consider

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themselves to be "realistic", "rigorous" and "scientific".

However, I also believe it necessary to point out that the Celtic peoples have a very ancient and extensive epic tradition, that Old Castile was Celtic territory very thinly Romanized, so that the Castilian epic must contain a Celtic substratum. I also wish to point out that the logical and indeed inevitable sequel to the Visigothic theory is that the Castilian epic must inevitably contain a very strong Iranian element. It is, of course, this second point which interests us at the moment.

Before the expansion first of the Huns and later the Turks and Mongols, an immense area from Hungary to the frontiers of China was occupied by nomad peoples who were ethnically and linguistically Iranians. These peoples were divided into tribes and confederations, among which were the Scythians, the Sarmatians, the Alans and many others. The word "Scythian" comes from the Iranian *skuth*, which means "archer"(247). The Persians called all these nomadic Iranian peoples of the great Eurasian steppe by the generic name Saka, although they also had names for the various divisions of the Sakas. The word "Saka" has a variant, *Sai*.(248) The word "Saka" is related to the Avestan *saxta* (*sakhta*), i.e., "strong, tough"(249) and to the Vedic *s'ak* (*shak*), i.e., "to be able, strong".(250-251) *S'ak* appears in the Rig Veda in the form *s'aknoti*, used as an epithet for "men" (252-253). In Classical Sanskrit *s'ak* means "to be able, strong".(254) For convenience we will use the name "Saka" to refer to said

Iranian nomads, except when referring to a particular division of

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them. The Sakas had a very extensive and varied epic tradition. The Ossetians, a people of the North Caucasus who speak an Iranian language and appear to be descendants of the Sakas, have an epic cycle called Nart, and no doubt had other cycles now lost.(255)

Another proof of the existence of the Saka epic, perhaps much more important, is the fact that all or nearly all Iranists seem to agree that the Persian Epic is in large part of Saka rather than purely Persian origin.

The Shah Namah, "Book of Kings", by the great poet Firdausi, is, as we said before, the principal work of the Persian Epic, and includes various Iranian epic cycles.

Edward G. Browne (256) noted that, besides elements which proceed from the Avesta (a product of Eastern Iran, of Bactria and Khurasan) and from Sassanian sources, a great part of the Shah Namah proceeds from epic materials from Seistan. Browne also noted (257) that the Garshasp Namah, an epic cycle not included in the Shah Namah, redacted by Asadi the Younger of Tus, also proceeds from Seistan. It should be noted here that Firdausi (258) and Asadi (259) were both Khurasanis, from Tus, near Meshed, and thus belonged to the Eastern rather than the Western Iranian World, or Persia properly speaking.

Both works, the Shah Namah (260) and the Garshasp Namah (261) are written in the *mathnavi* verse form, a typically Persian form, and contain a minimum of Arabic words, only 4% - 5%, not much more than normal English, and considerable less than normal Spanish.

What I have said above is important, because in the 1st - 2nd

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centuries BC Seistan was occupied by the Sakas, which changed the ethnic composition of the population. Seistan was known as Sakastan under the Parthians and the early Sassanians (262-263), and the name Seistan comes from Saka in the variant *Sai*.(264)

Following Browne, Richard N. Frye has developed a great deal the idea of the Saka origin of a great part of the Persian epic. Frye divides the non-Sassanian parts of said epic into two divisions; one derived from Avestan material, which he calls Kayanian, from the Kavis (the Avestan word *Kavi* is *Kai* or *Kay* in Pahlavi), the "taifa kings" (265-266-267) of Eastern Iran. This includes Seistan, known as *Zranka* in the time of Zoroaster, from whence the name *Drangiane* used by the Seleucids.(268) The other division might be called "Saka" or "nomad", from the Sakas of Seistan and Central Asia, including Sogdia and Khwarazm, where the non-nomad population spoke Sogdian and Khwarazmian.(269)

The relations between the Parthians and the Sakas in Eastern Iran are little known.(270) The Parthians themselves were of Saka origin, somewhat Persianized during their long stay in Khurasan (271-272). Their language never completely lost its Saka elements.(273) This origin no doubt helped make it easier for the Parthians to maintain good relations with the Sakas than it was for the Greeks, Persians or Indians. (274) In Indian sources it would appear that the Parthians (called *Pahlavas* in said sources) and the Sakas were allies in their Indian conquests. In the Indian kingdom of the Sakas and Pahlavas, Saka and Parto-Pahlava

names appear together on the coins of the realm, and among the

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kings Saka names such as *Maues*, *Azes*, and *Aziles* alternate with Partho-Pahlava names such as *Gondophares*, *Orthagnes* and *Pakores* (275-276-277).

Therefore it would appear certain that conditions in Eastern Iran in Parthian times were optimum for the sort of synthesis proposed by Frye; that the Kayanian and Saka epic traditions were combined under the Parthians, who no doubt added something of their own traditions.(278)

As we have said in other places, the Arthurian Cycle is Celtic at base, with which many Iranian - both Saka and Persian - elements have combined; therefore, this cycle is of great interest to us. The Arthurian Romance Tristan and Isolt is of special interest to us, for reasons which shall be made clear.(279)

First, we must define a few terms. The term "France" has had different meanings in different times and places. In the Chanson de Roland, "France" refers only to the Ile de France, a rather small region with Paris as its center. In the 12th century, "France" referred to the area in which was spoken Old French, the *Langue d'oïl*. This would be the northern part of modern France plus the French-speaking part of Belgium and minus Brittany and Alsace; it did **NOT** include Occitania, where was spoken the *Langue d'Oc* or Provençal, which was the southern part of modern France plus Catalunya and minus the *Pays Basque*, the Basque Country.. In other words, in the 12th century the expressions "France" and "Occitania" had linguistic rather than political meanings. Henry

II Plantagenet and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine

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held extensive lands in both "France" and "Occitania". Eleanor's first language was the Langue d'Oc or Provençal, though of necessity she later had to learn Old French or the Langue d'Oïl. Henry II himself read Latin, Provençal and French, but spoke only French and Provençal. In 1172 a mysterious personage came to bring a warning to Henry II, greeting the king in the 12th century English *God holde thee, cuning, (God keep you, king)* " Henry II then turned to the knight Philip of Norcross and said to him in French: "Ask that peasant whether he has dreamed all this". The knight then addressed the peasant in English. Since this story comes from Philip of Norcross himself, there is no reason to doubt its veracity.(280) This shows that Henry II was able to understand English at least to some extent, but did not speak it. No surprise here; I understand Catalan, but do not speak it. Some might say that Henry II spoke through the knight as a mark of social distance, but this would have been totally out of character for him. Firstly, kings do not like to reveal their ignorance of certain things. Also, in the Middle Ages kings were at least as accessible as presidents today, probably more so., and Henry II was not one to deliberately distance himself from his subjects, even if they did happen to be Saxons. The above agrees with the observation by Walter Map, who said that "Henry II had some knowledge of every language from the (English) Channel to the river Jordan, but himself employed only Latin and French".(280) Walter Map was probably mistaken: Henry II may have learned to

speak Provençal from his wife Eleanor and the Provençal troubadors

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which she brought in her train. Also, Henry II was acquainted with the Provençal troubador Bertran de Born, with whom he communicated without an interpreter. It is less likely that Bertran de Born spoke French than it is that Henry II spoke Provençal; Henry II's wife spoke Provençal, but nothing indicates that Bertran de Born had a French-speaking wife.

Henry II's wife Eleanor of Aquitaine all her life spoke only Provençal and French. Even forty years after her marriage to Henry II, Eleanor needed an interpreter when speaking to the English population.(281)

Of all the versions which exist of Tristan and Isolt, probably the most important is that of Thomas of Brittany, because it is relatively early, because it contains much material from Welsh and Breton sources, and because all or almost all versions which we have today depend wholly or in part of that of Thomas of Brittany.

Some believe that Thomas was an Anglo-Norman, but this is obviously wrong, because it involves using the name "Britain" in its modern English usage, and not in that of the 12th century.

In Roman times, "Britain" referred to what we now call the island of Great Britain. This was changed by the Saxon invasions, after which there was no Britain, but rather England, Cornwall, Wales, the Welsh kingdom of Strathclyde and Scotland. Only at times in Cornwall, Wales, Strathclyde and Brittany did the name "Britain" continue to refer to the island of Great Britain. The

Saxon invasions also caused a large migration of Celtic Britons to

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that large peninsula which the Romans called "Armorica", but which henceforth would be known as "Brittany". Now, in English, "Britain" and "Brittany" are two distinct words. However, in many languages, including French, Provençal, Spanish, Catalan, Italian and German, "Britain" and "Brittany" are the same word; if one wishes to specify that one is referring to the island of Great Britain, then one must say "Great Britain", since the island is much larger than the peninsula. Thus, in French, Provençal and German in the 12th and 13th centuries, "Thomas of Britain" would have meant "Thomas of Brittany". "Thomas of Brittany" was not an Anglo-Norman, he was a Breton.

This is not to say that the earliest version of Tristan and Isolt is that of Thomas; the roots of said legend go far back in Celtic and perhaps Indo-European antiquity. Thomas of Brittany's version of Tristan and Isolt is simply the model for all or almost all later versions, as we said above. In fact, Thomas' version has survived only in fragments. Gottfried von Strassburg, who wrote the version of the legend which is probably the most widely read, said that he based his version on that of Thomas. Much more recently, Joseph Bedier has attempted to reconstruct the version of Thomas.

Thomas of Brittany was a poet attached to the court of Henry II Plantagenet and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine. This is not a surprise. Henry II was a Norman on his mother's side and an Angevin on his father's side, his father being Geoffroy, Duke of

Anjou, known as "Geoffroy Plantagenet", from whence comes the

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name of the dynasty. There were numerous Bretons in the army of William the Conqueror at the battle of Hastings, the Bretons having come to fight their ancestral enemies, the Saxons. Very likely Taillefer, who killed the first Saxon in William's invasion of England, was a Breton. The Dukes of Anjou were partly of Breton ancestry. Geoffroy "*Li Bel*" (The Handsome) son of Henry II and Eleanor, married the beautiful Constance, Duchess of Brittany, and their son was named "Arthur". The Norman kings and at least the early Plantagenets, as we have said, Henry II was the first of the Plantagenet kings, showed a considerable predilection for Welshmen, in part because they were not Saxons. Thus, Thomas of Brittany no doubt encountered many Welshmen and Cornishmen in the court of Henry II. Henry II's wife, Eleanor of Poitou, later Eleanor of Aquitaine, had Welsh connections, though she had no Welsh nor Breton ancestry. The Welsh bard Bledhri was a court poet for the Counts of Poitou from 1100 to 1137, where he established a fashion for tales of Sir Gawain, Sir Tristan and the other knights of King Arthur.(282) This would have been during the reign of Eleanor's father, William, Count of Poitou (Provençal: *Guilhem Coms de Peitieu*), so Eleanor was familiarized with Arthurian romances, including that of Tristan, from an early age.

Eleanor was not only a patroness of troubadors, she inspired them, as she was a great beauty. Of the bards and troubadors attracted to the court of the Counts of Poitou was Bernard de Ventadour (Provençal: *Bernart de Ventadorn*). Below is a song by

Bernart de Ventadorn whose date is uncertain, but scholars agree

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that it cannot be later than 1154:

My heart is so filled with joy
That I am totally transfigured
As flowers white, red and yellow
So does the cold appear to me,
The wind and rain
Only increase my vigor,
So that my merit increases and my singing improves.
So much love have I in my heart,
So much joy and sweetness,
That the ice becomes a flower
And the snow becomes verdure.
I can go outdoors unclothed,
Naked save for my shirt,
Because true love immunizes me
Against the cold breeze.
But foolish is he who underestimates me,
And does not judge rightly,
For this reason I am careful in judging myself,
Since I have fallen in love
With the most beautiful lady,
From whom I hope to receive much honor,
Which honor I prefer to Pisa.

I am separated from her affections,
But I have confidence
Because at least,
I have conquered
The beautiful image;
And separating myself from her
I feel such happiness,
So that the day that I see her
I shall feel no remorse.
My heart is near to love,
So that my spirit flies toward it,
But my body is here, in another place,
Far from her, (who is) in France.
I have high hopes.
But it will serve for little,
Because thus I am in the balance
As the ship to the wave.
So badly am I demoralized
That I know not where to hide.
All night I toss and turn,
Till I am at the edge of the bed
I suffer for the sake of love

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**More than Tristan, who in love,
Suffered such pains
For Isolt the Fair Haired.**

Alas, oh my God! Why can I not be a swallow,
That flies through the air
And, in the darkest night,
Enters her sleeping chamber!
Excellent and gentle lady,
He who is in love with you dies for your love!
I fear that my heart will break,
If all this agony is prolonged.
Lady, for your love
I fold my hands and worship.
Gentle lady of fresh countenance,
What pains you make me suffer!
There is nothing in the world
Which so causes me to worry,
As when I hear something about her,
My heart does not pound and her likeness does not appear in
My imagination,
Anything that you hear me say,
To you it appears that I am about to laugh.
So much do I love you with true love,
That often I weep,
For to me sweeter is the savor of sighs.
Messenger, go and run
And say for my part to the most gentle ady
Of the pain and anguish
Which I suffer, and the martyrdom.

Note that Bernart de Ventadorn was from the Limousin (Provençal: *Lemozi*), named for the Celtic tribe *Lemovices*, cradle of the troubador verse. The Limousin or Lemozi is thus outside the Breton, Welsh, Cornish and French-speaking areas. Though he may have learned to speak French, Bernart de Ventadorn wrote all his songs and verses in Provençal, and the song given above was certainly meant for those who spoke and read Provençal. The brevity of the reference to Tristan and Isolt in the above song indicates that Bernart de Ventadorn was confident that his Provençal-speaking audience was familiar with the Tristan legend,

and this in the early part of the decade of the 1150's.

So Thomas of Brittany had access to a great many versions of the Tristan legend: from his own Breton heritage, from the Welshmen and Cornishmen he must have encountered at the court of Henry II, and from any versions of said legend which were brought by the Provençal troubadors who accompanied Eleanor of Poitou or Eleanor of Aquitaine to the court of Henry II. As Thomas of Brittany himself said, he knew many versions of the legend of Tristan and Isolt, and it was his task to harmonize them, or, in the original Old French or Langue d'Oïl, "*én uni drie*", which Joseph Bedier translated as "*donner au milieu de variants contradictoires de la legend, un recit logique et coherent*", which in English would be "To give to the multitude of contradictory variants a logical and coherent statement".(283)

The above indicates that Thomas of Brittany was very much a polyglot, speaking, reading, and writing his native Breton, Welsh, French, and very likely Provençal, as Provençal was widely spoken in the court of Henry II due to the influence of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Breton and Welsh are so close as to be very nearly mutually intelligible; I have heard this from both Bretons and Welshmen. So, being a Breton, Thomas could have - and apparently did - learn Welsh easily and quickly. Only someone fluent in both Breton and Welsh could have had the linguistic ability to be familiar with "*au milieu de variants contradictoires de la legend*", i.e., "the multitude of contradictory variants of the legend".

Some have said that the legend of Tristan and Isolt is simply a 12th century French and Provençal romance which contains some exotic Welsh and Breton names. However, this is not the case. As Roger Sherman Loomis has pointed out, the whole Arthurian Cycle contains much ancient Celtic material, and as others have noted, the whole Arthurian Cycle, including Tristan and Isolt, also contains much Iranian material, both Saka and Persian; we shall return to this Iranian material later.

One must be careful not to consider "Celtic" on the one hand and "French" and "Provençal" on the other as being totally alien to one another and being diametrically opposed. France (in the 12th century sense) and Occitania both contain a very visible and potent Celtic substratum, and said substratum was no doubt more visible and more potent in the 12th century than it is today, after the so-called "Enlightenment" and the French Revolution have done their utmost to obliterate the Celtic heritage in France and Occitania. This is not to say that there were not great differences between the ancient Celtic World on the one hand and 12th century France and Occitania on the other.

Notes Gertrude Schoepperle Loomis:

"The story of Tristan as it was first conceived, and conceived in no less of tragic beauty than in the forms in which we now have it, was Celtic. Gaston Paris, in the glowing pages in which he discusses it, speaks to us of the story of Tristan as we have it, in Eilhart, in Beroul and in Thomas *is* French (and Provençal), and Monsieur Bedier, in his discussion of it, speaks to us of the story as it *is*.

We have tried to show, by examining in detail Celtic romances of a character similar to Tristan, that the stories current among the Celts in the 12th century

not only reflect a *milieu* entirely different from that with which the 12th century French (and Provençal) poets were familiar, but that they imply sentiments, emotions, conceptions of honor, moral ideas - an entire psychology different from the French (and Provençal). A Celtic story would have to be altered, in fact almost transformed, before it could be presented to a French (or Provençal) audience. The poet must infuse into the Celtic lovers the spirit of French (and Provençal) chivalry." (284)

While Ms. Schoepperle Loomis overstates the case in implying that "Celtic" and "French" or "Provençal" are utterly incompatible and diametrically opposed - like the Iranian peoples but very unlike the Romans, the pre-Roman, pre-Christian Celts were familiar with romantic love; also very like the Iranian peoples and very unlike the Romans, the pre-Roman, Pre-Christian Celts had a code of chivalry and sense of honor which differed little from that of their 12th century French and Provençal speaking descendants - she is right in pointing out that, with the exception of a few Welsh and Breton *lais*, the Arthurian Cycle as we know it has been filtered through a 12th century French and Provençal crystal. However, it should be emphasized that there is great continuity between the pre-Roman, pre-Christian Celts and their French, Occitan and Spanish descendants, who did **NOT** inherit romantic love, chivalry and their sense of honor from the Romans, as the Romans knew nothing of such things.

Tristan excels at jousting, fencing, putting the stone, hurling the lance, wrestling and leaping. Wrestling was one of the chief exercises of the heroes of the Irish epics. Of Cu Chulainn, the Ulster Cycle says:

"When they wrestled, he (Cu Chulainn) would throw the same thrice fifty to the ground beneath him and a sufficient number of them to hold him could not get to him."(285)

Tristan performs various prodigious leaps, notably when he leaps from the chapel window to the sea.

In Bricriu's Feast, part of the Ulster Cycle, we read:

"Fighting from ears of horses and over the breaths of men, springing in air like a salmon when he springs the spring of heroes.

Rarest of feats he (Cu Chulainn) performs, the leap that is birdlike he leaps. Bounding over pools of water, he performs the feat *cless nonbair*."(286)

In the Leinster or Fenian Cycle, Diarmaid also performs prodigious leaps.

Marie de France is often considered to be the greatest woman poet of the Middle Ages, though some of the female troubadors of Occitania could give her stiff competition. Her name indicates that she was a native of what is today northern France, and it is known that she was a noblewoman attached to the court of Henry II. Many believe that Marie de France was the illegitimate daughter of Geoffroy Plantagenet, Count of Anjou, which would make her the half-sister of Henry II; this theory is congruent with all known facts. No physical descriptions of Marie de France survive, but one likes to believe that she possessed the Plantagenet beauty.

Marie de France says that she derived most of her famous *lais* from *lais* in the Breton language. By many scholars it is taken as axiomatic, *a priori*, that Marie de France was familiar with the Breton *lais* only by second hand, i.e., by way of French

versions or translations. There is no way to know the truth of this; however, I do not see why it should be taken as axiomatic that Marie de France was not acquainted with the Breton *lais* in the original Breton language; quite the contrary.

The early Plantagenets, of whom Marie de France was one, were known for their talent and ease in learning languages. Henry II and his sons Richard *Coeur de Lion* (the Lionheart), and Geoffrey *Li Bel* (The Handsome) were all famously polyglot. Of course, Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of Henry II and mother of Richard and Geoffrey, learned French only with difficulty, and after forty years as queen of England, never learned to speak nor understand English. But then, Eleanor was not a Plantagenet.

Also, as we have noted, the early Plantagenets had many close relations with the enchanting land of Brittany. We know little of the biography of Marie de France, but apparently she spent most of her life in the Continental possessions of the Pantagenets, rather than in Great Britain. Very likely she lived in Brittany for some time.

The mastering of a language is not and either/or proposition. I read several languages - French, Catalan, Provencal, Portuguese, Italian, Romanian - which I am unable to speak or to understand when spoken. I have a Pakistani friend who is perfectly fluent in spoken Urdu and Punjabi, but is unable to read or write them. I have known people who were able to understand French, but were unable to speak it. So, it is not a question of Marie de France either being totally ignorant of the Breton language or of her

having mastered it in all respects, spoken and written. As we shall see, there are indeed reasons which lead one to believe that Marie de France had some knowledge of the Breton language. In summary, I consider it very probable, indeed virtually certain, that Marie de France knew the Breton *lais* in the original language. As to her level of mastery of the Breton language, I do not care to speculate.

As Ernest Hoepffner notes:

"...there was mention of certain "Breton *lais*", short narrative poems in (Old) French which in their subject-matter sometimes display a marked resemblance to episodes found in the Arthurian romances. There are other *lais* which, though offering no close parallel in incident to the romances, deal with Arthurian characters or are localized at Arthur's court. There are still others, the majority, which bear no relation to the longer works of fiction attached to the knights of the Round Table. These short poems known as Breton *lais* began to be composed in verse about the middle of the twelfth century and shared the widespread popularity of the Arthurian romances well into the fourteenth century, some of them being freely rendered into (old) Norse, English, German, and Italian. Some *lais* have been preserved only in these foreign forms and some have been lost altogether, though their names have survived, such as *Merlin le Suavage* and *Mabon*.

The problem of the origin of the genre has not yet found a definitive answer, but some inferences may be drawn from the use of the word *lai* in what seem to be earlier senses, and from the fact generally accepted by scholars, that it is related to the Irish (Gaelic) word *laid*, meaning a "song". Certain early uses of the term imply that it meant both a song and its musical accompaniment. The poet Thomas (of Brittany), in a charming scene, presents Isolt singing the *lai* of Guiron. When Benoit de Ste-Maure compares the melodious cries of the Amazons to the Breton *lais*, he is evidently thinking of a vocal rather than instrumental compositions. On the other hand, Wace says that Baldulf was skilled in the art of harping "*lais* and melodies (*notes*)", and that the *jongleurs* at the court of King Arthur performed "*lais* of *vielles*, *lais* of *rotes*, harps, and flutes". One can thus understand how

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Chretien de Troyes in *Cliges* could speak of two

combatants who "played lais on the helms" with their swords. Apparently the word *lai* first referred indifferently to the words of a song or the tune. Of such songs no example has survived, but one may conclude from the high admiration they evoked that the music was complicated and artistic.

What, then, is the relation between the extant narrative poems and the songs, called Breton lais, which are forever lost? This is no easy question to answer. Marie de France stresses the titles of her lais. In *Eliduc* and *Chaitivel* she gives two titles; sometimes she gives the same title in two or three different languages. The fact that two of these alternative titles, *Laustic* and *Bisclavret*, are Breton, and a third, *Guildeluec ha Gualadun*, contains the Breton conjunction *ha* suggests that she had heard Breton *jongleurs* (*barzh*, the Breton word for "bard", would seem to be more appropriate in this case) announce their songs in this way. The song, then, would have been in the Breton tongue, and a tale would be told in (Old) French for the benefit of those who did not understand Breton, explaining the circumstances which were supposed to have inspired the song. The relation seems to have been like that between the Provençal *razo*, a short prose narrative prefixed to certain troubador lyrics, and the lyrics themselves. Thus the term *lai* was extended from the original Breton composition, which embraced both music and words, to the oral narrative in (Old) French, the *cunte* or *reisun* (*Eliduc*, verses 1-4), which preceded or followed it. The term was further extended to a literary composition in verse, based on an oral tale. Only lais in this third sense were written down and have survived and only those which have an Arthurian connexion are treated here.

The earliest surviving lai is probably the *Lai du Cor* of Robert Biket. It is archaic in its verse form, being composed in six-syllable verses instead of the normal octosyllables; archaic also is the rather crude humor with which it treats the great King Arthur and his court. Indeed, Lucien Foulet and Bruce refused to accept the poem as a genuine lai because of its unromantic tone, and classed it as a *fabliau*. But must a Breton lai necessarily be serious and sentimental? Must it treat Arthur's fellowship with high respect? There are other poems called lais which are even more grossly cynical, and Chretien (de Troyes) himself is by no means consistently flattering in his portrayal of King Arthur.

The *Lai du Cor* has been dated in the third quarter
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of the twelfth century, but not by conclusive criteria. Of Biket we know nothing except that his language betrays the Anglo-Norman. He professes to have heard the tale from an abbot, and asserts that the magic horn was

to be seen at Cirencester - statements which there is no more reason to doubt than that there was shown at St. Seurin at Bordeaux what professed to be the hon of Roland. Though Cirencester was then not more than twenty miles from the Welsh-speaking district beyond the Severn, it is significant that the personal names which Biket introduces are as remote from the corresponding Welsh forms as the names in any Continental French romance.

The hero of the *Lai du Cor* is a figure known to Chretien de Troyes as Karadues Briebraz (Short-arm), to the Bretons as Karadoc Brech Bras (Armstrong), and to the Welsh as Catadawc Vreichvras. The manuscript of the lai gives the name as Garadue. It also gives other well-known names: Arzurs, Artu, Gauuein, Gauwain, Iuuein, Iuwain, Giflet, Keerz, Lot, and Mangounz. Aguisiaus d.Escoce may have been borrowed from Chretien's *Erec*. Kadoins, Kadoiners, Gohers, Glouien, Caratouns, and Galahal are of uncertain derivation, and are not recognizably Welsh. It seems clear that neither Biket nor his alleged informant derived his material directly from the lands across the Severn.

The general theme of the lai is found at different times and under different forms in the folk-lore of many peoples. In this poem it is a drinking-horn which is sent to Arthur's court at Caerleon by King Mangiun of Moraine, and which has the property of exposing the slightest infidelity of a wife. Arthur insists on the experiment and, when he tries to drink, is drenched with wine from top to toe. He would have killed the queen if his knights had not intervened. But he covers his good humor when he finds that all who follow his example are similarly disillusioned by the magic horn, and he pardons her with a kiss. Finally Garadue passes the test triumphantly, and Arthur awards him the lordship of Cirencester.

Though stories of chastity tests are spread far and wide, and though the *Lai du Cor* was not derived directly from the Welsh, it may be significant that all medieval versions of the horn test are set in Arthur's banquet hall, and that the hero bears a name renowned in Wales and Brittany.

One cannot affirm that Biket knew Chretien's *Erec*, but he must have known Wace. The list of royal guests, the toast "Wesseil" which Garadue proposed to Arthur, the respectful treatment of Keerz (Kay), and certain stylistic features assure us of the fact. Though nearly

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contemporary with Chretien's earliest work, *Lai du Cor* belongs to an older world, and its importance lies largely in shedding light on the nature of Arthurian fiction before the influence of Chretien was felt.

About fifty years after Biket had treated the theme

of the chastity-testing horn it was again taken up by the anonymous author of the First Continuation of Chretien's *Perceval* and introduced as the final episode in a sort of biography of Caradoc. The principal characters are the same, the horn is again described as banded with gold and set with jewels, and other details suggest familiarity with the lai. But the differences are many. The town of Cirencester is not mentioned, nor are the sweet-sounding bells attached to the horn. The proper names assume a more familiar form: Caradoc's wife, nameless in the lai, is called Guigier; and even the horn is equipped with a name which varies from manuscript to manuscript but appears in two of them as Beneiz, Beneoiz. Guenievre, foreseeing that her infidelity will be revealed, prays God that the horn will spill its contents over her husband, and when this occurs Arthur interprets his humiliation as a miraculous answer to prayer rather than as proof of his wife's guilt - a clever bit of comedy which reminds one of Isolt's cynical use of the ambiguous oath in Beroul. The *Livre de Caradoc* thus provides an instructive example of how the material of a lai was modified to fit into a romance. (287)

Ernest Hoepffner continues:

"...If we tuen back chronologically to the period about 1160 we meet a poet with a different spirit and far greater talent who composed at least twelve Breton *lais* in standard literary French with Norman coloring - the woman already referred to as Marie de France. '*Marie ai nom si sui de France*', [Marie is my name, I am of France], she declares in her *Ysopet*, and by this she presumably meant that her childhood home had been in France as distinct from the great duchies of Burgundy, Berry, Aquitaine, etcetera. She certainly had been well educated and moved in high society, dedicating her *lais* to a 'noble king', probably identified as Henry II, and her *Ysopet* to a *cunte Willame*', possibly William Longsword, natural son of Henry. The *lais* would therefore have been composed between 1155 and 1189, the date of Henry's death. The *Ysopet* followed, and her last work, the *Espurgatoire St. Patrice*, was written after 1189. An identification of the poet with Marie, half-sister of King Henry II, who became Abbess of Shaftsbury and died about 1216,

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would fit in with these dates and facts. Another plausible theory would identify the 'noble king' with Henry II's son Henry [*Li Roi Jeune*, i.e., "The Young King"], crowned during his father's lifetime [this seems unlikely to me, as Henry *Li Roi Jeune* died some years before his father], and the Count William with William

Marshall, Earl of Pembroke.

Living in England, the poet must have listened to the Breton singers and *conteurs* who were then fascinating courtly circles with their strange musical compositions and their fabulous tales. She tells us frankly in her prologue to the *lais* [once again, note her use of an indisputably Celtic word] that she intended to employ her talents on translating some Latin narrative into French, but, finding the field occupied, she had decided to make a collection of *lais*, turn them into rhyme, and make poems of them. '*Rimez en ai e fait ditie.*'

Though familiarity with [the Norman poet] Wace's *Brut* may account for the reference to the feast of St. Aaron ar Carlion in *Yonec* and for the introduction of Hoel as King of Brittany in *Guigemar*, this is not the only explanation possible, and in any case it does not bring these poems within the Arthurian Cycle. The employments of certain supernatural motifs which appear later in Arthurian settings, such as the chase of the white hind in *Guigemar* and the werewolf in *Bisclavret*, does not make these poems Arthurian. Only two of Marie's *lais* can be so defined with any justice. To be sure, one of the, *Lai du Chevrefoil*, may be excluded since Arthur is not named and there is no assurance that Marie linked Tristan, the hero, with Arthur's court; but since that association was firmly established by [the Norman poet] Beroul's time [last decade of 12th century], not long after, and has continued down to our own day, *Le Chevrefoil* may be considered to lie within the scope of this chapter.

Though containing only 118 verses, it was, judging by many references to it in later literature, one of Marie's most popular poems. She adopts the convention of ascribing to the hero the original musical composition: '*Tristram, ki bien saveit harper, En aveit fet un nuvel lai.*' [Tristan, who well knew how to play the harp, later composed a new *lai*.]. She gives us also the more reliable information that she heard stories of the loves of Tristan and the queen [Isolt] from many persons [probably including Thomas of Brittany] and had also found them in writing. Indeed, she assumes on the part of her readers a complete familiarity with the romance, and the incident she relates is remotely similar to one told by the German, Eilhart von Oberg.

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Tristan returns from exile in South Wales to Cornwall, and in order to inform the queen of his presence, he carves his name on a hazel rod and leaves it in the road along which she is to pass. She does indeed spy the token, stops her cavalcade, and on the pretext of resting leaves them to meet her lover. Though soon parted again from the queen, Tristan composed the *lai* in

remembrance of the joy he had in the meeting and in order to preserve the words he had written at the queen's direction.

What were these words? - a question much discussed by scholars. Marie tells us: Tristan has long waited the chance to see the queen, for he cannot live without her. It is with them as with the honeysuckle (*chevrefeuil*) and the hazel tree. When the vine has twined itself about the hazel trunk, they may may endure together, but, separated, they die. '*Bele amie, si est de nus: Ne vus sanz mei, ni mei sanz vus*'. [Beautiful lover, you cannot live without me, nor I without you.] In this couplet we have the essence of the whole Tristan legend. In its harmonious simplicity it reveals not only the art of Marie but also the profound feeling with which she entered into the sorrows and the joys of her characters. It has the poignancy of that other couplet, recorded by Gottfried von Strassburg: '*Iseut ma drue, Iseut m'amie, En vous ma mort en vous ma vie*.' [Isolt my truth, Isolt my love, In you my death, in you my life].

Lanval also is one of the most brilliant and moving of Marie's *lais*, and tells a dramatic story. The titular hero, a king's son serving in Arthur's court, has fallen into disfavor and poverty. One day as he was lying, sad of heart, in a meadow, he was invited by two damsels to the tent of their mistress. She declared that she had left her land for his sake, granted him her love on condition that he would never reveal the secret, and even after his return to court supplied him mysteriously with wealth. Unfortunately Arthur's queen, unnamed, tried to seduce him, and in a reckless moment he boasted that even the handmaid of his mistress was lovelier and better bred than the queen. Thereupon she accused him to the king of improper advances, and Lanval was ordered to produce his faery mistress to prove that he had not slandered the queen. But since he had broken his promise of secrecy, the *fay* no longer visited him, and he was in despair. Summoned before the judges, Lanval confessed his inability to make good his rash words, but before decision was rendered against him two maidens, robed in cendal, rode in to ask hospitality for their lady. Presently two others arrived and created a sensation by their beauty. But

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Lanval had to admit that he did not know them. At last and in the nick of time his mistress arrived, riding a white palfrey, and all present, including the judges, agreed that Lanval was exonerated. As the *fay* rode away Lanval sprang onto the saddle behind her, and both departed to the isle of Avalon [Isle of Man; Gaelic; *Ellan Vannin* or *Mannin*]?

It would be unreasonable to dispute Marie's assertion that this story was told by the Bretons and

that the Bretons called its hero Lanval. Though as a man's name Lanval does not occur in historic records, two places called Lanvaux are to be found in Brittany and there was also a place called Lanvalay near Dinan. A Willelmus de Lanvaleio was seneschal of Rennes in Henry II's time. Two other Breton *lais*, *Desire* and *Graelent*, use the same plot, and the latter takes its title from an historic and also legendary figure, Gradlon, King of Cornouaille in the sixth century. And though various elements in the plot, such as the faery mistress and her taboo and her bestowal of wealth on her favorite can be matched in the folk-lore of many peoples, it should not be overlooked that they are found in the medieval epics of Ireland and in the modern folk tales of Wales and Brittany. And Giraldus Cambrensis himself testified that it was the '*fabulosi Britones et eorum cantores*' [the tales of the Bretons and their singers], not the Welsh, who told how Arthur had been borne away by a '*dea phantastica*' [fantastic goddess] named Morganis to the isle of Avalon [Isle of Man: Gaelic; *Ellan Vannin* or *Mannin*]?

A comparison with the analogous *Graelent* proves, however, that the Arthurian setting is not original. Can the queen who plays such a contemptible role in both *lais* be the Guenievre of romance? Doubtless Guenievre's reputation, as we have seen, was far from spotless, but this lying, vindictive female is someone else, and Marie recognized the fact by refusing to give her a name. Whether Marie was responsible for the localization of an originally independent *conte* at the court of Arthur, or merely accepted a connexion already made, one cannot say, but probably she added the reference in the opening lines to the raids of the Picts and Scots on the land of *Logres* [England, though in this context it obviously refers to Roman Britain], for this seems to be an echo of Wace. It is highly probable, also, that the very faithful correspondence between the judicial procedure described in the *lai* and that employed in actual trials is due to the accurate knowledge and realistic feeling of Marie. But her supreme achievement lies in her fine sense of the dramatic possibilities of her story, in the conduct of

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the passionate dialogue between the queen and Lanval, for example, or in the masterly use of suspense and climax in the arrival of the faery mistress. The poem is a triumph of sustained artistry.

There are two anonymous *lais* which, like *Lanval*, illustrate the tendency to bring non-Arthurian *lais* into the Arthurian orbit. Marie tells the story of the werewolf and his faithless wife in *Bisclavret* without mentioning a single name and without any historical setting. The author of *Melion* tells much the same story

but has fitted it with Arthurian names and an Arthurian background. Lucien Foulet and Bruce regard *Melion* as simply an adaptation of Marie's poem, but Kittredge in connexion with his elaborate study of *Arthur and Gorlagon* maintained that both *lais* had a common source. However that may be, the author of *Melion* has taken as the name of his werewolf hero a name occurring in Chretien's *Erec* and *Perceval* and other Arthurian romances. He has introduced Gauvain, Yvain, and King Ydel (a variant of Yder, invented to rhyme with *bel*). He has made considerable use of Wace, identifying the nameless king of *Bisclavret* with Arthur, '*ki les terres conquerait et qui donna les riches dons*', and referring specifically to his war with the Romans. As in Wace, there is an account of the devastation of Ireland, the slaughter of the cattle, the petition of the inhabitants to the king, and the succor which he brings them, though Wace attributes the calamity to Arthur's army while the *lai* attributes it to the band of wolves which Melion has gathered about him. The author of *Melion* thus built up a pseudo-Arthurian tale, more elaborate, more circumstantial than Marie's *Bisclavret*.

Tyolet is another anonymous *lai* originally independent of the Arthurian Cycle; its hero is never mentioned in any romance of the Round Table. But its author could not resist the attraction of the legend, and, as Lucien Foulet has shown, clumsily combined two major plots in an Arthurian framework. The first part is an imitation of Perceval's *enfances*, possibly based on Chretien's poem, but possibly on a common source. Whichever view is taken, one recognizes the famous tale of the orphan boy brought up by his widowed mother in the woods, his chance meeting with a knight, his curiosity about the knight's arms, his departure from his mother, and his arrival at Arthur's court. However, if the author was following Chretien's poem, he displayed his independence in several ways, particularly in the uncanny meeting of *Tyolet* with the '*chevalier beste*'. For it was no ordinary knight who appeared to the youth as a presage of his destiny, but a stag, which, standing on the far bank of a deep

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river, suddenly was metamorphosed into a splendid warrior, fully armed. Such transformations are typical of Breton *lais*, and this is a felicitous example.

The original *lai* of *Tyolet* probably began with the second part, since the hero is introduced as if the reader had never heard of him before. The daughter of the king of Logres, like other heroines of romance, rides on a white palfrey into Arthur's court to find a champion to undertake a perilous adventure. This turns out to be the quest of the stag with the white foot, an episode likewise found in the Second Continuation of

Chretien's *Perceval*, the *Didot Perceval*, *Perdur*, and the Dutch *Lancelot*. When other knights have failed, Tyolet sets out and succeeds in cutting off the white stag's foot, but is attacked by lions and left half dead. The motif of the false claimant, well known from its employment in the Tristan legend and elsewhere, follows. Gauvain searches for Tyolet, brings him back to court, the impostor is unmasked, and Tyolet wins the princess as his bride. Among the knights who kiss him on his return from his hazardous exploit are Gauvain, Uriain, Keu, Ewain, and Lodoer. The last name was recognized by Gaston Paris as a scibal corruption of Bedoer. Ewain (Yvain) is described here, as in the *Suite du Merlin* (*Huth Merlin*), as the son of the celebrated fay Morgan (*Morgan le Fae*) and this seems to be based on tradition, for the corresponding Welsh hero, Owain, is likewise described as the son of the fay Modron.

One cannot be dogmatic as to the precise sources from which the author of *Tyolet* derived his material, but Lucien Foulet has made it clear that he was familiar with Marie's *Lanval*. Does he wish to describe the young princess of Logres on her arrival at Arthur's court? He has only to recall Lanval's mistress riding on her white palfrey, accompanied by a hound. Does he wish to emphasize his heroine's beauty? He compares her to Dido and Helen, just as Marie compared Lanval's lady to Venus, Dido, and Lavinia. He even reproduced three lines from *Lanval*, almost verbatim.

The Breton *lais* attached to the Arthurian Cycle vary greatly in their artistic quality, but they include two of Marie's little masterpieces. The sources of the plots may lie sometimes in known surviving works, but not always. Wace frequently provided pseudo-historical detail. The most noteworthy conclusion to which the *lais* we have examined lead is that most of the tales which they tell had originally no association with Arthur and the court of Camelot. They illustrate the magnetic attraction of Arthur's name."(288)

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Says Helaine Newstead:

"...It is noteworthy that the various forms of the Tristan legend, unlike the romances of the (Holy) Grail, are fairly consistent. In spite of variations to be considered, the following synopsis may serve as the basis of our discussion of the legend's origin and growth.

A young noble or king named Rivalen came to Cornwall to take service with King Mark, fell in love with his sister Blancheflor, married her, and had by her a son Tristan. Blancheflor died the day the boy was born, and the orphan was brought up by a master. The

accomplished youth arrived at King Mark's court incognito and won his uncle's favor. He slew in combat the Irish champion Morholt, who had demanded a tribute of Cornish youths. A fragment of Tristan's sword, lodged in Morholt's skull, was removed and preserved by the Irish princess Isolt, who vowed to find the slayer of her uncle and avenge his death. Later, when Tristan was sent in search of a bride for King Mark, he reached Ireland and slew a dragon ravaging the land. As he lay unconscious, overcome by its poison, a false seneschal claimed the victory and the hand of the princess. But she discovered Tristan and tended his wounds. As he sat in a bath, she identified him as the slayer of Morholt by a breach in his sword matching the fragment she had kept. She spared his life only in order to save herself from the seneschal. After confounding the false claimant, Tristan won Isolt as his uncle's bride.

On the voyage to Cornwall a magic love potion intended for the bridal couple on their wedding night was given in error to Tristan and Isolt, who thenceforth were bound to each other by its spell. All duties and obligations were sacrificed to the demands of their consuming passion. The episodes deal in mounting suspense with the stratagems of the lovers to remain together and to escape the perils of detection. On the wedding night, Isolt, to conceal the loss of her virginity, persuaded her faithful attendant Brangain to take her place and then plotted to murder her to keep the secret, though afterwards she penitently cancelled the order. On another occasion, King Mark was induced by a spying dwarf to conceal himself in the branches of a tree beneath which the lovers had planned a rendezvous. His shadow revealed his presence to them, and they cleverly lulled his suspicions by a conversation suggesting their hostility to each other. The dwarf then plotted to trap the lovers by strewing flour on the floor of the royal chamber in the hope that Tristan's footprints would betray his visit to the

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queen's bed. Tristan outwitted the dwarf by leaping from his bed to Isolt's, but the effort broke open a wound that stained the queen's bed with blood. Since Mark was convinced of her guilt by the bloodstains, Isolt offered to swear publicly on red-hot iron that she was faithful to her husband [See the trial by fire of Siyavush in the Shah Namah of Firdausi as related in Chapter 9.]. She arranged for Tristan, disguised as a pilgrim, to meet her at the place appointed for the ordeal, and, stumbling apparently by accident into his arms, she was enabled to affirm the literal truth that no man save her husband and the pilgrim had ever embraced her. The red-hot iron left her unscathed, and Mark accepted this proof of her innocence.

Eventually, however, the king banished the lovers, and they fled into the forest of Morois. One day when Mark was hunting he discovered them asleep with a naked sword between them. Reassured once more of their innocence, he recalled Isolt, but sent Tristan into permanent exile. In Brittany Tristan gained the friendship of the ruler's son Kaherdin. Though suffering from his separation, Tristan was persuaded to marry his friend's sister, Isolt of the White Hands, because she bore the same name as his beloved. He remained faithful, nevertheless, to the Irish Isolt. One day, as his wife was riding with her brother and water happened to splash her leg, she remarked that Tristan had never been so bold with her. Accused by Kaherdin of neglecting her and so insulting his family, Tristan confessed that a more beautiful Isolt in Cornwall was his true love. To satisfy Kaherdin's demand for proof of this assertion, the friends travelled in disguise to Cornwall, where they spent the night with the queen and one of her maids. Kaherdin not only was convinced of the superior beauty of Isolt but he also fell in love with the maid. Although Isolt commanded her to lie with him, the clever maid outwitted her importune lover by putting him to sleep with the aid of a magic pillow placed beneath his head. Finally, after many other adventures following the return of the two friends to Brittany, Tristan was desperately wounded, and he sent for Isolt of Ireland to heal him. If she came with his messenger, the ship was to hoist white sails; if not, black sails. Isolt hastened to her lover, but his jealous wife falsely reported to him that the sails were black. He died in despair, and when Isolt found that she had arrived too late she died of grief beside him.

Abundant evidence for the Celtic origin of the legend has been assembled by Zimmer, Bedier, Deutschbeim Gertrude Schoepperle, and Rachel Bromwich, (677)

among others. Their studies revealed the contribution of Irish, Welsh, Cornish, and Breton tradition to the formation of the Tristan story before it was transmitted to the French romancers, as Bedier in particular has maintained, by the Breton *conteurs*. ... (289)

Helaine Newstead continues:

"...King Mark was renowned in Wales as well as in Cornwall. The most famous tradition about him - apart from his role in the love story - appears in an episode related by Beroul concerning a certain secret known only to the king's dwarf. Questioned by the curious barons, the dwarf promised to confide the secret to a hawthorn bush. They could overhear it if they wished, and he would remain technically faithful to his trust.

Accordingly, they listened as he announced to the bush the momentous news that King Mark had horse's ears. When the barons reported their knowledge to the king, he beheaded the dwarf.

This tale of the horse's ears was probably connected with King Mark at an early period, for in all Celtic languages his name means "horse". Onomastic stories of this kind are characteristic of Celtic narrative, and variants of this particular tale are found in Ireland, Wales, and Brittany, usually attached to a person whose name means "horse". Although the story turns up in other areas as well, its popularity in Celtic lands is natural since Celtic tradition is especially rich in names with an equine meaning. In Wales and Brittany the story of King Mark, who murdered his barbers to conceal his embarrassing secret, circulated as an independent folk-tale for more than 700 years. A Breton variant is the most likely source of Beroul's version.

When the Tristan legend migrated to Brittany, the basic outline of the plot and the relations of the main personages were already established. The Bretons, however, made a number of important modifications. The name of Tristan's father was changed to Rivalen, and an introductory romance was added about Tristan's parents, Rivalen of Brittany and Blancheflor, the sister of King Mark. This development may have been suggested by the fact that a certain lord of Vitre named Tristan, who ruled between 1030 and 1045, was the son of Rivalen. It would have been flattering to his descendants to imagine that the great legendary hero was his namesake and perhaps his remote ancestor. If the Welsh patronymic Tallwch was replaced by Rivalen under these circumstances, it seems reasonable to assume that the

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insular legend reached Brittany in the early eleventh century.

The dragon episode is another Breton contribution. It is derived, as Van Hamel showed, from a Breton folk-tale analogous to the story of human tribute related of Drust. In this Breton folk-tale, as in the Tristan legend, the hero slays a dragon to whom the princess is to be sacrificed, and the false claimant, offering the head of the monster as a token of the victory, is exposed as an imposter when the hero produces the dragon's tongue. The Drust story lacks the motifs of the dragon combat and the severed tongue, which are characteristic of the Breton tale. The fusion of the two stories results in a double recognition of Tristan: he is identified as the slayer of Morholt by the matching sword fragment and also as the victor in the dragon combat by means of the monster's tongue.

The localization in Brittany of the episodes after

Tristan's banishment indicates that Breton influence was as potent in shaping the conclusion of the romance as it was in forming the introduction. The narrative theme of the Man with Two Wives in two of the Breton *lais* of Marie de France, *Eliduc* and *Fresne*, was familiar in Brittany and probably affected the story of Tristan's marriage to Isolt of the White Hands, although, as we shall presently see, it was not the only influence. The motif of the black and white sails seems also to be derived from Breton tradition. A folk-tale current in an island off the coast of Brittany relates how a princess arranged with her lover that if he returned successful from a certain journey, his ship was to hoist white sails; if not, black. As she languished gravely ill, a woman whom she sent to watch for the arrival of the vessel was instructed by the princess' hostile father to report falsely that the sails were black. On hearing this news the princess died. Despite the obvious differences, the motif is handled as it is in the Tristan story. In both, the black and white sails are used as a signal; a woman is sent to watch; and the false report inspired by hatred causes the death of the waiting lover.

Can the modern Breton folk-tale be explained as a derivative of the medieval Tristan romance? Except for the motif of the sails, the two stories are so dissimilar in other respects that a connexion of this kind is highly improbable. Since the motif of the sails as a signal appears in other Celtic folk-tales that could not possibly have been affected by the Tristan legend, the Breton story can be most plausibly explained as a modern descendant of a tale from which the Breton *conteurs* of the twelfth century borrowed the

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motif for the tragic ending. Similarly, the Breton folk-tale of the dragon-slayer cannot be derived from the medieval Tristan romances. The Breton tale includes many important features, such as the helpful animals, which have no counterpart in the Tristan episode but which relate it closely to the standard formula of the folk-tale. Moreover, it lacks the recognition in the bath, a distinctive element in the Tristan story, and it is constructed as a single story rather than as two separate episodes. These facts support Van Hamel's conclusion that medieval versions of the dragon-slayer tale circulating in Brittany contributed to the Tristan legend.

Not everything in the Tristan legend, however, is derived from Celtic tradition. Some episodes have a more exotic origin. The story of Isolt's attempt to murder Btangain, for example, is ultimately of Oriental [What, precisely, does "**Oriental**" mean in this case?] derivation, although the earliest European version is

preserved in an Irish text of the tenth century. In this tale a princess betrothed to a noble youth accidentally suffocated her secret lover in an effort to conceal him during an inopportune visit from her father. She then killed a churl who helped her dispose of the corpse. After her marriage to her betrothed, she substituted her maidservant in the bridal bed. When the maid refused to yield her place, the princess set the bed afire and drowned the servant while she was drawing water to extinguish the flames. No one discovered these murders, but years later she repented and confessed them to her priest, who wickedly demanded her submission to his lust as the price of secrecy. When she refused, he revealed her sins to her husband. Though imprisoned in a hut by a cross-roads and left to die, she repented so ardently that her life was miraculously spared. Eventually she ascended to heaven, and the cross-roads became a shrine to the Virgin.

The Irish story is already partly Christianized. Other versions in Latin and French, with some modifications, turn it into a *conte devot* to illustrate the virtues of penitence and the unfailing mercy of the Virgin. In such a form it appears in collections used by the preaching friars and in anthologies of miracle legends.

Whoever adapted this tale to the Tristan legend handled it freely. He borrowed certain elements to account for the first successful deception of King Mark and to show the astonishing devotion of Brangain to her mistress. One of the penitence versions of the tale, perhaps of Celtic provenance, must have been the source, to judge by Isolt's penitent conduct when she

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fears that her orders to murder Brangain have been carried out." (290)

As Anjou is near Brittany, the Counts of Anjou were partly of Breton ancestry, there were Bretons at the court of Henry II, and Henry II's son Geoffroy *Li Bel* (The Handsome) was married to the beautiful Duchess Constance of Brittany, there is nothing surprising in this. At least the early Plantagenets - among whom one must include Marie de France - had close connections with Brittany, as we said above, and this may partly account for their predilection for the Welsh.

Marie de France wrote only one lai in which Tristan and Isolt

figure as the principal protagonists, though other lais, such as Lanval, Yonec and Eliduc seem to contain episodes from the Tristan legend. Since Marie de France's lai Chevrefoil is her shortest, and is of such interest to us, we reproduce it here:

I should like very much
To tell you the truth
About the lai men call Chevrefoil
Why it was composed and where it came from.

Many have told and recited it to me
And I have found in writing,
About Tristan and the queen (Isolt)
And their love was so true,
That brought them much suffering
And caused them to die the same day.
King Mark was annoyed,
Angru at his nephew Tristan;
He exiled Tristan from his land
Because of the queen (Isolt) whom he loved.

Tristan returned to his own country,
South Wales, where he was born,
He stayed a whole year;
He could not come back
Afterward he began to expose himself
To death and destruction.

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Do not be surprised at this:
For one who loves very faithfully
Is sad and troubled
When he cannot satisfy his desires

Tristan was sad and worried,
So he set out from his land.
He traveled straight to Cornwall,
Where the queen (Isolt) lived,
And entered the forest all alone

He did not want anyone to see him;
He came out only in the evening
When it was time to find shelter.
He took lodging that night,
With peasants, poor people.

He asked them for news
Of the king what he was doing.
They told him they had heard
That the barons had been summoned by ban.
They were to come to Tintagel

Where the king wanted to hold his court;
At Pentecost they would all be there,
There would be much joy and pleasure,
And the queen (Isolt) would be there too.
Tristan heard and was very happy;
She (Isolt) would not be able to go there
Without his seeing her pass.
The day the king set out,
Tristan also came to the woods
By the road he knew.

Ther assembly must take,
He cut a hazel tree in half,
Then he squared it.
When he had prepared the wood,
He wrote his name on it with his knife.

If the queen (Isolt) noticed it
And she should be on the watch for it,
For it had happened before
And she had noticed it then
She would know when she saw it,

That the piece of wood had come from her love.
This was the message of the writing
That he had sent to her:
He had been there a long time,
Had waited and remained

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To find out and to discover
How he could see her,
For he could not live without her.
With the two of them it was just
As it is with the honeysuckle (*chevrefoil*)

That attaches itself to the hazel tree:
When it has wound and attached
And worked itself around the trunk,
The two can survive together;
But if someone tries to separate them

The hazel dies quickly
And the honeysuckle (*chevrefoil*) with it.
"Sweet love, so it is with us:
You cannot live without me, nor I without you."
The queen rode along;

She looked at the hillside
And saw the piece of wood; she knew what it was,
She recognized the letters.
The knights who were accompanying her,
Who were riding with her,

She ordered to stop:
She wanted to dismount and rest.
They obeyed her command.
She went far away from her people
And called her maid servant

Brenguein, who was loyal to her.
She went a short distance from the road;
And in the woods she found him
Whom she loved more than any living thing.
They took great joy in each other.

He spoke to her as much as he desired,
She told him whatever she liked.
Then she assured him
That he would be reconciled with the king
For it weighed upon him

That he had sent Tristan away;
He had done it because of the accusation.
Then she departed, she had left her love,
But when it came to the separation,
They began to weep.

Tristan went to Wales,
To wait until his uncle sent for him.
For the joy that he had felt
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From his love when he saw her,
By means of the stick (*withe*) he inscribed

As the queen had instructed,
And in order to remember the words,
Tristan, who played the harp well,
Composed a new *lai* about it.
I shall name it briefly:

In English they call it *Goteslef* (Goat's Leaf)
The French call it *Chevrefoil*.
I have given you the truth
About the *lai* that I have told here.

Tristan was a renowned harper. As Marie de France says in her
lai *Chevrefoil* (the Honeysuckle):

Tristan, ki bien saveit harper
En aveit fet un nuvel lai.

Tristan, who well played the harp
Composed a new lai about it.

Marie de France appears to use episodes from the Tristan legend in other *lais*, for example, in Lanval, the parade of beautiful ladies, each mistaken in turn for the protagonist, in Yonec, the trap of sharp pointed stakes set for the hero, and in Eliduc, the secret shrine of love concealed in the forest.

Marie de France says that her *lais* are based on tales transmitted by Breton bards, but it is not clear whether she heard said tales in Breton or in French, though, as we said above, I am inclined to believe that she heard and/or read them in the original Breton. In her *lais* she does give some proper names in the Breton form, for example, at the beginning of the *lais* Bisclavret she says:

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Since I am working to compose *lais*,
I do not wish to forget Bisclavret;
In Breton, the name of the *lais* is *Bisclavret*;
The Normans call it *Garwaf* [*The Werewolf*].

At the beginning of Lanval, Marie de France says:

I will tell you the plot of another *lai*,
Just as it occurred:
It was composed by a very noble vassal;
In Breton, he is called *Lanval*.

Finally, in the beginning of the *lais* Laustic [*The Nightingale*], Marie de France says:

I will tell you of a romance
Concerning which the Bretons wrote a *lais*.
Laustic was the name, I believe,
That they (the Bretons) gave it in their country.
In French it (*Laustic*) is *Rossignol*. (Nightingale:
Provencal: *Rossinhol*; Welsh: *Eos*; Gaelic: *an Spideag*;
Spanish: *Ruisenor*; Catalan: *Rosinyol*).

Marie de France, sister of Henry II Plantagenet, was of

course, not a Bretonne, but an Angevenne or Plantagenet. The Counts of Anjou, ancestors of the Angevin or Plantagenet dynasty, were of a family known as *Lusignan*, which indicates a Celtic origin, either Gaulish or Breton. In any case, Brittany is not far from Anjou, and the Counts of Anjou were certainly at least partly of Breton origin. Also, in the time of Marie de France, both Wales and Brittany were ruled by the Angevin or Plantagenet dynasty, in this case by Henry II Plantagenet, son of Count Geoffrey of Anjou, known as "Plantagenet" because of his habit of wearing a sprig of yellow broom (*Planta Genesta*) in his helmet. So it certainly would not be surprising if Marie de France was thoroughly familiar with Brittany, perhaps knowing the Breton language, though this is not certain. It is also obvious that under the early Plantagenets,

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the various strains of the Tristan legend - Welsh and Breton - could easily combine, as appears to have happened in the case of Thomas of Brittany, and, since the Plantagenets ruled all of what is today western France, it was easy for these Welsh and Breton legends to spread first the the Continental lands ruled by the Plantagenets and later much farther afield.

It has often been noted that Marie de France reveals a feminine sensibility in her *lais*, though the original Breton bards were almost certainly male. Marie de France very probably possessed the Plantagenet beauty, and, being a beautiful woman, knew romance at first hand.

In various versions of the legend, Tristan takes only his harp and sword with him in the rudderless boat. King Mark hears of

Tristan's harp playing and is thus attracted to the boat. Tristan teaches Isolt to play the harp. When Tristan visits King Mark's court disguised as a bard or *conteur*, plays the lay of *Chevrefoil* before the king, Isolt knows that it is Tristan, since he would never have taught said lai to another.

Some versions of the Tristan legend have Tristan being able to cast rushes into a curtain in such a way that each following one lodged in the one before it and remains attached to it.

In The Feast of Bricriu we read:

"Cu Chulainn then sought out the women-folk and took thrice fifty needles from them. These he threw one after the other . Each needle went into the eye of the other till in that wise they were in a row."

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In the lai *Chevrefoil* by Marie de France we read:

He (Tristan) cut a hazel tree in half
Then he squared it.
When he had prepared the wood,
He wrote his name on it with his knife.
If the queen (Isolt) noticed it

And she should be on the watch for it,
For it had happened before
And she noticed it then
She'd know when she saw it,
That the piece of wood had come from her love.

There recently has appeared an essay titled "Marie de France's *Chevrefoil*, Hazel Rods, and the Ogam Letters *Coll* and *Uillenn*", By William Sayers, professor of Comparative Literature at Cornell University, "High above Cayuga's waters":

"A better understanding of the medieval hazel coppice, the inscription of Irish Ogam along the edges of stone or wood, and the Ogam letters *coll*, 'hazel' and *uillen* 'honeysuckle' aids in our appreciation of Marie's *lai* as fundamentally concerned with the

transformative, commemorative artistic process.

Chevrefoil is the shortest of Marie de France's *lais* and the event (*aventure*) around which it is built is no more than one lovers' meeting among many, yet it is replete with the terminology of communication and artistic creation. In fact, the chiasmic effect of beginning and end,

Del lai qu'hum nume chevrefoil,
Que la verité vus en cunt,
Pur quell fu fet, comment e dunt

Chevrefoil le nument Franceis
Dit vus en ai la verité
Del lai que j'ai ici cunté

(It pleases me greatly and I am eager to relate to you the truth of the lai called *Chevrefoil*, to say why it was composed and how it originated. The French call it *Chevrefoil*. I have told you the truth of the lai related here.) suggests the permeable world of alloforms within, when we discover ingenuous tale and romance, written message and song, known story and new signification, in a variety of media: memory, ordinary
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speech, artistic language, writing on wood and writing on vellum.

Among these, critical attention has singled out the inscribed hazel rod and its message as the most problematic from a modern perspective, although this alone does not guarantee their centrality to Marie and her public. The evolution in narrative voice and shifts in style leave in question whether Tristan's declaration of love, longing, and interdependence was all contained on the dressed rod on which he has incised his name, was communicated to the queen from the forest by other means at some slightly earlier date, or simply expresses the mutual awareness of their love as encapsulated in a botanical image *the honeysuckle* the coterminous lives of the hazel and the entwining honeysuckle an awareness later made explicit and given voice at the conclusion of this or a later encounter in a *lai* that Tristan composes at the queen's behest. As editor Jean Rychner observes of lines 53-78,

'Ce quelques vers ont fait couler beaucoup d'encre'
(these few lines have caused a great deal of ink to flow). From the last century of scholarship we have no fewer than three summary reviews of the many critical stands taken on these issues.

This essay defers comment on Tristan's message until the implications of its medium, the hazel rod, or rather media, rod and writing, have been explored. The starting point is Tristan's decision after returning to

Cornwall from South Wales to communicate with the queen from a hiding place in the forest, when she passes with the royal party to Tintagel.

Le jur que li rei fu meuz,
Tristan est el bois revenuz
Sur le chemin quë il saveit,
Que la rute passer deveit,
Une codre trencha par mi,
Tute quarreie la fendi.
Quant il ad pare le bastun,
De sun cutel escrit sun nun.

Ilustrative of the generally accepted understanding of this scene is the prose translation offered by Burgess and Busby:

On the day the king set out, Tristan entered the wood along the road he knew the procession would have to take. He cut a hazel branch in half and squared it. When he had whittled the stick he wrote his name on it with his knife.

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The hazel (*Corylus avellana*) is an important understory tree in the deciduous forests of much of Europe, where it shares space with the oak and with the honeysuckle. A member of the birch family of trees, the hazel can grow to a height of thirty feet, although eighteen would be a better measure for the conditions of western Britain. Rather than having a single stem unbranched near the ground, the hazel typically has a number of shoots or trunks branching out at, or just above, ground level from a large base or stool, which can be up to two metres in diameter. This feature, plus the flexible, straight-grained and easily split wood, led to widespread coppicing in the Middle Ages and before. Hazel shoots were regularly harvested, typically after a six-year growth cycle, in late summer or during the dormant period. Each trunk was cut above the base and then trimmed of branches and foliage at the upper end for use as poles, staffs, crooks, in hurdles and mud-and-wattle walls, as inverted, U-shaped clamps to hold down thatch, spilt for basket-making and other applications. Male flowers, in the form of pale yellow catkins, open in February in Britain, when deciduous trees are still lifeless, and are then among the first signs of spring in the forest. Hazel leaves, among the last to fall in autumn, were used as cattle fodder. Hazelnuts or filberts, rich in fats and proteins, are important to the wood mouse, red squirrel, and dormouse, and have been prized in the human diet, alone or ground in bread. The hazel has a symbiotic relationship with a

variety of mosses, liverworts, lichens, and some fungi, but not with the honeysuckle, although coppicing, by letting more light reach the forest floor, would promote the growth of the climber.

When a honeysuckle does twine around a hazel shoot, it leaves marks on the wood, still visible when the bark has been removed. Most or all of this would have been well known to Marie.

We must recall the extent to which the medieval forest and woodland was managed and was not simply an impenetrable, sterile wilderness. Even in flight in the forest, Tristan and Isolt never seem quite beyond the reach of society and Mark's courtiers. Ownership and rights of exploitation were legally codified and game, timber, fruit and nuts were regularly harvested. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, for example, shows a landowner thinning out herds of fallow does. The hazel must then be seen as one among many resources in a largely controlled environment.

With that passion for categorization that characterized the learned stratum of early medieval Ireland, trees were classified in three groups. The
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coll or hazel was included among the *airig fedo*, 'nobles of the wood', and specific legal penalties were attached to its illegal cutting. The justification for this classification lay not in size but in '*a mes 7 a cáel*' (its nuts and rods). One manuscript tradition includes honeysuckle in the third group, *fodla fedo*, 'lower divisions of the wood'. Various names for the plant were *féithlenn*, *fedlend*, *eidlenn* and *uillen*. This twining climber, like so many plants, may have had real or imagined pharmaceutical and charm-working properties but cannot have been of true economic importance. Its presence in the list may reflect the replacement of the relatively rare arbutus or strawberry tree by a better known plant.

Hazel shoots were traditionally employed as dining rods and witching rods to locate buried treasure and valuable minerals and ores. Like the honeysuckle, the hazel was also employed by herbalists for various remedies. In Celtic tradition the backdrop, however accurately discerned by Marie, against which we must situate the Tristan story the hazel and its nuts were associated with wisdom and poetic inspiration, in particular with the very access to such preferential knowledge. In the legendary history of Fionn MacCumhail, hazel nuts drop into a stream and are then eaten by a salmon of knowledge that comes into the young Fionn's hands. In parallel to other stories of novices winning insight, Fionn burns his thumb when cooking the salmon, puts it in his mouth, and gains a greater awareness of the world. Here knowledge enters by

way of the mouth, the means for its later communication to others.

Hazel and other light-colored wood was also employed as a medium for writing in early Ireland, if we may trust literary tradition on this count. But before recalling some legendary instances, we must consider the penetration of arboreal imagery into another important sphere, not that distant from the preferential knowledge afforded by hazelnuts. No later than in the fifth century, Irish scholars devised a signary specifically designed to transfer the Irish language (Gaelic) to written form. Here it must be stressed that the Ogam alphabet, as it was known, was not part of a common Celtic learned or other heritage, was not the preserve of pagan druids, and was not magical in its principal applications, although, like other alphabets, it could be a medium for encrypted messages, prohibitions, curses, and other performative utterances in which Logos was strengthened by the Letter. Used in monumental inscription, the signs consisted mainly of horizontal and diagonal strokes,

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and dots incised along the imagined stemline formed by a vertical edge or arris of an upright stone. Ogam was read from the bottom up. As in the Greek traditions, the letters of the Ogam signary had names (as well as a principal or generalized phonemic value). In Ireland these names continued as regular lexical elements of common speech and were thus still revelatory of their origins (cf. the loss of original meaning in the transfer from Phoenician or Greek *alpha*, *beta*). Since the majority of Ogam letters were composed of linear incisions out from the stemline, the bore some resemblance to twigs and tree imagery is basic to many (but not all) letter names and even to the very terms for the letters (*fid* = 'wood') and constituent lines or strokes (*flesc* = 'rod, wand', but also 'line, stroke'; cf. Modern Irish *flescín*, 'twigler' for the hyphen). While scholars have attempted to relate the tripartite taxonomy of the tree-list to the internal organization of the Ogam signary (initially grouped into four subsets) and to its nomenclature, this has not yielded results useful in determining the conditions or mindset in which the Ogam alphabet was devised and evolved.

Two letters will here retain our attention. The letter signifying /k/ was called *coll* or 'hazel' and its sign was four strokes out from the left of the stemline. *Coll* was one of twenty consonants and vowels in what is judged the original signary. Over time and perhaps when the alphabet was less used for monumental inscription and became the reserve of scholars more at home with parchment and antiquarian lore than with stone, wood or memorialization, five additions (*forfeda*,

'supplementary characters') were made to the basic alphabet 'in particular to accommodate letters of the Latin and Greek alphabets not already matched by Ogam characters.' One of these was *uilen*, introduced to represent Latin and Greek *y* and, perhaps later, the diphthongs *ui* or *úa*. Two signs curlicue and a double St. Andrew's Cross to the right of the stemline were alternately employed to represent it.

This has been the received view. Recently, it has been convincingly proposed that this supplementary letter initially designated "geminate" and its original name would have been *uillen*, 'honeysuckle'.

Since no words began with this labial geminate, the acrostic principle (*coll* for *c*) was not involved in the name, which may have rendered less stable its relationship with the phoneme.

As concerns the associate signs, the double St. Andrew's Cross may be earlier than the curlicue, whose resemblance to a tendril of honeysuckle is nonetheless striking. The angular sign, on the other hand, may have

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contributed to the name of the letter being recast as *uilen*, a word that meant 'elbow, angle, corner' in Old Irish. But a multiple valence was still retained for the letter name, so that, while one of the kenning associated with the letter *uilen* was *cubat oll* 'great elbow' or 'cubit', another, here with *uillenn* 'honeysuckle' in mind, was *túathmar fid*, 'fragrant tree'. In the meaning 'elbow', *uilen* was also used of the angular edge of a piece of wood or block of stone that could serve as the stemline for an Ogam inscription. But this instance of learned Irish word-play cannot have been accessible to Marie de France, whatever awareness she had of non-Roman writing systems, and here it will be prudent to return to the concrete concerns of her *lai* and Tristan's hazel shoot.

Une codre trencha par mi,
Tute quarrei la fendi.
Quant il ad paré le bastun,
De sun cutel escrit sun nun.

He cut a hazel tree in half,
Then he squared it.
When he had prepared the wood,
He wrote his name on it with his knife.

It will not be profitable to comment in detail on the various, in my judgement all slightly inaccurate, ways in which this scene has been interpreted, due to insufficient knowledge of medieval forestry practices or Celtic writing tradition. To cut to the heart of the matter and be rather categorical, Tristan does not cut a

hazel branch 'in the middle' but rather cuts a central length from a stem, above the stool but below the twigs or branches at the top. He does not square off the two ends (for which *fender* would be a poor verb) but axially splits off four half-round pieces of wood with bark, thus squaring the circular cross-section of the rod. The verb *parer* is then not to be read as 'peel' or 'pare', since the bark has already been removed along with the quarter-rounds of external fibre, but rather as 'prepare'. 'He cut out the central length of a hazel shoot and split it so that it was quite square in cross-section. When he had thus prepared the rod, he carved his name with his knife.' It must be emphasized that Tristan has not readied four flat surfaces for his inscription, the legibility of which might be better served by an incision directly into the retained bark of the rod, but has squared off the stick to yield four edges, stemlines for carving Ogam letters. The first of these will represent his name.

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We should not allow exclusively practical considerations to dictate our interpretation, but Marie is generally quite matter-of-fact, and the supernatural intervenes in her work in what we might call quite ordinary fashion. Thus, let us stay with familiar and realistic considerations, as far as they take us. Tristan counts on the queen recognizing his signal if we view the rod as such in its initial function because the two have used comparable means of communication in the past, unspecified in Marie but known as inscribed hazel chips floating on a stream elsewhere in the Tristan corpus. The rod cut out of season (just before Pentecost) and divested of its bark, but fixed vertically to permit the bottom-up reading of the name, would also be an anomaly by the roadside.

Le reine vait chevachant:
Ele egardat tut un pendant,
Le bastun vit, bien l'apaceut,
Tutes les letters I conut.

The queen rode along the way;
She looked down the bank,
Saw the rod and recognized it for what it was,
She made out all the letters.

I imagine the way through the forest to be elevated with reference to the roadside, where there may have been a hazel hedgerow or a stand of hazel on the slightly lower ground toward which the queen looks. At the side of a well traveled route, with easy transportation from the site, coppicing of the hazel

would be expected. Planted upright, the rod would display only one (at best two) right-angled edges to a passerby, and thus we might assume that it is first the bright, bare wood of the squared shoot and then Tristan's name that comes to Isolt's attention. Had she been able to decipher a longer message from horseback, surely the staff if not its message, however encrypted, would have come to the attention of other members of the royal party. Let us settle, provisionally, for the fiction of the queen taking the staff with her as she and Brenguein go into the forest, turning it over for additional information.

All writing systems offer the possibility (but not the necessity) of compression over more or less spontaneous speech. Redundancies are resolved, accurate terminology replaces circumlocution, etc. Even considerations of effort and time may play a rôle in promoting economy, as in monumental inscriptions in stone. The desire to encrypt a message may also result

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in abbreviations, as in the Irish example cited by numerous scholars of Marie's opus in which Ogam *b* is repeatedly cut into a birch switch the first use of Ogam in fact and the sequence can later be expanded by a qualified reader into an alliterative statement that Lug MacEthlenn's wife would be abducted seven times unless the birch protected her.

The most radical compression of Tristan's feelings or intended statement of waiting, longing, and interdependence that we can imagine would have been to carve next to his name or on another edge of the rod the letters *coll* and *uillen*, hazel and honeysuckle. The letters could even have been juxtaposed on the left and right, respectively, of the stemline to suggest their intimate relationship. Interpretation would then require some astute 'glossing of the letter'.

But here we must pull up short and recall that there is no true symbiotic relationship between hazel and honeysuckle in the understory of the deciduous forests of western Britain, nor was one ever posited in Celtic tradition or story. A honeysuckle might well twine about a hazel shoot, leave its mark on it, and be materially damaged if the latter were cut, but this is not the conceit promoted by Tristan. How could such a notion have originally been advanced, against the evidence of direct observation? The answer, I suggest, lies in both the natural physical circumstances of honeysuckle growing on hazel (among many other plants) and the wordplay subsumed in the name of the Ogam letter between *uillenn*, 'honeysuckle' and *uilen*, 'elbow, edge' (for inscription.). That the honeysuckle literally inscribes itself on the hazel in nature, with marks visible beneath the bark, would have been a

further incentive.

To turn now to Irish names for similarly Ogam engraved wooden communications, Fionn MacCumhail's fool Lemnae discovers Fionn's wife lying in stealth with Coipre. He prepares an allusive written statement that Fionn will be able to interpret, in part because the exceptional medium will promote mental acuity. The bearer of this message is 'a four-cornered rod', *flesc cetharchuir* (*cethar* = 'four' plus *corr* = 'projecting part') and thus the equivalent of Tristan's *bastun quarreie*. Another text mentions a *trosdán cetharuillennach* = 'four angled' or 'four-square staff' (four + *uillenn* + adjectival suffix).

I propose that for the logocentric medieval Irish literati it was a short step from a 'quadrangular rod' to a 'honeysuckle-entwined rod', especially when the wordplay was already active in the nomenclature for letters of the Ogam signary. If this explanation, and

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much of the foregoing concerning coppiced hazel, commands credence, the hazel/honeysuckle connection, its potential for extension to an amorous situation, and possibly the conceit of the two parallel forms of inscription (by twining tendril and with knife) would predate Marie in Irish (and conceivably Welsh) storytelling, and need have no literary antecedents in the Ovidian tradition of metamorphoses and vegetal unions. The original learned wordplay in Irish would not have come down to Marie and only the circumstance of the natural co-occurrence of the two plants would have assured their continuing coherence as a literary motif. It is quite plausible that Marie was the first to associate the hazel/honeysuckle conceit with the Tristan story, perhaps prompted by knowledge of other incidents involving hazel chips, although in the fiction of the *lai* it is to Tristan himself that credit is due. This said, some knowledge of the Irish writing system is apparent in the *lai*, once we better understand the trimmed and squared length of hazel that is central to her poem and the Ogam inscription, of whatever length and degree of encryption, that is carved on one or more of its vertical edges.

On balance and largely for aesthetic reasons, I judge that Marie wished us to believe that a rather full statement by Tristan was engraved on the rod, but that the very act of writing made this a *sume* in relation to his mental process or an imagined utterance and to the *lai* he subsequently composes. To make this declaration the object of some prior communication with the queen, as some critics have done, is to deflate the *lai* to the prosaic and quotidian and, more importantly, would not authorize an equation between hazel rod and *lai*, composed at Isolt's request *pur les paroles*

resembler (in order to remember the words). Here we should note that Tristan's *lai* is not a mnemonic device, and *aide-mémoire* to recall words exchanged between the lovers, but serves rather to commemorate these words in heightened artistic form, just as they had earlier been given similarly marked expression through the conventions of inscription on the dressed rod. It would now perhaps be prudent to review the opening claim that a lovers' meeting is the event on which the *lai* is spread and assign this function to the incision of the hazel message which, to adopt a useful modern image, 'morphs' into Tristan's harp-accompanied *lai* and the circle now complete by the return to writing into Marie's own *lai*.

Much of earlier critical attention seems in my judgement misplaced in its fixation on the information in Tristan's message(s) to Isolt and on the sequence of
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his communications with her. Against this preoccupation with content and time, I would emphasize materiality, form and the telescoping of time. What is illustrated and at issue in the lines following *Ceo fu la sume de l'escrit* (This was the message of his writing) is the creative process itself, the refinement of experience into art, a transformation which plays a rôle assigned to the supernatural in other poems by Marie. The author begins in the third person in the redundant, uneconomical discourse of real life *lunges ot ilec esté / E atendu e surjuné* (he had been there a long time and had tarried and waited). Marie then heightens the artistic stakes by moving to *style indirect libre*:

*D'eus dues fu il tut autresi
Cume del chevrefoil esteit*

Ki la codre se perneit (the two of them were just like the honeysuckle that twines itself around the hazel).

She concludes not only with the immediacy of direct speech but also with a dense aphoristic turn of phrase marked by heightened emotionality, apostrophe, ellipsis, chiasmus, and parallelism:

Bele amie, ci est de nus

Ne vus sanz mei ni mei sanz vus (Dear friend, the same is true of us: neither you without me nor I without you).

As the medieval image of bark covering the pith of knowledge, the superfluous matter of experience, recollection, even of artless story itself, like the exterior of the hazel shoot, is pared away to its essentials, compressed as we assume the Ogam message was

compressed, but at the same time given heightened expressivity through all the devices of poetry and music. Tristan's transformation of his carved message and prior and later statement of love into a *lai* is replicated under Marie's more widely cast net, when she combines Celtic lore with conventional motifs from the Tristan story in a self-referential *lai* about *lai*-making. Just as the hazel that became the medium of a message had a prior association in Celtic tradition with preferential knowledge, the *lai*, Tristan's and her own, is to recall the terminology of her 'Porlogue' the further gloss on the letter of experience and story that assigns signification, and thus permits the possibility of permanence beyond vegetal and human life. But such transformation is always accompanied by cost: the honeysuckle indelibly marks the hazel that it

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embraces, the hazel shoot must be cut and trimmed, and any entwined climber sacrificed to permit the message. The separation of which the poem repeatedly speaks is not only of one lover from the other, it is also a separation, often violent, from prior form, from growing tree into fixed wooden letter, from declaration of love into song, from loving life into lovers' legend."(291)

In Joseph Bedier's reconstruction of Tristan and Isolt by Thomas of Brittany, we read:

"And every evening, by Brangien's counsel, Tristan cut him twigs and bark, leapt the sharp stakes and, having come beneath the pine, threw them into the clear spring; they floated light on the foam down the stream to the women's rooms, and Isolt watched for their coming, and on those evenings she would wander out into the orchard and find her friend."

In Gottfried's Tristan, the nurse Brangien says to Tristan:

"When you see that your chance has come, take a twig of olive, cut some slivers lengthwise, and just engrave them with a 'T' on one side and an 'I' on the other, so that only your initials appear, no more, nor less. Then go into the orchard, you know the brook which flows there from the spring towards the ladies' apartments? Throw a shaving into it and let it float past the door where wretched Isolt and I come out at all times to weep over our misery. When we see this shaving we shall know at once that you are by the brook. ..But Brangien soon noticed the message-bearing shavings in the current and beckoned to her mistress. Isolt retrieved and examined them. She read both 'Isolt' and

'Tristan'".

In The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne, part of the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle, we read:

"Diarmaid was making dishes, and the shavings which he was making were going down with the stream to the strand. The Fenians were hunting along the foot of the strand. Fionn took notice of the shavings at the foot of the stream. 'These', said he, 'are the shavings of Diarmaid'. - 'They are not; he is not alive', said they. - 'Indeed', said Fionn, 'they are'."(292)

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In another version we read:

"Fionn saw a speal that Diarmaid cut off a stick in the water, and immediately knew that Diarmaid was in the woods thereabout, for the speal curled around nine times, and it was ... quarters long; there was none in Ireland who could do the like."(293)

In yet another version:

One day my generous king, And his Fenians who were not
timorous,
Were hunting along the dark glens. We went down to the
strand.
Then my king saw In front of the true man of strength of
Ireland,
A shaving in form of a pure white roll, Folded nine
times, coming to the sea.
He caught it un his white hand, And he gazed sharply and
keenly,
He me assured it with his comely foot, And its length
was five feet and a span.
Then he spoke fiercely, 'It is Diarmaid who made this in
all truth,
And none of the men of Cormac, Or the swordsmen of the
Fianna.'(294)

Another similar tale is found in the Fenian Cycle:

"Finn ua Baiscúe went on the track of Ferchess (son of Comnan) to avenge MacCon (for it is Fionn that was leader of the Fenians), until he slew him at the end of seven years at the Pool of Ferchess on the Bann, when he found the chips carried down by the river which Ferchess had set free."(295)

The points of similarity between the Irish and the Tristan

episodes are:

- ❖ 1.) The hero fashions chips in a manner so individual that they are sure to be recognized by those who know him.
- ❖ 2.) He sends some of them down a stream.
- ❖ 3.) The stream flows through a house. The hero sends the chips from this house (some Irish versions). The hero sends the chips to a person dwelling in this house (Tristan and some Irish versions).
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- ❖ 4.) The chips are found and recognized (some Irish versions) by the person for whom they are intended (Tristan and some other Irish versions), and notify him (her) of the hero's presence along the stream. (296)

In Irish sources there are other, more striking parallels to the lai Chevrefoil by Marie de France.

In the Ulster Cycle we read:

"I am forced to go to a tryst with Fedelm Noichride, from my own pledge that went out to her," said Cu Chulainn.

He made a *spancel-withe* (a twig twisted in the form of two rings), then before he went, and wrote an *ogam* (ancient Gaelic alphabet) inscription on its peg, and threw it on the top of the pillar.

They (the four who went ahead of Medb's army) found the withe that Cu Chulainn threw, and perceived the grazing that the horses had grazed. For Sualtaim's two horses had eaten the grass with its roots from the earth; Cu Chulainn's two horses had licked the earth as far as the stones beneath the grass. They sat down then, until the host came, and the musicians played to them. They gave the with inyo the hands of Fergus MacRoich; he read the *ogam* inscription that was on it.

When Medb came, she asked: "Why are you waiting here?"

'We wait', said Fergus, 'because of the withe yonder. There is an *ogam* inscription on its peg, and this is what it says: 'Let no one go past till a man is found to throw a like with with his one hand, and let it be one twig of which it is made; and I except my friend Fergus.' 'Truly', said Fergus, 'Cu Chulainn has thrown it. And they are his horses that grazed the plain.'

And he put it in the hands of the druids; and
Fergus sang this song:

Here is a with, what does the with declare to us?
What is its mystery?
What number threw it?
Few or many?

Will it cause injury to the host,
If they go a journey from it?
Find out, ye druids, something therefore
For what the with has been left.

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Of heroes the hero who has thrown it,
Full misfortune on warriors;
A delay of princes, wrathful is the matter,
One man has thrown it with one hand.

Is not the king's host at the will of him,
Unless it breaks fair play?
Until one man only of you
Throw it, as one man has thrown it.
I do not know anything save that
For which the with should have been put.
Here is a with.'

Then Fergus said to them: 'If you outrage this with',
said he, 'or if you go past it, though he be in the
custody of a man, or in a house under a lock, the - of
the man who wrote the *ogam* on it will reach him, and
will slay a goodly slaughter of you before morning,
unless one of you throw a like with. 'It does not please
us, indeed, that one of us should be slain at once',
said Ailill. 'We will go by the neck of the great wood
yonder, south of us, and we will not go over it at
all.'(297)

In another version, Aillil's decision is different:

'We will betake ourselves to the protection of
this great forest until morning. There we will pitch our
tents, and take up our quarters.'(298)

At another place in the Ulster Cycle, we read:

'They are from our people and from our choice
warriors', said Ailill.

One of them read the *ogam* that was on the side of
the fork; that is: 'A man has thrown the fork with his
one hand; and you shall not go past it till one of
you, except Fergus, has thrown it with one hand.'

'Avert this strait from us, O Fergus', said Medb.

'Bring me a chariot then', said Fergus, 'that I may take it out, that you may see whether its end was hewn with one blow.' Fergus broke then fourteen chariots of his chariots, so that it was from his own chariot that he took it out of the ground, and he saw that the end was hewn with one blow.' (299)

In another version, Fergus, having broken seventeen chariots, is commanded by Medb to desist:

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'Stop, O Fergus', she says, 'if you were not with the army we should already have reached Ulster. We know why you do this, to delay and hinder the army until the Ulstermen recover from their weakness.' (300)

In yet another passage from the Ulster Cycle:

"Then they reached Mag Mucceda. Cu Chulainn cut an oak before them there and wrote an *ogam* on its side. It is this that was therein: that no one should go past it till a warrior should leap it with one chariot. They pitched their tents there, and came to leap over it in their chariots. There fall thereat thirty horses, and thirty chariots are broken. Belach n-Ane, that is the name of the place forever.

They are there till next morning; then Fraech is summoned to them: 'Help us, O Fraech', said Medb. 'Remove from us the strait that is upon us. Go before Cu Chulainn for us, if perchance you shall fight with him.' (301)

The points of similarity to the lai Chevrefoil by Marie de France on the one hand and the episodes from the Irish epics are:

- ❖ 1.) A person knows that a troop is to pass along a certain path.
- ❖ 2.) He has reason for wishing to delay their march. In Tristan, it is to allow him a meeting with Isolt. In the first Irish episode cited, to allow him a meeting with Fedelm Noichride (or her maid). In the second and third Irish episodes cited, to gain time.
- ❖ 3.) He carves a message on a piece of bark and places it on their path.
- ❖ 4.) The troop passes; the message is found and read.

❖ 5.) The halt is secured.

❖ 6.) The purpose of the ruse is achieved.(302)

Then there are the incidents of the *Petit Crû* and the bell, preserved only by Thomas of Brittany:

"While Tristan is in exile, he enters the service of a certain duke, by whom he is honored and cherished for his prowess. When the duke sees that he is always
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heavy-hearted, he seeks to divert him, and sends for his chief treasure, a marvelous little dog which he has from Avalon (Isle of Man, Gaelic: *Ellan Vannin* or *Mannin*), the country of the fairies. This dog is of extraordinary beauty; from whatever side one looks at it, it shines with innumerable colors. If one looks at it from the front it appears white, black and green. If one looks at it obliquely it looks red as blood; sometimes one would think it dark brown, and again light red. From the side, one cannot tell what color it is, for it seems to have none. It was a fairy that gave it to the duke. Never was there a dog so beautiful, so delicate, so agile, so gentle, and so obedient. The servants bring it in by a golden chain. When it is freed, it shakes its body, and the little bell that it wears on its neck sounds with so sweet a tinkling that Tristan forgets all his sorrow. His heart and senses are so strangely moved that he forgets even his love. No one living, when he heard that sound, could fail to be altogether consoled and filled with joy and to forget every other desire.

Tristan determines to obtain the dog (*Petit Crû*) for Isolt, to free her from her grief for him. But he is too wise to make known his wish at once. One day the duke declares that there is nothing that he would not give to be delivered from a giant that is coming to carry off the tribute of cattle which he levies yearly upon the people. Tristan succeeds in destroying the giant. When the delighted duke tells him to name his reward, he asks for the *Petit Cru*.

He sends it to Isolt by a messenger. She has built for it a beautiful golden niche, and has it carried with her wherever she goes. But when she perceives that the tinkling of the bell makes her forget her grief, and that with her grief she forgets Tristan, she reproaches herself bitterly that she should be gay while her lover is sad. She tears the little bell from the dog's neck, and from that moment it loses its magic power."(303)

There are numerous passages in Celtic literature which speak

of colored dogs and horses. Below is a Welsh example, from the Mabinogion:

"Then he looked at the color of the dogs, not staying to look at the stag, and of all the hounds that he had seen in the world, he had never seen any that were like unto those. For their hair was of a brilliant shining white, and their ears were red; and as
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whiteness of their bodies shone, so did the redness of their ears glisten."(304)

Below is an example from an Irish book of lives of saints:

"O Ciaran", says his mother, "do not spoil the dyestuff for me; but let it be blessed by thee'. So when Ciaran blessed it there never was made, before or after, dyestuff as good as it, for though all the cloth of the Cenel Fiachrach were put into its *iarcaín*, it would make it blue, and finally it made blue the dogd, and the cats, and the trees against which it came."(305)

It should be noted that Tristan's dogs, Husdent and *Petit Crû*, are the only dogs in French romances who are given names. In Irish romances, on the contrary, in which, as in Tristan, hunting plays so important a rôle, dogs are frequently given names. Says an Irish bard:

"Goll" asked Cormac, "what hounds are those?" -
"Bran and Sceolang held by Fionn", replied Goll:
'*Adhnuaille* and *Feruaire* by Ossian; *Iarratach* and *Fostadh* by Oscar; *Baeth* and *Buidh* by Dermot; *Breac* and *Luath* and *Lainbhinn* by Caeilte; *Conuall* and *Comrith* by MacLughach."(306)

One particularly Celtic element in the story of the *Petit Cru* is the little bell that soothed the grief of those that heard it.

Here is an example from the Irish romance Cormac's Branch:

"One day, at dawn in the month of May, Cormac, grandson of Conn, was alone on Mur Tea in Tara. He saw coming towards him a warrior, sedate, greyhaired. A purple, fringed mantle was around him. A shirt, ribbed, gold-threaded was next(?) to his skin. Two blunt shoes of white bronze were between his feet and the earth. A branch of silver with three golden apples was on his

shoulder. Delight and amusement enough it was to listen to the music made by the branch, for men sore-wounded, or women in child-bed, or folk in sickness would fall asleep at the melody which was made when the branch was shaken.

At the end of a year the warrior comes into his meeting and asked of Cormac the consideration for his
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branch. "it shall be given", says Cormac.

"I will take thy daughter Ailbe today", says the warrior.

So he took the girl with him. The women of Tara utter three loud cries after the daughter of the king of Erin. But Cormac shook the branch at them so that he banished grief from them all and cast them into sleep.

That day comes the warrior and takes with him Cairpre Lifechair (the son of Cormac). Weeping and sorrow ceased not in Tara after the boy, and on that night no one therein ate nor slept, and they were in grief and exceeding gloom. But Cormac shook the branch at them, and they parted from their sorrow."(307)

Here is another account of Cormac's branch:

"And this was the manner of that branch, that when anyone shook it, wounded men and women with child would be lulled to sleep by the sound of the very sweet fairy music which those apples uttered, and another property that branch had, that is to say that no one upon earth would bear in mind any want, woe, nor weariness of soul when the branch was shaken for him, and whatever evil might have befallen anyone, he would not remember it at the shaking of the branch."(308)

Tristan had been living in his cabin for some time when he decides to take a voyage in a rudderless boat. Tristan bids farewell to Gorvanal, telling him to wait for a year, and if he does not return to go to his father and tell him to take him as a son in place of Tristan. Tristan takes only his sword and harp with him in the boat without oars nor rudder. There is great lamentation when Tristan is placed in the boat. But he would rather die alone in the sea than plague the people with the smell of his wound.

The voyage in a rudderless boat is a frequent motif in Old

Irish literature. Below is from The Voyage of Mael-duin:

"A mysterious person, appearing to be a voyager, reproaches him for his coventousness, and obtains from him a promise of obedience. The stranger then directs
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him to throw akk his riches into the sea. He continues: "Go now, and in the stead in which thy boat shall pause, stay therein." He is given as provision a cup of whey water and seven cakes. Putting forth alone, without oars nor ridder, he is borne to an unknown goal by the wind and the waves." (309)

From The Voyage of the Hui Corra:

"A party of jesters see a boat departing on which are embarked the three sons of Conall the Red, 'robbers and brigands going on their pilgrimage'. By the command of St. Columba, 'to seek the Lord on the sea and on the mighty main.' The leader of the jesters, stricken with contrition, joins them of his own accord. Then he went on board their boat and they were thinking whither they should go. 'Whitersoever the wind shall take us', says the bishop. Thereafter they shipped their oars and offered themselves to God. They visit marvelous islands, the description of which constitutes the interest of the story." (310)

From The Voyage of Snedgus and MacRuagla:

"Snedgus and MacRuagla had benn directed by St. Columba to watch the departure of sixty couples of the men of Ross who had been condem,ned to put to sea in open boats 'that God would pass His judgement upon them.'" When the two had assured themselves that the condemned were not trying to evade their fate, 'they bethought them of wending with their own consent into the outer ocean on a pilgrimage, as the sixty couples had gone, though these went not with their own consent'. They abandon their oars, and leave their voyage to God. The story relates the wonders which they see." (311)

From The Tidings of the Three Young Clerics:

"Three young clerics set out in a boat with three loaves and a cat. When they have reached the open sea, they throw away their oars and rudder, and commend themselves to God. They reach an island, and spend the rest of their lives as hermits." (312)

From The Voyge of Maelduin:

"Mael-duin, having set out with his companions to

avenge his father, is driven from his course by the wind. And even after morning they saw neither earth nor land, and they knew not whither they were going. Then
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said Mael-duin: "Leave the boat still, without rowing, and let it be brought whithersoever it shall please God to bring it." They come to marvelous islands, the description of which constitutes the interest of the story." (313)

From The Life of St. Tathan:

"In order to avoid being made king, St. Tathan, following the command of an angel, goes to the sea-coast, and, finding a little ship, unsupplied with rudder or rowing gear, is carried by the wind to Britain." (314)

From The Life of St. Brynach:

The saint, troubled by his increasing fame, goes alone to the sea, and, not finding a ship, places a piece of rock on the water. Committing himself altogether to God, he is carried the length of the British Sea and brought to the port of Milford." (315)

In Tristan and Isolt we find the element of 'healing at the hands of the enemy'; Tristan is informed by his enemy Morholt that he, Tristan, can only be healed at the hands of Morholt's sister, Isolt. Joseph Bedier has, most ingeniously, suggested that the name *Pro de Iemsetir*, which Tristan gives on being questioned by the Irish king, is an anagram of *Isot pro mire*. The music of Tristan's harp inspires the Irish king with pity. The Irish king sends for his daughter Isolt to bring a plaster, and she prepares a plaster that heals him. Isolt is not Tristan's enemy, but she is the sister of the enemy who wounded him.

In the Ulster Cycle we read:

"When Cu Chulainn was in this great weariness, the Morrigan (whom he has previously wounded in the head, the eye and the leg) met him in the form of an old hag. And she blind and lame, milking a cow with three teats, and he asked her for a drink. She gave him milk from a

teat.

'He will be whole who has brought it', said Cu
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Chulainn; 'the blessings of gods and non-gods on you', said he. (Gods with them [the pre-Christian Celts] were the might folk that is dwelling in the *sidh* [fairy land]; the non-gods the people of husbandry).

Then her head was healed so that it was whole.

She gave the milk of the second teat, and her eye was whole; and gave the milk of the third teat, and her leg was whole. So that this was what he said about each thing of them, 'A doom of blessing on you', said he.

'You told me', said the Morrigan, 'I should not have healing from you forever.'

'If I had known it was you', said Cu Chulainn, 'I would not have healed you ever.'"(316)

In some versions of the above incident, it is said that none but Cu Chulainn could heal the wounds that he inflicted.(317)

Such is the pagan Celtic belief that a wound establishes some relation between the victim and the person or weapon which inflicted it.

Besides Tristan and Isolt, the idea is found in other medieval French romances. As we mentioned when speaking of the Holy Grail, it is noted that the lance which wounded the Fisher King could heal him. In the Story of Balin, part of the Huth Merlin we read of a slain knight who could only be avenged by the *tronchon meismes* (same blade) by which he had been killed, and in the same tale a young man who has been wounded by Garlan can be healed only by the blood of his enemy. In Meriaduc a knight is wounded, and can only be healed by the same blade. There can be no doubt as to the Celtic origin of the above medieval French romances, as the names *Balin*, *Merlin*, *Garlan* and *Meriaduc* are all Welsh or Breton.

As we said above, Ms. Schoepperle Loomis vastly overstates the

case when she makes such an absolute distinction between

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"Celtic" and "French". Said distinction is neither ethnic nor cultural; it is chronological. The Gallic Celtic ancestors of the 12th century French and Occitans, and the Hispano-Celtic ancestors of 12th century Spaniards, both Christian and Muslim, as well, in pre-Roman, pre-Christian times were culturally indistinguishable from the ancestors of the Irish, Highland Scots, Welsh, Strathclyde Welsh, Cornishmen and Bretons, while the 12th century Irish, Highland Scots, Welsh, Strathclyde Welsh, Cornishmen and Bretons found many of the customs of the pre-Christian Celts to be as repugnant and alien to their sensibilities as did the 12th century French, Occitans and Spaniards.

A perfect example of the above is the custom of taking heads as trophies of war. This custom was practiced by the pre-Christian Celts as well as by other Indo-European peoples, such as the Vikings and certain Iranian peoples. The Vikings and Lombards used the skulls of their enemies as drinking vessels; the Scandinavian drinking toast *skoal* literally means "skull". Certain Iranian peoples, mainly Sakas, also took enemy heads as trophies of war and used the skulls as drinking vessels. This custom survived as late as the 16th century when Shah Ismail, founder of the Safavi Dynasty, had the skull of Shaibani, Khan of the Uzbeks, made into a drinking vessel.(318) The Castilian or Spanish epic is a product of the 12th century; in said epic the custom of taking heads as trophies of war appears, notably in the the *cantar de gesta* of The Seven Princes of Lara (or Salas), though in this case the taking

of heads as trophies of war is considered to be an act of savagery

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and villainy. It should be noted that taking enemy heads as trophies of war is **NOT** the same as head hunting as practiced by some peoples of Melanasia and certain South American Amerindians.

The Church abhorred the custom of taking heads as trophies of war, and by the 12th century said custom had vanished in Western Europe, except for Castile, as we have said. In the 12th century said custom was equally abhorred by Irish, Highland Scots, Welsh, Strathclyde Welsh, Cornishmen, Bretons, Frenchmen and Occitans, and in Castile was considered to be an act of savagery and villainy. The contrast between the world of the Irish epic and that of 12th century France and Occitania is merely one of chronology.

In some versions of Tristan and Isolt we find the following incident:

"One day Gorvenal comes upon one of the barons hunting in the forest. He stations himself behind a tree, and when the baron is sufficiently near, falls upon him from ambush and cuts off his head. He carries it in his hand to the cabin where Tristan is sleeping, and suspends it by the hair from a forked branch, to greet his master when he awakens. The huntsmen find the dead body of the baron, and think it is Tristan's work. They shun that part of the forest thereafter." (319)

The custom of taking enemy heads as trophies of war on the part of the pre-Roman Gauls, the Celtic ancestors of the French and Occitans, is well documented in Roman sources:

"The Consul Gaius fell fighting desperately and his head was brought back to the Celtic kings.' Polybius mentions very briefly the custom of decapitation (Histories II:28). 'After a battle between the Senonēs (a Gallic Celtic tribe) and the Romans near Clusium, the consul had no news of the battle until some

Gallic horsemen came in sight with Roman heads
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hanging from their horses' breasts or fixed on spears. The riders were singing their customary songs of triumph.' (Livy, History: X: 26). Once when the *Boii* (another Celtic Gallic tribe) had caught a Roman army in an ambush, they cut off the head of the leader and carried it to their most hallowed temple. There the head was cleaned out, and the skull gilded and used as a sacred vessel (Livy, History: XXIII: 24).

The taking of an adversary's head is described by Diodorus Seculus:

'When the enemies fall, the Gauls cut off their heads and fasten them to the necks of their horses. They nail up the heads in their houses, they embalm in cedar-oil the heads of the most distinguished of their enemies and keep them carefully in a chest: they display them with pride to strangers. They refuse to accept for them a large sum of money or even the weight of the head in gold.'" (320)

In the Tain Bo Cualnge, part of the Ulster Cycle, we read:

"They came to encounter Cu Chulainn because they deemed excessive what he had done against them the previous day, namely killing the two sons of Nera MacNuatair Meic Thacain at Ath Gabla and killing Orlam, the son of Aillil and Medb, as well as displaying his head to the men of Ireland. They came then that they might kill Cu Chulainn in the same way and bear away his head as a trophy. They went to the wood and cut down three rods of white hazel to put in the hands of their charioteers so that all six of them together might fight with Cu Chulainn. Cu Chulainn attacked them and cut off their six heads. Thus fell Meic Arach by the hand of Cu Chulainn.

There came also Lethan on to his ford on the Nith in the district of Conaille Muirtheimne, to fight with Cu Chulainn. He attacked him on the ford. Ath Carpait was the name of the ford where they reached it, for their chariots had been broken in the fighting at the ford. Mulchi fell on the hill between the two fords, whence it is still called Gualu Mulchi. Then Cu Chulainn and Lethan met, and Lethan fell by the hand of Cu Chulainn, who cut off his head from his trunk on the ford, but he left it with it, that is, he left his head with his body." (321)

"Then Cu Chulainn went into the wood and descended from his chariot and cut a forked pole of four prongs, whole and entire, with one stroke. He pointed it and charred it and put an *ogam* inscription on its side and cast it out of the back of his chariot from the tip of

one hand so that two-thirds of it went into the ground and but one third of it was above ground. Then it was that the two lads mentioned, the two sons of Nera MacNuatair Meic Tacain, came upon him engaged in that task, and they vied with one another as to which of them would first wound him and first behead him. Cu Chulainn attacked them and cut off their four heads from them (and from their charioteers) and impaled a head of each man of them on a prong of the pole."(322)

"Turn the chariot back again for me, driver, for I swear by the gods whom I worship never to retreat until I carry off as a trophy the head of yon little deer, who is Cu Chulainn."(323)

"Then Conchobar and Celtchair went to Ath Nirmide with thirty hundred chariot fighters armed with spears, and there they met eight score big men of the household of Aillil and Medb with eight score captive women, one captive woman held prisoner by each man of them, and that was their share of the plunder of Ulster. Conchobar and Celtchair struck off their eight score heads and freed their eight score captives. Ath Nirmide was the name of that place until then, but it is called Ath Feinne ever since. The reason it is called Ath Feinne is because the warriors of the war-band (*fian*) from the east and the warriors of the war-band from the west met there in battle and contest on the brink of the ford."(324)

The practice of taking heads as trophies of war among the pre-Roman, pre-Christian Celts has been amply confirmed by archaeology.(325)

Clear memories of and veiled references to the taking of heads as trophies of war by the ancient Celts are found in the folklore of many places where there exists a Celtic substratum.(326)

No doubt clear memories and veiled references to the practice of taking heads as trophies of war by the ancient Celts were far more prevalent in the 12th century than they are today.

The incident of the Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne of the

Leinster of Fenian Cycle is particularly close to Tristan and Isolt in a number of ways.

In several medieval French Romances, such as Aucassin and Nicolette we find the star-crossed lovers hiding in the wilderness. However, in medieval French romances, it is only Tristan and Isolt who make the forest their home, with no thought of seeking a more congenial society beyond it. In one version, Isolt says to Tristan:

Nous avons perdu le monde et le monde nous, i.e., "We have lost the world and the world has lost us."

Just so, Grianne sings to Diarmaid:

"Sleep a little, a blessing on thee! Above the water of the spring of Trenghart; little lamb of the land above the lake, from the womb of the country of strong torrents.

Be it even as the sleep in the south of Dedidach of the high poets, when he took the daughter of ancient Morann in spite of Conall from the Red Branch.

Be it even as the sleep in the north of fair comely Finnchadh of Assaroe, when he took stately Slaine in spite of Failbhe Hard Head.

Be it even as the sleep in the west of Aine, daughter of Gailian, what time she fared by torch light with Dubhthach from Doirinis.

Be it even as the sleep in the east of Degha, gallant and proud, when he took Coinchenn daughter of Binn in spite of fierce Dechell of Duibreann." (327)

Tales such as that of Tristan and Isolt abound in the ancient Irish tradition, Below are some examples:

- ❖ 1.) The elopement of Mugais with Fiamain.
- ❖ 2.) The elopement of Deirdre with the sons of Uisnech.

- ❖ 3.) The elopement of Aife, daughter of Eoghan, with Medead.
- ❖ 4.) The elopement of Naise, the daughter of Fergus, with Nertach, son of Ua Leith.
- ❖ 5.) The elopement of the wife of Gaiar, son of Derg, with Glas, son of Cimbaeth.
- ❖ 6.) The elopement of Blathnait, the daughter of Pall, son of Fidhach, with Cu Chulainn.
- ❖ 7.) The elopement of Grianne with Diarmaid.
- ❖ 8.) The elopement of Muirn with Dubhrnis.
- ❖ 9.) The elopement of Ruithchearn with Cuana, the son of Cailcin.
- ❖ 10.) The elopement of Ercm daughter of Loarn, with Mureadhach, the son of Eoghan.
- ❖ 11.) The elopement of Dighe with Laidenen.
- ❖ 12.) The elopement of the wife of Ailill, the son of Eoghan, with Fothudh Canaun.(328)

We find another description of the life of two lovers in the forest in the Elopement of Deirdre with Naisi, part of the Ulster Cycle:

"and for a long time they wandered about Ireland, in homage to this man or that; and often Conor sought to slay them, either by ambuscade or by treachery; from round about Assaroe, near to Ballyshannon in the west, they journeyed, and they turned them back to Benn Etar, in the north-east, which men today call the Mountain of Howth. Neverthe less, the men of Ulster drove them from the land, and they came to the land of Alba (Scotland), and in its wilderness they dwelled."(329)

Deirdre afterwards alludes to their life in the forest:
Naisi, with mead of hazel-nuts
Came to be bathed by me at the fire,
Ardan, with anox or boar of excellence,
Aindle, a faggot on his stately back.

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Though sweet be the excellent mead to you
Which is drunk by the son of Ness, the rich in strife,
There has been known to me, ere now, leaping over a
bank,
Frequent sustenance which was sweeter.

When the noble Naisi spread out
A cooking hearth on hero-board of tree,
Sweeter than any food dressed under honey
Was that captured by the son of Usnach.

Though melodious to you each month
Are the bagpipers and horn-blowers,
It is my open statement to you today
I have heard melody sweeter far than these.

For Conor, the king, is melody
Bagpipers and blowers of horns,
More melodious to me, renowned, enchanting
The voice given out by the sons of Usnach.

Like the sound of the wave the voice of Naisi,
It was a melodious sound, one to hearken to forever,
Ardan was a good baritone,
The tenor of Aindle rang through the dwelling
place.(330)

Diarmaid, in The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne, due to
moral scruples and loyalty to Fionn, at first is very much the
"reluctant lover", for which Grianne taunts him as a coward:

"She took heart and began to walk by Diarmaid's
side boldly. A light jet of water splashed up through
the toes of her foot till it struck up to her thigh, and
she said to herself softly and guardedly:

'A plague on thee steaky splash
You are bolder than Diarmaid.'

'What is that you said, O Grianne?' asked Diarmaid.
'It is of no importance', said Grianne.
'Not so', said Diarmaid, 'I shall not rest until I
know it, for I think I heard part of it.'

Then Grianne said timidly, shyly, and modestly, 'O
Diarmaid, great is your valor and bravery in battles and
encounters, I think that this light splash of water is
bolder than you.'

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'That is true, O Grianne', said Diarmaid, 'and although I have been keeping myself from you for a long time for fear of Fionn, I will no longer endure your reproaches. Truly it is hard to trust women.'

It was then that Diarmaid first made a wife of Grianne, and took her into the thicket. He killed a wild deer that night, and they ate their meal then, their fill of flesh and pure water."(331)

A similar incident happens in Tristan and Isolt. In this case, the complaint is by Isolt of Brittany or Isolt of the White Hands, NOT by Isolt of Ireland, wife of King Mark of Cornwall, nor is there any reproach cast upon Isolt of Ireland, for having brought Tristan to ruin. It is Isolt of Brittany or Isolt of the White Hands whom Tristan resists, and she resents his indifference.

The significant comment to the water is not made in the presence of Tristan, nor is it intended for him. It is made by Isolt of Brittany or Isolt of the White Hands as she is riding with her brother and the cross a steed.(332)

There is another incident from the tale of Diarmaid and Grianne which is of interest to us.

A stranger, who appears to be a supernatural being, enters the cave in which Diarmaid and Grianne have taken refuge, and he and Diarmaid play a game of dice, which Diarmaid loses. The stranger then demands Grianne as the stake. Diarmaid is by honor compelled to relinquish her, and leaves. Later Diarmaid comes to the cave disguised as a beggar. Grianne recognizes him when he offers her the first piece of salmon that he has roasted, because she knows that he is under a *geis* (spell or taboo) never to eat

nor drink in the presence of a woman without offering her the first morsel. Diarmaid challenges the stranger to a duel, kills the stranger and leaves the cave. Grianne follows him, and finally overtakes him at dawn on the mountain Sliabh Gaoil, and attempts a reconciliation:

Diarmaid: Why should I take you as a wife, o woman, although my voice is soft, you the woman who forsook the king of the Fiann (Fenians), and forsook me afterward just as surely.

Grianne: Even though I did leave Fionn And although I forsook you afterward, when I was altogether despondent, I will never forsake you now, but true love to you forever growing, shall be like fresh branches on the bough. With gentle warmth throughout my life.

Diarmaid: Fulfil your promise, o woman, and although you have tormented me with sorrow, I will accept you as my wife, although you did choose the great giant.(333)

In another version of the same incident, through no fault of his own, Diarmaid, after the coming of the stranger, is no longer able to leave the uncooked meat as a sign to Fionn. Grianne has given herself to the stranger. Diarmaid kills the stranger when he discovers Grianne's dishonor, and thus remains faithful to Fionn, his liegeland. Fionn, not knowing of this, and finding the sign no longer, believes that Diarmaid has betrayed him. So, when Fionn overtakes Diarmaid, he kills him. Diarmaid's innocence is later discovered, and Grianne is buried alive.(334)

The above incidents bear a resemblance to the incident of the harp and the rosette, as it appears in most versions of Tristan and Isolt:

A stately ship arrives from Ireland, and the splendidly attired captain is granted an audience by the king and queen (Isolt) of Cornwall. Isolt recognizes Tristan at once. Isolt tells King Mark concerning the race and lineage of the sea captain, and bids him to honor the captain. The king invites the captain to eat from his own plate. The captain says that he is a bard, and will not for one moment be parted from the elaborately ornamented golden harp which he carries under his cape. After the meal, the king asks the captain to play, but he refuses to do so except for a reward. The king promises the captain that he shall have whatever he wishes. The captain plays two tunes, and demands Isolt as his reward. The king refuses, and the captain declares that a liar is unworthy to be king. The captain appeals to King Mark's council, saying that he is ready to defend his right in single combat. The council advises King Mark to keep his word; no one dares to accept the challenge to single combat. The captain carries the weeping Isolt to his ship, but the tide delays departure.

Tristan returns from the hunt, and on learning the news, disguises himself as a bard and hurries to the port. He finds the captain trying to divert the distressed queen. The captain promises Tristan a mantle and a good robe if he can dry her tears by his playing.

While Tristan plays, the captain forgets the rising tide, and that it is time to set sail. When the water has risen above the gang plank, Tristan offers to carry the queen to the ship on his

horse. As soon as he has the queen safely on his horse, Tristan rides off, taunting the hapless captain for his folly.(335)

In the Old Irish romance Wooing of Etain, is an analogue to the above incident from the Tristan and Isolt:

- ❖ 1.) Etain the wife of Midir, king of the fairy (Persian: *peri*) folk of Bri-Leith, after being beaten about by the winds for a thousand years through the magic arts of the jealous Fuamnach, is reborn as the child of an Ulster warrior, and becomes the wife of Eochaid, king of Ireland. In her childhood, a mysterious and magnificent personage once appears to her, accosts her as the wife of Midir, and sings a prophetic song.
- ❖ 2.) Again, shortly after her marriage, Midir mysteriously appears to her three times and reminds her of their former relation and its tragic ending. She refuses to return with him unless he obtains her husband's consent.
- ❖ 3.) Early one summer morning Midir approaches and greets Eochaid as he sits in his tower overlooking the country. He proposes a game of chess, and insists on playing for a stake of fifty horses. He loses the first game. For the second he suggests that the winner shall appoint the wager. He loses this time also, and is required by Eochaid to perform a number of difficult tasks. They play a third game on the same terms. Midir wins. He demands a kiss and his two hands around Etain. Eochaid asks a month's delay. On the day appointed the king sets guards within and without the house. At nightfall the stranger appears in the midst of the armed forces surrounding the queen, and demands her. He reminds the king of his promise, and her, in a touching song, of her pledged word, and the delights of his land. Eochaid concedes only the permission to embrace her in the presence of all. Midir takes his weapons in his left arm, and the woman under his right, on the floor before them. The heroes rise in indignation, but see only two swans, disappearing in the direction of the Fairy Hill. For a year the king seeks his wife in vain.

- ❖ 4.) At last a druid finds out, by some tricks with *ogam*, that she is in the Fairy Hill. After a nine years' siege Midir is forced to surrender Etain.(336)

Here is another example from Old Irish romances:

Mongan, king of Ulster, wants the cattle of the king of Leinster, who refuses to give up his cattle except on condition of 'friendship without refusal'. Mongan agrees, and takes the cattle home with him. Shortly after Mongan returns home, the king of Leinster appears and demands Dubh Lacha, Mongan's wife.

Silence fell upon Mongan, And he said: 'I have never heard of anyone's giving away his wife.'

'Though you have never heard of it', said Dubh Lacha, 'give her, for honor is more lasting than life.'

Anger seized Mongan, and he allowed the king of Leinster to take her with him.

Dubh Lacha obtains from the king of Leinster the promise that he will not claim her body for a year. At the end of that time Mongan shifts his shape, and sets out for the weeing feast as the son of the king of Connaught. He brings with him a hideous hag whom he has transformed for this occasion into the shape of Ibhell of the Shining Cheek. By the power of a love-charm the king of Leinster falls in love with her and offers Dubh Lacha in exchange for her. Mongan craftily accepts, and departs with his wife on the swiftest steeds in the stables of the king of Leinster.(337)

There is a similar story concerning Mongan's mother:

Fiachna Finn is losing great numbers of his army tby a flock of venomous sheep let loose on them by his enemy, the king of Lochlann (Scandinavia). One day he saw a single tall, warlike man

coming toward him, wearing a green cloak over his breast, and a satin shirt next to his white skin. A circlet of gold was around his hair, and two sandals of gold under his feet. And the warrior said:

'What reward would you give to him who would keep the sheep from you?'

'By my word', said Fiachna, 'whatever you ask, provided I have it, I will give it.'

'You shall have it to give', said the warrior, 'and I will tell you the reward.'

'Say the sentence' said Fiachna.

The stranger then demanded Fiachna's wife for the night, and revealed his identity. He was Manannan, son of the god Lir.(338)

Below is a version from the collection of Welsh tales known as the Mabinogion:

A stranger arrives at the wedding feast of Pwyll, salutes the company, and declares that he has come to make a request. Pwyll promises that it shall be granted, whatever it may be. Having reminded him of the dishonor attaching to the breaking of one's [pledged word, the stranger demands Rhiannon, the bride of Pwyll. The stranger is Gwawl, son of Clut, a magnificent and powerful personage, to whom she has previously been promised as a wife. Rhiannon reproaches Pwyll for his rashness, but declares that he must not break his word. She teaches him a ruse by which he may avoid losing her. She will obtain a year's respite. On the day set for her marriage with Gwawl, Pwyll is to enter the hall in the

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disguise of a begger, and ask, as a gift, sufficient food to fill

a little sack which she gives him. It is a magic sack and will remain empty, however much is put into it. Gwawl will remark that it is slow in filling. The beggar is then to advise him to press down the contents of the bag with his foot, and to declare that by this means alone it can be filled. Pwyll will then tie Gwawl in the bag, and signal to his men to enter from the woods.

All turns out as she has planned. Gwawl makes the rash promise and puts his foot in the sack. He is compelled to pledge himself to give up his claim to the bride and to pay a heavy ransom for his own release.(339)

The Celtic archetype, as found in the Old Irish versions, in the Mabinogion and in Tristan and Isolt is as follows:

A magnificent and mysterious stranger appears to the king. His race and lineage are known only to the queen, to whom he has a claim owing to some previous attachment. He gives a display of skill, in recognition of which the king promises him any boon he shall name. He demands the queen. The king hesitates, but, taunted with having compromised his honor, unwillingly submits. The stranger departs with the queen, no one daring to lift a hand to prevent him. The husband later pursues and recovers the queen by ruse or magic.(340)

The motif of "the separating sword", found in most versions of the Tristan legend, resembles an incident in The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne:

While Diarmaid is with Grianne in the forest, he always makes
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his bed at a distance from Grianne's. When they are in a cave,

Diarmaid takes his place always at the farthest end. It is thus that the stranger is able to reach Grianne before him. In one version we are told that every night Diarmaid put a cold stone between himself and Grianne.(341)

When King Mark comes upon Tristan and Isolt sleeping in the forest, he finds a sword between them. Tristan, having guessed from the barking of the hounds on the preceding day, that Mark and his party are in the forest, places the sword in this position as a ruse to deceive anyone who may discover them.(342)

We have already discussed at length the incident of the wood chips which Tristan whittled so skillfully and sent down the stream to Isolt, as it appears in most versions of Tristan and Isolt and the carved hazel rod as it appears in the *lai Chevrefoil* by Marie de France.

We find a close parallel to this incident in The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne.

One of the whittlings made by Diarmaid flows down the stream. Fionn, who is hunting in the woods nearby, knows that it is Diarmaid who has down it; *for the speal curled round nine times and it was quarters long; there was none in Ireland that could do the like*. It is then, according to several versions, that Fionn lets loose his dogs.(343)

The above incident from The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne resembles both the incident of the whittlings which Tristan sends down the stream and the incident recounted by Marie de France.

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"Romances of tragic love abound in Old Irish literature. Only through an intimate acquaintance with

the great body of imaginative literature that has been edited in the past thirty years is it possible to form an idea of the persistence with which this theme occurs. No more than a small fraction of the wealth of Old Irish romances that existed prior to the 10th century has survived, but in what we have, the note of tragic love is sounded with a hundred variations. Students of medieval romance are disposed to look upon the French and Provençal literature, from their superiority to that of the neighboring peoples, as highly developed. They are disposed to consider that, whatever tradition of Tristan and Isolt the ancient Welsh, Bretons, Cornish and Strathclyde Welsh may have had, it must have been of a rudeness of sentiment corresponding to the primitive character of their material civilization. There could be no greater error. Ireland and Wales (and presumably Brittany, The Scottish Highlands, Cornwall and Strathclyde) possessed in the 10th century a literature of romantic love of a depth and refinement of sentiment of which France and Occitania had not dreamed.(344)

The same could be said of Parthian and Persian literature in the 10th century.

Here are some examples of early Irish romance.

In the story of Deirdre and Naisi, The Exile of the Sons of Uisnech, from the Ulster Cycle, the elements of the tragic conflict are on the one hand the passion of the lovers, and on the other the social order. Naisi takes Deirdre from Conchobar in defiance of the laws of feudal (and pre-Roman, pre-Christian society was feudal; the word *vassal* is Celtic, Gaulish to be exact) society, and brings upon himself the enmity of its most renowned member, Naisi's lieglord, king Conchobar.(345)

In Liadain and Carithir the struggle is not with external circumstances, but rather is a struggle between love and

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conscience. Liadain has already taken monastic vows when her lover comes to her. St. Cummine, to whom they turn for direction,

endeavors to resolve the conflict by uniting them in one of those spiritual marriages dear to the Church. His effort fails. Curithir must therefore depart. Liadain follows him, full of remorse now for having denied him. When he hears that she is coming, he sets out in pilgrimage in a rudderless boat. Liadain returns and ends her life in grief and prayer for him.(346)

In the Sickbed of Aillil we have again a story of unlawful love in which the tragedy is in the transgression of a moral law. The story involves in a strange way the motif which we have discussed in connection with the incident of the harp and the rote. Aillil is stricken with love for the wife of his brother Eochaid, the high king (Gaelic: *Ard Righ*) of Ireland, and falls into a wasting illness. When Eochaid goes on his royal progress through Ireland, he leaves his wife behind to take care of his brother, who is near death. She resolves to heal Aillil. Here, as in Tristan and Isolt, the lover struggles between his passion for the woman and his loyalty to her husband. By the intervention of the fairy (Persian: *peri*) king Midir, who corresponds to the stranger in the incident of the harp and the rote, Aillil is cured of his illness without the loss of her honor.(347)

In the Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne, there is another element of tragedy: Diarmaid, like Tristan, is deeply attached to the husband whom he betrays. At least in the case of Tristan, King Mark, though perhaps above Tristan in the feudal hierarchy, is not

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his direct liegeland. Tristan, as one of King Arthur's knights, has King Arthur as his direct liegeland. Thus, Diarmaid's case is

even more difficult and tragic.

The lovers suffer, not only from the hostility of the social order with which, much against their will, their passion puts them in conflict, not only from the vengeance of the most powerful of its members, but from the consciousness of having violated and inner law, of having broken their faith to one they love, and who, in the case of Diarmaid, is his liegeland. Even in the mutilated fragments of The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne which have survived, and even in the corrupt versions drawn from oral tradition, this element remains. Diarmaid laments:

You have ruined me, o Grianne
You have brought shame on the son of Cumhall;
To be as I am in distress,
Is a load I cannot endure.

From Fionn himself of joyous heart
From him we used to get welcome;
I left the delight of his house,
And you have ruined me, O Grianne.

In a later version we read:

"I am like a deer or a stag, passing my days among remote glens. None desires to see me, of all who were kin to me in the house of hosts.

I have forsaken all my people, those who were brighter in nature than now on the hillside. Their hearts were loving and generous to me, like the sun high in the sky.

But now they have become full of hatred toward me, like an ocean that does not ebb, since you did beguile me, o Grianne. O, your love has been of ill omen to me!

...

I can never again return to the Fianna (or Fenians) of Erin whose companies were great; my character is more hateful to Fionn than the terror of a monster of sharpest bristles. (348)

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The services which Diarmaid rendered to Fionn, his liegeland, the many exploits which they performed together and the many times the Diarmaid saved Fionn from a situation of great peril

form an important part of the stories of the Finna or Fenians.

Below is an example:

"One drink from your cup, o Fionn, o man of sweet and pleasant words, since I have shed much of my blood, bring me a drink from the well.'

I have never injured you yonder or nearby, from east or from west, but (it was) Grianne who carried me off captive, when she caused me to break my word (as vassal).

If you remember the day of Suibhne. There is no need to be recalling it; I killed eight hundred and three men for you.

In Bruidhen Caorthainn you were prisoner, o Fionn, I was good to you, when the White-toothed one was wounding you, and you were in distress and *combat*.

Three king's sons of Inis Tire-fo-thuinn, I killed them all in spite of their resistance, and I washed you in their blood, though you have overcome me with cruelty.

If you but remember the day of Conall. When Cairbre and his people were before you, yourself and your Fenians in your train, o sad is my face toward Ben Gulbain."(349)

No doubt Gauls and Hispano-Celts were coarsened by the harsh rule of the Romans, who knew nothing of romantic love, honor nor chivalry. In places such as Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, wick the detestable Romans never conquered, or in Wales, Cornwall, Brittany and Strathclyde, where the Roman influence was not strong enough to destroy the Celtic languages, the Celtic sensibility survived, to be restored to the medieval descendants of the Gauls and Hispano-Celts after the downfall of the Roman Empire. Today most Spaniards detest the Romans, and in France the popularity of the cartoon character "Asterix the Gaul", which shows the Romans

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as being utterly despicable and contemptible, shows that this sentiment is by no means absent in France, even after the French revolutionaries have done their worst to utterly annihilate and obliterate the Celtic heritage.

Like the Celts, the Parthians had their epic bards, called *gosans*, who, like their Celtic counterparts, must have endured years of rigorous training. The word *gosan* survives in Modern Persian. Says Mary Boyce concerning the *gosans*:

"The cumulative evidence suggests that the *gosan* played a considerable rôle in the life of the Parthians. Entertainer of king and commoner, privileged at court and popular gatherings and festivals; present at the graveside and at the feast; eulogist, satirist, storyteller, musician; recorder of past, and commentator of his own times. As poet musicians the *gosans* presumably enjoyed reputation and esteem in proportion to their individual talents. Some were evidently the poet laureates of their age, performing alone before kings; others provided together the choir or orchestra at court or at a great man's table; and yet others, it is plain, won a humble livelihood and local fame among peasants and in public places." (350)

Certainly the *gosans* played a most important rôle in transmitting the legends of the Kayanian Dynasty, the pagan ancestors of Kavi Vishtaspa, patron of Zoroaster, which legends would find their way into Firdausi's Shah Namah. Proof of the rôle of the Parthian *gosans* in the above is that in the Sassanian Xwaday-Namag or Book of Lords, from which Firdausi drew much of his material, Parthians abruptly appear at the court of Kai Kaus (Avestan: *Kavi Usa*) and continue throughout the reigns of the Kayanian successors of Kai Kaus. The Parthians Godarz (Parthian:

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Gotarz), *Gev* (Parthian: *Wew*), *Bizhan* (Parthian: *Wezan*), *Milad* (Parthian: *Mihrdat*) and *Farhad* (Parthian: *Frahat*) appear together with the Avestan or Kayanian kings and heroes. (351) We have already spoken of the Saka elements which became intermingled with the Avestan and Parthian material.

There survives one fragment of the Kayanian or Avestan epic not reworked in later Parthian, Pahlavi or Modern Persian. This is the Ayadgari-i-Zareran, which is an account of a great battle in the holy wars of Zoroastrianism. Presumably it was originally written in Avestan, but has come down to us in Pahlavi. Parthian words in the Pahlavi text leave no doubt that it was passed down from Avestan to Pahlavi by way of the Parthian *gosans*, though there is nothing specifically Parthian in the text, except for the above-mentioned words. Ergo, in this case the Parthian *gossans* transmitted the text without reworking it.

In the Ayadgar-i-Zareran, the principal protagonist is the Zoroastrian hero Zarēr. The poem eloquently expresses nobility of spirit and expression, celebrating honor, courage and the pride and skill of a knightly warrior.

In the Ayadgar-i-Zareran the young prince Bastwar improvises a lament over his father's body on the battlefield. In the Shah Namah of Firdausi, Isfandiyar, resting by a spring, takes his *tar* and sings a lament for his hard lot in life, condemned to wander and to fight. This is an indication of the extreme antiquity of much of the material used by Firdausi in the Shah Namah. (352)

Below is a translation of the Ayadgar-i-Zarern. Spēntodad

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(Avestan: *Spēntodata*; New Persian: *Isfandiyar*), eldest son of Vishtaspa, is the great hero of the Avestan or Zoroastrian epitradition, along with his brother Pishyotan (New Persian: *Pishotan*) and the mighty captain Zarēr (Avestan: *Zairivairi*).

"When King Vishtasp, with his sons and brothers,
nobles and retinue, received from Ohrmazd the pure faith

of Mazda-worship, then the news reached Arjasp, lord of the Hyons. ... He was much perturbed; and he sent Vidrafsh the sorcerer and Namkhvast son of Hazar, with 20,000 chosen warriors, on an embassy to the land of the Iranians, [bearing a letter]. ... In the letter it was thus written: "I have heard that your majesty has received from Ohrmazd the pure religion of Mazda-worship. If you do not renounce it, it will assuredly be the cause of great harm and distress to us. If it please Your Majesty to relinquish this pure faith and to become (again) of the same religion as ourselves, then we shall serve you as our lord, and every year we shall give you much gold and silver, many good horses, and many kingly thrones. But if not ... then we shall attack you, and we shall consume what is green and burn what is dry, and carry off captive man and beast from your land. And we shall set you to toil in bondage, in much misery" When King Vishtasp heard these words he was greatly distressed. Then the brave and mighty captain, Zarer, ... said to King Vishtasp: "If it please your Majesty, I shall give command how to answer this letter." King Vishtasp bade him answer the letter. And the brave and mighty captain, Zarer, ordered this answer to be made: "From King Vishtasp, ruler of the Iranians, to Arjasp, king of the Hyons, greeting! First, we shall not relinquish this pure faith and we shall not become (again) of the same religion as you ..., Next month we shall meet you in mortal combat, at the White Forest ..., there where there are no high mountains and no deep lakes. On that level plain let the decision be for our brave horsemen and foot warriors. You shall approach from your side, we from ours, until we see one another. And we shall show you how devs (demons) are struck down at the hands of yazads." ... Vidrafsh the sorcerer and Namkhvast son of Hazar took the letter, bowed to King Vishtasp, and departed . Then King Vishtasp bade his brother Zarer order (signal) fires to be kindled on the mountain tops. "Alert the land, and alert heralds to proclaim: "Except for mobads who worship and tend Water and the Atash Bahram, let no man, from ten-year-old to eighty-

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year-old, remain at home. So act that next month you present yourselves at the court of King Vishtasp. ... Ten all men heard the heralds' proclamation and went in a body to the court of King Vishtasp. And they sound *bagpipes and blow flutes and raise the clarion of great trumpets. And he reviews his army, and the elephant-drivers pass on their elephants, and the camelteers on their camels, and the charioteers on their chariots. And many are the mighty *swords, and many the quivers full of arrows, and many the bright suits or armor, and many the four-times-tempered coats

of mail. The army on the march from the Iranians' land is so great that the tumult goes up to heaven, the reverberation down to hell. Along the road where they pass they cut up the way that they mix (its dust) with the water, so that for a month the water cannot be drunk. For fifty days there is no light. No bird finds a resting-place unless it perches on the mane of a horse or the tip of a spear or a mountain's lofty peak. Day is dark as night through the dust and haze. Then King Vishtasp ordered his brother Zarer: "Pitch your tent, so that the Iranians too will pitch their tents, and we may indeed know if it is night or day." Then Zarer left his chariot and pitched his tent, and the Iranians pitched their tents, and the dust and haze settled, and the stars and moon shown in the sky. ... Then Vishtasp ... summons Jamasp, the Chief Minister, to his presence and says: "I know you to be wise and brave and sage. ... And you know even this, what will happen tomorrow in that terrible "Battle of Vishtasp", and which of the sons and daughters of me, Kay Vishtasp the King, will live, and which die. Jamasp, the Chief Minister, says: ... "If it please Your Majesty ... to swear by the Glory of Ohrmazd the Lord, and by the Mazda-worshipping Religion, and by the soul of your brother Zarer ... that you will not strike nor kill me, nor even banish me, then I shall tell what will take place in the "Battle of Vishtasp". Then King Vishtasp says: "I swear ..." Then Jamasp, the Chief Minister, says: "Happier is he who was not born of his mother, or, being born, died. ... Tomorrow when hero meets hero, wold boar against wild boar, many a mother who now has a son wi become sonless, many a son will lack a father, and many a father a son. ... Many an Iranian horse will gallop riderless, seeking its master among those Hyons, and will find him not. ... And of your sons and brothers, two and twenty will die." When King Vishtasp heard these words, he fell from his throne to the ground. ... Then Jamasp says: "May it please Your Majesty to rise from the dust and be seated again on the royal throne! For what is to be, will be, and that

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which I have said will come to pass." King Vishtasp does not rise and does not look up. Then it is the mighty captain, brave Zarer, who goes and says: "May it please Your Majesty to rise from the dust and be seated again on the royal throne! For tomorrow I shall go and I shall slay with my own might 15,000 Hyons." King Vishtasp does not rise and does not look up. [*Other champions follow, each promising to slay great numbers of the foe, but each is unheeded.*] Then it is the brave hero Spendodad who goes and says: "May it please Your Majesty to rise from the dust and be seated again on the royal throne! For tomorrow I shall go, and I swear by the Glory of Ohrmazd the Lord and by the Mazda-

worshipping Religion, and Your Majesty's soul, that I shal not leave alive a single Hyon from the battle." Then King Vishtasp rises and takes his place again on the royal throne. ... Then Kay Vishtasp the King declares: "If all the sons and brothers and nobles of me, Kay Vishtasp the King, ... were to die, even then I would not relinquish this pure religion of Mazda-worship, even as I have received it from Ohrmazd."

There follows an account of the heroic battle, as a series of single combats, ending at last with Spendodad victorious, as he has foretold, in a field of tragic carnage." (353)

There is one other example of the works of the Parthian *gosans*, which has reached us by way of Fakhr ud-Din Gurgani (11th century), who, as he says, based his version on a Pahlavi source. Said Pahlavi version was, in turn, based on a Parthian original. Vladimir Minorsky believes that the romance reflects the history of a branch of the Parthian ruling house, said branch having been founded by Godarz, who appears in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, as we have said.(354) Minorsky also believes that Gurgani's work originally existed in epic or at least ballad form.(355) We, refer, of course, to the romance of Vis and Ramin.

Vis and Ramin is not the only example of epic material being reworked as ballad or romance. The Arthurian romances are perhaps the best known example of this, but there are many others. The

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Spanish Romancero consists in great part of episodes and motifs from the Castilian epic reworked as romances. Episodes from the Irish Epic were reworked as ballads and romances, first in Gaelic, then in English. The Persian romance Khusrau and Shirin by Nizami of Ganja is based on an episode from the Shah Namah of Firdausi.

Gurgani's version of Vis and Ramin reminds one very strongly of Arthurian romances, particularly Tristan and Isolt, as we shall

see, Old Irish romances, and, to a lesser extent, of French medieval romances. Says Mary Boyce concerning Vis and Ramin:

"Since Vis and Ramin survives only in derivative versions, it is impossible to judge the style of the (Parthian) original. The story is told at length, with many episodes and embroideries. Repetitiveness of incident, and wearisome prolongation of dialogue (once to five hundred verses) may well have developed in the course of transmission, for it seems that even the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) version was not fixed in writing until after the coming of Islam. Emotions are intensely depicted, but character and motives only superficially drawn; and the poem differs fundamentally from the older epic in its subordination of action to feeling. Battle and hunt, though still described, have receded into the background, and the story pursues its way in the enclosed atmosphere of court and castle, garden and moonlit orchard, dealing in magic and subterfuge, faith and faithlessness, like any medieval French (or Provençal) romance."(356)

Like Tristan, Ramin, male protagonist of Vis and Ramin, is a bard of great merit. This is something strange in medieval French romances, as Joseph Bedier noted:

"Tristan, like Sigfried, possessed the gift of being able to imitate and learn the songs of all the birds. What French poet could imagine this in a knight?"(357)

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Though in Vis and Ramin Viru derides Ramin because of his bardic calling, no Persian poet, nor any Welsh, Breton or Irish poet would ever think of disqualifying a knight on these grounds. Though they be best known in their French and Provençal redactions, the Arthurian romances are **NOT** French nor Provençal by origin.

Some of Ramin's songs appear in Vis and Ramin, though to what degree they reflect the lyric verse of the Parthian *gosans* and to

what degree they are the creation of Gurgani there is no way to know, as the Pahlavi redaction on which Gurgani based his work is no longer extant. The fact that Ramin's verses use a different rhyme scheme than the rest of the romance suggests that, to some degree at least they must be inspired by the Parthian *gosans*.(358)

It is also true that Ramin's verses remind one far more of the Provençal trobadors than of the classic Persian poets. Below are a few examples.

I saw a garden where spring flowers fell in cascades,
Perfect for love's blossoming:
Tall cypresses swayed into sight,
A heavenly moon rose and spoke silver words to the night.

Sweet April rose shyly, opened its petals and smiled,
Perfumed in far paradise,
In days of joy and delight
In nights of weeping a balm for the lover's sad eyes.

I lost my heart to the garden; now early and late
Through tulips wander my feet,
Salve of the garden of love,
I feast my eyes on the flowers,
Enemies outside the wall like the ring on the gate.

Why should the envious glare at me as they pass by?
God gives each what he deserves:
Heaven was deserving, and so
(733)

God gave the moon to it to be the Queen of the Sky.

For climatic reasons, the trobadors loved May rather than April as the month of flowers, tulips were unknown in Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries (though, as we shall see in a later chapter, the Chinese tulip tree may have been known), and a trobador would have considered it sacreligious to speak of the moon as "Queen of the Sky", since the title "Queen of Heaven" belongs only to the Virgin Mary. However, these are minor points: the above poem is very trobadoresque.

If anything, the following poem of Ramin is even more trobadoresque.

Night, you that steal my heart away,
You are to me the day:
Daybreak brings darkness to my eyes,
Sunset is my sunrise.

Now once again morning is near:
My sleeping heart, beware!
Swift comes the arrow that you fear
Splitting the dawn air.

However sweet love's rose we find,
Thorns lurk behind!

The 16th century Spanish poet and mystic St. John of the Cross was heir to both the Provençal trobadors and the Persian Sufi poets. Compare the above with this selection from Dark Night of the Soul by St. John of the Cross.

In the beneficent night
In secret, so that no one might see me
Nor saw I anything,
With no otherlight nor guide
Save that which burned in my heart

(734)

Onward it guided me
More surely than the light of noonday
To where someone awaited me
Whom I knew well.
In a place where there appeared to be no one.

Oh night that guided me!
Oh night more friendly than the dawn!
Oh night that united
Lover with Beloved
The lover becoming transformed into the Beloved.

Alba is a somewhat archaic word which means "dawn" or "daybreak" in several Indo-European languages, including Spanish, Gallego-Portuguese and Provençal. In said languages, according to the context, *albada* may mean a bagpipe tune meant to be played at

daybreak or a song which deals with dawn or daybreak. I am reminded of a beautiful girl from Avila, Spain, whose name, *Rosa de Alba*, which means "Rose of the Dawn" or "Rose of the Daybreak", is pure poetry. Below is an *albada* by the Provençal troubador Raimbaut de Vaqueiras (12th century). In Provençal, *l'alba ay l'alba* means "the dawn, alas the dawn", or "the daybreak, alas the daybreak".

Watch well, sentry of the castle
When the creature who is to me the best and most beautiful
I have at my side until the *alba*
The day comes, but I did not call it
The *alba* robs me of my joy
L'alba, ay l'alba!

Watch, my friend, cry and sing
For I am rich and have what I most desire
But I am angry with the *alba*
And the damage which the day brings to us
Angers me more than the *alba*
L'alba, ay l'alba!

Guard us, sentinel of the tower
From the jealous one, your accursed liegelord
More odious than the *alba*

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We here below speak of love
But we fear the *alba*
L'alba, ay l'alba!

Goodbye, my lady, for I can remain no longer
To my regret I must leave.

When I see that the daybreak is so near
We wish to deceive the *alba*
L'alba, ay l'alba!

Below is a song by Uc de la Bacalaria (12th century), who, though he wrote in a language called by convention "Provençal", was, in reality, from the Limousine (Provençal: *Lemozi*). In fact, say that the language of the troubadors should be called "Limousine" rather than "Provençal". Below is a "reverse *albada*"

by Uc de la Bacalaria. The refrain of the song is:

*Dieus! Qual eneug
Mi fay la nueg!
Per qu'ieu dezir l'alba.*

Which in English would be:

My God! What distress
Has the night caused me!
For this reason I desire the *alba*.

In order not to lose the untranslatable play on words between *eneug*, which means "distress" and *nueg*, which means "night", I have chosen to leave the refrain in the original Provençal.

For gratitude to the the good beginning
Which has me in its power
And to relieve my pain,
I wish to greet the *alba* with a new melody.
I see the night clear and serene
And hear the song of the bird
Which relieves my pain
But that which I seek and desire is the day.

*Dieus! Qual eneug
Mi fay la nueg!
Per qu'ieu dezir l'alba.*

(736)

I swear by the Holy Gospels
That never Andre de Paris,
Floris, **Tristan**, nor Amelis
Were so faithful in love.
Since I gave my heart to Elis
I do not pray an Our Father without
Before saying the "who art in Heaven"
That my spirit is not with her.

*Dieus! Qual eneug
Mi fay la nueg!
Per qu'ieu dezir la'alba.*

Not on the sea, nor the plain, nor the rocks
Can I escape from love,
But give no credit to the fools
Who try to separate me from my love;
In this way they hurt me and strike my heart
So that I can neither eat nor sleep
So that even were I in Antioch
I would wish to die with her.

Dieus! Qual eneug

*Mi fay la nueg!
Per qu'ieu dezir l'alba.*

Love, I know how to set traps
And to hunt bears and leopards
And to cause a strong castle to surrender,
But against you I have no defense
Nor do I like to fight against you
For, when I seem to be winning
I become weaker in defense
And my fear increases a thousand times.

*Dieus! Qual eneug
Mi fay la nueg!
Per qu'ieu dezir l'alba.*

Very trobadoresque also is the soliloquy attributed to Ramin
as he speaks to the nightingales:

"Why do you sing these complaints? What in the world
have you lost? You are up in the branches with your
mate, not, as I am, wretched and mourning! You have
gardens of a thousand kinds, I have a thousand kinds of
brands on my heart. Fortune has granted you a mate and a
garden, but has visited on me in love pain and brand.
You sing your plaint before the garden: why, then, must
there be pain and brand? You sing your plaint in the
presence of your love: why are your hearts thus wounded
by plaint? It is meet that I should moan early and

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late, for my love is not aware of my pain. Such weeping
and lamentation is proper for me, for I am far from that
rose of the spring garden. This heart-rending sigh is
suitable for me, for I am far from that delightful rose
bed. It is right for me to be thus beside myself,
wounded in heart by separation from my ctpress. It is
meet for me to give up the ghost in wretchedness and
fail to survive in the pain I suffer for my sweetheart."

Below is a synopsis of the plot of Vis and Ramin:

"The story tells of the vicissitudes of the
lovers Vis and Ramin. Shahru, Queen of Mah (Media),
rejects the suit of King Moubad of Marv and swears that
should she bear a daughter she will give her to him as
a bride. She gives birth to a daughter, Vis, who is sent
to Khuzan to be cared for by a nurse who also brings up
Ramin, younger brother of King Moubad. When Vis grows up
Shahru marries her to her son Viru, brother of Vis.
Zard, half-brother of Moubad and his vizier, arrives at
the banquet with a message from Moubad recalling the old
oath. War breaks out and Moubad's army is defeated, but
an invader from the north threatens Viru. Moubad,

profiting by this turn of events, makes his way to the castle where Shahru and Vis are being kept and suborns Shahru with gifts; she surrenders Vis to him. On the way to Marv, Ramin sees Vis and falls in love with her. Vis persuades the Nurse, who is a sorceress, to make a talisman which renders Moubad impotent. The talisman is lost in a flood and Moubad remains impotent for life. Ramin seduces the Nurse and prevails upon her to arrange an assignation with Vis. Moubad discovers their intrigue and makes Viru place Vis in custody; she is banished to Mah, her homeland. Ramin leaves Marv on the pretext of a hunting expedition and breaks his promise to Moubad not to associate with Vis; the lovers spend seven months together. Moubad learns of it and sets off with an army but is placated by Viru. He orders Vis to swear before the sacred fire that she is innocent of connection with Ramin. Vis and Ramin elope and Moubad sets off to wander the world in search of Vis. Ramin's mother eleicits a pledge from her elder son, Moubad, that he will not harm Ramin; the lovers return to Marv where Moubad overhears them whispering fondly at his banquet. Ramin wanders on the palace roof and sends a message to Vis by the hand of the Nurse. Vis tells the Nurse to lie in her place in the King's bed. The King discovers the trick but is consoled by Vis. News reaches Moubad that the Emperor of Rome is approaching

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with an army. Moubad orders Zard to imprison Vis in a redoubtable fortress. Ramin sets off with Moubad's army, but falls sick with misery; he is left behind and makes his way to the fortress. He shoots an arrow into the castle as a signal, scales the wall, and the lovers are reunited. Vis pledges her love for Ramin with the wine cup (*the Holy Grail?*) and they remain together for nine months. Their secret is divulged to Moubad, who comes to the castle; the Nurse lets Ramin down the wall. Moubad beats Vis and the Nurse, returns to Marv, and summons Vis to join him. Ramin makes his way into the palace garden, where Vis upon him asleep. Moubad arrives and Ramin escapes by scaling the wall. There is later a brawl at Moubad's banquet when a bard sings a song with pointed reference to the situation. Ramin parries Moubad's dagger blow and throws him to the floor. A sage counsels Ramin to leave Marv and console himself with another sweetheart. Ramin requests Moubad to appoint him general in Mah. Despite the warning of Vis he visits Gurab, where he meets Gul, a girl of great beauty with whom he falls in love. They are married and Ramin writes to Vis to say that he has found happiness with another. Vis sends the Nurse to Ramin, but he insults her. Vis then summons her scribe and sends ten Letters to Ramin. Meantime Ramin has become sated of Gul; he wanders into the country and when he is

presented with a nosegay of violets by a girl he is reminded of a similar souvenir given him by Vis. He sets out for Marv but is greeted coldly by Vis. A long disputation ensues and Ramin is nearly frozen in a fearful snowstorm. He rides away but Vis sends the Nurse to stop him; after further recriminations the lovers are reconciled. Moubad insists that Ramin accompany him on a hunting expedition; the lovers and the Nurse plan a revolt. Vis gains permission from Zard, guardian of the fortress, to go out to visit the fire-temple. Ramin and his men return with her in the guise of women. At dead of night they set about the garrison; Ramin kills Zard. Ramin takes Vis and the king's treasure and goes to Dailam. Moubad decides after some hesitation to give battle; a wild boar appears in his camp, rushes for the King's horse, and spears it and the King with its tusks. Moubad is killed. Ramin is left supreme and is welcomed in Marv as a liberator. He reigns for eighty-three years. He and Vis have two sons. After eighty-one years of Ramin's reign, Vis dies. Ramin builds a Tower of Silence for her, hands over the realm to his son Khurshid, and retires to spend his dying days by the tower. He dies there and "the souls of the lovers are once more joined as bride and groom."(358)

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The plot of Vis and Ramin has close parallels with tales from the Celtic Epics, notably Deirdre of the Sorrows,(359) from the Ulster Cycle of the Irish Epic, The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne from the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle of the Irish Epic, and Tristan and Isolt. Or, in Welsh and Breton, *Trystan a Essylit*. Let us examine them in more detail. Below is a synopsis of Deirdre of the Sorrows:

"When Conchobar MacNessa, King of Ulster, was feasting in the house of Feidlimid MacDaill, his storyteller, Feidlimid's wife, who was pregnant, served food and drink to the company. As she crossed the floor of the house the child screamed in her womb and was heard through the whole dwelling, Cathbad, the druid, placed his hand upon her womb: "It is a girl", he said. "Deirdre shall be her name. She will be the most beautiful woman in Ireland, but she will bring much bloodshed and evil upon the land.

The company were in favor of slaying the child, but Conchobar decided to rear her to become his wife. She was reared without any human contact except her foster-

father, foster-mother, and the female satirist, Leborcham.

Once when her foster-father was skinning a calf outside in the winter-time, Deirdre saw a raven drink the blood from the snow. "I would like," she said to Leborcham, "a man who would have yonder three colors: hair like the raven, cheeks like the blood, and a body like the snow."

Leborcham told her that there was such a man, Noise MacUislenn. Deirdre sees him one day and goes quickly as if to pass him. "A fine heifer goes past us", said Noise.

"There should be great heifers", said Deirdre, "where there are no bulls."

"You have the bull of the province", said he, "the King of Ulster".

"I would choose between the two of you", said Deirdre, "and I would take a small young bull like you."

Noise refused her offer. Deirdre rushed at him and seized his two ears. "There will be two ears of shame and mockery upon you", she said, "unless you take me with you."

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Noise and his two brothers fly with Deirdre. They travel all Ireland and are pursued by the machinations of Conchobar. They eventaul flee to Scotland and take service with the King. They keep Deirdre hidden lest they should be slain on her account.

The King's steward sees them sleeping one day. He goes to the King, and tells him of her beauty, and advises him to kill Noise and take Deirdre as a wife. The King did not consent to this but constantly sent his steward to urge Deirdre to make an assignation with him. Deirdre refused and the King ordered the three brothers to be put in the most difficult places in battle so that they might be slain. This did not succeed, however, because of their strength and prowess.

The men of Scotland were gathered to slay them, but Deirdre warned them. They escape to an island in the sea.

The Ulstermen plead with Conchobar for the end of the exile of the brothers. Conchobar consents, and the brothers return under a guarantee of safety from Fergus, Dubthach and Cormac, Conchobar's son. Conchobar violates the honor of the guarantee by having Noise slain. Fergus, Dubthach and Cormac rise against Conchobar and slay many his people. They then go with many of the best of the Ulstermen to Conchobar's enemies, Ailill and Medb of Connacht, and Ulster did not cease to bemoan their loss for sixteen years.

Deirdre was with Conchobar for a year after that. But she never smiled, took food, nor slept, nor raised her head from her knee. Musicians were brought to her in

vain. Conchobar failed to please her in any way.

One day he said to her: "Of all you see, what do you hate most?"

"You", said she, "and Eogan MacDurthacht."

"Then", said Conchobar, "you shall be a year in Eogan's company."

He gave her to Eogan, and the next day they went to the fair at Macha. She stood behind Eogan in the chariot.

"Well, then, Deirdre", said Conchobar, "You make the eye of a sheep between two rams between me and Eogan."

On hearing this, Deirdre threw herself out of the chariot and dashed her head against a rock." (360)

Below is a synopsis of the Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne:

"Grianne, married to the old Leader of a warrior band, Fionn MacCumhail, falls in love with Fionn's cousin, Diarmaid. Grianne, in a conversation with Daire (741)

MacMorna elicits the names of the men of Fionn's war band, the *Fionna* or *Fenians*. She asks Daire: "Who is that freckled, sweet-worded man, upon whom is the curly dusty black hair, and who has the two berry-red cheeks?"

At a feast, Grianne administers a sleeping draught to all the *Fionna* or *Fenians* except Diarmaid and Oisín MacFionn, who, as his name indicates, is Fionn's son. She then makes overtures to Oisín, who, refuses, and Diarmaid, who also refuses.

In spite of his refusal, Grianne uses some magic spell (*gessa*) to induce him to flee with her. The first place at which they stay is *Doire da Bhoth*, which means "Oakgrove of the Two Bothys", or "Oakgrove of the Two Inns", this name making clear that they did not sleep together because of Diarmaid's loyalty to Fionn as cousin and vassal.

Diarmaid and Grianne were pursued by Fionn. When they are surrounded by the *Fionna*, Grianne escapes with the aid of Oengus an Broga, while Diarmaid escapes by a wonderful leap.

Diarmaid and Grianne lived on wild game and fish. Though they are shown as sleeping together, "there was no sin between them". Let us note here that Druidism was as intolerant of fornication and adultery as is Catholicism. Also, ties of kinship and vassalage enter here. One day when Grianne was walking with Diarmaid, water splashed on her leg. "Diarmaid", she said, "though your hardiness is great in battles and contests, I think that this bold splash is braver than you." Stung by this insult to his manhood or *machismo*, Diarmaid yielded to her.

Fionn and the Fionna once again come upon them, and once again Grianne escapes with the help of Oengus, an Broga, and Diarmaid escapes by leaping.

Oengus an Broga went to Fionn and asked him to forgive Diarmaid and Grianne. Finally, Fionn is persuaded.

Fionn and Diarmaid went to hunt the Wild Boar of Ben Gulban. Diarmaid kills the boar, but is wounded and close to death. Only Fionn MacCumhail can cure him; Fionn has the magic gift that should he give water from the palms of his hands to someone, that person will be made young and sound and free of any sickness. Fionn is persuaded by Diarmaid to go and fetch the water, but when Fionn thinks of Grainne, he let the water slip through his fingerd, and Diarmaid died. Grianne mourned Diarmaid, but later she became reconciled to Fionn and remained with him until she dies."(361)

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Because its plot is far more involved and complicated than Deirdre of the Sorrows, The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne, and, for that matter, Vis and Ramin as well as for other motives which will presently be made clear, we shall devote more space to Tristan and Isolt than to the two Irish romances.

Like Dante Alighieri, from an early age I became addicted to what Dante called "the beautiful stories of King Arthur", though, unlike Dante, I always knew that the tales of King Arthur were of Welsh-Breton origin rather than French, having been adopted by medieval French and Provençal trobadors and romancers only much later.

Some have said that the romance of Tristan and Isolt was not originally part of the Arthurian Cycle, but was merged into it by medieval French and Provençal romancers. However, in the very earliest Welsh and Breton references to Tristan, he is already associated with King Arthur. Here are two Welsh *englynion* which date from a period long before King Arthur and Tristan were known

to French and Provençal romancers:

Trystan, worthily renowned,
Do you not, know, have you not found,
Arthur's host that hems you 'round?

Trystan, your repute is clear,
And the stroke of your sword can cleave a spear,
Spurn not Arthur's friendship dear.(362)

In a very early Welsh source, King Arthur acts as referee between King Mark of Cornwall and Tristan, who have been quarreling over Isolt.(363)

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So, Tristan was part of the Arthurian Cycle from the very beginning.

As we have said, the name *Isolt* is derived from the Welsh *Essylit*. Prof. Kenneth Jackson believed that *Essylit* ultimately derives from the pre-Roman Brythonic Celtic **Adsiltia*, which means "she who is gazed at".(364) Isolt also appears associated with both Tristan and King Arthur in a very early Welsh *englyn*:

Three faithless wives of the Island of Britain.
Three daughters of Culfanawyd of Britain:
Essylit fair-Hair, lover of Trystan
And Penarwan, wife of Owain son of Urien
And Bun, wife of Fflamddwyn.
And there was one more faithless than these three:
Gwenhwyfar (Guinevere), Arthur's wife
Since she shamed a better man than any of the others.(365)

Culfanawyd of Britain is otherwise unknown; some have said that he was one of King Arthur's northern vassals, specifically a chief of the *Gododdin*, called by the Romans *Votadini*, a Celtic tribe who inhabited the area of Edinburgh, known as *Duneideann* in Celtic times, and still known by that name in Welsh and Gaelic.(366) However, I find the proofs of this to be strained,

somewhat contrived, and unconvincing. "Culfanawyd of Britain" may well have been a chief of the *Gododdin* and vassal of King Arthur, but there is no convincing proof of it; he remains something of an enigma, though in all probability he was a vassal of King Arthur.

Below is a synopsis of Tristan and Isolt:

"When King Arthur ruled in Britain, the king of Cornwall was Mark, who had neither wife nor heir. His only sister Blancheffleur was married to King Rivalen of Lyonesse and had by him one son named Tristan.

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Blancheffleur died at Tristan's birth and Rivalen not long afterward, when one Duke Morgan attacked his land and usurped his crown. Tristan, now an orphan, grew up under the harsh rule of Morgan and as a young man came to the court of his uncle, King Mark. In Cornwall, Tristan soon distinguished himself as a clever hunter, an accomplished harpist, and an adroit swordsman. He was young, personable, and extraordinarily intelligent; everyone loved him.

At the time of Tristan's arrival Mark was under threat by the King of Ireland, who was demanding that Mark send young men and women to Ireland in the charge of a villainous giant, the Morholt of Ireland. The Morholt, who was the brother of the Queen of Ireland, would visit Cornwall annually, claim the tribute, and return to the Irish court. On the particular anniversary after Tristan came to Cornwall, he determined to put an end to the tribute. He planned to be included among the young people of the tribute, challenge the Morholt to single combat, kill him, and rid Cornwall of the unfortunate obligation. Mark begged him not to go, but Tristan was adamant. Eventually Mark agreed, and the Morholt accepted the challenge. Mark then pressed upon Tristan the gift of a new and beautiful sword. Tristan killed the Morholt, but broke the tip of his sword, leaving a small fragment of steel in the Morholt's head. (*We shall have more to say concerning Tristan and his broken sword.*) The tribute was ended; the Morholt's body was returned to Ireland. There the Princess Isolt, daughter of the King, removed the steel fragment and kept it for her own as a reminder of her uncle's defeat.

Although Tristan conquered the Morholt, he was badly injured by his enemy's poisoned sword. The wound festered, would not heal, and the stench became so offensive that Tristan was forced to retire to an isolated hut by the sea. Like all heroes, Tristan hated inactivity. Anything would be better than stagnating in

a hut. He persuaded Mark to push him out to sea in a small, rudderless boat. Taking only his harp, he resolved to remain away from Cornwall until he could be a more fitting member of the court.

Tristan's wound was curable by only one person in the world Princess Isolt of Ireland. The niece of his recent antagonist, she had learned medical skill from the Queen, her mother. Fortunately, his boat took him directly to an Irish harbor. Tristan, clever enough to land without divulging his name, was cured by the Princess Isolt, although some versions say that the Queen herself gave him the medicine. Then, when he had recovered his strength, he returned to the Cornish

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court.

Tristan was now a personal favorite with King Mark, so much so that the jealous Cornish barons urged Mark to provide himself with an heir. And then a curious event occurred. A swallow bearing a bright golden human hair in its beak flew into a window. (*Blondes are rare in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, and also in Ireland, except where Vikings and Normans settled.*) Mark seized the hair and, hoping to forestall the barons, vowed that he would marry only that woman whose hair matched the single strand he held in his hands.

The barons were delighted. Here was an excellent way of disposing of Tristan. Let him seek the owner of the hair. If he were successful, Mark would marry; if he were not and failed to return, so much the better.

When Tristan saw the strand of hair, he knew that only Isolt the Fair, Princess of Ireland, had hair that would match the King's sample. In spite of the contempt of the barons, whom he ignored, he vowed to find the lady and persuade her to become King Mark's bride.

In Ireland things had changed since his last visit. A fire-breathing dragon, a kidnapper of maidens, was devastating the country. In desperation the King had offered his daughter and half of the Kingdom to any hero who would kill the monster.

Instead of going to the court to announce the purpose of his mission, Tristan went directly to the lair of the dragon. The monster came roaring out of its cave, breathing fire and sulphurous smoke. Tristan's companions fled, and armed only with his broken sword, he faced the dragon. He plunged the sword through flames into the mouth of the beast and killed it. He cut the tongue from the dragon, took it with him, staggered a few feet away, and collapsed behind a small hill.

The king's seneschal, who had long loved the Princess Isolt, came by. Seeing the dead dragon, he ran back to the court, shouting that he himself had killed the monster, and that he wanted to marry the Princess. But Princess Isolt hated the seneschal. Refusing to

believe that he could have killed the dragon, she went to see for herself. She found the unconscious Tristan and brought him back to the castle for medication. Tristan responded to the treatment and as usual did not reveal his identity. Nor did Isolt recognize him, not having had a close look at him when he was previously in Ireland. Because he still had the dragon's tongue, he soon proved that the seneschal was a liar.

While the unidentified Tristan was bathing, Isolt casually examined his sword. She saw the broken tip,

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and the shape of the notch was familiar. She ran to where she kept the steel fragment taken from the Morholt's skull. The piece fitted Tristan's sword exactly. The nameless hero was that very Tristan who had slain her uncle, the Morholt. Isolt, whose temoer was short (*She was Irish, even though she was a blonde!*) under the best of circumstances, rant to the bath waving the sword and prepared to avenge her uncle on the spot. Trsitran acknowledged his own identity and soothed her by explaining that he wooed her not in his own name but in King Mark's. Pacified by the thought of becoming a queen, Isolt agreed to go to Cornwall and there to marry King Mark. Arrangements were soon made, and a ship was ordered.

Before the ship sailed, Isolt's mother visited Brangien, Isolt's personal maid, and gave her a small bottle containing a love charm. Were a man and a woman to drink the charm together, no matter what their previous feelings or commitments had been, they would be lovers. Brangien was told to guard the charm and give it to Mark and Isolt on their wedding night. She agreed, and the ship sailed as scheduled.

The weather on the Irish Sea was hot. Tristan and Isolt, thirsty and seeking refreshment, found the love charm and drank it together. Before the ship landed they were lovers; the damage had been done.

Isolt, no longer a maiden, was faced with the obvious wedding night problem: how to hide her indiscretion from King Mark. She persuaded Brangien to take her place, and thus not for the last time was King Mark deceived. But the game was a dangerous one, and Isolt reasoned that the fewer people who knew the secret the better. Accordingly she employed servitors to lure Brangien into the woods in order to kill her. But Brangien presented such impassioned pleas that she was released to face, as it turned out, a repentant and forgiving Isolt.

Now came a long period of deception. Information was passed between the lovers in all sorts of surreptitious ways. Chips of wood floating down a stream into the castle became secret messages. Pine trees became hiding places. Tristan and Isolt were

helpless before the magic of the charm (*recall the "gessa" in The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne*), yet neither wished to shame King Mark.

Tristan's old enemies, the jealous and contemptuous barons, did. Eager to disgrace the hero, they revealed the secret to King Mark. One of them, a vile dwarf and hunchback named Frocin, made this proposal to King Mark. "Sire, let Tristan ride hard tomorrow at dawn with a brief drawn up on parchment and

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well sealed with your seal: bid him ride to King Arthur at Carduel. Sire, he sleeps with the peers in your chamber; go out when the first sleep falls on men, and if he loves Isolt so madly, why, then, I swear by God he will try to speak with her before he rides. But if he does so unknown to you or me, then slay me. As for that trap, let me lay it, but say nothing to him of his ride until the time for sleep."

When King Mark had agreed, this dwarf did a vile thing. He bought of a baker four farthings' worth of flour, and hid it in the fold of his coat. That night, when the King had taken supper and the men-at-arms lay down to sleep in the hall, Tristan came to the King as was his custom, and the King said:

"Fair nephew, do my will: ride tomorrow night to King Arthur at Carduel and give him this brief, with my greeting, that he may open it: and stay with him but one day."

And when Tristan said: "I will take it in the morning"; the King added "Aye", and before the dawn of the day."

But as the peers slept all around the King their liegeward, a mad thought came to Tristan that, before dawn he would say a last word to Isolt. And there was a spear length in the darkness between them. Now Frocin the dwarf slept with the rest in the King's chamber, and when he thought that all slept he rose and scattered the flour silently in the spear length that lay between the bed of Tristan and that of Isolt.

Should one of the lovers go to join the other, the flour would retain the imprint of his steps. But as he strewed it about, Tristan, who lay awake, saw him: "What does this mean? This dwarf is not in the habit of working for my good, but he shall be deceived: only a fool would let him take the imprint of his steps."

At midnight, when it was dark in the room, no candle nor any lamp glimmering, the King went out silently by the door and with him the dwarf. Then Tristan rose in the darkness and judged the spear length and leapt the space between, to say his farewell to Isolt. But that day in the hunt a boar had wounded him in the leg, and to his ill luck the wound was unbandaged, and due to his exertion it began to bleed.

He did not feel it nor see it in the darkness, but the blood dripped upon the couches and the flour strewn between; and outside in the moonlight the dwarf read the heavens and knew that the lovers were together. He trembled with joy at the thought, and cried: "Enter, my King, and if you do not find them together, hang me high."

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Then the King and the dwarf and the four other felons ran in with lights and making noise, and though Tristan had regained his place there was blood for witness, and though Isolt feigned sleep, and Perinis (Tristan's hound) too, who lay at Tristan's feet, yet there was blood for witness. And the King looked in silence at the blood where it lay upon the bed and the boards and trampled into the floor.

And the four barons held Tristan down upon his bed and mocked Isolt also, promising her full justice; and they bared and showed the wound from whence the blood flowed.

Then the King said: "Tristan, now nothing any longer holds. Tomorrow you shall die."

The King had Tristan imprisoned in a cell high on a cliff, but Tristan, ever an athlete, escaped from his cell with a fantastic leap and fled to banishment to the nearby Wood of Morois. There Isolt joined him, and the lovers continued their life in a hut, eating the game that Tristan killed.

They slept with Tristan's sword between them, and once when they were thus sleeping, King Mark discovered them. The gullible King, seeing the sword between the lovers, was convinced of their innocence and left believing that he had wronged his nephew and his wife.

Still the baron accused Tristan to Mark. And the King, now in doubt, said that he would reaccept Isolt as his queen if she could pass an ordeal or trial by hot iron. A person suspected of lying was asked to touch a hot iron. If he were innocent, he would not be burned; if he were guilty he would be burned.

Isolt agreed to the experiment and gave Tristan his instructions. On the day of the ordeal the King and his nobles assembled by a stream. Interested witnesses of the trial included King Arthur himself and a number of Knights of the Round Table (*Tristan himself was a knight of the Round Table*). Isolt appeared on a horse by the other shore. Tristan was nowhere to be seen, for no one knew that the ragged beggar loitering across the stream from the assembled court was King Mark's nephew. As Isolt rode her horse into the stream in order to cross, the disguised Tristan sprang forward to guide her. Halfway across Isolt slipped from her horse into the water. The apparent beggar picked her up from the

river and replaced her on the saddle. On the other bank Isolt presented herself for the ordeal of iron. She was asked by the presiding magistrate if ever she had been unfaithful to King Mark. Her truthful answer was that she had never been in the arms of any man save the King, and, oh yes, that ragged fellow who had picked her out of the water. Then she touched the iron, which,

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of course, did not burn her. The King and his nobles were satisfied. Isolt was exonerated and welcomed back to the court. Tristan remained in the woods except for occasional nocturnal visits with Isolt.

The strain of all this deception was too much for Tristan. He decided to go abroad, to travel the world, and above all to escape the conflict of love for Isolt and loyalty to King Mark. To forget Isolt the only answer was flight.

In Wales he entered the service of a young duke troubled by a giant named Urgan. The duke owned a magic dog named Petit Crû, which was so beautiful that no one could tell what color it was. It wore a bell which made such a lovely sound that Tristan immediately coveted the dog. Tristan challenged and killed the giant Urgan, cutting off Urgan's right hand as a trophy. The grateful duke offered Tristan any reward he wished, and Tristan, turning down offers of gold, half the dukedom, and the duke's sister, chose the dog, which he immediately sent by secret courier to Isolt. She was not so easy to forget as he had hoped.

He continued wandering; on one adventure he killed Morgan, the usurper of his father's kingdom. In Brittany he entered the service of Duke Hoël and soon became friends with Hoël's son, Kaherdin. Again he defended his new friends against their enemies, and again he was offered the duke's daughter as his reward.

For years Tristan had been turning down the daughters and sisters who were continually being offered to him. His only love was Isolt, the wife of King Mark. But he changed his mind when he met Hoël's daughter, for she was also named Isolt, Isolt of the White Hands. They were married, but Tristan, unable to forget Isolt the wife of King Mark, refused to consummate his marriage.

One day Tristan, Kaherdin and Isolt of the White Hands were riding across some puddles left by a recent rain. The water kicked by the horses' hooves splashed up, some of it high under the skirt of Isolt of the White Hands, who broke into laughter. She said that the water had been bolder with her than ever her husband had been. Kaherdin was furious. If Tristan had refused to touch his sister, the family was insulted. Tristan could do no more than beg for a chance to explain.

So Tristan told Kaherdin all about the love charm

and the long affair with King Mark's wife. Kaherdin now understood but wished to take a secret voyage to Cornwall to see for himself.

Once again Tristan in disguise approached the court of King Mark and Isolt the Fair. And once again his disguise allowed him to resume his affair. This

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time Kaherdin was with him and on seeing the beauty of Isolt the Fair sympathized with Tristan. Kaherdin was further won by his admiration for Isolt's maid and became her lover.

Back in Brittany, Tristan and Kaherdin were faster friends than ever. Only Isolt of the White Hands, still the untouched bride, was unable to share their happiness. Ristan and Kaherdin fought against common enemies and on one occasion were challenged by a fierce baron named Bedalis. Tristan killed Bedalis, but in the battle received a poisoned wound very similar to those he had received from the Morholt and the dragon years before.

Only Isolt the Fair had cured the wound made by the Morholt, and only Isolt the Fair had cured the wound made by the dragon. Tristan knew that only she could help him now. He sent her a secret message to come to him. The captain of the ship was given Tristan's own ring for identification and two sets of sails, one black, one white. He was to return with his ship rigged with the white sails if Isolt the Fair was with him and with black sails if she was not. The captain agreed and set off. Unfortunately, Isolt of the White Hands had overheard the plan. Each day Tristan asked if a ship were approaching the harbor. Each day she answered that there was none. Then one day she told him that a ship was in sight. Tristan asked what the sail color was. The sail color was white, but Isolt of the White Hands, remembering her grievance, falsely reported the sail as black. Heartbroken, Tristan, believing that Isolt the Fair had deserted him, turned his back to the wall, saying: "I cannot keep this life of mine any longer." Three times he said: "Isolt, my friend." And on saying it the fourth time he died.

The throughout the palace, the knights and the comrades of Tristan wept out loud, and they took him from his bed and laid him on a rich cloth, and the covered his body with a shroud.

When Isolt the Fair arrived, she heard great mourning and lamentations in the street and the loud tolling of bells in the chapel towers. When she asked an old man what had happened, he answered; "Lady, we suffer a great grief. Tristan that was so loyal and so just, is dead. He was open to the poor; he ministered to the suffering. It is the chief evil that has ever fallen on this land."

But Isolt the Fair, hearing this, could not answer them. She went up to the palace, following the way, and her cloak was random and wild, The Bretons marveled at her as she went, for they had never seen a woman of such beauty and grace, and they said: "Who is she, and

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from whence does he come?"

Near Tristan, Isolt of the White Hands crouched, maddened by the evil that she had done, and calling and lamenting over the dead man. Isolt the fair came in and said to her: "Lady, rise and let me come by him: I have more right to mourn him than have you - believe me, I loved him more."

And when Isolt the Fair had turned to the east and prayed to God, she moved the body a little and lay down beside Tristan, beside her friend. She kissed his mouth and his face, and clasped him closely; and so gave up her soul, and died beside him of grief for her lover.

When King Mark heard of the death of the lovers, he crossed the sea and came to Brittany; and he had two coffins hewn, for Tristan and Isolt the Fair, one of chalcedony for Isolt the Fair, and one of beryl for Tristan. The bodies of Tristan and Isolt the Fair were buried side by side in the coffins fashioned for them by King Mark. One night from the grave of Tristan there sprouted a green and leafy sweetbriar, strong in its branches and in the scent of its flowers, and from the grave of Isolt the Fair sprouted a climbing rose. The sweetbriar from the grave of Tristan and the climbing rose from the grave of Isolt the fair met and became intertwined, and no man could ever part them." (367)

The incident of Isolt's ordeal of the hot iron is of special interest. Says Helaine Newstead:

"Another striking example of Oriental material in the Tristan legend is the equivocal oath by which Isolt escapes punishment in the ordeal of red-hot iron. This tale also has a remarkable history. It originated in ancient India, in a Hindu ceremonial called the Act of Truth, a ritual based on the belief that a truthful statement has magical power. The Act of Truth is a formal statement of fact - any fact - accompanied by a prayer or resolution that the purpose of the agent may be accomplished. In addition to stories illustrating this power of truth to turn back fire, to cause rain, to restore vision to the blind, other stories were told of Acts of Truth used by adulterous wives to deceive their husbands. These appear in most of the great Sanskrit collections of tales. From India they spread west to Persia and Europe. The plot remains substantially the same, though some variants are more elaborate than

others. A faithless wife accused by her husband offers to submit to a test of her innocence requiring a declaration of truth. She secretly directs her lover to disguise himself as a repulsive character
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of low rank and to seize her when she arrives at her destination, usually a hallowed spot suitable for sacramental acts. When this happens as planned, she declares the literal truth and so escapes the penalty. The story was so popular that it is difficult to determine exactly how it reached the Tristan legend. In any case, it was a story easy to transpose from Orient to Occident; the original Hindu Act of Truth is replaced in the European versions by a Christian oath and an ordeal." (368)

As we have noted, it is no surprise to find Iranian and Indian influences in the Celtic epic. While the Arthurian Cycle certainly contains direct Iranian influences, as we shall see; outside the Arthurian Cycle, said apparent Iranian and Indian elements are probably not examples of external influences, but rather of the strong affinity between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranian and Indo-Aryan peoples on the other.

Some say that originally Tristan had no connection with King Arthur; however, as we have noted, very early indeed Tristan is connected to King Arthur and his knights. As Rosemary Sutcliffe notes:

Arthur is gone.
Tristan sleeps, with a broken sword
And Isolt beside him
Where the spume-crested waves
Roll over drowned Lyonesse (Breton: Ys)
To the sounding deep.

Like Dante Alighieri, since childhood I have loved what Dante called: "the beautiful stories of King Arthur".

Apparently it was Thomas of Brittany who synthesized the Welsh and Breton versions of Tristan and Isolt. Also, as we have

seen, the "motif" or "archetype" of Tristan and Isolt is not only pan-Celtic, but goes back to a time in which the Celts and

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the Iranian peoples had not yet separated, as the parallels between Tristan and Isolt on the one hand and the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin on the other are far too close to be a coincidence, and since said "archetype" is pan-Celtic, its presence in the Welsh-Breton Arthurian Cycle cannot be attributed to the influence of Sarmatian and Alanic cavalry which the Romans stationed in the northern part of Roman Britain: no Sarmatian or Alanic cavalry were ever stationed in Ireland, since Ireland was never part of the Roman Empire.

Anyone who can read the romance of Tristan and Isolt and not have tears in his eyes when he reaches the end is made of different stuff than I. But then someone who knows me very well said that I am an incurable romantic and idealist.

A preliminary observation must be made. From late Roman times until near the end of the Middle Ages, waves of Iranian influences, both Saka and Persian, reached western Europe, and, indeed, medieval civilization would be unthinkable without said influences. Said Iranian influences no doubt reached western Europe by a great number of different channels, which are the subject of much speculation and polemic. However, the fact itself is undeniable, as we have said throughout the present book. Some might say that said Iranian influences continued to reach western Europe even after the end of the Middle Ages, using the works of the great Spanish poet and mystic St. John of the Cross, who lived

in the latter part of the 16th century, as proof.

However, Spain was very late in being affected by the so-

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called "Renaissance"; in fact, Spaniards of the 15th and 16th centuries contemptuously referred to people influenced by the so-called "Renaissance" as *italianados* or *italianinis*. Spain accepted the so-called "Renaissance" very late and then only with the greatest reluctance. St. John of the Cross was quite unaffected by the so-called "Renaissance", which he no doubt held in contempt.

The great Shi'a thinkers of the Safavi period in Persia achieved a splendid synthesis which gives the lie to the idea that Muslims simply ceased thinking after the death of Averroes. St. John of the Cross was contemporary at least with the early Shi'a thinkers of Safavi Persia, such as Shaikh Baha' al-Din Amili, also known in Persian as Shaikh Baha'i, though he had no connection whatever to the much later Baha'i sect, Mir Damad and Mir Abu'l-Qasim Findiriski. As we shall see in a later chapter, St. John of the Cross was much influenced by the Ibn Arabi al-Mursi, Suhrawardi, Haidar Amoli and the Shi'a Imams, particularly Ja'afar as-Sadiq, the 6th Imam, all of whom contributed vital elements to what might be called the "Safavi-Shi'a synthesis". So, had St. John of the Cross heard anything of the teachings of Shaikh Baha'I al-Din Amili, Mir Damad and Mir Abul-Qasim Findiriski, he would have been vitally interested in them, and their influence would be clearly visible in his works, However, such influence is not visible, so one may assume that St. John of the Cross knew nothing of the works of the great Shi'a thinkers of Safavi Persia. The

latest Persian thinkers whose influence may be possibly detected

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in the works of St. John of the Cross are Ibn Turkah (died 1432) and Ibn Abi Jumhur al-Ahsa'I (died 1499).

In fact, the Irish tradition has a great number of tales which parallel Vis and Ramin and Tristan and Isolt. However, I have chosen to deal with only those tales which form part of the Ulster Cycle and the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle, because they are by far the earliest, and dealing with the later examples would hopelessly complicate things.

The Ulster Cycle and the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle are very ancient indeed; their atmosphere is totally Druidic and archaic. Notes Cecile O'Rahilly:

"Diodorus Siculus tells us of the Gauls: "They have also lyric poets whom they call Bards. They sing to the accompaniment of instruments resembling lyres, sometimes a eulogy and sometimes a satire. They also have certain philosophers whom they call Druids. They further make use of seers, thinking them worth of high praise." Corresponding to the bard, druid and *vatis* among the learned classes in Gaul we have in the Irish tales (of the Ulster Cycle and the Leinster Cycle or Fenian Cycle) the *fili*, *drui* and *faith*. Both Diodorus Siculus and Strabo speak of the warlike qualities of the Celts, of their boastfulness and courage. Says Strabo: "the Whole race is madly fond of war, high-spirited and quick to battle." Some of them so far despise death that they descend to battle unclothed except for a girdle." Examples of such heroic nudity are found in the Tain Bo Cualnge (part of the Ulster Cycle). The Gaulish weapons which are described by these authors, the shield, the long sword, the spear and the sling are those of the Irish warriors in the Tain Bo Cualnge and other tales. The use of the war-chariot had disappeared in Gaul in Caesar's time, though it was still found in Britain. Diodorus Siculus tells us that for their journeys and in battle the Gauls used chariots drawn by two horses and carrying both charioterr and chieftain. "When they meet with cavalry in the battle", he says, "they cast their javelins at the enemy and then descending from the chariot join battle with their

swords." So in the

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Tain Bo Cualnge we have a description of the noise and tumult of the Ulster warriors advancing to battle in their chariots with clatter of wheels and loud hoof-beats of horses. But in the ensuing battle no mention is made of chariots; the warriors arm themselves with shield and spear and sword and fall to hacking and slaughtering their enemies. The Gauls cut off the heads of their enemies slain in battle and attached them to their horses' necks. So Cu Chulainn (protagonist of the Tain Bo Cualnge) beheads the enemies he has slain, impales the heads on a branch or brandishes them before the enemy as a sign of victory. Diodorus tells us that at feasts they honor brave men with the finest portion of the meat. Athenaeus, quoting directly from Posidonius, writes: "And in former times when the hindquarters were served up, the bravest hero took the thigh-piece, and if another man claimed it, they stood up and fought in single combat to the death. In the sagas (the Ulster Cycle and Leinster Cycle) the custom is represented as still surviving among the Irish, for to this corresponds the *curadmir*, the champion's portion, for which the heroes contended in Fled Bricrend and in Scela Meic Dathó.(369)

Ms. O'Rahilly continues:

"As professor David Greene has noted: "Certain elements belonging to the coherent society portrayed in the Tain - totem and tabu, head-hunting, fighting from chariots - are unknown in early Christian Ireland and cannot, therefore, be inventions of literary men influenced by Latin learning."(370)

Ireland was never conquered by the Romans. No Sarmatian or Alanic cavalry in the service of Rome was ever stationed in Ireland. Until some years after the time of St. Patrick, about 500 AD at the very earliest, there is virtually no way that the waves of Iranian influences mentioned earlier could have reached Ireland.

In this chapter we have spoken of several parallels between the early Irish epics on the one hand and the Persian epic on the

other. However, said parallels are not the result of Iranian influence on Ireland in such an early period, but rather they go back to a time in which Celts and Iranians had not yet separated, like the multitude of other affinities between Celts and Iranians of which we have already spoken; in other words, rather than the one being the origin of the other, they both go back to a common source. Thus, Vis and Ramin on the one hand and Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne on the other hand, spring from a common source; the one is not derived from the other.

Between Vis and Ramin on the one hand and Tristan and Isolt on the other, things are more complicated. As we have said before, there is no doubt whatever that there are strong Iranian influences, both Saka and Persian, in the Arthurian Cycle, of which Tristan and Isolt forms a part, as we have said; the resemblances are too numerous and close, too many of them are not found in any non-Arthurian source.

Valdimir Minorsky believed that the similarity between Vis and Ramin on the one hand and Tristan and Isolt on the other is a mere coincidence, but then relented and quoted von Stackleberg to the effect that both go back to a common Indian source.(371) This is absurd. The ancient Iranian world is very much closer to the Celtic world, geographically, historically and culturally, than is the Indian or Indo-Aryan world. Also, Prof. Minorsky does not seem to have been informed concerning the many parallels between Celts and Iranians, nor of the Sarmatian and Alanic cavalry stationed in

Britain in late Roman times, nor of the waves of Iranian influences which reached western Europe, nor of the many Iranian elements in the Arthurian Cycle besides Tristan and Isolt.

In summary, Vis and Ramin, Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne all spring from a common source, all go back to the time when Celts and Iranians had not yet separated, all are among the many elements which Celts and Iranians share in common. However, the above does not in any way preclude the idea that Tristan and Isolt contains Iranian elements, which arrived with the waves of Iranian influences, both Saka and Persian, which reached Western Europe, including Britain and Brittany from late Roman times until near the end of the Middle Ages. So, Tristan and Isolt is related to Vis and Ramin both by virtue of springing from a common source and by way of the waves of Iranian influences which reached Britain and Brittany in late Roman and Medieval times.

The Parthian *gosans* had a most extensive epic tradition, and the Parthians did indeed add traditions of their own which combined with Avestan and Saka elements to form the Persian Epic in the final form given it by Firdausi.

Says George Morrison of Oxford University:

"The relationship between the romance of Vis and Ramin and that of Tristan and Isolt has been the subject of much discussion. The date and background of Gurgani's poem (Vis and Ramin) somewhat recall the history of the Tristan romance. In his introduction to the Tristan of Gottfried von Strassburg, A.T. Hatto writes: "The earliest discernible literary version of Tristan was composed by c. 1150. Although there are earlier versions extending back into Celtic antiquity,

nothing positive can be said of them."

Professor Vladimir Minorsky (Journal "Iranica", University of Tehran Publications, Vol. 775 (1964), p. 194) concludes that the relationship between the two stories is tenuous and quotes von Stackelberg to the effect that both may go back to a common Indian source. R, Zenker suggests a closer relationship and speculates as to whether bards or itinerant monks might have carried the Oriental romance to Ireland (or Wales or Strathclyde). Professor Mujtaba Minovi believes that the Persian romance may have been transmitted to the West through bards who had free access to both Crusader and Saracen camps in the Holy Land. The poem was translated into Georgian possibly early in the 13th Century (Minorsky, "Iranica" p. 151.).

Parallels between the two romances may be noted from the point in the Tristan story where King Mark sends for Isolt as his bride and Tristan and Isolt meet. Vis and Ramin in the Persian ("Parthian" to be more precise) have already lived together as children in the care of the same nurse, the counterpart of Brangane. The triangle Mark-Isolt-Tristan corresponds to Moubad-Vis-Ramin.

Ramin, as we have seen, is, like Tristan, a bard (Parthian: *gosan*). Joseph Bédier, in the course of a discussion of certain traits in the character of Tristan unlikely to have been of French origin, writes: "*Tristan possède, comme Sigfrid, le don d'imiter à s'y méprendre le chant de tous les oiseaux. Quel poète de France l'eût imagine d'un chevalier?*" (Tristan possessed, like Sigfried, the gift of being able to imitate and to learn the songs of all the birds. What poet of France could imagine that of a knight?) No Persian poet (nor Irish, nor Welsh, nor Breton, nor Strathclyde poet), on the other hand, would have dreamt of disqualifying a knight on such grounds, much though Viru in the Persian poem may lampoon Ramin disparagingly for being given to the bard's (*gosan's*) calling.

Tristan and Ramin also share the gift of being skilled archers. There is a marked use of hunting metaphors in the passages referring to Ramin's romantic exploits which recalls similar passages in the Tristan story and the hunting prowess of Tristan.

King Mark is depicted as less melodramatically evil than his counterpart King Moubad, but both are the slaves of nagging jealousy. On the other hand, Vis, though deceitful to her husband and a victim of feelings of revenge, does not sink to the level of Isolt. In both stories the heroines are more faithful than their sweethearts; Ramin even has the epithet

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"cunning". The episode of Tristan's infidelity with

Isolt of the White Hands is closely paralleled by that of Ramin with Gul, whose appealing forwardness very much recalls the demeanor of her counterpart. Ramin sadly recalls the keepsake of Vis, as does Tristan the ring of Isolt. The idyllic sojourn of Tristan and Isolt in the Cave of Lovers has a parallel in *Vis o Ramin*. Both Tristan and Ramin plead illness to excuse themselves from a hunting expedition. The Nurse in *Vis o Ramin* is persuaded to deputize for Vis in Moubad's bed exactly as befalls Brangane in *Tristan*. Her counsel to Vis resembles a corresponding passage in *Tristan* where Brangane similarly admonishes Isolt.

The absence of the motif of the love-potion is noticeable in *Vis o Ramin*. Here, however, the Nurse herself is the baneful influence binding the lovers together and keeping them on their fatal course. A.T. Hatto writes: "The Brangane episode is an integral part of the events which arise from the drinking of the potion, showing as it does how swiftly love can drive Isolt to the depths. In the Brangane episode the malign aspects of love as it was released by the philter are shown to the full in action."

In the Persian romance, the Nurse is a sorceress and uses a talisman to render King Moubad impotent. The tie of a common nurse links Vis and Ramin and the three-cornered relationship is further cemented by Ramin's seduction of the Nurse in the garden.

Both Vis and Isolt are commanded to suffer the Ordeal, though Vis escapes during the proceedings. The killing of Moubad by a boar recalls the dream of Marjodoc in *Tristan* where a boar rushes into the royal palace, makes its way into Mark's chamber, and soils the royal linen with its foam. Both romances contain the adventures of the lovers under the suspicious eye of the King, including the unexpected arrival of the King on the scene.

Other parallels are pointed out in the notes to the translation; similarities may also be noticed in the passages which philosophize on the subject of love." (372)

There are other parallels between Vis and Ramin and Tristan and Isolt, some of which are given below. All quotes are from Vis and Ramin by Fakhr ud-Din Gurgani, translated and with an introduction by George Morrison, New York, 1972 and, unless otherwise indicated, Tristan by Gottfried von Strassburg, With

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Surviving Fragments of the Tristan of Thomas, translated and with

an introduction by A.T. Hatto, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England, 1975.

In Vis and Ramin we read:

"On one side bards (*gosans*) singing to the wine; on the other, nightingales singing to the rose. Wine had made the sweet-lipped beauties even fairer than before, just as the nightingale enhanced the trobadors."

In Gottfried's Tristan we read:

"The heavenly nightingale, that enchanting little bird - may its sweetness abide forever! - was trilling among the blossoms so wantonly that many a noble heart took joy and zest from it."

In Vis and Ramin we read:

"The sky was for all the world like a thicket with a;; its flags displaying tiger, lion, wolf and boar; the plain had become like a cypress grove, so that may flags waved on it; the moon gleaming from the brocade of the banners; on the crest of each a golden bird; eagle, falcon, peacock, Simurgh; beneath the falcon, a gorgeously colored lion; you would sworn the falcon had the lion in its claws."

One of the ways in which Thomas of Brittany showed his allegiance to Henry II was that he portrays Tristan as bearing on his shield the rampant lion of Anjou on an azure field. Some have insisted that the coat-of-arms of Anjou was a rampant lion on a red field, as this was the coat-of-arms of the later Plantagenet kings. However, this is an error. Henry II's father was Geoffroy Plantagenet, Duke of Anjou; on Geoffroy's tomb at Le Mans there is a shield with a rampant lion on an azure field. Henry II was the first of the Plantagenet kings, so it is virtually certain that on his shield was a rampant lion on an azure field, the rampant lion

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on a red field being that of the later Plantagenets.

However, Gottfried changed the rampant lion of Tristan's shield to a wild boar. The reason for this is obvious enough. Marjodoc was the head steward of King Mark and a close friend of Tristan. One night Marjodoc dreamed that

"A huge boar, fearsome and dreadful, ran out from the forest. Up to the king's court he came, foaming at the mouth and whetting his tusks and charging everything in his path. And now a great crowd of courtiers ran up. Many knights leapt hither and thither 'round the boar, yet none dared face him. Thus he plunged grunting through the palace. Arriving at Mark's chamber, he broke in through the doors, tossed the King's appointed bed in all directions, and fouled the royal linen with his foam."

This dream was the beginning of a chain of events which forced Marjodoc to conclude with the greatest reluctance and misgivings that Tristan and Isolt were having an affair.

Note that lions and boars figure in the heraldry in both Vis and Ramin and Tristan and Isolt.

In Gottfried's Tristan, before Tristan has finally won Isolt for his uncle, she is compared to the free falcon on its bough that turns its gaze where it pleases. In Vis and Ramin, Vis tells King Moubad:

"On the day when the falcon pairs with the mountain partridge shall I sort with you in love."

Ramin says:

"I swear by her life that there has never been in the world, nor ever shall be, one like her (Vis) with face like her with face like the sun and form like the moon, descended from queens, of high lineage. You would swear)that) she had been born of her mother to raise fire from the seven climes especially from this unlucky heart of Ramin, which is a very *Khurrad* and *Burzin* (two
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of the principal sacred fires of the *Zoroastrians*) fire! Though I burn constantly through injustice, may her heart never burn on such a fire! Though Fortune has

broken faith with me, may glorious Fortune be afoot for her! I constantly say as I burn from passion for her, 'Grant that her fortune may never be like mine! For every single pain (that) I experience through love for her I offer up a hundred blessings upon her fair face. Thus I would have it ever: I suffering torment at her hand, she enjoying felicity."

Says Tristan:

"Whether it be life or death, it has poisoned me most sweetly! I have no idea what the other will be like, but this death suits me well! If my adorable Isolt were to go on being the death of me, in this fashion, I would woo death everlasting."

Says Ramin to the old nurse of Vis:

"Now you know more spells than any; you can likewise contrive remedies; you have a store of more than a thousand spells; all your thoughts are ordered and collected; nothing emanates from you that is not worthy of approbation; there is none so clever as you. At the moment of speech you have much store of talent. Match words skillfully to action; and by their twofold use cast a spell on Vis. Had my fortune not been kindly disposed it would not have led you to me here. Since luck has seen fit to aid me today it has made me victorious by the sight of you. As you are my comrade in this enterprise, even so may God be your helper in every task!"

So saying, he clasped her close to his breast and kissed her head again and again; then he kissed her lips and face. A demon (*div*) came and entered into his body; he quickly gained his desire of the Nurse."

Tristan to Brangiane, Isolt's nurse:

"Thank you, lovely woman. I do not doubt that you are loyal and honorable. Greater loyalty and honor were never implanted in one heart. If luck should come my way, I would use it to your happiness and advancement. Though my situation is wretched and my fortunes are toppling, if I knew how I might devote my hours and days to your happiness, believe me, I would gladly shorten my life to do so!" And then addressing her again through his tears: 'My good and faithful lady!' Whereupon he put his arms about her and drawing her

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very close, kissed her eyes and cheeks with many a pang, time and again."

Vis struggles with her conscience:

"Now her shame would drive her desire far away, Reason command her thought. She feared eternal shame, drested too the requital for this world's deeds. As she dreaded God and Hell, Reason preferred chastity to love. She repented of love and romance, she chose in their stead freedom and fear of God. She set her heart on becoming in no wise involved in a notorious deed; on preferring Reason to Ramin, on not laying her head on an improper pillow. When she made righteousness the captain of her heart, fear of God made her soul saintly!"

Isolt suffers the same qualms:

"And so it fared with her (Isolt). Finding this life unbearable, she, too, made ceaseless efforts. When she recognized the (bird) lime that bewitching Love had spread and saw that she was deep in it, she endeavored to reach dry ground, she strove to be out and away. But the (bird) lime kept clinging and drew her back and down. The lovely woman fought back with might and main, but stuck fast at every step."

In Persian *sougand khordan*, "to take an oath" originally meant "to swallow sulphur"; trial by ordeal was well known in ancient Persia. In Vis and Ramin, King Moubad brings fire from the fire temple (*atashgade*), and makes a huge bonfire, intending to submit Vis and Ramin to ordeal by fire to prove their innocence. In Gottfried's Tristan, Isolt is summoned to an ordeal by hot iron in the presence of King Arthur and his knights, of whom Tristan was one:

"The good Queen Isolt had given away her silver, her gold, her jewelry, and all the clothes and palfreys she had, (in order) to win God's favor, so that He might overlook her very real trespasses and restore her to her honor. And now the reliquary was brought, on which she was to swear. She was ordered forthwith to make known to God and the world how guilty she was of
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the sins that were alleged against her. Isolt had surrendered her life and honor utterly to God's mercy. She stretched out her hand to take the oath upon the relics with fearful heart, as well she might, and rendered up heart and hand to the grace of God, for Him

to keep and preserve. Hear the oath which I mean to swear: 'That no man in the world had carnal knowledge of me or lay in my arms or beside me but you (King mark), always excepting the poor pilgrim, whom, with your own eyes you saw lying in my arms. 'I think that this will suffice, ma'am. So far as I can see', answered King Mark. 'Now take this iron in your hand and, within the terms that you have named to us, may God help you in your hour of need.' 'Amen', said the fair Isolt. In the name of God she laid hold of the iron, carried it, and was not burned."

Previously, Tristan had disguised himself as a poor pilgrim, and, on disembarking from a ship, pretended to fall by accident in Isolt's lap and arms.

In his reconstruction of Tristan and Isolt by Thomas of Brittany, Joseph Bédier gives a slightly different version of Isolt's ordeal by hot iron:

"Tristan and Isolt arranged that Tristan should dress as a poor pilgrim. When Isolt's skiff neared the shore, she said to the knights: 'My lords. How shall I land without befouling my clothes in the river mud? Fetch me a ferryman.' One of the knights hailed the pilgrim (Tristan in disguise) and said: 'Friend, truss your coat, and try the water; carry you the Queen to the shore, unless you fear the burden.'

But as he took the Queen in his arms she whispered to him: 'Friend.' She threw to the pilgrim a little clasp of gold. Before the tent of King Arthur was spread a rich Nicean cloth upon the grass, and the holy relics were on it. And 'round the holy relics on the grass stood a guard more than a king's guard, for Sir Gawain, Sir Girflet and Sir Kay the seneschal kept guard over them (apparently Tristan had been excused from this duty for something akin to what today we would call "conflict of interest").

The Queen having prayed to God, she took off her jewels from her neck and hands, and gave them to the beggars; she took off her purple mantle, and her overdress, and her shoes with their precious stones,

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and gave them also to the poor that loved her.

She kept only her sleeveless tunic, and then with arms and feet quite bare she came between the two kings (Mark and Arthur), and all around the barons watched her in silence, and some wept, for near the holy relics was a brazier burning.

And trembling a little, she stretched her right hand towards the relics and said: 'Kings of Britain and Cornwall, my lords Gawain, and Kay and Girflet, and all of you that are my warrantors, by these holy relics and all the holy things of the earth, I swear that no man born of woman has held me in his arms saving King Mark, my lord, and that poor pilgrim who only took a fall, as you saw. King Mark, will that oath stand?'

'Yes, Queen,' he said, and then she went near the brazier, pale and stumbling, and all were silent. The iron was red, but she thrust her bare arms among the coals and seized it, and bearing it took nine steps.

Then as she cast it from her, she stretched her arms out in a cross, and with the palms of her hands wide open, and all men saw them fresh and clean and cold. Seeing that great sight the Kings and the barons and the people stood for a moment silent, then they stirred together and they praised God loudly all around."

In Vis and Ramin we read:

"Our hand 'round the wine, for it is better to drink wine at the hand of friends." Ramin, light of the world, complied; he joyfully poured and drank wine. The wine showed its mettle in his brain and joined forces with his heart full of love. As he was handing wine to Vis of the tulip cheeks, he whispered to her, unknown to the king, 'beauty of fairy descent, drink pure wine in joy and pleasure, so that we may water the field of our love with wine."

Compare the above with the chapter on the love-potion or *philter* in any version of Tristan and Isolt.

In Vis and Ramin we read:

"She (Vis) said to the nurse: 'What remedy do you weknow for me? How shall you deliver me from the hand of King Moubad? For he is asleep; should he wake, our light will be a sorry one. If he remains alone in his room he will wake and discover what we do; there is nothing for it but for you to sleep with him as lover with lover."

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Compare the above with this passage from Gottfried's Tristan:

"That night, when she (Isolt) was to go to bed with King Mark, she, Brangane (Isolt's nurse) and Tristan had gone to great trouble in advance to choose their ground and plan of action wisely and have it all cut and dried. There were none but these four in King Mark's chamber:

the king himself and the three. And now King Mark had lain him down, Brangane had donned the Queen's robes - they had exchanged clothes between them - and Tristan now led her towards him to suffer her ordeal. Her mistress Isolt put out the lights and King Mark strained Brangane to him."

In Vis and Ramin, King Moubad takes Vis to a castle called *Ishkaft-e-Divan*, which means "dug by demons". Minorsky (373) has pointed out that some artificial grottoes, of supposed Buddhist origin, in the hilly reaches of the Murghab River valley are known as *divka*, meaning "made by demons"

In Tristan we read:

"Tristan had long known of a cavern in a savage mountainside, on which he had chanced when his way led him there while hunting. The cavern had been hewn into the wild mountain in heathen times, when giants ruled there."

In Vis and Ramin we read:

"If you avoid seeing Vis for a year, seek someone else in her place, prefer another to her, you will not suffer distress on her account at the time of separation, you will in the end succeed in not even remembering her. When love for a sweetheart overcomes the heart there is no better remedy than distance. All love lessens from not seeing the adored one; 'whom the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over!' Absence has erased many a love, so that you would swear it had never been. Many a day you will find your heart recalling Vis only vaguely."

In Tristan we read:

"Here lovers can see from this story that one can bear a distant sorrow for an absent love with much greater ease than loving near at hand and missing love
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within one's reach. Truly, as I see it, a man can suffer want of dearest love in absence, desiring it from afar, better than wanting what is near and forgoing it; and he will be rid of this distant love more easily than he will refrain from a love that is near."

In Vis and Ramin we find:

"One of his companions, a maid of fairy (Persian; *peri*) birth, had some violets and handed him a nosegay; Ramin's heart recalled the day he had made a compact with fascinating Vis; Vis sat on the King's throne, the sun shining from her face, the moon from her bosom, She gave Ramin a nosegay of violets and said: 'Keep this always in remembrance of me. Every time you see fresh violets, remember this compact and oath."

In Tristan we read:

"Isolt stepped back a pace and addressed him with a sigh. 'My lord, our hearts and souls have been engrossed with each other too long, too closely and too intimately, ever to know what forgetting could be between them. Whether you are near or far, there shall be no life in my heart nor any living thing save Tristan, my life and being! It is a long time now, sir, since I surrendered my kife to your keeping. See to it that no living woman ever comes between us to prevent us from remaining always fresh in our affection, in which we have been so perfect all this long time. Now accept this ring. Let it be a witness to our love and devotion. If you should ever be moved to love anything but me, let this remind you of how my heart now feels."

Tristan and Isolt and Vis and Ramin both resemble Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne in the general outline of their plots. However, as we said before, Iranian influence is precluded in the case of Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne. We have spoken of the Iranian influences in medieval Europe, but these could not have been present in pre-Christian Ireland.

There is scholarly consensus that the resemblances between

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Tristan and Isolt on the one hand and Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne on the other are products of a common Celtic background, not due to any sort of influence of the Welsh Epic on the Irish Epic nor vice-versa. Since the resemblances between Tristan and Isolt and Vis and Ramin are too

numerous and close to be coincidence, ultimately, Vis and Ramin, Tristan and Isolt, Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne must go back to a more remote source, to a time when Celts and Iranians had not yet separated; in other words, we have here yet another example of the close kinship between Celts and Iranians.

This does not by any means preclude more recent Iranian influences in Tristan and Isolt. Tristan and Isolt resembles Vis and Ramin not only in general plot outline, but even in intimate details, as we have seen, proof of the presence of more recent Iranian influences. This is true of the whole Arthurian Cycle, of which Tristan and Isolt is a part; as we have said before, Iranian influences, both Persian and Saka, are evident throughout the Arthurian Cycle. As we noted in the previous chapter, Friedrich von Suhtschek claimed that the whole Arturian Cycle is of Iranian origin and the Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival (inspired by a tale in the Welsh Mabinogion) and the Gawain romances are free translations from the Persian. I believe this to be extreme. We have shown that Tristan and Isolt contains ancient Celtic material which is not of Iranian origin, though also in the previous chapter we noted Iranian influences, both Persian and Saka, in

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many parts of the Arthurian Cycle. However, to say that the whole Arthurian Cycle, including Tristan and Isolt, is of Iranian origin, goes too far. Tristan and Isolt is **NOT** merely a free translation of Vis and Ramin.

Tristan and Isolt, like the rest of the Arthurian Cycle, is

not merely a 12th century French romance which contains exotic Celtic names; it, like the rest of the Arthurian Cycle, contains both ancient Celtic material and Iranian, both Persian and Saka, influences. In summary, Tristan and Isolt, like the rest of the Arthurian Cycle, has a Celtic base to which have been added Iranian, both Persian and Saka, elements, the whole to some extent tinted by being filtered through the ambience of 12th century France.

The Persian word *Pahlavan* for 'hero' or "brave man" and its frequent use in the Shah Namah as an epithet for the heroes of Iran would seem to be another point in favor of Frye's theory, as well as the fact that this word, in the form *paladin* (pahla-din = "hero of the faith") passed to Medieval Europe. One may suppose that those parts of the Persian Epic which clearly and specifically referred to the Parthians were either suppressed or so drastically altered that their Parthian origin became unrecognizable (the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin does not appear in the Shah Namah). The early Sassanians had good reason for doing this. To glorify the Parthians would have weakened the Sassanian's claim to be the "restorers of Iran", and with a Parthian (*Arsacid*) dynasty still ruling in Armenia and with so

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many noble families who were once Parthian vassals continuing as Sassanian vassals in Eastern Iran, might well have been a positive danger to the stability of the Empire. The Seistan origin of so many of the heroes of the Shah Namah does indeed suggest a connection with those powerful vassals of the Parthian kings, the

great Suren family.

Frye says in particular that Rustam, one of the main characters of the Shah Namah, was a Saka hero from Seistan. In another place Frye speaks of the fact that there exists a tale concerning Rustam written in Sogdian which does not appear in the Shah Namah, which leads Frye to believe that Rustam was a Saka prince from Central Asia (374). Of course, Seistan as well as Central Asia was Saka territory, and it is highly probable that a certain amount of contact was maintained between different groups of Sakas. There is no real contradiction here; Rustam may indeed have been a hero of the Sakas of both Seistan and Central Asia.

Frye's views have been vigorously supported in a recent book.(375) In said book it is noted that the Parthians, as North Iranians, were in close contact with the Sakas, their close ethnic and linguistic kin, and at times at least their allies in their Indian conquests. Thus the Parthians absorbed the epic traditions concerning Rustam from the Sakas, and said traditions later spread throughout the Empire in Sassanian times. Thus Rustam, hero of Seistan, "Land of the Sakas", became part of the Persian National Epic Tradition.(376-377)

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Facts supporting the above have quite recently come to light. Fragments written in Sogdian dealing with Rustam and his horse Rakhsh. As we have said before, Sogdian is a Northeastern Iranian language closely akin to the language of the Sakas. Said Sogdian fragments include tales very like those of the Shah Namah which deal with the war waged by Rustam against the *divs* (demons) of

Mazandaran. Indeed, the only difference between the Sogdian account of Rustam's war against the Mazandarani *Divs* and that given in the Shah Namah is that in the Sogdian version the Mazandarani *Divs* against whom Rustam fights are described as riding unearthly beasts, a detail absent in the Shah Namah.(378)

The above-mentioned Sogdian fragment also includes an account of Rustam at leisure. After crushing the *Divs* of Mazandaran, the Sogdian fragment describes Rustam taking the opportunity to relax:

Rustam turned his back in great glory, went to a good Meadow, stopped, unsaddled his horse (Rakush), then sent him out to graze. He himself rested, ate food, was satisfied, spread out a rug. Lay down and began to sleep. ...

...They (the Mazandarani *Divs*) went to search for brave Rustam. And also then came perceptive Rakush and he woke Rustam. Rustam Tore himself from sleep, quickly put on again his leopard skin garment, attached his quiver, mounted Rakush and dashed toward the *Divs*.(379)

Closely parallel to the above are no less than four episodes of the Shah Namah.

The first such episode occurs when Rustam goes to rescue Kai Kaus from the White *Div* of Mazandaran. Rustam eats his fill, sets Rakush out to graze, and goes to sleep. A lion comes to attack

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the sleeping Rustam, and Rakush, his horse, fights and kills the lion while Rustam remains asleep.

In the second episode, Rustam once again eats his fill, sets Rakush out to graze and falls asleep. When a dragon threatens to attack, Rakush three times tries to waken the sleeping Rustam. Not seeing the dragon because of the darkness, Rustam becomes irritated with Rakush for disturbing him. Rustam finally sees the

dragon, and proceeds to slay it.

The third episode occurs shortly before the story of Sohrab and Rustam. In this case, once again Rustam eats his fill, sets Rakush out to graze, and falls asleep. In this case, Rakush is stolen by Turanians, but Rustam recovers him after various adventures.

The fourth episode takes place during during the conflict between Rustam and Esfandiyar. In this case, Rustam kills an onager, proceeds to roast it for his repast, and sets Rakush out to graze. Bahman, brother of Esfandiyar, hurls down a gigantic boulder, but Zawara, Rustam's brother, manages to warn Rustam in time, and Rustam kicks the boulder far away.(380)

The first two episodes from the Shah Namah mentioned above are very close indeed to the Sogdian version, in which Rustam is awakened by Rakush and takes action. However, the Sogdian version and all four episodes from the Shah Namah obviously share many features in common. In each, Rustam sets Rakush out to graze, eats a heavy meal, and except in the fourth episode from the Shah Namah, falls into a deep sleep.

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The recently discovered Sogdian fragments most certainly support Richard N. Frye's and Mary Boyce's thesis that:

"Rustam was truly a Saka hero, and not a hero of the indigenous pre-Saka population (of Seistan)."(381)

There is a theory according to which the prototype of Rustam is the victorious Parthian general Surena (of the Suren Clan of Seistan). As is related by Plutarch in his biography of Crassus,

said Parthian general crushed the Romans under Crassus at the battle of Carrhae in 53 BC.

I agree with Olga M. Davidson that this theory is true as far as it goes, but that it fits into a much older Iranian narrative motif or archetype which has Indo-Iranian and even Indo-European roots. Or, perhaps, it might be more accurate to say that the Surena, the the Surena, the victor over the Romans at Carrhae, was fitted into said motif or archetype by Iranian epic bards. What is most interesting from our viewpoint is what the proponents of said theory say concerning Rostam and the Surena, victor of Carrhae:

"Bivar's evidence for this identification (of Rostam with the victor of Carrhae) is that both Rostam and the Surena are heroes from Seistan, both are connected to the Sakas."(382)

The Iranian scholar B. Sarkarati argues that:

"Rostam should be sought neither in history nor mythology but (rather) in the legendary or epic tradition of the Saka people."(383)

As Ehsan Yarshater notes:

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"Rostam (Old Iranian: **Raudhastakhma*, Pahlavi: *Rodstakhm*) and Zal, however, are not mentioned in the Avesta.

(These difficulties) could be obviated if we assume that Rostam was indeed, as his frequent title *Sagzi* (the Saka), indicates, a Saka hero, whose legends were brought to Sistan by the invading Saka tribes and which spread to the rest of Iran in Parthian times and eventually combined with the Kayanian Cycle as part of the national epic tradition. The origin of the Rostam legends is to be sought, not in the historical events of the time of Gundofarr, but in the remoter past of the Saka people. Any similarity between Garshasp and Rostam can be explained more plausibly by the features common to heroic legends than by assuming substitution.

It is to be noted, however, that the spread of Rustam's legends reflects marked linguistic influence from Persia. His name, *Rodstakhm* in Pahlavi (no occurrence of the name has been found in Khotanese Saka, whose literature is chiefly Buddhist and has links with India rather than ancient Iran); even the form used in the Sogdian fragments on Rustam, namely *Rwstmy*. Appears to be a borrowing from Persian. If *Rashdama* and *Rashdakma* in the Elamite tablets from Persepolis should prove to represent the name of the Sistanian hero a possibility raised by (Ilya) Gershevitch, who suggests their derivation from **Rastutaxma*, then Noldeke's view will have found unexpected support. (Noldeke believed that the legends of Rustam and Zal belonged originally to the early Iranians of Drangiana (Zarang) and Arachosia (Zabul). As a name, Rustam appears already in the Drakht-i-Asurig, which is based on a Parthian original. The first datable occurrence of Rustam's name is the Armenian *Arostom* in the 5th century AD. (As we have already said, in the 5th century AD Armenia was ruled by a Parthian dynasty, the "Arsacid") The legends of Rustam enjoyed great popularity during the 7th century, to judge by the number of people who bore this name. But it is unlikely that the Khwady Namag would have given us as full an account of Rustam's legends as the one we find in *Firdausi*, whose prose source drew on Sananian legends, and whose poetic imagination was attracted to them. (One of the four scholars who helped the author of the prose Shah Namah was Yazdandad of Sistan.) The account of Rustam in early Arabic sources is more succinct, and even *Tha'alibi*, whose version is fairly exhaustive and conforms to *Firdausi*'s in outline, makes no mention of the episodes relating to *Suhrab*, *Manizha* and *Bezhan*, or Rustam's Seven Stations. On the other hand, in the story of the *Simurgh* (Avestan: *Saena Meregha*: Pahlavi: *Sen-murv*), *Tha'alibi*,
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367-368, has details which are lacking in the Shah Namah. The stories of Rustam's birth and youth must be later elaborations, since original poems or stories of celebration and adventure generally do not concern themselves with such details. The 8th century Sogdian fragment concerning Rustam found in the Turfan excavations attests to the wide popularity of Rustam's legends in Transoxiana (thus favoring the idea of a Saka origin for the Rustam Cycle). It describes a battle between Rustam and the demons, in which the latter, deceived by a stratagem devised by Rustam, suffer losses. The name of *Raksh*, Rustam's celebrated steed, is also mentioned in the fragment. A further indication of the popularity of the legends of Rustam in Central Asia may be seen in the 7th century wall-paintings of *Panjikert*, some of which have been

identified as illustrations of Rostam's exploits in his "Seven Stations".(384)

It is as obvious to myself as to Yarshater, Davidson and Frye that the figure of Rostam in the Shah Namah is a composite in which historical, mythological and Saka epic elements are intermingled to such a degree that to attempt to separate them would be like trying to separate the white and the yolk of a scrambled egg. Surena, the victor of Carrhae, was of Saka origin, and his actions correspond to a very ancient Iranian narrative motif or archetype. Evidently, all three aspects - historical, mythological and Saka - are present and inseparable in the figure of Rostam in the Shah Namah.

In any case, the Sakas were Iranians, and certainly their epic traditions should share very ancient Iranian motifs and archetypes with the epic traditions of other Iranian peoples.

What is most interesting from our viewpoint is that all the above-mentioned authorities emphasize Rostam's connections with the Sakas.

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Yet another support for Yarshater's, Frye's and Boyce's theory is the fact that Afrasiyab, Siyavush and Kai Khusrau (Avestan: *Kavi Haosravah*), other protagonists of the Shah Namah, have connections with Sogdia. In the Shah Namah Afrasiyab is the great king of Turan, while Siyavush and his son Kai Khusrau are Iranian heroes. In his History of Bukhara, Abu Bakr ibn Jaafar al-Narshakhi says that Siyavush was murdered by Afrasiyab, and that Kai Khusrau avenged his father. Kai Khusrau and the forces of

Iran besieged Afrasiyab in the citadel of Romatin, near Bukhara. After a siege of two years, Afrasiyab was captured and executed by Kai Khusrau. Note the theme of the son avenger. This theme, which occurs in the Castilian epic in the Seven Princes of Lara and other chansons de geste, is considered by Menendez Pidal and others to be of purely Germanic origin. Here one finds it in an Iranian epic legend. Keep this in mind. We will discuss it more fully later.

During the siege, Kai Khusrau built a Zoroastrian fire temple in the village of Ramish (385). The name of this sort of temple is *Atashgade* or *Atashgah*, from the Avestan *Atarsh*, i.e., "sacred fire", *atur* in Pahlavi.(386) To me it appears to be a reference to the great Sassanian Emperor Khusrau I Anushirvan, though Bukhara was conquered not by Anushirvan but by Bahram Chobin, the great general of the Sassanian Emperor Hormiz IV.(387) It would appear that Zoroastrianism was introduced, or reintroduced in Sogdia before the Sassanian period, in the time of the Hephthalites.(388) Before the Hephthalites, the principal

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religion of Sogdia was Buddhism, although one may conclude that there existed a great many popular pagan Iranian beliefs and practices, which may have aided in the expansion of Zoroastrianism. Frye believes that the name "Bukhara" proceeds from the Sogdian *BRGR* (vocalization unknown, the first "R" may be vocalic), which in turn comes from the Buddhist Sanskrit *vihara*, i.e., "Buddhist Monastery".(389) There is a town in the region of Bihar in India called Bukhar, and it is said that the name of both

the region and the town are derived from *vihara*. Al-Kharezmi, a writer of the Samanid period, says that al-Bukhar is an idol temple of India.(390) There exist references to conflicts between Buddhists and Zoroastrians in pre-Islamic Sogdia.(391). The pre-Islamic legends of Bukhara had confused Hormizd IV with Khusrau I Anushirvan, who in turn they confused with the Kai Khusrau of the epic. Narshakhi says that the tomb of Afrasiyab is near one of the gates of Bukhara.(392) All this is important, because Narshakhi's work was written in 943, more or less 70 years before the great work of Firdausi, and therefore could not have been taken from said epic.(393-394) Narshakhi gives "the books of the Parsees" (Zoroastrians) as his source.(395)

The population of Bukhara, being Sogdians, identified with Iran in opposition to Turan. Narshakhi, citing Abul Hasan al-Nishapuri, speaks of a tradition which states that the citadel of Bukhara was built by Siyavush.(396) Narshakhi also says that in his day lamentations for Siyavush, called *Kin-I-Siyavush* (Lament for Siyavush) were sung. Note that the word *Kin*, used by

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Narshakhi, is the same as the Gaelic *coinn*, pronounced KEEN, Welsh *cynu*, pronounced "KEENU", which also means "mourning" or "lament". We shall have more to say about this in a later chapter.

Narshakhi also says that in the festival of *Nauruz* (Persian New Year) roosters were sacrificed over the tomb of Siyavush in Bukhara.(397) Frye says that the rooster and the hen had religious significance for the Indo-European peoples, and continued to have it among the Zoroastrians.(398) Avestan

speakers held the rooster in high regard, believing that his crowing drove away evil spirits of the night. The rooster was a sacred bird in pre-Islamic Persia, where it was sacrificed at funerals. Fire, the dog and the rooster were regarded by pre-Islamic Persians as the three protectors.(399) The rooster is one of the commonest artistic motifs used by the Scythians of the Altai region of Siberia, circa 400 BC.(400) The cock or rooster very frequently appears as a decorative motif on Sassanian glassware.(401) I have noted that the Gypsies of Spain still sacrifice roosters on occasion. The Khwarazmians believed themselves to be descendants of Siyavush.

This is interesting, since it appears that the Khwarazmians were of Saka origin.(402-403-404) Frye also notes the existence of Iranian epic cycles not included in the Shah Namah, such as the Garshasp Namah, the Barzu Namah and others not named which come from Seistan.(405) It is interesting to note that Frye considers vengeance, the idea that a king must be just and pious above all, the *farr* or charisma of the Royal Glory, the loyalty of a man to

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his family and of a vassal to his liege lord being the principal themes of the Shah Namah.(406)

The evidence appears conclusive; the Sakas had a very extensive epic tradition, and although much has been lost, at least a considerable part has survived.

The reader may now ask:

"All this is very interesting, but aside from the fact that both the Castilian and the Saka-Iranian epics are Indo-European epics,

what has all this to do with Spain?"

The answer is: a great deal. As we shall decisively demonstrate, the link between the Spanish or Castilian Epic on the one hand and the Persian Epic on the other by way of the Sarmatians and Alans (who were Sakas) and the Visigoths is perfectly clear.

As was said before, I believe that Menendez Pidal was right as far as he went in affirming that the Castilian epic is mainly of Visigothic origin. Parting from this base, it must be noted that the Alans invaded Spain with the Germanic peoples. The Alans, like the Sarmatians, were Sakas, not Germans.(407) Although some Alans crossed to Africa with the Vandals, it seems probable to me that many, perhaps the majority, remained in Spain and later fused with the Suevi and the Visigoths; with these last the Alans had a great deal in common from the cultural viewpoint. From an early date, large numbers of Alans were incorporated into the Visigoths, and we hear of these Alans even in Visigothic Spain, as we shall see.(408)

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As late as 575, long after the Vandal migration to North Africa, the feudal lord, vassal of the Visigothic kings, in Orense in Galicia was named *Aspidus*, a Latinized version of the Iranian *Aspadas*, derived from *asp* (Persian *asb*), the Iranian word for horse. *Aspidas* was "dethroned" by the Visigothic king Leovigild.(409) The armies of the Visigothic kings of Spain used the Alanic tactic of feigned retreat.(410)

Any account of the battle of Hastings in 1066 in which the Normans crushed the Saxons, will say that at Hastings the Normans

used the tactic of feigned retreat to deadly effect. Now, feigned retreat is a highly sophisticated tactic which requires much training and firm discipline, so it cannot be suddenly improvised on the spur of the moment. There is nothing which indicates that the Alans and/or the Goths were ever in that part of France which is north of the river Loire. So, how did the Normans learn of the sophisticated tactic of feigned retreat? In fact, the answer to this apparent enigma is fairly simple. The Normans were partly of Viking origin, as their name indicates. Rollo, (old Norse: *Hrolfr*) the founder of the Duchy of Normandy and its first duke, was a Viking. So, the use of the tactic of feigned retreat by the Normans is one of many proofs that the Goths maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland even after they were long settled on the north shores of the Black Sea. In other words, the Goths learned the tactic of feigned retreat from the Alans. In turn, the Vikings learned the tactic of feigned retreat from the Goths, who maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian

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homeland.

At least according to some accounts, Shah Ismail Safavi used the tactic of feigned retreat at the battle of Merv in which he crushed the Uzbeks and slew Shaybani Khan. The preliminary of this are most colorful. Shaybani Khan sent the young Shah Ismail Safavi a begging bowl, telling him that he had better become a wandering Sufi like his grandfather if he wished to have a long life. Shah Ismail Safavi sent Shaybani Khan a spinning wheel, telling him that he had better hide among the women of the harem if he did not

wish to feel the sharp steel of swords. So, the stage was set.

Below is Dr. Kaveh Farrokh's account of what transpired. Obviously, Shaybani Khan, "the Old Fox", grossly underestimated the very young novice who was Shah Ismail Safavi.

"In 1507, Shaybani Khan (of the Uzbeks) wrote a highly threatening and insulting letter to (Shah) Ismail demanding that he come to battle. (Shah) Ismail was too preoccupied at the time with his campaigns in eastern Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Khuzistan to respond, leaving Shaybani free to roam Iran's northeastern Iranian realms at his leisure. Nevertheless, Ismail had every intention of coming to Khurasan once he had concluded his campaigns in the west. He had also given asylum to Badi ul-Zaman, the late Hussein Baiqara (last Timurid ruler of Herat)'s son and heir. [Note that Hussein Baiqara was close kin to Zaher e Din Mohjammad Babur, founder of the Moghul Dynasty in India.]

Finally in 1510 (Shah) Ismail was ready to march northeast. By November of that year he assembled an army of 17,000 troops, from Luristan, Azerbaijan, Arran, Kurdistan, Fars, Iraq-Ajam (Hamadan, Qazvin, Zanzan, Qum, Kashan, and Rayy), and Mesopotamia as well as local contingents from Khurasan and the Herat area. The formidable *Qizilbash* cavalry would again play a pivotal role in the upcoming battle. The Safavi army was outnumbered as Shaybani (Khan) was able to field 28,000 troops, almost all cavalry.

(Shah) Ismail's army liberated Tus and Meshed. As
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Ismail moved towards Herat, Shaybani fled towards the city of Merv in Central Asia. Shaybani's tactic was an intelligent one. Ismail had not expected to engage in sieges, and hence had not brought much in the way of siege equipment. A means had to be found to bring Shaybani out into the open. Ismail and his *Qizilbash* commanders adopted Shaybani's literary tactics, and wrote him an insulting letter. They stated that they needed to leave immediately to fight rebels in Azerbaijan and Diyarbakr, and that they would return once the fighting was over. To add to the deception, Ismail ordered his "retreating" army to burn all of their old tents at their encampment. A small force of 300 crack *Qizilbash* cavalry, led by Amir Beg Muslu, was stationed near the burn camp.

Safavi spies were highly active [most of the populace was loyal to the Timurids, and loathed Shaybani Khan and his Uzbeks.] and brought up-to-date reports on the Uzbek army and Shaybani's intentions. Shaybani and

the Uzbeks, thinking that Ismail was indeed retreating, decided to launch a surprise attack on their opponent's "retreating" army. They reached the burnt-out abandoned camp and found Amir Beg Muslu and his 300 cavalry waiting for them. Muslu engaged in a series of lightning hit-and-run attacks and then feigned retreat. Shaybani and his army took the bait and pursued. But Ismail had prepared a deadly trap.

Ismail had formed his army into a horseshoe shape, and asked Muslu to arrive at their location in the dark of night with the Uzbeks in pursuit. Muslu achieved his task brilliantly: in the darkness of night Muslu led the unsuspecting Uzbeks straight into the ambush. Ismail's troops were equipped with oil-draped torches which were simultaneously lit, just as the war drums and trumpets chorused their message of doom. Ismail unleashed his cavalry from all around the horseshoe into Shaybani and the Uzbeks. Swinging his *Shamshir* sword, Shah Ismail slew large numbers of Uzbeks during the battle. He soon caught up with Shaybani and killed him as he fled. The total number of Uzbek dead stood at around 10,000. After the battle, Ismail had Shaybani's skull fashioned into a drinking vessel."(411)

Shaybani Khan, the "Old Fox", had been outgeneralled and outfought by a very young novice. At least Muslu's 300 *Qizilbash* must have been very highly trained and disciplined indeed to successfully achieve such a complex and highly dangerous maneuver

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as feigned retreat. Indeed, all of Shah Ismail's heterogeneous force must have been well disciplined to have maintained silence until the right moment. Shah Ismail was unquestionably a brilliant tactician and a most charismatic leader of men.

From what is said above, it is obvious that Shah Ismail Safavi followed many customs typical of the ancient Iranian nomad peoples. We have already mentioned that the custom of making a drinking cup out of the skull of a vanquished enemy is something typical of several ancient Indo-European peoples, including Iranians, Celts and at least some Germanic peoples, such as

Lombards and Vikings. My own Celtic ancestors practiced the above mentioned custom, but the thought of drinking from a cup made from the skull of Saddam makes me positively ill.

In the early 7th Century, St. Isidore of Seville said that the Alans were militarily ineffective on foot.(412) This would seem to mean that as late as the 7th Century the Alanic vassals of the Visigothic kings of Spain still maintained their identity and formed separate units in the army.

There are indeed Alanic place names in Spain, i.e., "Alange" in the province of Badajoz, "Alanis" in the province of Seville, and "Alano" in the province of Huesca.(413) Chronology rules out the possibility that these names could be Celtic: they must be Alanic. Obviously, many Alans entered Spain with the Visigoths, while others remained behind after the Vandals had migrated to North Africa, all these Alans becoming vassals of the Visigothic

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kings of Spain.

In Medieval Spain there existed a breed of dog called *Alano*. Said breed is mentioned by Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita (14th Century), Libro de Buen Amor, (Book of Good Love), stanzas 175, 226-227, 1220, 1600, and in the Libro de Monteria of Alfonso XI (I, 115-117). Said dog was very likely brought to Spain by the Alans, from whom it took its name. Nevertheless, in contrast to the above-mentioned place names, this breed of dog, with its name *Alano* may be earlier than the arrival of the Alans in Spain, since the name *Alano* may be of Celtic origin (Gaelic - *alainn* = "beautiful"; Sanskrit - *alan-kara* = "decoration", "ornament",

literally "That which makes beautiful"; Persian *alan-gau* = "bangle", literally "beautiful ball or sphere"). We are uncertain as to when this breed of dog was introduced to Spain, and whether its name is Celtic or Alanic, though the Alanic theory seems by far the more probable.

It is evident that the Sarmatians and the Alans were among the creators of the Saka epic, which had so great an importance in the formation of the Persian epic, and that they were in contact with Bactria and Khurasan in Avestan times and later with their close kinsmen the Parthians. The first Sarmatians reached the region north of the Black Sea in the 1st and 2nd centuries BC, possibly as part of the great migration of Sakas from Central Asia which changed the ancient Zranka to a Sakastan. Leaving Central Asia somewhat later than the Sarmatians, the Alans arrived at the region to the North of the Black Sea in the 1st Century AD, only a

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century before the Goths reached the same area.(414-415-416-417)

Possibly one may identify the *Sakaraucai*, a Saka tribe of Sogdia in Parthian times, with the *Roxalani*, a division of the Alans. It would seem reasonable that the *rauc* of "Sakaraucai" and the *Rox* of Roxalani be related to the Iranian root *ruk*, which means "light" or "brilliance".(418). This root is related to the name "Rakush", Rostam's horse. It may be supposed that the Sarmatians and the Alans brought their great epic tradition with them to the West, and were in possession of it when they came in contact with the Goths.

Except for the Sciri and Taifali, later absorbed by the

Goths, it was the Goths who of all the Germanic peoples had the most prolonged and intimate contact with the Alans, the most recent arrivals from the Eastern Iranian World. When Carlos Alonso del Real speaks of the "Sarmatized Germans" (419), to whom is he referring if not to the Goths?

Says Frye:

"For the Early Middle Ages in Europe, the South-Russian background of the Goths, the Vandals and other Germanic tribes is certainly important, and the Iranian influence on them was very strong."(420)

Says Jesse L. Byock in the introduction to his translation of the Viking epic The Saga of the Volsungs:

"The unknown Icelandic author who wrote The Saga of the Volsungs in the thirteenth century based his prose epic on stories found in far older Norse poetry. His sources, which may have included a lost earlier prose saga, were rich in traditional lore. The Saga of the Volsungs recounts runic knowledge, princely
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jealousies, betrayals, unrequited love, the vengeance of a barbarian queen, greedy schemes of Attila the Hun, and the mythic deeds of the dragon slayer, Sigurd the Volsung. It describes events from the ancient wars among the kings of the Burgundians, Huns, and Goths, treating some of the same legends as the Middle High German (*Mittelhochdeutsch*) epic poem, the Nibelungenlied. In both accounts, though in different ways, Sigurd (Siegfried in the German tradition) acquires the Rhinegold and then becomes tragically entangled in a love triangle involving a supernatural woman. In the Norse (Viking) tradition she is a *Valkyrie* [Old Norse: *Valkyrja*] (derived, no doubt by way of the Goths, from the Iranian *Fravashies*), one of Odin's warrior maidens.

...
...One can only speculate about the origin of the saga's dragon slaying and of other mythic events described in the tale. Many of the saga's historical episodes, however, may be traced to actual events that took place in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, the period of great folk migrations in Europe. In this time of upheaval, the northern frontier defenses of the Roman Empire collapsed under the pressure of barbarian

peoples, as Germanic tribes from northern and central Europe and Hunnish horsemen from Asia invaded what is now France and Germany. A seemingly endless series of skirmishes and wars were fought as tribes attempted to subjugate their enemies and to consolidate newly won territories into kingdoms and empires.

The memory of the migrations became part of the oral heritage of the tribesmen, as epic poems about heroes and their feats spread throughout the continent during succeeding centuries. In the far north legends and songs about Burgundians, Huns, and Goths, as well as new or revised stories about indigenous northern families such as the Volsungs, became an integral part of the cultural lore of Scandinavian societies. The old tales had not died out by the Viking Age (*circa* 800-1070), that is, several centuries after the migration period had ended. On the contrary, during this new age of movement in Scandinavia the epic cycles of the earlier migration period seem to have gained in popularity. As Norsemen sailed out from Viking Scandinavia in search of plunder, trade, and land, they carried with them tales of Sigurd and the Volsungs.

One of the places to which the Norsemen carried these epic lays was Iceland, an island discovered by Viking seamen in the ninth century, which soon after its settlement (*circa* 870-930) became the major Norse outpost in the North Atlantic. In Iceland, as in the Norse homelands and other overseas settlements, the

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men of Sigurd and the various tribesmen - among them Huns, Goths and Burgundians - became choice subjects for native poets.

The Saga of the Volsungs was written down sometime between 1200 and 1270. Its prose story is based to a large degree on traditional Norse verse called Eddic poetry, a form of mythic or heroic lay which developed before the year 1000 in the common oral folk culture of Old Scandinavia. Eighteen of the Eddic poems in the thirteenth-century Codex Regius, the most important manuscript of the Poetic (or Elder) Edda, treat aspects of the Volsung legend. ... This manuscript, which is the only source for many of the Eddic poems, is, however, incomplete. An eight-page lacuna occurs in the middle of the Sigurd cycle, and the stories contained in The Saga of the Volsungs, chapters 24-31, are the principal source of information on the narrative contents of these lost pages.

So popular was the subject matter of the saga in the period of oral transmission that, if we are to believe later Icelandic written sources, some of the stories traveled as far as Norse Greenland. Someone in this settlement, founded in 985 by Icelanders led by Erik the Red, may have composed the Eddic poem about

Attila (Atli) the Hun called The Greenland Lay of Atli. This poem of heroic tragedy and revenge was later written down and preserved in Iceland.

Written Icelandic material builds on a long oral tradition. By the tenth century the Icelanders had already become renowned as storytellers throughout the northern lands, and Icelandic poets, called *skalds*, earned their keep in the royal courts of Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England. We may assume that, along with many other stories, they told the Sigurd cycle just as German poets told the story of Siegfried. It is noteworthy that about the year 1200, the Nibelungenlied, with its poetic version of the Siegfried story was written, probably in Austria. At approximately the same time or within seven decades, The Saga of the Volsungs was compiled in Iceland with far fewer chivalric elements than its German counterpart.

It is not by chance that in Scandinavia so much of the narrative material about the Volsungs was preserved in Iceland. This immigrant society on the frange of European civilization, like frontier societies in other times and places, preserved old lore as a treasured link with distant homelands. Fortunately for posterity, writing became popular among the Icelanders in the thirteenth century, when interest in old tales was still strong. Almost all the Old Norse narrative

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material that has survived - whether myth, legend, saga, history, or poetry - is found in Icelandic manuscripts, which form the largest existing vernacular literature of the medieval West. Among the wealth of written material is Snorri Sturluson's Prose Edda, a thirteenth-century Icelandic treatise on the art of skaldic poetry and a handbook of mythological lore. The second section of Snorri's three-part prose work contains a short and highly readable summary of the Sigurd cycle which, like the much longer prose rendering of the cycle in The Saga of the Volsungs, is based on traditional Eddic poems. Although Snorri and the unknown author of The Saga of the Volsungs were treating the same material, there is no indication that the latter was familiar with Snorri's Prose Edda.

In the Middle Ages, when most narrative traditions were kept alive in verse, the Icelanders created the *saga*, a prose narrative form unique in Western medieval culture. Why the Icelanders became so interested in prose is not known, but it is clear that they cultivated their saga form, developing it into a suitable vehicle for long tales of epic quality, one of which is The Saga of the Volsungs. At times it seems as if its anonymous author was consciously trying to make history from the mythic and legendary material of his sources. It is also possible that he was drawing upon an earlier prose saga

about the Volsungs. He may have been influenced by The Saga of Thidrek of Berne, a mis-thirteenth-century Norwegian translation of tales from north and west Germany about King Theoderic the Ostrogoth, [or *Theodoric the Amal*, or *Theodoric the Amalung*] a heroic figure from the migration period later called Dietrich of Berne. This saga is a rambling collection of stories about the king, his champions, their ancestors, and several renowned semimythic heroes, including Sigurd.

Along with tales of Sigurd and those of historical peoples and events, The Saga of the Volsungs recounts eerie stories whose roots reach back into European prehistory. When Sigurd's father Sigmund is driven from society by his enemy the king of Gautland (or *Gothland*) in southwestern Sweden, Sigmund finds a companion in his son Sinfjoti. Away from other humans, the two live in an underground dwelling, clothe themselves in wolfskins, and howl like wolves. They roam the forest as beasts of prey, killing any men they come upon. This section of the tale may be interpreted in light of traditions concerning some of Odin's warriors who, according to Snorri Sturluson, behaved like wolves. The description of Sigurd's kinsmen living like werewolves may also shed light on the "wolf warriors". Helmets

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and sword scabbards decorated with these strange figures, perhaps werewolves or berserkers, date from the sixth through the eighth century and have been found widely in northern and central Europe. The account of Sigmund and his son Sinfjoti in the forest, and others like it in the saga, reflect the uncertain boundaries between nature and culture and between the world of men and the world of the supernatural. The saga's frequent descriptions of crossings of these borders reveal glimpses not only of fears and dreams but also of long-forgotten beliefs and cultic practices. Not least among these is Sigurd's tasting the blood of the dragon, thereby acquiring the ability to understand the speech of birds. The mixture of arcane knowledge and oral history in the Volsung material proved a potent lure for Norse audiences. ...

...The Saga of the Volsungs falls into two distinct parts. The first part, ending with Sigurd's arrival among the Burgundians, is studded with mythic motifs, although their religious meaning and their coherence are often lost. Characters in this section include many supernatural beings: gods, giants, a Valkyrie (Old Norse: *Valkyrja*), a dwarf, and a dragon. It is difficult to discern historical precedents even for the human characters in this section. By contrast, the second part of the saga takes place in a human world with recognizable social problems. Nearly all the characters in this section may be identified with historical

figures.

The first part of the saga is a valuable source of information about Odin, the one-eyed god of war, wisdom, death, and ecstasy. Odin appears here as ancestor and patron of the Volsung line and its scion, the dragon slayer Sigurd. Many of the god's characteristics described in the saga are corroborated by other sources. For example, Odin appears in other Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon traditions as a progenitor of royal families. He also often bestows gifts on warrior-heroes, a function that he fulfills several times in the saga. It is Odin who first provides the magical sword that Sigurd later inherits from his father Sigmund. Odin also advises Sigurd how to identify the special horse Grani, a descendant of the god's own eight-legged steed Sleipnir.

Sigurd is an Odinic hero, and at crucial moments for Sigurd's ancestors, Odin's intervention assures the continuation of the family that is to produce the monster slayer. Thus when the marriage bed of Sigurd's great-grandfather, King Rerir, is barren, Odin sends Rerir an apple of fertility. The token is carried by a "wish-maiden", one of Odin's supernatural women who

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flies in the guise of a crow, a carrion bird similar to Odin's ravens. This divine intervention results in the miraculous birth of King Volsung. Later Volsung further reinforces the progenitorial link with the god by marrying the wish maiden who brought the apple that precipitated his own birth. The implied incestuousness of this marriage is echoed later in the saga by the sexual union of Volsung's twin children, Sigmund and Signy. Volsung has an additional connection with fertility cults: his name corresponds to an Old Norse fertility god called Volsi, whom Norwegian peasants represented as a deified horse phallus in The Tale of Volsi. This short Christian satire on pagan beliefs probably contains elements of actual pagan ritual. The tale was inserted into The Saga of Saint Olaf found in Flateyjarbok, a major fourteenth-century Icelandic manuscript named for the island Flatey in western Iceland where the book was found.

Odin, together with the silent god Hoenir and the trickster Loki, sets in motion the events that bring a great treasure from the chthonic world of the dwarves into the world of men. The treasure, which passes through the hands of nearly all classes of beings in the Norse cosmos - dwarves, gods, giants, a dragon, and humans - carries a curse and serves to link the human tragedy of the second part of the saga with the supernatural prehistory of the first part. A particular item in the treasure is a special ring called Andvaranaut, a cursed magical object that even Odin is

not able to keep for himself.

What purpose, we may ask, do Sigurd's supernatural advantages and Odin's patronage serve? Although Sigurd has many semidivine attributes, he does not thirst after immortality as do many heroes. The patronage of the highest god and Sigurd's special equipment make him formidable among men but not invincible. The issue of immortality is more clearly drawn in the Nibelungenlied, where Siegfried bathes in the blood of the dragon and, like Achilles, becomes invulnerable to weapons except in one part of his body. Furthermore, unlike the exploits of such monster slayers as Beowulf and the heroes of creation epics, Sigurd's dragon slaying and subsequent knowledge do not bring order or safety to the world. On the contrary, his memorable deed has disastrous consequences: almost all persons who come in contact with Sigurd or his family experience tragedy.

Sigurd's susceptibility to the opposing attractions of the real and supernatural worlds is perhaps heightened by the ambivalence of his own nature. Though finally incorporated by marriage into

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the real world of the Burgundians, he retains certain supernatural abilities, such as the power to assume the shape of others. He uses his otherworldly powers of shape-changing to trick Brynhilde by appearing in the guise of his brother-in-law. For reasons that are not explained, Odin distances himself from Sigurd after the monster has been slain. Perhaps Sigurd is no longer of use to the god. It is noteworthy that, after the killing of the dragon, Odin appears only once more in the saga, at the tale's end, when he counsels Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) the Gothic king on how to kill Gudrun's sons.

An overriding theme of tension between marriage and blood bonds runs through the saga. For generation after generation, strife with kin by marriage brings a series of misfortunes upon the Volsungs. Marriage creates new kinship alliances, which are vital for survival in societies like the one pictured in the saga, where there is no effective central order and only a rudimentary judiciary. Many of the sagas major characters are kings or noble retainers, individuals prepared to fight regularly to maintain their status. Even though pledges were exchanged between lord and retainer, the most trustworthy defense lay in the family. Yet villainy often arose from within that social unit, especially in the weak link of the in-law relationship.

In the saga, the Volsungs seldom have dependable blood relations. Sigurd grows up without a father, an element of his upbringing for which the dragon mocks him. The absence of the support that blood relations might supply exacerbates Sigurd's problems with in-laws,

who are often untrustworthy. Germanic societies tended to be patrilocal: that is, a man married a woman outside his group and brought her to live with his family instead of their living with hers. Sigurd breaks the usual social pattern after marrying the Burgundian princess Gudrun by settling among his in-laws at Worms. There the protection of both his person and his treasure is dependent upon the goodwill of his wife's Burgundian kinsmen.

The saga makes much of the disturbing fact that Sigurd's brothers-in-law plot against him, even though two of them have increased their obligations to him by establishing blood brotherhood. It is the third Burgundian brother, not bound to the outsider by a ritual blood tie, who carries out the attack on Sigurd. In part the recurring pattern of strife among in-laws comes from the sources available to the saga author. Many of the poems he drew upon for his prose narrative were small tragedies that, like the saga, focused on

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intrafamily rivalry over treasure and status. Linked together one after the other, the small tragedies weave a larger tale of horror. ...

...Because verifiable information about the migrations era is limited, the period is a historical snake pit that requires scholars to act much like King Gunnar, who in the saga played the harp with his toes. The writings of Greeks and Romans about their barbarian opponents and neighbors have in modern times come under increasing scrutiny, and the old assumption that tribal names necessarily denote significant or continuing ethnic, cultural (archaeological), or political grouping is questionable. Differing views that often depend on interpretation cannot be proved or disproved by reference to irrefutable fact, since the sources are often uncritical or incomplete and at times are contradictory. For example, four different accounts in ancient writings record the destruction of the Burgundians. It is possible that "Burgundians" becomes a topos in classical sources and Germanic material, the equivalent of disaster to a family through betrayal. To whatever degree this idea may or may not be valid, connecting the saga and poetic references with historical events is certainly speculative.

The element of speculation is further increased by an awareness of the way in which legends grow. The process of taking root on oral memory tends to obscure their origins, and this observation is true regarding the deadly clash between the Burgundians, led by Gunnar and Hogni, and the Huns under King Atli (Atila), called Etzel in German sources). The most that can be said about Gunnar, for example, is that the historical king of the Burgundians, Gundaharius, is one of the main

sources for the fictional King Gunnar; the two are by no means identical. In some instances a legend may develop so fully that it shares only a name with the historical figure with whom he is identified. In other instances, legendary and historical events may correspond without any association between the names of the figures involved.

Often characters who lived centuries or decades apart become contemporaries in legend. In The Saga of the Volsungs, for instance, Gundaharius (died 437), Attila (died 453), and Hermenrichus (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*, of the *Amal* or *Amalung* dynasty) (king of the Goths, died 375) are presented as the contemporaries Gunnar, Atli, and Jormunrekkr. Conflicts between nations or tribes are often reduced to quarrels between families, as witnessed by the way the saga treats the struggle between the Burgundians and the Huns. The absence of evidence that

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the Icelandic saga audience understood or gave any thought to the ethnic difference between the Huns and the Germanic tribesmen is noteworthy. The oriental origin of Attila is forgotten, and he is treated as one of several competing leaders in the migration period.

If we have come to question classical writings, the writers themselves, especially in the period of the late Roman Empire, seem to be secure in their views: those who mention the Burgundians perceived them as a historical people. The Roman historian Tacitus, writing about the Germanic tribes beyond the Rhine frontier at the end of the first century AD, unfortunately does not mention the Burgundians, and we have no certain knowledge about their earliest history. In late classical and early medieval sources they are associated with the island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea. Scholars now generally doubt such a connection, and attempts to demonstrate archaeologically a postulated migration from Scandinavia in the first century BC have been unsuccessful. Never the less, a Scandinavian origin for the Burgundians is at least as logical as any other possibility. By the second century AD Burgundians are reported to have been living in the area between the Vistula and Oder rivers, in what is today western Poland. Sometime afterward they began their migration westward, arriving in the mid-third century AD in the region on the upper and middle main river is southwestern Germany.

The next major move of the Burgundians, to the region around Worms, where the saga places them, is better documented. In the unusually severe winter of 406-407 the Rhine froze, making the border indefensible and enabling large numbers of barbarians to cross into Roman territory. Chief among these invaders were the

Vandals, who were themselves under pressure from the Huns farther to the east. The Vandals destroyed the previously important Roman garrison town of Worms in the northern part of the upper Rhine Valley before continuing a migration that took them through France and Spain and eventually into North Africa. On the heels of the Vandals other tribes also passed through Worms, but they too had already moved deeper into Gaul when, around 413, the Burgundians crossed the Rhine and first entered the area. By diplomatic means Roman agents detached the newly arrived Burgundians from alliances with other major intruders, and the Burgundians became *foederati* (client-allies) of the Roman Empire. In the fertile region surrounding Worms (some have argued for Koblenz) they established a short-lived kingdom under the aegis of the Romans. Despite the absence of conclusive archaeological evidence, it has long been

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supposed that the Burgundians established their royal fortress in the old Roman forum in Worms.

The Romans probably hoped that the Burgundians, once settled, would prove to be a bulwark against the incursions of tribes living east of the border. When in the next decades the Burgundians tried to expand northward into neighboring Roman territory, they incurred the wrath of Aetius, the last great Roman general in Gaul. Aetius knew the barbarian peoples well. He had once been a hostage of the Huns and often enlisted these horsemen as his allies. Relying on a Hunnish mercenary army, Aetius, then the effective leader of the Western Empire, attacked the Burgundians in 436 and completely routed them. The Burgundians, it is said, lost their king Gundaharius, his whole family, and 20,000 men. After the Huns withdrew from the region around Worms, the area was occupied by the Alemanni, another Germanic tribe, who in turn were conquered by the Franks in the late fifth century.

But the Burgundians did not disappear from history. Under the protection of the victorious Aetius, those who survived the battle migrated south to the region near Lake Geneva. In less than two decades the Burgundians had surprisingly regained enough strength to resume their fight against the Huns. In 451, under the generalship of Aetius, they joined with the Franks, the Visigoths, and the Gallo-Romans to repel the invasion of Gaul by Attila. The victorious alliance, however, soon fell apart. The Burgundians turned on the Gallo-Romans and, by defeating them, quickly became a major power within the crumbling empire. By the latter part of the fifth century they had extended their power over most of eastern Gaul and had established their capital at Lyon. The surrounding region came to be called Burgundy, a name it has kept. The Burgundians, however, were unable

to maintain their independence. A series of conflicts with the Franks and the Goths sapped their strength, and in 534 what was left of their kingdom was annexed by the Franks. Thereafter the Burgundians were absorbed into Frankish society, eventually losing their ethnic identity.

The Huns were pastoral nomads who originated in the Altai Mountains of Central Asia. Because no written record of their native language has survived, we can only guess at the nature of Hunnish languages from names recorded in other peoples' writings. Probably a substantial group of Hunnish peoples spoke some form of Turkic, a subfamily of the Altaic languages. Little definitive information about the Huns' early history is available, although it has long been supposed that they were related to the Hsiung-nu, against whom the Chinese (796)

erected the Great Wall. Until the time of Attila in the fifth century, when rudimentary forms of statehood began to take shape, the Huns were chiefly a loose association of different tribes. The accuracy of their compound bows and their reputation for cruelty inspired fear among their enemies.

One such enemy was the Ostrogoths, a people represented in the saga by their king Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*). In the fourth century the Ostrogoths ruled a vast empire north of the Black Sea, stretching across the grasslands of Russia (and Ukraine) from the Don River to the Dniester and extending from the Crimea to the Pripet marshes. The earliest history of the Goths is shrouded in obscurity, but they almost certainly originated in southern Scandinavia and migrated across the Baltic in the first century AD, probably giving their name to the Baltic island of Gotland. By the third century the Goths were inhabiting a region near the Vistula, in present-day Poland, before migrating southeast.

By the fourth century the Goths had split into two major groups, the Visigoths, living in present-day Rumania, and the Ostrogoths. How the Ostrogoths acquired their empire and came to dominate the many peoples it included remains a mystery. The Huns fell upon and destroyed the Ostrogothic empire, when, around 375, they suddenly invaded the steppes of present-day Russia (and Ukraine). Continuing on the offensive, they advanced into central Europe and enslaved the tribes in their path. In 376 they overwhelmed the Visigoths, whose remnants then sought safety within the borders of the Roman Empire. After that victory the Huns settled down on the Hungarian plain, having in three short years wiped out a century-long Gothic expansion.

After destroying the Visigoths, the Huns remained quiet for half a century, but about 430 they were again

on the move. It was at this time that the army of Hunnish mercenaries, acting under the orders of Aetius, crushed the Burgundians. At approximately the same time, the Huns, in a series of similar but unconnected raids on other Germanic tribesmen, Romans, and eastern peoples, expanded their own empire until it reached from Europe to the Persian and perhaps even to the Chinese frontier. Beginning in 434, Attila and his brother Bleda ruled the empire jointly. In 445, after murdering his brother, Attila became the sole ruler. His apparently weak control over the eastern part of the empire, however, diminished his ability to acquire sufficient reinforcements of Hunnish warriors and trained horses.

At the heart of the Hunnish empire was its
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capital, the "Ring", a circular city of tents, wooden palaces, and wagons, at whose center stood Attila's royal residence. Attila's court was a meeting place for hostages, retainers, and warriors from the various subject tribes. Large contingents of the latter were incorporated into the Hunnish armies, whose military organization was modified in Attila's time to reflect the growing importance of units of armored warriors drawn from the conquered peoples. Poems such as the Anglo-Saxon Waldere and parts of the different Sigurd/Siegfried traditions show traces of what most certainly was a series of heroic cycles about Attila's court and the champions of the period.

After Attila's death in 453, his numerous quarreling sons divided the empire into separate dominions. In 454 an alliance of subjected tribes revolted and inflicted a crushing defeat upon their masters. The Goths remained for the most part neutral in this battle, but over the next decade they too fought a series of mostly successful engagements against the Huns. These reversals reduced the Huns to insignificance, and after the mid-sixth century they are no longer mentioned in the sources. Because of the temporary nature of their buildings and towns, no major archaeological trace of the Hunnish empire has been found.. The modern Hungarians are not descended from this group but stem from a later migration of the (very) distantly related Magyars.

What is the connection between the historical Huns, Burgundians, and Goths and the characters who play prominent roles in The Saga of the Volsungs? The answer is clouded by time. Obviously Atli, king of the Huns in the saga, is based on Attila, and Gunnar represents Gundaharius, the ill-fated Burgundian king. Without doubt the later Burgundians, even under the Franks, retained knowledge of their ancestors. A sixth-century law code names Gibica, Gundaharius, and Gislaharius as early Burgundian rulers. Gibica corresponds to Gjuki,

the father of Gunnar; Gundharius, to Gunnar; and Gislaharius, to Giselher, who appears in the Niedelungenlied as one of the kings jointly ruling Burgundy. Atli's betrayal of Gunnar and Hogni in the saga reflects the historical destruction of Gundaharius' kingdom by the Hunnish mercenary army.

The saga's account, however, is far from historically accurate. Among the many discrepancies is the absence of Aetius, the Roman general who commanded the Hunnish mercenaries. Furthermore, the political reasons for the war are lost; events are portrayed as springing from intrafamily feuds, motivated by greed and jealousy among blood relations and in-laws. A major

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chronological difference is that the historical Attila did not participate in the war against the Burgundians in 436; at that time he was on the middle Danube negotiating with the Romans. It is not difficult to understand, however, that a storyteller would want to embellish his tale with a character as intriguing as Attila.

The Hunnish king's association with the Burgundians was perhaps an early step in the development of the legend. Certainly the connection of Attila with wealth is well founded. Vast quantities of gold and valuables flowed into his coffers, and large numbers of slaves became his property. As his treasure grew, so did his greed. In 443 the Eastern Roman emperor Theodosius bought peace from Attila at the price of 432,000 solidi, about two tons of gold. Payments of this magnitude brought wealth to the subject tribes serving Attila, enabling large quantities of precious metals to circulate through the northern lands, including Scandinavia. Such exorbitant tributes, along with booty and payments acquired by other tribesmen, provided material for flamboyant jewelry and ornaments.

The saga's account of King Atli's death at a woman's hand also has a foundation in history. The earliest and most reliable report of Attila's death was written by the Greek historian Priscus, who had visited the Huns as a member of a diplomatic mission a few years before Attila died. Priscus' work survives only in fragments, but he is cited at length by the sixth-century Gothic historian Jordanes in his History of the Goths:

"He [Attila] near the time of his death, as the historian Priscus tells, married a very beautiful girl named Ildico, after countless other wives, as was the custom of his people. At his wedding he overindulged in gaiety and lay down on his back, heavy with wine and sleep. A gush of blood, which normally would

have run down out of his nose, was hindered from its usual channels; it flowed on a fatal course into his throat and killed him. Thus drunkenness brought a scandalous end to a king famed in battle. On the next day, when a good portion of the day had passed, the king's servants suspected something tragic and, after a great clamor, smashed down the doors. They discovered Attila dead without any wounds. His death was caused by an effusive nosebleed, and the girl, her head
(799)

hanging low, cried under her veil."

Jordanes, who makes an effort to establish the accidental nature of Attila's death, may have been aware of other versions of the story in which Ildico kills Attila, since a contemporary chronicle says that Attila died at the hands of a woman. The woman involved was evidently Germanic; *Ildico* seems to be a diminutive of the female proper name *Hild*, which in the form of the suffix *-hild* is a common element in other Germanic female names. For example, the woman in the Niedelungenlied who plays the role similar to Gudrun's in The Saga of the Volsungs is named *Kriemhild*. [and do not forget *Brynhilde the Valkyrie*]

The saga's Gothic King *Jormunrekkr* (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*), like Gunnar and Atli, is based on a historical figure known to the Romans as Ermenrichus, who in the fourth century ruled the vast Ostrogothic empire on the steppes. The contemporary Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, in his History, claims that Ermenrichus (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) killed himself rather than contend with attacks by the Huns:

"Accompanied by their allies, the Huns burst with a sudden attack into the wide districts of Ermenrichus. Ermenrichus, a very warlike king who terrified nearby peoples because of his many boldly executed deeds, was hit hard by the force of this sudden attack. For along time, however, he tried to remain strong and resolute. Nevertheless, rumor spread, exaggerating the looming disasters, and he settled his fear of these major crises by his voluntary death."

By the sixth century the legend of Ermenrichus had developed beyond these sparse facts into a recognizable version of the story told in The Saga of the Volsungs. Among other new details Jordanes, in his History of the Goths, tells of a woman named Sunhilda, wife of a leader

of a people subject to the Goths. Jordanes mentions the vengeance of her brothers Sarus and Ammius and Hermanaric's (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekr*, of the dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) death in old age:

"Hermanaric, king of the Goths, as we have reported above, was conqueror of many tribes. Nevertheless, while he was apprehending the approach of the Huns, the treacherous tribe
(800)

of the Rosomoni, who among others owed him allegiance, seized the opportunity to turn on him. The king, shaken with rage, ordered a certain chief's wife of the above-mentioned named Sunhilda to be bound to wild horses on account of her husband's treachery. She was then torn asunder by the horses running at full gallop in opposite directions. After this killing, her brothers Sarus and Ammius avenged her death by thrusting a sword into Hermanaric's side. Stricken by his wound, Hermanaric lived out a sickly existence with an enfeebled body. Balamber, king of the Huns, made use of this illness and moved his battle-ready men into the territory of the Ostrogoths, from whom the Visigoths had already separated because of some disagreement between them. Meanwhile Hermanaric, unable to bear the pain of his wound and the distress of the Hunnish invasion, died full of days at the age of 110. Because of his death the Huns prevailed over those Goths who, as we have said, settled in the eastern region and are called Ostrogoths."

Jordanes' story appears, in part, historically accurate: it presents a reasonable chronology and with seeming correctness identifies the peoples involved. At the same time we can see the elements that are to be more fully developed in later legend. Sunhilda is manifestly the prototype of Svanhild, Sigurd and Gudrun's daughter, who in the saga is killed by Jormunrekr. Likewise the correspondences with Svanhild's brothers Sorli (Sarus) and Hamdir (Ammius) are reasonably clear. Although we will never know precisely what source Jordanes used for this story, it is tempting to postulate that he relied on a now lost (Gothic) heroic lay.

In the centuries that followed, the tale passed more thoroughly from history into legend. Spreading widely, it was known in some form in Anglo-Saxon

England, where the tragedy of Ermenrichus (*Eormanric*; Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*, of the dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) is one of the many referred to in the moving Anglo-Saxon lament Deor:

(801)

We've heard of the she-wolf's heart
Of Eormanric: he ruled the folk
Of the Goths' kingdom. That was a
Cruel king!
Many men sat bound in sorrow,
Expecting woe; often they wished
That the kingdom be overcome.

One can only guess when and how Sigurd became connected with the other legendary elements of the story. Earlier sources yield some evidence that Sigurd may not originally have been the Volsung who slew the dragon. In the Anglo-Saxon epic poem Beowulf, the dragon slaying is attributed not to Sigurd, who goes unmentioned, but to Sigemund Waelsing (Volsung), the Anglo-Saxon equivalent of Sigurd's father Sigmund. The poem also mentions Sigmund's nephew Fitela whose name corresponds to the Scandinavian Sinfjotli, who is Sigmund's son by his sister and hence also his nephew:

He told all that he had heard
Of the deeds of valor, far voyages
And unknown struggles of Sigmund Waelsing,
Feuds and foul deeds; Fitela alone,
And no other men, knew of this,
From when Sigmund chose to speak of the deeds
Uncle to nephew, as they ever in battle
Were comrades in arms, each to the other -
They killed great numbers of the giant race,
Slew them with swords. No scant glory
Developed for Sigmund after his death
Because the brave warrior killed the serpent
Guardian of the hoard.

Under the gray stone
The Prince's [Waels'] son alone performed
A fierce deed - Fitela was not with him.
Even so, it happened that his sword hewed
The ornate serpent; the noble weapon
Drove into the wall as the dragon died.
With valor the warrior won the ring hoard,
So that he might enjoy it at his own desire;
The wons of Waels loaded his watercraft,

Bore bright treasures to the ships's bosom.
The serpent's own fires melted its flesh.

In this Anglo-Saxon version of the story Fitela is described only as Sigmund's nephew, whereas in the Icelandic saga *Sinfjotli* is both son and nephew to Sigmund. The motif of incest in The Saga of the Volsungs, so important to the understanding of the
(802)

relationship between Sigmund and Sinfjotli as father and son, may be a late addition to the legend. Beowulf refers to the progenitor of the race of heroes as Wael. In Scandinavia the name of Sigmund's father was the unusual compound, *Volsung*, possibly formed when the patronymic suffix *-ung* (present in the Anglo-Saxon form *Waelsing*, "Son of Wael") was interpreted as an integral part of the names. [As we shall see, the name of the royal family of the Ostrogoths was *Amalung*, "son of Amal". Note the form *-ung*, later found in Old Norse.]

Sigmund appears to be the original dragon slayer, and Sigurd's filial connection with the old hero is probably an expansion of the legend. This hypothesis gains additional credence through the absence of Sigurd's name from The Lay of Eirik, one of the earliest Scandinavian poems referring to the Volsungs. The lay is a memorial poem for Eirik Bloodaxe, king of Norway and of Viking York. Composed after the death of this Norse prince in AD 954, the poem has Odin call Sigmund and Sinfjotli to greet Eirik on his arrival in Valhalla, Odin's hall for slain warriors:

Sigmund and Sinfjotli: Rise up with speed
And go to greet the warrior:
Invite him in, if it be Eirik;
I await his arrival.

Who, then, was Sigmund originally? To this difficult question we will probably never have a definitive answer. Certainly Sigurd was already a character of myth and legend when he was joined to the Volsungs. He may even have some basis in history, and in this regard two figures in particular have received attention. One is Arminius, a leader in the first century AD of the Cherusci, a Germanic tribe; the other is the sixth-century Frankish king Sigibert. In both instances the connection is highly conjectural.

In AD 9, in the Teutoburg Forest in northern Germany, Arminius lured the attacking Romans, led by Quintilius Varus, into a trap and wiped out three Roman legions. For years preceding this defeat the Roman Empire had been engaging in a costly but gradually successful conquest of Germania, and the three legions were the major part of Rome's mobile forces in the West.

The Roman historian Suetonius reports that everyone on the Roman side was massacred - the legionnaires and the officers, the commander, the complete staff, and the auxiliary forces. So unsettling was the defeat that when the news reached Rome, the emperor Augustus commanded that the city be patrolled

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at night to prevent an uprising. For months afterward Augustus suffered deep despair. He left his beard and hair uncut and, often striking his head against the door to his chamber, he would call out, "Varus, give me back my legions!"

The loss of his legions forced Augustus to abandon the hope of conquering Germania permanently. He fixed the border protecting Gaul and the already conquered German provinces a short distant east of the Rhine. With small adjustments, the frontier between the Romans and the northern barbarians remained fixed for the next four centuries. The border posts finally fell before the migrating tribes in the early fifth century, or about the time of the clash between the Huns and the Burgundians.

For the Romans, the Varus episode, although grievous, was ultimately of less importance than the much larger conflict on the Danube frontier and the twin-frontier problem (Rhine-Danube) thereafter. Nevertheless, the Romans showed considerable interest in Arminius. Velleius Paterculus, a contemporary first-century writer, describes this barbarian leader (in his synopsis of Roman history) as "A young man of noble descent..., valorous and astute, with talents exceeding those of common barbarians. His name was Arminius, the son of Sigimerus, chief of the tribe, and he showed the fire in his soul, by his countenance, and in his eyes." If somewhat of a passing curiosity to the Romans, the Cheruscan leader remained a hero among the barbarians on the northern frontier. The Roman historian Tacitus reports (in his Annals) that unwritten songs and lays of Arminius were sung by tribesmen a century after his death.

The arguments for connecting Sigurd with Arminius stress in particular the genealogy of the war leader, most of whose male relatives bore names with the initial *seg-* or *segi-* (victory), equivalent to Old Norse *sig-*. If Arminius was a Roman name or a Latinized Germanic title, the leader would probably also have had a native name beginning with *seg-*, as alliterating names were a common feature in Germanic families. Furthermore, the *-elda* element in the name of Arminius' wife is similar to the *-hild* element in the names of women connected with Sigurd in later versions. However, appealing this evidence, it should be remembered that these characteristics of nomenclature were common and may well

be coincidental.

The Greek geographer Strabo gives more information about Arminius' family. In his geography from the first century AD, Strabo describes the triumphal procession in Rome in AD 17 accorded to Germanicus, a member of

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the imperial family, who avenged Varus' defeat:

"But they [the tribesman] all paid the price and gave the young Germanicus a victory celebration, in which their most distinguished men and women were led captive - namely, Segimundus, son of Segestes and leader of the Cherusci, and his sister Thusnelda, wife of Arminius,. . . . But Segestes, the father-in-law of Arminius, set himself against the purpose of Arminius from the very beginning and, seizing an opportune time, deserted him; and he was present, and honored, at the triumph over those dear to him."

Strabo's account thus suggests that Arminius, like Sigurd, was betrayed by his in-laws.

Other elements in the theory connecting Arminius with Sigurd (Siegfried) are even more hypothetical. Some scholars have suggested a linkage between Sigurd and Arminius on the basis of associated animal imagery, interpreting among other things Sigurd's dragon as a symbolic representation of the dragon banners of the legions destroyed by Arminius. As fascinating as such conjectures may be, the basic fact remains that beyond the general motif of kin strife, the connection is just a supposition and a highly speculative one at that. Little actual correspondence exists between the life of Arminius, as described by Roman historians, and Sigurd's legendary adventures.

A second possibility for the historical origin of Sigurd is the Frankish King Sigibert (AD 535-575). As the Merovingian king of Metz, Sigibert ruled a territory that included much of what is today northeastern France, Belgium, and the region on the upper Rhine where the Burgundians lived before their destruction by the Huns in 437. Among Sigibert's subjects were many Burgundians. Sigibert's wife Brunhilda (Died 613) may be loosely identified with the Brunhilda in the saga. The marriage of Sigibert to this Visigothic princess [note the Gothic-Iranian-Fravashi-Valkyrie connection; as we note in several places, Brynhilde was originally a Valkyrie] is reported by the sixth-century Gallo-Roman bishop Gregory of Tours in his History of the Franks:

"When King Sigibert saw that his brothers

were taking wives who were unworthy of them, even debasing themselves to the point of marrying their female slaves, he dispatched
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an embassy to Spain with abundant gifts for Brunhilda, daughter of King Athanagild. ... Her father, not refusing him, sent her to the king with a large dowry. Sigibert assembled the elders and prepared a feast, taking Brunhilda with great joy and delight as wife."

Somewhat like Sigurd, Sigibert was destroyed by strife within his family. The Frankish king was murdered by the mistress of his brother. Brunhilda's subsequent attempts to take revenge within the royal family seriously weakened the Merovingian kingdom, just as Brynhilde's revenge in the saga contributes to the fall of the Burgundians. Sigibert's story, as well as Arminius', bears some resemblance to Sigurd's, but attempting to identify the dragon slayer with either of these two historical figures is not fully convincing. The similarities center mostly on common aspects of the Germanic naming practices and a social milieu where kin strife was frequent.

No one can say exactly when the process of combining the different historical, legendary, and mythic elements into a Volsung cycle began, but it was probably at an early date. By the ninth century the legends of the Gothic Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, of the dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) and those of the destruction of the Burgundians had already been linked in Scandinavia, where the ninth-century Lay of Ragnar by the poet Bragi the Old treats both subjects. Bragi's poem describes a shield on which a picture of the maiming of Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, of the dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) was either painted or carved and refers to the brothers Hamdir and Soli from the Gothic section of the saga as "kinsmen of Gjuki", the Burgundian father of King Gunnar.

The Lay of Ragnar has other connections with the Volsung legend. The thirteenth-century Icelandic writer Snorri Sturluson identifies the central figure of the lay, whose gift inspired the poem in his honor, with Ragnar Hairy Breeches, a supposed ancestor of the Ynglings, Norway's royal family. Ragnar's son-in-law relationship to Sigurd through his marriage to Sigurd's daughter Aslaug (mentioned earlier in connection with stave church carvings) is reflected in the sequence of texts in the vellum manuscript; The Saga of the Volsungs immediately precedes The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok. Ragnar's saga, in turn, is followed by Krakumal (Lay of the Raven), Ragnar's death poem, in

which Ragnar, thrown into the snake pit by the Anglo-Saxon King Ella, boasts that he will die laughing. The
(806)

Volsung and Ragnar stories are further linked by internal textual references. It is likely that the Saga of the Volsungs was purposely set first in the manuscript to serve as a prelude to the Ragnar material. The opening section of Ragnar's Saga may originally be the ending of The Saga of the Volsungs. Just where the division between these two sagas occurs in the manuscript is unclear. Together these narratives chronicle the ancestry of the Ynglings - the legendary line (through Sigurd and Ragnar) and the divine one (through Odin). Such links to Odin (Old Norse), or Wotan (Old High German or *Althochdeutsch*), were common among northern dynasties; by tracing their ancestry through Sigurd, later Norwegian kings availed themselves of one of the greatest heroes in northern (Viking) lore. In so doing, they probably helped to preserve the story for us." (421)

The Saga of the Volsungs does indeed deal with the Goths:

"...Gudrun and Sigurd had a daughter called Svanhild. She was the fairest of all women and had keen eyes like her father's, so that few dared to face her glance. She transcended other women in her beauty as the sun does the other heavenly bodies.

Once Gudrun went to the sea, picked up stones in her arms, and walked out into the water, meaning to kill herself. Then towering waves carried her out over the sea. Crossing the water with their help, she came at last to the fortress of King Jonakr, a powerful ruler with many followers. He married Gudrun. Their children were Hamdir, Sorli, and Erp. Svanhild was raised there.

There was in those times a powerful king called Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, of the dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*). His son was named Randver. The king called his son to speak with him and said: "You will travel with my counselor Bikki on a mission for me to King Jonakr. Svanhild, the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's Bane, has been raised there, and I know her to be the fairest maiden under the sun. More than any other woman I would like to marry her, and you are to ask for her hand in my name." Randver replied: "I am obliged, sir, to travel on your errand." Then he had the journey prepared in a fitting manner. They traveled until they came to King Jonakr. They saw Svanhild and thought her beauty most worthy. Randver met with the king and said: "King Jormunrekkr wants to offer you his kinship by marriage. He has heard of Svanhild and wants to choose her as his wife. She could hardly be given to a man who is more powerful." King Jonakr called it a splendid

match and said: "Jormunrekkr is a king of great renown."

Guðrun said: "Fortune is too fragile a thing to trust that it not break." But with the exhortations of the king and all things considered, an agreement was reached. Svanhild went to the ship with a splendid following and sat on the raised deck next to the king's son. Then Bikki spoke to Randver: "It would be more proper for you to have so beautiful a wife, rather than for an old man to have her." That idea suited Randver's thinking well, and he spoke agreeably to her, as she did to him. They arrived home in their own land and met with the king. Bikki said: "It behooves you, my lord, to know what has happened, although it is difficult to relate. Yet it has to do with deceits against you. Your son has received Svanhild's full love, and she is his mistress. Do not let such a wrong go unpunished."

In the past Bikki had given the king much bad counsel, although this outstripped any of his previous ill advice. The king listened to his many wicked persuasions. He could not still his anger and ordered that Randver should be taken and hanged on the gallows. When Randver was led to the gallows, he took a hawk, plucked from it all its feathers, and said that it should be shown to his father. When the king saw it, he said: "One can see that he thinks I am shorn of honor just as this hawk is shorn of feathers." Jormunrekkr then ordered Randver removed from the gallows, but Bikki had been busy in the meantime and Randver was dead.

Bikki spoke again: "No one deserves worse from you than Svanhild. Let her die in disgrace." The king answered: "I accept your advice." Then Svanhild was bound in the gate of the fortress and horses were driven at her. But when she opened her eyes the horses did not trample on her. When Bikki saw this, he commanded that a skin bag be drawn over her head. Thus it was done, and then she died.

Guðrun heard of Svanhild's violent death and she spoke to her sons: "How can you sit there so peacefully or speak with cheerful words, when Jormunrekkr had had your sister shamefully trampled to death under the hooves of horses? You do not have the spirit of Gunnar or of Hogni. They would avenge their kinswoman." Hamdit answered: "Little did you praise Gunnar and Hogni when they killed Sigurd and you were reddened with his blood. Vile was the vengeance for your brothers when you killed your sons by Atli. We might better kill King Jormunrekkr if we were all together. But we cannot endure your taunts; so persistently are we being urged."

Guðrun went laughing and gave them drink from deep goblets. Afterward she chose large sturdy coats of mail

and other armor for them. Then Himdir said: "Here we shall part for the last time. You will hear the tidings and will hold a funeral feast for us and Svanhild." Then they departed.

Gudrun went to her chamber, her sorrow yet heavier, and said: "I have been married to three men. First I wedded Sigurd the slayer of Fafnir and he was betrayed, bringing me the deepest sorrow. Then I was given to King Atli, yet my heart was so full of hatred against him that in my grief I killed our sons. Then I went into the sea, but I was borne to land by waves, and I was married to this king. Then I married off Svanhild, sending her away to a foreign land with enormous wealth; when she was trampled under the feet of horses it was the most grievous of my sorrows after Sigurd. It was grimmest for me when Gunnar was placed in the snake pit, but it was harshest when the heart was cut out of Hogni. Better if Sigurd would come to meet me and I would go with him. Not a son, not a daughter is left hereto comfort me. Do you remember now, Sigurd, what we spoke of, when we entered one bed? You said you would visit me from Hel and then wait there for me." Thus ended her lamentations.

It is now told of Gudrun's sons that she had prepared their armor so that iron could not bite through it. She cautioned her sons to cause no one damage with stones or other large objects, telling them they would come to harm if they did not do as she said. After they had set out they met their brother Erp and asked how he would help them. He answered: "As the hand helps the hand, or the foot helps the foot." They took this reply to mean that he would not help them at all, and so they killed him.

Gudrun's sons continued on their way, and it was but a short time before Hamdir stumbled and threw out his hand. "Erp must have told the truth", he said. "I would have fallen just then, if I had not braced myself with my hand." A short time later Sorli stumbled. He threw out his foot, regained his balance, and said: "I would have fallen just then if I had not supported myself with both feet. Thus they decided that they had wronged their brother Erp.

They journeyed until they came to King Jormunrekkr's. They went before him and attacked at once. Hamdir cut off both his hands and Sorli both his feet. Then Hamdir said: "His head would now be cut off if our brother Erp were alive, whom we killed on the way. Too late we have realized this." As the verse relates:

(809)

Off would now be the head
If Erp were living,
Our battle-eager brother

Whom we killed on the way.

In the action the brothers had not observed their mother's wishes, as they had used stones to wound. Now men attacked them, but they defended themselves bravely and well, killing many of the attackers. Iron was of no avail against the brothers. Then a one-eyed man, tall and ancient, came up and said: "You are not wise if you do not know how to kill these men." King Jormunrekkr answered: "Advise us how, if you can." He said: "You should stone them to death." Thus it was done and from all directions stones flew at them. So ended the lives of Hamdir and Sorli."(422)

The Elder Edda is a collection of Viking literature (not all of which could be classified as sagas) contained in what is today known as the Codex Regius, apparently compiled at the Benedictine monastery of Thingeyrar in northern Iceland around the year 1270, though obviously based on much older material.(423) The Elder Edda contains material which deals with the Goths.

Gunnar, of whom much will be said, is identified as a Goth:

Grimhild will wholly deceive you,
Urge you to wed Brynhilde
On Gunnar's behalf, the lord of the Goths;
You will soon promise the trip to the ruler's
mother.(424)

Says Brynhilde the Valkyrie:

It wouldn't have been fitting that he'd have ruled
Gjuki's inheritance and troops of Goths,
When he'd already had five sons,
Keen warriors, to govern the people (425)

Once again we cite Brynhilde:

Then I let the old man of the Goths,
Helm-Gunnar, go straight off to Hel;
I gave the victory to Auda's young brother;
Odin became very angry with me for that(426)

(810)

King Thjodrek (Theoderic, probably originally something like *Thjodereiks*, a Gothic name, though not to be confused with the

much later Ostrogothic king of Italy, of the dynasty of Amal (or Amalung) was with Atli (Attila), and had lost almost all his men. Thjodrek and Gudrun exchanged the stories of their sorrows. Gudrun spoke thusly to Thjodrek:

Them Grimhild (mother of Gunnar) found out, queen of the
Goths,
In what frame of mind I was:
She threw down her embroidery, fetch her sons,
With eagerness she asked
Who would compensate their sister for her son,
Or pay for her slaughtered husband.(427)

Says Gudrun:

Why are you sitting and sleeping away your life?
Why aren't you grieved to talk of happiness?
When Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) had your sister,
Young in age, trampled with his steeds,
White and black on the high road,
With the grey and gait-tame horses of the Goths.(428)

Says the *skald* Hamdir:

It was not now, nor yesterday,
A long time has passed since then,
=Few things are so ancient that this was not so -
When Gudrun, born to Gjuki, urged
Her young sons to avenge Svanhild.

Your sister was called Svanhild,
Whom Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, of the dynasty
Amal or *Amalung*)) trampled with his steeds,
White and black on the high road,
With the grey and gait-tame horses of the Goths.(429)

Hamdir continues:

There was celebration in the hall, warriors ale-happy,
And they did not hear the sound of horses,
Until a brave warrior blew his horn.

(811)

They went to tell Jormunrekkr
That soldiers under helmets had been seen:
Consider a plan; powerful princes are here:
You trampled a maid of mighty men!

The Jormunrekkr laughed, and smoothed his moustaches,
He stirred himself to struggle, made war-keen by wine;
He shook out his chestnut locks, glanced at his white
shield,
Held waving in his hand a golden goblet.

Happy I'd think myself, if I could see,
Hamdir and Sorli here in my hall;
I'd bind up those boys with bow-strings,
Tie the good sons of Gjuki to the gallows.

Then spoke a fame-clad girl, stood on the threshold;
She said, slender-fingered, to a young lad:
Now they promise what they cannot achieve;
Can only two men fight ten hundred Goths,
Fight and bind them in the high fortress?

A stirring occurred in the hall: ale-cups crashed,
Men lay in blood shed from the Goths' breasts.

Then said Hamdir the Stout-hearted:
You longed, Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, of the
dynasty Amal or Amalung), for our arrival,
Brothers born of the same mother, inside your fortress.
You see your own legs, you see your arms,
Jormunrekkr, flung into hot flames.

Then growled the man powerful in magic,
The mailcoated warrior, as a bear would growl:
Stone the men, since spears won't bite,
Neither edges nor iron, Jonakr's sons.(430)

We will see other examples of the Goths prominently mentioned
in other Viking sagas when we deal separately with The Poetic
Edda. The crucial importance of these mentions of the Goths in the
Viking sagas will be made plain below.

The Goths lived in Saka territory in what is now South Russia
and Ukraine during two centuries. No doubt the Kingdom of
Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the *Amal*

(812)

(or *Amalung*) on the banks of the Dnieper, with Olbia as its
capital, included many Sakas; as we have seen, one of his titles
was "King of Germans and Scythians". Jordanes says that some

compared Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr* the *Amal* or *Amalung*) with Alexander the Great because he was the conqueror of all Germanic and Scythian (Saka) peoples from the Black Sea to the Baltic.(431-432-433). Taking the above into account plus the fact that the Goths in their great migration towards the Roman Empire were fleeing from the Huns, it may be supposed that a considerable number of Sakas were included among the Goths. St. Ambrose, cited by Carlos Alonso del Real, says:

"The Huns attacked the Alans and the Alans attacked the Goths and the Goths attacked the Taifali and the Sarmatians".(434)

Note the impression of a confused flight of Goths and Sakas from the Hun invasion. In such circumstances it is inevitable that peoples of similar culture and physical type, such as the Goths and the Sakas, would intermingle a great deal. Note also that the Goths lived between the Alans on the East and the Sarmatians on the West, both of whom were Saka peoples, and apparently had lived thus for two centuries. Who can doubt that many Sakas accompanied the Goths in their great migration toward the West? Who can doubt that the Goths themselves were profoundly Iranized?

Says Lucien Musset:

"These Germans (the Goths) lived in symbiosis with the Iranians... in the 4th Century AD appear proofs of marriages between Alans and Goths. The Iranians, who had a civilization more advanced and in particular better adapted to an environment to which the Germans
(813)

were strangers, passed (to these Germans) many cultural elements: combat on horseback, costumes (the fur garb of the Gothic kings appears to be of Iranian type) and especially the famous "art of the steppes" whose roots are Sarmatian and Sassanian".(435)

Says Mikhail Ivanovich Rostovtzeff:

"What is extremely important, is the out of all these elements the Sarmatians created a peculiar culture and in particular an original and characteristic style of art. I refer to the renaissance of the Scythian animal style, which combined with the use of precious stones and enamel, led to the formation in the Russian (and Ukrainian) Steppes, of the polychrome style of jewelry which was adopted by the Goths and is wrongly called Gothic. The style is not Gothic at all: it is Iranian - if you like, Sarmatian. And it was not the Goths but the Sarmatians who introduced it into Central and Southern Europe." (436)

Mr. Rostovtzeff continues:

"(In the 4th century AD, when the Goths ruled the Russian and Ukrainian Steppes) in the nature of the tomb furniture, these finds do not differ from the 3rd
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century AD (pre-Gothic Sarmatian) finds. There are the same funerary crowns, with gold medallions taken from Roman and (Cimmerian) Bosphoran (note: the "Cimmerian Bosphorus" refers to the strait between the Crimean Peninsula and the Taman Peninsula) coins; the same solid gold torques, terminating in the heads of fantastic animals, eared and fanged, with a long squarish snout; the same custom of burying horse trappings with the dead; and so forth. But there are novelties both in the character and the decoration of the objects. The shapes of the arms, especially of the swords, are new: new arms are introduced, such as the shield with egg-shaped boss. The fibulae are more numerous, larger, more massive and more complicated: the types remain the same, but the forms are exaggerated. Lastly, in the system of decoration, the predominant process is the diversification of the surface by means of garnets cut to geometric shapes and surrounded by golden cloisons: although the older practice is by no means abandoned, that of stones inlaid in hollows and surrounded by a wire in pseudo-granulation. It cannot be doubted that a new wave has
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spread over the almost wholly Sarmatian culture of Panticapaeum (Kerch). This was unquestionably the (partly) Germanic (really polyethnic), the Gothic wave. What did it bring with it?

The introduction of the new arms, and the modification of the old, were certainly due to the military and conquering spirit of the new-comers. I will not deny that they brought with them the new varieties of fibula, which they had developed

elsewhere, out of the same type, however, as was current at Panticapaeum (Kerch), the tendril fibula. Nevertheless, these new forms of fibula were now deeply influenced by Sarmatian art. I would instance the (re)introduction of the animal style in the ornamentation - the use of birds' heads, the lion fibula from Szilagy-Somlyo (Hungary), and so forth; and the constant occurrence of fibulae in the shape of animals, such as were widespread in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. But I see no novelty in the technical processes which were employed in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus before their (the Goths') arrival: embossing, false filigree, cloisonne. They (the Goths) also appropriated the polychrome style of decoration with all its rules. Their (the Goths') predilection for the garnet is nothing new. Before their (the Goths') time, the garnet was the most popular of precious stones with the Sarmatians, no doubt because it was the cheapest and the easiest to work. Lastly, the development of the cloisonne

combined with cut garnets was merely the natural outcome of principles which had been observed in the (Cimmerian) Bosphorus long before the arrival of the Goths: witness the Maikop belt. It must also be noted that the 4th century style of jewelry at Panticapaeum (Kerch) was not greatly affected by the animal style: we said the same about the western branch of the polychromatic style as a whole, the branch of the Kuban valley and the (Cimmerian) Bosphoran Kingdom.

The 4th century AD finds just mentioned are by no means isolated. We have several of them, and some later ones as well. They are not confined to Kerch; like the Sarmatian art of the previous age, they are spread all over the Russian (and Ukrainian) steppes. I may cite the finds, published by Tolstoy and Kondakov in the Antiquities of South Russia, from Chulek near Taganrog in the region of the Don, from Kudinetov in the Tersk province in the Northern Caucasus, the great fibula from Nezhin in the district of Chernigov; and the excavations, unknown to these writers, in the cemetery of Suuk Su near Gurzuf in the southern Crimea. The Gotho-Sarmatian civilization, therefore, developed

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uninterruptedly in South Russia (and Ukraine) and covered the same area as the Sarmatian."(437)

In another place Musset says:

"The Goths collected remnants of the Bastarni (who had lived intermixed with the Sarmatians since the 3rd Century BC) and the Sciri and accepted a strong influence from the Iranian ancient Iranian occupants of

the region. The Goths became semi-nomad horsemen, adopted the coat-of-mail and - at least their kings - the Iranian garb, so thoroughly and successfully that the Greco-Roman writers frequently confuse them with the Scythians or take the Alans to be one of their ramifications".(438)

Themistius, a fourth century Roman orator, philosopher and politician, repeatedly identifies the Goths with the Scythians.(439) Themistius was familiar with the name "Goth"(440), and speaks of the Germans on the Rhine Frontier.(441) Obviously, Themistius considered the Goths to be "Scythians" i.e., Sakas, rather than Germans. St. Isidore of Seville believed the Goths to be of Scythian origin.(442)

Roman sources speak of the Goths as wearing "Scythian furs". (443) Cassiodorus laments that Josephus Flavius had nothing to say of the Goths except that their name and origin identified them as Scythians.(444) Herodotus speaks of the "Royal Scythians": the noble Visigothic clan of the *Balthi*, Royal Dynasty of the Visigoths of Spain, was considered to be the descendants of the "Royal Clan of the Scythians", in this case probably the Royal Clan of the Sarmatians, or, even more probably, the Alans. (445)

There is a legend that king Filimer expelled the witches, called *haliurunnae* in Gothic, from among the Goths and Alans, whereupon they mated with the evil spirits of the steppe and gave

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birth to the Huns (446). To a Goth or an Alan who spoke Gothic, may have seemed obvious that "Hun" is a contraction of *haliurunnae*.

Of course, hostility toward "witchcraft" or "black magic" is very typical of Druids, Magi and Brahmins. There are mentions of

something which moderns refer to as "Shamanism" among the Sakas of the Black Sea area.(447) The term *shaman* or *Shahman* is very vague, being applied to the most diverse peoples, often no doubt somewhat indiscriminately. As an example of (probably intentional in this case) wrong application of a name, the Soviets refer to the Muslim Sufis as "shamans". What the term *shaman* could mean in reference to an Iranian people such as the Sakas is not at all clear. As is well known, the word "shaman" comes from the language of the Tungus, a Siberian people of Turko-Mongol speech. Yet if one looks at the word, it appears strangely Indo-European. The *sha* or *shah* reminds one of the Persian *shah* and the Sanskrit *Kshatriyya*, which refers to the warrior caste. The stem *man* appears in many Indo-European languages, meaning "man" or "mind". Some Merriam-Webster dictionaries suggest a connection between the Tungusic word "shaman" and the Sanskrit *sramana*, which means "beggar monk". This is all very complex, and a discussion of it would lead us too far afield.

Herodotus also says that among the Scythians a war god was worshipped in the form of a sword stuck into the ground. This same custom was found among the Goths after their arrival on the shores of the Black Sea (448), in particular the Visigoths. Says

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Herwig Wolfram:

"Hostile brothers may mock each other in this way, but the threatened neighbor uses stronger terms. To the Vandals the Goths seemed like *trouloi*, trolls, as the Scandinavians still call demons and monsters of the other world. But there are still indeed mentioned in Scandinavia Gautigoths and Greutingi, who lived "like animals in carved out, castlelike rocks" (Jordanes).

This is an odd agreement between two sources as different as Cassiodorus and Olympiodorus, who are separated by more than a century.

To be sure, the name of the Greutingi, which originated in southern Russia (and Ukraine) came to Scandinavia only as part of a (Viking) saga; for this is the Origo Gotica, if a suggested emendation is correct. This would contain the first evidence, The original meaning of the name-pair Tervingi-Greutingi lived on in the (Viking saga) Hervarasaga and its concluding section, the "Battle of the Goths and the Huns". The Gothic land is called Tyrfingr (the Tervingian), the same name that is given to the mythical hereditary sword of the Goths. This presupposes that the Scythian Ares-Mars, who was seen as the incarnation of the people and the land and who also manifested himself in the shape of a sword, had been accepted as a Gothic god. And in fact this sort of acculturation can be demonstrated only for the Tervingi

(i.e., the Visigoths). Now the "Battle of the Goths and the Huns" also knows the Greutingi name, but here it does not refer to an object or a land, but instead to the Greutingi Warrior", a demonic-divine person, names Odin (the Viking war god) himself. Thus the Nordic epic poetry preserved the geographically determined names of the Goths with remarkable accuracy. The Greutingi survived as the surname of the Ansic Gaut, who is at the head of the Amal (or Amalung) (name of the noble clan or dynasty of the Ostrogoths) geneology, while the Tervingian (name) designated the land and the sword, the objects which embodied the Scythian and from the fourth century (AD) the Gothic Ares-Mars."(449)

However, some Scandinavianists believe that the names *Tervingi* and *Greutingi* in fact date back to the time when the Goths yet lived in what is today southern and central Sweden, in other words, long before they had arrived at he north shores of

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the Black Sea. Josef Svennung believes that the *Tervingi* were originally the Scandinavian "ox people"(450) while the *Greutingi* were originally the "rock people" of what is today southern Sweden, who lived to the west of the Gauts.(451) The above is yet more evidence of the Scandinavian origin of the Goths.

Note that the Tervingi are the Visigoths, who came to Spain and whom Ramon Menendez Pidal believed to be the originators of the Castilian epic. In other words, the Visigoths were very strongly accultured to the Iranian, i.e., Sarmatian-Alanic milieu of the Russian and Ukrainian steppes to the north of the Black Sea. Also note the similarity between this and the supposed Alanic origin of the Arthurian *sword in the stone*, as we have noted earlier. Many have noted that in the Cantar de Mio Cid, *Colada* and *Tizona*, the two swords of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "el Cid Campeador", are virtually personages or personalities in their own right.

There is another interesting parallel between the Alans and the Goths. The popular etymology of "Ostrogoth" as Eastern Goth and "Visigoth" as Western Goth is not really acceptable nor tenable. "Ostrogotha" first appears in Gothic legend as one of the descendants of Amal, founder of the noble Gothic clan of the same name. Specifically, Ostrogotha is the son of Hisarna. If, as we said before, Hisarna represents the Celtic element, then Ostrogotha would seem to represent the Saka element.(452)

Certainly the use of Ostrogotha as a personal name would seem to

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preclude its meaning "Eastern Goth". Many believe that the "Ostro" of Ostrogoth is derived from the stem *austra*, which means "resplendant" or "brilliant", and therefore "Ostrogoth" means "Brilliant Goth"(453-454). *Hreidgotha*, the epic name for the subjects of Ermanrick (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal or Amalung, also seems to mean "Splendid

Goth".(455)

Although I have never read it anywhere, it seems to me possible and logical that the *Vis* of "Visigoth" may be related to the German *weiss*, which means "white". There is an Iranian stem, *vius*, which means "to flash" (Avestan niminative singular feminine participle *Viusaiti*). *Viusaiti* appears in the Avesta as an adjective of "dawn".(456) There is also the Parthian personal name Vis, name of one of the principal protagonists of the Parthian romance Vis and Ramin, of which we have spoken before, because it has the same plot as the Celtic romances Tristan and Isolt, Deirdre of the Sorrows and The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Grianne. The Vedic stem *Vas* means "to shine", from which comes the name of the Vedic goddess of the dawn *Usas* (457). One may therefore postulate that the "Vis" of Visigoth is the result of the fusion of a Germanic and an Iranian stem, both going back to a common Indo-European origin, or said "Vis" may be purely Iranian.

Josef Svennung attributes the origin of the "Vis" of "Visigoth" to the name of the river *Vesi* in Sweden.(458) Since we are dealing with places far distant one from the other, and of

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long periods of time, there is no necessary contradiction here. The name *Vesi* may have been used by the Tervingi or Visigoths in Scandinavia, and later, on the shores of the Black Sea, when the river *Vesi* had been forgotten, said name may have taken on another meaning, phonologically similar, but with a different signification. Thus, the name of the forgotten river *Vesi* paved

the way for the adoption of a name similar in sound, but totally different in meaning.

We now have "The Brilliant Goths" and the "The White, Flashing Goths". One of the tribes or clans of the Sarmatians was the *Aorsi*, whose name is derived from the Iranian *ors* or *uors*, which means "white".(459) A branch of the Alans was called Roxalani, which appears to mean "The Brilliant Alans".(460) Chronologically it would be very logical if the Roxalani were the Sakaraucai migrated to the West. Sakaraucai seems to mean "The Brilliant Sakas", as was said before. Names which have to do with light or brilliance are characteristic of Iranian peoples, and the Avesta uses the allegory "light = good, darkness = evil" a great deal. Mithra was, among other things, a god of light.(461) The above is especially interesting if one takes into account that the names "Ostrogoth" and "Visigoth" are later than the arrival of the Goths on the shores of the Black Sea, when they came into close contact with the Iranians. Said names appear to be no older than the 3rd Century AD or the beginning of the 4th Century AD. When the Goths first appear in history, the Visigoths were called *Tervingi* and the Ostrogoths *Greutingi*.(462) Peter Heather states

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that the name "Visigoth" is first used in 390 AD, while "Ostrogoth", as a tribal rather than a personal name, is first used in 399 AD.

Peter Heather very clearly states that the names "Visigoth" and "Ostrogoth" do not, repeat not mean "West Goth" and "East Goth".(463) In conclusion, the "Vis" of "Visigoth" is related to

the German "Weiss", which means "white" and also to the Iranian "Vius", which means "to flash". "Visigoth" would therefore be a partially (NOT wholly) Germanized version of the Sarmatian tribal name *Aorsi* derived from the Iranian *ors* or *uors* which also means "white", while "Ostrogoth" would be a Germanized version, indeed a translation, of "Roxalani" or "Sakaraucai". So, the Goths took their very names from the Iranians.

As we have said, from the Sakas the Goths took their art.

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Says T.D. Kendrick:

"The course of events in Scandinavia in the first two centuries of the Roman Iron Age is thus accounted for. Indeed, in the two succeeding centuries influence from another quarter can be discerned as a new and important factor in the development of Scandinavian culture. This novel culture-influence is to be explained not by the advent, or proximity, of a new folk, but by the migration of a section of the Scandinavian peoples who, when the emigrants were finally established at the far-off terminus of their wanderings, maintained a close connection with their homeland along the route of their migration, and thus transmitted to the north many of the characteristics of the peculiar civilization that was the result of their sojourn in strange lands. These emigrants were the Goths. They had begun to leave their northern home (Gotland in Sweden, rather than the island of Gotland) towards the close of the last century before Christ, and after sojourning in the land

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around the (river) Weichsel mouth they had moved in the second century up this great river and finally made their way to the steppes bordering the Black Sea between the Don and the Danube. At least some of their number are known to have arrived here by AD 214, for in that year they came into collision with the Romans on the borders of Dacia. ...

...But it is not the Roman influence upon the Goths that matters here, nor even the fact, and it is of greater importance, that in their new homes these people came into contact with the enfeebled civilization of the Greek colonies on the Black Sea coast. For the event of chief interest is that the Goths lived side by side in

south Russia (and Ukraine) with the Sarmatians, a group of oriental nomads of Iranian stock and akin to the inhabitants of northern Persia. These Sarmatians, who were earlier immigrants into south Russia (and Ukraine) than the Goths, had wrested their lands from the Scythians who had preceded them in this movement westwards, and who were likewise, it is now believed, Iranians. From them the Sarmatians had acquired a distinctive art, peculiar as regards the representation of animal forms and as regards the style of jewelry affected, both this animal form and this jewelry being derived from the arts of the Persians, the Assyrians and the Egyptians (and, most obviously of all, the Celts). The Goths, soon after their arrival on the Black Sea, acquired from the Sarmatians a taste for their gay multi-colored personal ornaments; in fact, this jewelry, distinguished by flashy mosaics of semi-precious stones set in cells, and the bold use of large gems, is sometimes called "Gothic", the reason being that as a result of its adoption by the Goths it was destined to become a widespread and notable fashion throughout barbarian Europe.

There is, then, the possibility of a quasi-oriental influence acting upon Scandinavia by way of the (river) Weichsel trade-route and through the agency of the Goths. Such an influence can, in fact, be detected in the ready adoption of the "Gothic" plyphrome jewelry, for this seems to have reached the north directly from the Goths by way of the (river) Weichsel route, rather than from Hungary at a later period after the Gothic invasion of the Empire. An effect of such an influence upon small personal ornaments of this kind may seem, indeed, to be unimportant, but actually it is of considerable interest because Viking art itself is thought by some to owe not a little to Orientalizing tastes."(465)

Note that Kendrick affirms that the Goths on the shores of

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the Black Sea maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland. We shall encounter many more proofs of this.

They also took their arms and their manner of waging war. To prove this it is sufficient to compare Frye's description of the arms of the Sarmatians with any description of the arms of the Goths and Alans who destroyed the legions of the Emperor Valens at

Adrianople (9 August, 378).

There are abundant proofs of intermarriage between Goths and Alans, including the noblest of Gothic clans. Strabo, of the Amal or Amalung clan and rival of Theoderic or Thiudreiks, (Old Norse: *Thjodrek*) was the brother-in-law of Aspar the Alan (466). The *Andela-Andagis* family of the Amal clan was half Alan by blood (467). Jordanes mentions an Alan named *Safrax* as being a Gothic nobleman (468). If anything, intermarriage between Goths and Alans must have been even more frequent among the common people than among the high nobility. We have already mentioned that the *Balthi*, Royal Clan of the Visigoths, claimed a Saka origin. Procopius of Caesarea refers to the Alans as Goths (469) as many other writers refer to the Goths as Scythians. One of the leaders of the Visigothic army which destroyed the legions of the Roman Emperor Valens at Adrianople bore the Iranian name "Saphrax". (470)

Says Jordanes:

"Alaric (I) (Alareiks I, of the *Balthi* clan or dynasty, king of the Visigoths) was cast down by this reverse and, while deliberating what he should do, was suddenly overtaken by an untimely death and departed (824)

from human cares, his people mourned for him with utmost affection. Then turning from its course the river Busento near the city of Cosenza (Italy) - for the stream flows with its wholesome waters from the foot of a mountain near that city - they led a band of captives into the midst of its bed to dig out a place for his (Alaric the *Balthi*'s) grave. In the depths of this pit they buried Alaric, together with many treasures, and then turned the waters back into their channel." (471)

Said the German romantic poet August von Platen (1796-1835) in his

poem "Das Grab in Busento" (The Grave in the Busento):

*Nachtlicht am Busento lispeln
Bei Cosenza dumpfe Lieder.
Aus den Wassern schalit es Antwort
Und in Wirbeln klingt es wieder.*

Mournful songs whisper in the night
Near Cosenza, along Busento's banks.
The waters murmur their answer,
And the whirlpools resound with singing.

As Wolfram says:

"The entire story of Alaric's mysterious grave in the Busento, which has occupied the imagination of treasure hunters to this very day, is the stuff of legend and not historical fact. The origin of the saga goes back to the region of the lower Danube and the Black Sea, thus reflecting the acculturation of the Goths to their Scythian homeland."(472)

In effect, the Goths were Sakas by culture, Iranians more than Germans. A study of the Gothic language by someone well versed in Iranian philology might reveal Saka elements. The Gothic word *spatha*, i.e., "sword" (from whence the Spanish *espada* may be related to the Old Persian *spada*, which means "army".(473) The "th" (aspirated "t") nearly at the end of the word certainly appears to be more Saka than Germanic. This is particularly reasonable considering that the Gothic sword is

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certainly of Sarmatian origin.(474)

As we said before, we do not know as much of the languages of the Sakas as we would like, and, apparently, no expert in Iranian philology has ever made a systematic study of the vocabulary of the Gothic language. However, there is at least one Gothic word which is obviously of Saka origin. I refer to *sarwa*, meaning "coat-of-mail", which is related to an Avestan word (475). The

long tunic of the Gothic troops, both foot and horse, is derived from the caftan of the mounted peoples of Central Asia, while the Persian type of armor was adopted by the Gothic elite (476).

Say V. Vuksic & Z. Grbasic:

"The arrival of the Goths on the shores of the Black Sea and their alliances with the Sarmatians and Alans resulted in pooling of the military experiences of the northern peoples and the ancient Iranian nomad civilization." (477)

We have already spoken of the great Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*, of the clan or dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) "King of Germans and Scythians" and his kingdom on the shores of the Black Sea. Of the *Amal* or *Amalung* dynasty, Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) was of the 6th generation from *Amal*, 5th from the apparently Celtic or half-Celtic *Hisarna*, 4th from *Ostrogotha*, which name, as we have seen is a translation of "Roxalani" or "Sakaraucai". Thus, even before the time of Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Iranization or Saka'ization of the Goths was

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nearly complete; from the Sakas the Goths had adopted the armored lancer (forerunner of the medieval mounted knight) who fought on horseback, the practice of falconry, Shamanism (though, as we said before, the meaning of "Shamanism" in this context is far from clear), the adoption of the Sassanian royal vestments by the kings of the *Amal* or *Amalung* lineage.

In the words of Wolfram:

"Under its (the *Amal* or *Amalung* kingship) the

Scythianization of the Goths is completed: the armored lancer, who covered incredible distances and fought on horseback; the practice of hunting with falcons; shamanism; the adoption by the Amali of the Sassanian royal vestments; in short the life-style of the Iranian-Turkish peoples of the steppe became part of the Gothic world."(478)

The heterogenous nature of the population of Ermanaric's (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) kingdom has already been mentioned. Nor did the later migrations change this. Even after the formation of a Gothic kingdom on Roman territory,

"Gothic polyethnicity, which can already be attested in Ermanaric's (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) kingdom, remained unchanged. Finns, Slavs, Antes, Heruli, Alans, Huns, Sarmatians and no doubt also Aesti are mentioned."(479)

Of these, the *Antes*, Alans and Sarmatians are Sakas, the *Heruli* are Germanic, and the *Aesti* are Balts.

Archaeology as well as literary sources demonstrate the the strong Saka or Iranian influences among the Goths. In Gothic graveyards in what is now Rumania and Ukraine are found such characteristically Sarmatian features as cranial deformation, the

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use of a platform on which grave-goods were placed and jewelry in the style of the Saka or Iranian steppe cultures.(480)

It was not only the royal vestments that the Amal or Amalung borrowed from the Sassanians.

At the bloody battle of Catalaunian Fields the Visigoths under the leadership of their heroic king Theoderic or Theudereiks the Balts were allied with the Alans, Sarmatians and other diverse Germanic, Saka and Celtic peoples as well as with the Romans. On

the other hand, their Ostrogothic cousins found themselves in the somewhat humiliating position of being vassals of the Huns, whom the Goths and Alans believed to be the offspring of Gothic and Alanic witches (*haliurunnae*) who were expelled from their tribes and mated with the evil spirits of the steppe. Says Jordanes:

"Amid them (the vassals of the Huns) was conspicuous the army of the Ostrogoths under the leadership of the brothers Valamir, Thiudimir and Vidimir, nobler even than the king they served (Attila the Hun), for the charisma of the family of the Amal (or Amalung) rendered them Glorious." (481)

Ermanric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) by his evil conduct lost the royal charisma of the Amal (or Amalung) clan or dynasty, and also lost his life.

Says Jordanes:

"Now Ermanric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal or Amalung, king of the Goths, was the conqueror of many tribes, as we have said above, yet while he was deliberating on this invasion of the Huns, the treacherous tribe of the *Rosomoni* (Celts?, Germans?, Slavs?, Balts? Sakas?), who at that time were among those who owed him their homage, took this chance to catch him unawares. For when the king had given orders so that a certain woman of the tribe I
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have mentioned, Suinhilda by name (a Germanic sounding name), should be bound to wild horses and torn apart by driving them at full speed in opposite directions (for he was roused to fury by her husband's treachery to him), her brothers Sarus (this name sounds Iranian: Persian "sar" = "head") and Ammius (?) came to avenge their sister's death and plunged a sword into Hermanric's (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal or Amalung's) side. Enfeebled by this blow, he dragged out a miserable existence in bodily weakness. Balamber, king of the Huns, took advantage of his ill health to move an army into the country of the Ostrogoths." (482)

As we shall see, especially in the Viking sagas, there are

other versions of the fall of Ermanric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*: Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal or Amalung and the fall of his kingdom. Mierow believed that Jordanes' account is probably part of some Gothic saga.(483)

Ermanric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*: Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal or Amalung left behind a small son, who, in spite of his tender age, "embodied the Amal (or Amalung) charisma". In spite of their victory in Adrianople and conquest of Pannonia, Alatheus the Goth and Saphrax the Alan refused to declare themselves kings because they did not possess the Amal charisma, but remained loyal retainers of the Amal, even though the Amal heir was yet a child.(484) This "royal charisma" is most definitely NOT Germanic. It is quite obviously of Persian derivation, identical to that which is called *Khvarenah* in Avestan, *Farrah* or *Khvarrah* in Pahlavi, and *Farr* in Persian, with which we shall deal later in greater detail. Thus, the Amal or Amalung borrowed both the royal vestments and the concept of the "royal charisma" from the

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Sassanians.

The Avestan concept of *Khvarenah* (Pahlavi: *Farrah* or *Khvarrah*: Persian: *Farr*) is defined thusly by M. Schwartz:

"*Khvarenah* combines the concept of fortune and glory. As a divinity it represents the charisma of kingship, the paradigm for which was the *Kavian* (Kayanian) dynasty. In effect, the *Khvarenah* is the destiny of the land of Iran. This may explain why the *Khvarenah* is celebrated in Yasht 19 ("The Earth Yasht"), together with the mountains and land. It can be lost when a ruler sins, as was the case with Yima, from whom the *Khvarenah* departed in the form of a falcon, but it is then kept in custody by various divinities and heroes. It is *akhvareta*, i.e., it cannot

be seized by force, as is illustrated by the vain attempts to do so by the Turanian rogue *Frangrasyan*. In the latter tale the *Khvarenah* has an interesting material aspect; in the process of escape, it creates effluences from the sea *Vourukasha* (*Yasht XIX:56, LIX:62*)."(485)

Ehsan Yarshater elaborates:

"Variously translated as Divine Fortune, Grace or Glory, the *Khvarenah* (Pahlavi: *Farrah* or *Khvarrah*: Persian: *Farr*) was conceived as a blessing from above, usually by *Ashi*, the goddess of wealth and recompense. Originally, it appears to have meant the good things given to mortals by the gods, but the concept was hypostasized as a deity. As a divine gift, it accompanied men and women favored by the gods, and it afforded them power and prosperity. The *Zamyad Yasht*, although dedicated to the earth, in fact celebrates the *Khvarenah* as possessed by gods, prophets and great heroes of Iranian myth and legend.

The *Khvarenah* is one of the most enduring concepts of Iranian tradition and figures prominently in the national history. No king could rule successfully without it. It was only by virtue of the *Khvarenah* that the mighty achieved fame and glory. Its presence brought success and symbolized legitimacy. Its absence changed men's fortunes, indicating divine disfavor and often auguring imminent fall or defeat. The *Khvarenah* was frequently conceived as an image, such as a ray of light or a bird. As the Fortune of the Iranian kings, it was called the Royal Glory (*Kavaem Khvarenah*), and became identified with the Glory of Iran (*Airyanem* (830)

Khvarenah). It was also sought by hostile forces and the enemies of the Aryan people as a guarantee of success. When Yima succumbed to the Lie, the *Khvarenah* departed from him in the form of a falcon and passed into the possession of Mithra. *Azhi Dahaka* attempted to capture it, but it was saved by the Fire and escaped into the mythical *Vourukasha* Sea, whereupon it fell under the protection of the god *Apam Napat*. *Afrasiyab* plunged into the water three times, striving to capture it, but each time he failed.

The *Khvarenah* must have had a special place in the accounts of the kings in the *Khvady Namag*, as an expression of divine will or favour. This is often reflected in Islamic sources, particularly in the *Shah Namah*, where many rises and falls of kings are explained in terms of the presence or absence of the *Khvarenah*. Yima is defeated by Dahak when the *Khvarenah* departs from him. Tus and Gustahm, sons of king Naudhar, are barred from kingship on the grounds that they lacked the

Khvarenah. Kai Kavād is hailed as a king precisely because he is endowed with this gift." (486)

As we shall have numerous occasions to mention *Fravashis*, it might be appropriate to give M. Schwartz's definition of them:

"*Fravashis* are both (1) the spirits of the departed righteous, such as we find in cults of heroes and ancestors; & (2) the pre-existent doubles of all living things (which modern theosophists call astral bodies), including even Ahura Mazda. **The Fravashis support and sustain the entire world. Very much like the (Viking) Valkyries, they are described as armed females flying through the air on their mounts, destroying demonic forces.** The annual festival of the Fravashis was known as *Hamaspathmaedaya*: houses were carefully cleaned and otherwise made ready for the coming of the spirits, who were received with ritual offerings of food and clothing." (487)

Note that the Fravashis, like the Viking *Valkyries*, and also the Slavic *vily*, are described as "battle Maidens".

As we have said before, Iranian elements, both Saka and Persian, are abundant in Celtic epics; which of these elements are part of a cultural stock common to Celts and Iranians and which

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are the result of Iranian influences is a subject of great polemics in the field of Indo-European philology. Iranian elements are quite rare in Germanic epics, though not completely absent.

Later we shall speak of the *chanson de geste* Hildebrand, now in Old High German (*Althochdeutsch*), but evidently translated from another Germanic language, either Gothic or Old Norse. There is no doubt that Hildebrand was originally a Gothic *chanson de geste*, and that the version in Old High German which we have today was originally in Gothic, and passed to Old High German either directly from the original Gothic or else by way of Old Norse. The episode of Hildebrand and Hadubrand is virtually identical to the

episode of "Sohrab and Rostam" in the Shah Namah. The Valkyries appear in the Viking Sagas, and are no doubt a Saka influence, as we have noted, once again by way of the Goths. While they lived on the shores of the Black Sea, the Goths, commanding the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea trade route, maintained contact with their ancestral Scandinavian homeland, as we have seen.

Says Ehsan Yarshater of the **Fravashis**:

"Like the Indian *Pitaras*, the **Fravashis** were the souls of the departed, and their cult may have had its origin in a form of ancestor worship. Bailey has suggested an etymology which would indicate that they were originally the departed spirits of heroes and that later the concept was enlarged to include all mortals - dead, born and unborn. The **Fravashis** were conceived as invisible, powerful beings who could assist their kinsmen and ward off harm from them if properly commemorated with offerings and prayers in the Farvardin Yasht, which is dedicated to them, only the Fravashis of the righteous are invoked."(488)

Says the Mihir Yast or Yast X, of The Avesta, which Yast or
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chapter is commonly known as The Avestan Hymn to Mithra, concerning the **Fravashis**:

"Grass-land magnate Mithra we worship, whose words are correst, who is challenging, has a thousand ears, is well built, has ten thousand eyes, is tall, has a side outlook, is strong, sleepless, everwaking, whose excorts are good Ashi, Bounty in her fast carriage, strong manly Valor, the strong Kavyan Fortune, the strong Firmament which obeys its own law, the strong likeness of Ahura's creature, the strong **Fravashis** of the owners of Truth, and he who shares place and time with many Truth-owning worshippers of Mazda. On account of his splendor and fortune I will audibly worship grass-land magnate Mithra with libations. Grass-land magnate Mithra we worship, since it is he who bestows peaceful and comfortable dwellings on the Iranian (or **Aryan**) countries. May he join us for assistance, may he join us for the granting of spaciousness, may he join us for support, may he join us for mercy, may he join us for therapy, may he join us for ability to defeat the enemy, may he join us for a comfortable existence, may

he jin us for ownership of Truth, he who is strong and victorious, he whom the whole material world must needs worship, pray to, and refrain from deceiving, grass-land magnate Mithra. This powerful strong god Mithra, strongest is the world os creatures, I will worship with libations. I will cultiuvate him with praise and reverence, worship him with audible prayer, with libations, Mithra thegrass-land magnate.

We worship grass-land magnate Mithra with Haoma-containing milk and Barsman twigs, with skill of tongue and magic eord, with speech and action and libations, and with correctly uttered words.

We worship the male and female Entities in the worship of whom Ahura Mazdah knows what is best according to Truth."(489)

"...whose escort are good Ashi, Bounty in her fast carriage, strong many Valor, the strong Kavyan Fortune, the strong Firmament which obeys its own law, the strong Likeness of Ahura's creatures, the strong **Fravashis** of the the owners of Truth, and he (viz. Nairyosangha) who shares place and time aith many Truth-owning worshippers of Mazdah."(490)

"...on his right flies god Saosha, the friend of Ashi, on his left flies tall Rashnu the strong; all around him fly the waters and plants, and the **Fravashis** of the owners of Truth."(491)

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Below are some references to the **Fravashis** found in Ilya Gershevitch's commentary of his translation of The Avestan Hymn to Mithra:

"As pointed out in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, XVII, 483, the later *Avesta* contains a passage (*Yast* 16.7) which is almost a commentary on Xerxes' statement:

"The radiant quarters of Asha we worship, where dwell the souls of the dead, the **Fravashis** of the *ashavan-s*: the Best Existence of the *ashavan-s* we worship, which is light and affording all comforts.' *Vahista-ahu-*, the 'Best Existence', is one of the Avestan idioms for 'Paradise'; to it go back the Sogdian *wyshtm'x*, Middle Persian *whysht(w)*, New Persian *bihisht*, all meaning 'Paradise'. The idea that the Paradise is the seat of Asha must be of Indo-Iranian origin, since in the Vedas the seat of *Rta'* is the abode of the gods, occupying the highest position in the third sky, beyond the visible world.

The inhabitants of the 'quarters of Asha', the souls of the dead, are called *artavan-s* by Xerxes, but

Fravashis of *ashavan-s* by the author of Yast 16.7. This is at first sight surprising, because there are, according to Visprat 11.7, **Fravashis** of deceased *ashavan-s*, of living *ashavan-s*, and of men not yet born.' All these **Fravashis** are themselves in Visprat 11.7 said to be *ashavan* (*ashaonibyō Fravashibyō*) If there are **Fravashis** of living *ashavan-s* the wording *ya ashaunam Fravashiyo* in Yast 16.7 cannot be meant as an alternative description of *iristanam urvano*, but must be a restrictive qualification; only such souls of the dead as are **Fravashis** of *ashavan-s*. Actually there are no **Fravashis** except those of *ashavan-s*, See Yast 104, and we may take it for granted that every *Ashavan*, dead or alive, has his **Fravashi**. The Avesta normally speaks of *ashaunam fravashayo* without distinguishing between live and dead *ashvan-s*. So it happens that we are not told where the home (see Yast 13.49) of the **Fravashis** of live *ashavan-s* is to be found. It does not seem far-fetched to assume that it, too, is in the 'radiant quarters of Asha'.

We may now say that the apparent difference between Xerxes' use of *artavan* to denote a blessed dead, and the Avestan practice of applying the term *ashavan* also (and mainly) to righteous men alive, corresponds to the Avestan distinction between **Fravashis** of dead and live *ashavan-s*. The latter distinction is real enough, for in Yast 13.17 we are

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told that the **Fravashis** of men alive that are *ashavan* are stronger than the **Fravashis** of the dead. In what must have mattered most to a Zoroastrian, the share a man's soul has of Truth, the **Fravashi** of an *ashavan* alive does not appear to be worse off than when he is dead. At all stages, we may take it, she dwells in, or has access to, the 'radiant quarters of Truth'. The Zoroastrian point of view may then be put as follows:

There are, and have been from the beginning, countless **Fravashis** in the other world, who are all, by definition, **Fravashis** of potential (because not yet born) or existing (dead or alive) *ashavan-s*. A man who in the great choice between Truth (*Asha* and Falsehood (*Drug*) has opted for Falsehood remains without a **Fravashi**. He who chooses Truth acquires a **Fravashi**; through her he becomes *ashavan* (as stated in *Vishprat* 11.7), partakes all along of *Asha* in the world above. His 'owning Truth', or having a **Fravashi** who 'owns Truth' (the two amounting to the same thing), is the reward of having chosen Truth and adhering to it. Yet while he is alive the blessings of this reward are only to be discovered in the happiness derived from confidence in the future: he knows that once he sheds his body he will be largely reduced to his **Fravashi**, and as such will gain immediate experience of the 'radiant

dwelling of Asha', the 'best existence' for an ashavan." (492)

Ilya Gershevitch continues. Note that here we find the name **Fravashi** connected with "to choose"; as we shall see, one of the principle functions of the **Valkyries** was "choosers of the slain", as well as battle maidens.

"As I see the situation, there is a contrast between the general smell of humanity (*mashyanam*), and the smell of warriors (*naro*) which is characterized by *verethra-*. The **Fravashis** are distributed everywhere, the wind is sometimes here, sometimes there, blowing from various directions. Those **Fravashis** among whom a whiff of wind carries a smell of *verethra-* recognize by it the warriors, because these are *verethravan(t)-*. Hence, instead of saying 'when among them there blows a wind bearing the smell of men, then they (the **Fravashis**) recognize those who are warriors if it (the wind) smells of (the warriors') *verethra-*', the author could say '...then (those) among whom it (is) *verethra-*smelling recognize (or acknowledge) the warriors'.

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The harshness of the construction lies in the absence of a demonstrative pronoun *ta* which could serve as antecedent to *yahva*. In the oblique, such demonstrative antecedents are often omitted in Avestan; the present extreme case of a suppressed nominative is mitigated by the fact that the subject of the plural *paiti.zanenti* could easily be understood from the preceding sentence in Yast 13.45 (*ya [fravashayo] peretente*). The relative, instead of the hypothetic clause, may be due to the wish to avoid introducing another conjunction beside *yat*. It is true that E. Benveniste thought of forestalling interpretations in which the **Fravashis** are taken as subject of *paiti.zanenti*, by arguing that being goddesses they had no need of wind to identify humans. The point, however, is that because they are goddesses they are able to nalayse smells carried by the wind to an extent denied to human beings.

A word must be added on the (b) sentence of Yast 13.46, which E. Benveniste is scarcely right in connecting closely with what precedes. This sentence to my mind introduces a new trend of thought, which is developed in Yast 13.47, where the subject *yatara* refers to the warriors of each of two countries (as can be seen from the parallel st. 9 of the Mithra Yast, and from the reference to 'countries' at the beginning of Yast 13.48:

warriors normally propitiate the **Fravashis** before engaging in combat; if, however, they belong to two countries at war with each other, then the **Fravashis** lend their support to that side which is first in performing the propitiation.

If the above is the correct interpretation of Yast 13.46, its importance for the definition of *verethra-* will not be missed. Here *verethra-* is no longer an undefined item in an enumeration of qualities: it is singled out as the one quality of warriors whose smell suffices to make them recognizable to the **Fravashis**. Surely the quality selected will be the paramount requisite of a warrior. Is it then likely to be the passive attitude of 'defence, resistance', or even the somewhat more active one of 'warding off, restraining, repelling'? I fone surveys the evidence arrayed by E. Benveniste, one cannot help noticing that the translation 'force de resistance' which he adopts for *verethra-* would be much more convincing if the words 'de resistance' were dropped. There would then be no need to postulate a derivative meaning 'hostility', no need to assume that an otherwise not noticeable semi-passive attitude a 'victoire negative' was considered to be a great virtue of Mithra, Thraetaona, Verethragna, the **Fravashis**, the Manthra Soenta, and Mithra's mace,
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no need to subject the epithet *amae.migna-* to undue pressure, no need to charge the **Fravashis** with a lopsided view of what should constitute a warrior's chief requisite."(493)

E. Benveniste admits that:

"'il arrive que le *verethra-* confere une force suffisante pour aneantir l'effort de l'ennemi. Celui qui est pourvu doit alors triompher'. This, actually, does not only 'happen' here and there: it clearly is the case wherever the context gives an indication of the likely meaning of *verethra-*. 'Mais - E. Benveniste continues - 'on doit se garder de croire que le sens du mot en soit modifie. Il s'agit toujours de la force de resistance. ...' What is the reason for this warning? The more one scrutinizes E. Benveniste's most stimulating discussion, the more one gains the impression that the reason essentially lies in his derivation of *verethra-* from the base *var-* 'to resist'. In these circumstances the temptation becomes irresistible to propose a different etymology which will relieve us of the necessity of imposing on *verethra(van[t])-* an uncongenial definition. A connections with the Latin *valeo*, etc., will not only sanction the meaning of 'strength, strong', which eminently suits the context in each of the cases so far discussed, but will provide us with the last ingredient

we need to complete the description of *verethra-*: *ahmai tanvo drvatatem, ahmai tanvo vazdvare, ahmai tanvo verethrem*, says Yast 68.11, 'to him (you give) soundness of body, to him health of body, to him *verethra-* of body'. What could here fit better than 'physical fitness', *valetudo*?

Considering that the words *valor, valiant*, belong to Latin *valeo* 'to be strong, healthy, physically fit' we can contemplate for *verethra-* a range of meanings, 'physically fitness-strength-valor', with at least as much confidence as E. Benveniste's 'defence-hostility' or Christian Bartholomae's 'attack-victory'. It is true that *verethra-* would thus be separated from the Vedic *vrtra* and the first component of Avestan *verethra-gna-*. But if the two words, though formally identical, do not agree in meaning, there is no need to derive them from the same base. The suffix *-thra-* is common enough to allow for the possibility of its having been added to more than one of the numerous Indo-European **uer/l-* bases.

The conclusion is that Avestan *verethra-* '*valetudo*', and the *verethra* - (= Vedic *vrtra*) contained in *Verethragna* -, are two different words. On

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the meaning of the latter cf. the beginning of this note; if the kind of opposition it denotes consists in mere 'resistance', then the relation of *verethra-* (=Vedic *vrtra*) to Christian Bartholomae's *verethra-* 'shield' will be that of a noun of action to a noun of instrument of one and the same base *var-*, as E. Benveniste assumed. To the base of the Latin *valeo* we should further assign the Avestan *ham.vareti-* (*ham.vereti-*) 'valor', as well as probably the Median [note: in this context, **Median** refers to the **Medes**] masculine name *Fraoptas*, Old Persian *Fravarti-*, which should be kept distinct from the Avestan feminine nouns ***fraoreti-*** (to ***var-*** 'to choose') and ***fravashi-*** (to ***var-*** 'to choose'. [As we shall see, "choosers of the slain" was one of the principal functions of the *Valkyries* (Old Norse: *Valkyrja*, plural: *Valkyjur*) of the Viking sagas.]

"... 'Pact', moreover, takes us too far from the meaning oh *hak'-* 'to follow', of which *haxadra-* is an abstract noun; this obvious etymology makes it clear that the relation here envisaged between the two luminaries is that of mutual 'succession'. "Succession' in the sense of 'line of successors, heirs, descendants' is also the immediately convincing meaning of *hexadra-* in all other passages, and one which satisfactorily accounts for its frequent epithet *daragya-* 'long'. This meaning, which implies a collectivity of successors for each house which is thus to be blessed, also accounts for the use of the plural in Yast 13.30, where the ***Fravashis*** are said to be 'the best to be dwelt with for

long successions'. How suitably the **Fravashis** are invoked in connection with 'succession' can be seen from Yast 10.3, where they 'give noble progeny':

"To those who are not false to the contract grass-land magnate Mithra grants possession of fast horses, while Fire (the son of) Ahura Mazda, grants them the straightest path, and the good, strong, incremental **Fravashis** of the owners of Truth give them noble progeny." ...

"...The same explanation can be applied to Yast 17.18: because the **Fravashis** have protective functions which partly coincide with those of the **ratu-s** called *umanya*, *visya*, etc., they are, as a figure of speech, addressed by the titles of these *ratu-s*; since the titles happen to be substantivized adjectives, they are capable of taking feminine endings when applied to the **Fravashis**.

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There is nothing bewildering in Mithra or the **Fravashis** being thought of as holding functions which are normally the prerogative of men; the metaphor is the same as when Mithra is addressed as *dainghupati-* or Haoma as *pati-* of the house, the clan, the tribe, and the country." (494)

Says Carol Rose:

"These (the **Fravashis**) are a group of spirits in the Zoroastrian religion of Iran. The **Fravashis**, whose name means *She Who Confesses* or *She who is chosen*, are the Guardian Angels assigned to each human at birth to accompany them throughout their lives. The Fravashis were venerated as the bringers of good things, but remained invisible to the human. They are the assistants of Ormuz/Ahura Mazda in the promoting of growth and combatting evil. In the later folk beliefs of Armenia, they are still regarded as human Guardian Angels that dwelled near the burial places of the ancestors. (495)

Says Gherardo Gnoli concerning the Fravashis:

"**FRAVASHIS**, beneficent and protective guardian spirits whose services must be secured by means of ritual offerings, are an essential element in the religious structure of Zoroastrianism. They play an important role in the frequency of rainfall and are responsible for guaranteeing the prosperity and preservation of the family. As the spirits of the dead, they are the protagonists in a great feast held on the

last night of the ear. They are thought to pre-exist human beings and to survive them.

The *fravashis* do not appear in the *Gathas*. In the *Avesta*, the first mention of them occurs in the *Yasna Haptanhaiti*, and an entire hymn (*Yasht 13*) is dedicated to them.

The conception of the *fravashis* has all the characteristics of an archaic, pre-Zoroastrian belief that was later absorbed and adapted by the (Zoroastrian) tradition. Examples of these characteristics include their identification with the spirits of the dead and their warlike nature.

As the spirits of the dead the *fravashis* have often been compared to the Roman *manes* and or the Indian *pitarah*; as warlike beings, **they have been compared with the Germanic [more precisely Viking; the Valkyries were exclusively Viking, NOT pan-Germanic, in spite of the influence of Richard Wagner, who inserted the Valkyries in the Nibelungenlied, where, in reality,**
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they had no place] Valkyries or to the Indian *Maruts*, [ot the Slavic *vily* or *vilya*] the company of celestial warriors. In particular, in the context of the Indo-European tripartite ideology, the *fravashis* are seen as a Zoroastrian substitute for the *Maruts* (Georges Dumézil, 1953); both are linked to the concepts and ethics of the Aryan *Mannerbund*. Most likely, Zoroastrianism absorbed this ancient concept, typical of a warrior society, through its ties to the cult of the dead and reinterpreted the *fravashis* as combatants for the rule of Ahura Mazda. We find such a zoroastrianization in the myth told in the third chapter of the *Bundahishn* (Book of Primordial Creation), which relates that the *fravashis* chose to be incarnated in material bodies in order to fight Ahriman and the evil powers instead of remaining peacefully in the celestial world.

The etymology of the word *fravashi* is uncertain. Originally it may have been used to designate the spirit of a deceased hero who was endowed with **vrti*, "valor", or it may have expressed the theological concept, fundamental to Zoroastrianism, of choice **fra-vrti* or that of the profession of faith." (496)

Note that the *Gathas* are the most ancient of the Zoroastrian scriptures, believed, in part at least, to contain the very words of Zoroaster.

In another place, Gherardo Gnoli says:

THE FRAVASHIS AND IMMORTALITY

It has been noted that nowhere in the Gatha-s are the **Fravashis** mentioned, and there is no doubt that such an omission is significant, if for no other reason than the abundance of space devoted to the Fravashis in (later) Iranian sources, yet this does not result in direct and undeniable contrast with the message of Zoroaster, so that it may still be adapted to it with no difficulty.

The concept **Fravashi** is the subject of numerous studies and constitutes one of the subjects most characteristic of the ancient Iranian religion. The etymology of Fravashi must be sought in the concept of "protective value", "protection", **fravarti-*, according to the hypothesis which is now commonly accepted. It is the term often used for the spirit of a dead hero, possessing "valor", **vrti-*. According to

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this interpretation, the spirits of the slain valiant warriors continue to protect their living descendants. The concept **Fravashi**, is not exhausted here, and the Iranian tradition in this regards is quite complex: probably there was an historical development concerning which it is opportune to examine in some detail.

According to Bailey's *Zoroastrian Problems*, in an important article published in 1953 has sought to demonstrate that the Dumézilian principle of the tripartite socio-religious Indo-European division leads to a broad concept of the Perfect Man, which occurs repeatedly in the medieval Zoroastrian sources; a concept which has been successively studied with great acumen by Mole. Now, Barr has returned to investigate the union of the three elements, *xwarr*, *frawahr* and *tan zohr*, which constitute the *teleios anthropos* Zarathustra, and indicated the first, the second and the third functions: sovereignty, war and fertility. It is not for nothing that the tradition sees in the figure of Zoroaster a synthesis of the three social classes. The same Dumézil, in an article published in that same year, returning expressly to Barr's study, defending with many good arguments the thesis that the mission of the Fravashis belonged to the second function. There is no doubt, apart from the value which one wishes to give to the etymological meaning of the term - that he himself cannot deny, to tell the truth, this may be true from a historical prospective - if Bailey's theory is correct, that the Fravashi possessed a preeminent warlike character. The *Farvardin Yasht* is quite explicit: this combative character, very strong, victorious in battle, armed with offensive and defensive weapons; forming a numerous company, shattering the impetus of the enemy and annihilating him; advancing

with banners unfurled. (*Battle maidens again!*)

As representative of the second function, Dumézil saw in the Fravshi the Iranian Zoroastrian version of the Indian *Marut*, vedic and prevedic, a mythological entity that represents a sort of celestial projection of an armed band of young warriors, *marya-*, and note well the protagonists of the *Mannerbunde* songs, to which Wikander dedicated forty years in his masterful monograph.

The Maruts, children or men of heaven, forming company of individuals formed a collectivity, a band of brothers, of the same age, who did not age, they were associated with Indra in his combats and of his triumphs, *indrajyestha*; adorned with garlands and with rings, they were powerfully armed with lances, axes, sometimes with bows and arrows, with golden helmets and
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gold plates over their breasts; this is treated in a naturalistic manner which are used as a metaphor for a furious wind; poured out like rain upon the earth., darkening the sky with clouds, with an impulse like a thunderbolt in the atmosphere.

Though not possessing any special relation with the kingdom of the dead and with the cult of the deceased, Dumézil compares the Maruts with the *Fravashis*, not because they are adorned with garlands, with rings or golden helmets nor because of their preeminence in the latter, which is, in reference to them a naturalistic representation - "the Zoroastrian conventions explain this naturalistic figuration", writes Dumézil - but for their role in the falling of rain and in the flowing of water and for the collective nature of the armed band at the service of Ahura Mazda that they undoubtedly possess, and which evokes the tumultuous band of the young warriors of the atmosphere commanded by Indra.

The analogy, between the **Fravashi** and the Maruts, which to me does not appear to be very solid, is, according to Dumézil, with recourse to the theory of substitution, for part of Zoroastrianism, of the old for new functionally corresponding entities, neither more nor less, therefore, in so far as the same occurred with the Amesha Spenta, which recently confirmed in this manner the celebrated theory: "the list of Entities named to become Amesha Spenta were substituted by the reformed (Zoroastrian) theology for a list of two or three functions all close kin of those which in the course of time would become Indian".

One of the principle supporters of the tripartite ideology as applied to Iran, Widengren, has not been able to do more than reveal a certain contradiction in Dumézil's thesis with the data, which appears incontrovertible, of the belonging of the **Fravashis** to a sort of popular religion, or, in any case, not Gathic

and/or pre-Gathic. Widengren, striving to interpret in an authentic manner the thought of Dumézil, writes: "To read Dumézil's article, might think that the **Fravashis** are an invention of Zoroastrianism. ... I do not believe that this impression is just; in any case, it does not correspond to the facts. Another authority, Soderblom above all, insists on their non-Zoroastrian character..." Soderblom, in fact, strongly supports the Non-Zoroastrian character of the **Fravashis**, but in fact proposes to see in them an antique Iranian belief concerning the invisible survival of the defunct, threatening to the living if they are not provided with propitiatory practices. The Indo-Iranian comparison has provided the relevant facts, which, with the

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concept of the *pitarah*, considered, from this point of view, the close kin of the Iranian **Fravashis**.

Without doubt the Iranian conception of the **Fravashis** is presented in very specific ways, which, in its entirety, also because of the type of documentation accessible to us, anything but homogenous from the chronological point of view, which, on the contrary, appear to originate in diverse historical epochs, with difficulty are compatible with the data which confronts us: the Roman *manes*; the Indian *Pitarah*, the Viking *Valkyrie*; (the *Valkyries* are exclusively Viking, NOT Pan-Germanic, in spite of what Richard Wagner says in his operas), and the *Maruts* constituting in reality very partial and incomplete data for the many possible comparisons.

In particular, the weak point of the comparison of the **Fravashis** with the *Maruts* -and therefore the greater reason for their presumed nature as Zoroastrian substitutes for presumed pre-Zoroastrian entities - is, as on the other hand observed the same Dumézil, in the absence in the final analysis of the element "spirit of the dead" or "guardian angels associated with the spirit". In reality the fundamental character of the **Fravashis**, to be reunited with an ancient level of the typical Iranian religiosity typical of a society strongly impregnated with warlike valor - the reference to the *Mannerbunde* songs is that, in my opinion, not very pertinent - must be sought in the conception of death and survival.

A concept always accurately distinct from that of the spirit, Avestan: *urvan*, Pahlavi *ruvan*, in either the Avesta or in the Pahlavi texts, cannot be confused with the Gathic and post-Gathic concept of the *Daena*; in spite of the opinion of Lommel, the **Fravashis** are always intimately associated with the cult of the dead and with a conception of the afterlife, which anticipates the time of the return of the spirits of the forefathers at the end of winter and the idea of a transcendent

"double" with which the spirits of the dead reunite. There is a link between *urvan* and *Fravashi*, indubitably present in the psychology and anthropology of Mazdeism, in which this encompasses two of five constituent elements of the psychic reality of man, *ahu-* ("life"), *daena-*, *baodah-* ("knowledge"), *urvan-*, ***Fravashis-***, consisting above all in that concept of a reunion of the spirit with an entity which transcends and which prescind, in equal measure, of the life previously lived. Therefore one may speak of the ***Fravashis*** of men of the past, present and future.

Therefore, it is the idea of the immortality of the spirit that is at the base of the Iranian

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conception of the ***Fravashis***. Not dissimilar, from a distinct point of view, is the celebrated case of the Getai, the most valiant and the most just of the Thracians, which, as recounted by Herodotus, "they believed themselves to be immortal" and "believing themselves immortal or that at death they go to reunite with Zalmoxis, a *daimon*". A warrior ethic is a mythological complex connected with ecstasy, death is a pilgrimage of the spirit, a belief in immortality and in a paradisaical existence, which follows follows a *katabasis*, beyond which the return of the spirits of the dead, such is a trait characteristic of the Thracian religion, accurately studied by Mircea Eliade in his fundamental work on Zalmoxis, and which, as is noted, contradicts the *interpretation graeca* of the Thracian god, entirely centered in their interest in the *enthousiasmos* and in belief in immortality.

The presence in such a mythological complex of a link existing between a belief in immortality and the idea of a reunion *post mortem* of the dead, or of his spirit, with a *daimon*, appears to me to be important. Here we seek to understand, at least from a typological point of view, a religious belief which for some periods is essential - but the study could be, I believe, more profound - notably seems to approach the Iranian conception of the ***Fravashis***. The ***Fravashis***, therefore, are not the spirits of defunct heroes, but, to say it in terms with which the Greeks spoke of the Getai *athanatizantes*, a sort of *daimon* to which the spirit of the defunct is reunited. If one reads the third chapter of the *Bundahishn* one finds that the body of the dead reunites with the earth, the life force, *gyan*, with the wind, the prototype (?), *ewenag*, with the sun, the spirit, *ruwan*, with the *frawahr*, "so that the demons cannot destroy the spirit".

It remains to make clear the rapport which must exist between the archaic concept and the reform of Zoroaster, in the moment which, as we have seen, the unfolding studies of Dumézil are not completely

satisfactory. I believe that one should not have recourse to the idea of the substitution of an old entity, such as the Maruts, with a new entity more compatible with the Zoroastrian ideology. The notions of the **fravashi** and of the Maruts are not compatible, because in the last analysis, in fact, they do not appear to be a species of preexistent and surviving *daimones*, but rather the simple mythological transposition of the young warriors of the Indo-Aryan *Mannerbund*, faithful friends and followers of Indra. I believe, rather, that in the unfolding of said rapport by way of a "Zoroastrianization" of the **Fravashi**, that

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is to say by way of a sort of transformation and development in the Zoroastrian sense of an ancient traditional Iranian belief, within a prevalent warlike and aristocratic ethic, of the belief in immortality.

If we speak several times of a warrior ethic and we also in fact refer to the Aryan *Mannerbund* studied by Wikander. In reality the research of the last decade, within the Indo-Iranian ambience as well as more general terms, referring to various Indo-European peoples, we have a "society of men", having the nature of a military fraternity, whose particular rites and myths led to results of great interest, promise to be profitably used even to reconstruct the very early socio-religious basis of the Indo-Iranians, in vivid contrast to the later reform of Zoroaster. In a work which will be published within a year I have attempted the reconstruction of the origins of Zoroastrianism, placing them at the end of the 2nd Millenium BC in the eastern portion of the Iranian plateau, between the Hindu Kush and the southern portion of the great mountain chain. The social and religious ambience in

which Zoroastrianism was born must probably be that of a warrior society, politically fragmented, dominated by a military aristocracy and by an armed band, sustained by a bellicose morality, devotees of an aggressive and combative divinity. The customs and institutions of this society, far from being obliterated by Zoroastrianism and the new ethical values of Mazdaism, survived in Iranian history and, as has been brilliantly demonstrated by Widengren, formed the basis of successive social and political developments, as well as becoming a permanent part of the military ethic of the Iranian nobility.

But what could be the reason of the assimilation of the **fravashi** becoming a far from secondary part of the psychology and anthropology of Mazdaism?

We may hypothetically indicate the reasons. The first consists in the high degree of conservatism of the belief to the "heroic" cult of the dead, in a society strongly impregnated with warlike values; the second

reason consists probably in the fact that the constitution of the **fravashi** owed its existence, first to the reform of Zoroaster, the pivot of which was the Iranian belief in immortality, which the new faith did not attempt to destroy, but only to modify somewhat radically.

The influence of Zoroastrianism came to exercise its influence by way of the absorption of said belief together with new values, characteristic of the teachings of the *Gathas*. The essential moment of the process of Zoroastrianization may be seen in the

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doctrine, likely not original, at the very least in the form which we have noted, of the choice of the **Fravashi**. In contrast to the alternative of the restoration of the heavenly world, *menog*, hence free of the attacks of Ahriman, or to be incarnated in material bodies in order to fight against Ahriman and his potent evil, the *frawahr* requested to Ohrmazd that they would prefer to descend to earth. In such a manner, they were inserted into the traditional Iranian belief in immortality and in a paradisaical place in the spirit of the vigorous new Zoroastrian ethic, tied to a warlike society but in contrast with it, the constitution of the **fravashi**, which was dedicated to the great festival of the end of winter, in which the spirits of the ancestors return to life, this was easily harmonized with the Mazdean religion, which assumed, over the centuries, always described as very pure and canonical." (497)

In the Avesta, the *Yasht-s* are those texts and hymns devoted to the lesser divine beings of Zoroastrianism, including the **Fravashis**. Below are two selections from Yasht 13 which deal with the **Fravashis**.

"We venerate the recompense (*ashi-*) and the fravashi of just Spitama Zarathushtra, the first who thought what was good, the first who said what was good, the first who said what was good, the first who did what good, the first priest, the first warrior (*rathaeshtar-*), the first herdsman; ... who first in the material state praised Asha, reviled the Daevas (demons), confessed himself a Mazda-worshipper ..., opposed the Daevas, accepting Ahuric doctrine ...; whom the Amesha Spentas, all of one desire with the Sun, longed for ... as master and judge of the world, and as praiser of the greatest and best and most beautiful Asha. ... "Hail to us! A priest is born to us, who is Spitama Zarathustra! With offerings and strewn baresman Zarathustra will

worship us. Henceforth the good Mazda-worshipping religion will spread over the seven regions of earth. Henceforth, Mithra of wide pastures will further all ruling councils of the lands and pacify the lands that are in turmoil. Henceforth the mighty Apam Napat will further all ruling councils of the lands and restrain the lands that are in turmoil. And we venerate the recompense and fravashi of Maidhomanha, son of Arastya, who first listened to the word and teaching of Zarathushtra ...; and we venerate the **fravashi** of the
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just Saena, son of Ahumstut, who was the first to have a hundred priestly pupils ...; and we venerate the fravashi of (the) just Isatvastra, son of Zarathustra ... and of (the) just Urvatatnara, son of Zarathustra, and of (the) just Hvarchithra, son of Zarathustra, ... and of just Kavi Vishtaspa. ...

"I praise, invoke and and sing the good, strong, holy fravashis of the just ..., who arrayed sky, who arrayed water, who arrayed earth, who arrayed cattle, who arrayed sons in the womb ...; who are the givers of victory to the invoker, of a boon to the eager, of health to the sick, of good fortune to him who invokes them, worshipping, satisfying, bringing libations, just. ... We worship the good, strong, holy fravashis of the just who hurry homeward at the time of *Hamaspahmaedaya* (the Iranian feast of All Souls). Then they wander there for the whole night, desiring this help: "Who will praise us, who worship, who laud? Who will treat us lovingly, who welcome us with hands full of food and clothing, with proper worship? The name of which of us will now be invoked, the soul (*urvan*) of which among us will be worshipped, to which of us will that gift be given, whereby we shall have unending food forever?" Then the man who worships them with hands full of food and clothing, with proper worship, him will they bless, the contented, ... unvexed, mighty Fravashis of the just. To him at his dwelling there will be a herd of cattle and men. ... Then when ythe waters flow out from the sea Vourukasha ..., they go forward, the mighty **fravashis** of the just, many, many hundreds, many, many thousands ..., desiring water, each for her own family. ... They fight in battles, each for her own place and abode, where she had a place and abode to inhabit; even as a mighty chariot-warrior should fight, having girt on his sword belt, for his well-gotten treasure. Then those of them who conquer drive off the water, each to her own family."(498)

Note that even at the very early date at which the above was written, already the **Fravashis**, like the Valkyries (Old Norse:

Valkyrja; plural: *Valkyjur*), were considered to be "battle maidens".

Obviously, the Valkyries are of great importance to our theme, because they, like the saga of Hildebrand and Hadubrand,

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and other elements which we shall mention in due time, represent an Iranian element in Viking literature, which can only be the result of the Goths maintaining contacts with their ancient Scandinavian homeland. Therefore, we shall deal at some length with these fascinating creatures, especially Brynhilde.

It must be noted that the Valkyries are NOT a pan-Germanic literary element, but are peculiar to the Goths and the Vikings, and as we said, represent an Iranian element in Gothic and Viking literature, which no doubt reached the ancestors of the Vikings by way of the Goths, proving once again that the Goths were profoundly Iranized.

The **Valkyries** play a key role in the Viking sagas. The word **Valkyrie** is derived from the Old Norse **Valkyrja** (plural: **valkyjur**), meaning "choosers of the slain". The **Valkyries** were the shield-maidens of Odin, who rode through the air over the battlefield, marking with their spears those who are to be slain, and conducting the souls of those slain in battle to **Valhalla**. The **Valkyries** also appear as battle-maidens; "Amazons" would not be an accurate translation.

Unfortunately, most people get their concept of the valkyries from the operas of Richard Wagner. The Wagnerian version of the Valkyries in fact bears little resemblance to the Valkyries of the

Viking sagas. We will therefore begin with some general definitions of the word "**Valkyrie**", beginning with the Oxford English Dictionary:

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Valkyrie Forms: valkyria [Old Norse *valkyrja* (plural *-kyrjur*), from *val-r* = those slain in battle + *-kyrja* = chooser, from *kur-* (:*-kuz*), ablaut stem of *kjosa* = to choose. In Scandinavian mythology, one or the other of the twelve war-maidens supposed to hover over battlefields and to conduct the fallen warriors to Valhalla.

a. **1768** Gray Fatal Sisters Note, The *Valkyriur* were female Divinities, servants of Odin (or Woden) in the Gothic mythology. **1778** Mrs. Grant of Laggan The prophetic Valkyria may once more say ... **1806** W. Herbert Selected Icelandic Poetry Two of the Valkyriae or virgins of slaughter. **1835** Mrs. Heman's Sword of the Tomb The far renown'd Whom the bright *Valkyriur's* warning voice had call'd to the banquet where gods rejoice.

b. **1770** Percy, translator Mallet's Northern Antiquities I. 102 There are other virgins in Valhalla ... These goddesses are called Valkyries. **1784** Jerningham Rise Scandinavian Poetry The Valkyries are a female troop whom Odin sends to the field of battle upon invisible steeds. **1801** M.G. Lewis Tales of Wonder, Sword of Argantyr 'Tis the Valkyries who sing while they spin thy vital thread. **1843** Southey Death of Odin No virgin goddess him shall call; ... No Valkyrie for him prepare the smiling mead. **1881** Du Chaillu Land of Midnight Sun Are you Scandinavian Valkyries who travel through the air?

Says Hilda Ellis Davidson:

Valkyries

Supernatural figures who play a considerable part in the medieval literature of Scandinavia, Denmark and Iceland.

In their most familiar form Valkyries are the battle maidens of the god Odin, who sends them down to earth before a battle to decree which leaders are to be victorious and which must die, according to his choice. They ride through the air, armed like warriors with shields and spears, and it is their responsibility after the battle to conduct the illustrious dead to Valhalla, the hall of Odin. Here a life of perpetual fighting and feasting awaits kings and other leaders who die heroically on the battlefield. Odin's purpose was to collect outstanding warriors around him in preparation

for the last great battle at Ragnarok. ...

...By the eighth century Valkyries are pictured on memorial stones on the island of Gotland as dignified women welcoming dead heroes to Valhalla and offering them a horn of mead. This became a popular symbol of a

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heroic death, depicted on many carvings of the Viking Age and even found in the form of a silver amulet in a Swedish grave on the island of Oland. ...

...Poets as well as artists delighted in the image of these maids of battle; the Scandinavian poets known as *skalds* made many allusions to them, bestowing them with lists of suitable names, such as *Hildir* or *Gunnr*, words meaning "battle". Some poems relate that they conversed with ravens - birds that haunted the battlefield - and in funeral poems for kings of Norway in the Viking Age, Odin was represented as calling on his Valkyries to welcome the dead ruler arriving in Valhalla after his last battle. The very popular King Haakon the Good, who died in 961, was a Christian, but he, too, is welcomed by Valkyries into Odin's hall in the poem commemorating his death in battle.

A slightly different picture of Valkyries is that of guardian spirits who encourage and support young warriors, especially princes, throughout life. They appear in this guise in some of the poems of the Icelandic Poetic Edda, particularly in a group of three fragmentary poems dealing with one or more heroes called *Helgi*. In one of these a Valkyrie gives a name to the young hero and tells him how to win a sword.

The hero takes a Valkyrie as his wife; she supports him in battle and welcomes him into the burial mound when he is slain. In the last of the poems, Helgakvida Hundingsbana II, his Valkyrie wife is called *Sigrun*. When he falls in battle he rides home to the ancestral burial mound, where *Sigrun* awaits him. They spend the night together within the mound; however, in the morning he departs on his journey to Valhalla. Here we seem to have traces of an earlier concept than that of kings joining Odin in his hall; instead, they return to their ancestral burial places, to bring blessings on their people, and a guardian spirit is there to receive the dead warrior.

Saxo Grammaticus has an account of a female guardian spirit named *Svanhita*, who appears with her sisters to a young prince *Regner*. *Svanhita* inspires the prince, who had been deprived of his kingdom. She gives him a sword and becomes his bride, fighting off hostile supernatural enemies on his behalf.

A Valkyrie of this kind is represented in the Edda poem Sigrdrifumal as giving counsel to the young hero *Sigurd* the *Volsung* and teaching him the spells that he would need as a warrior prince. In other Edda poems

dealing with the Sigurd cycle, and in the late legendary Volsunga Saga, the heroine Brynhilde takes over the role of a Valkyrie. She is said to have offended Odin by granting victory to a leader against
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the god's decree and to have been imprisoned in an enchanted sleep on a hilltop surrounded by a wall of fire. Sigurd rode through the flames and awakened her, but after drinking a magic potion he forgot her and married Kudrun. It was Brynhilde's anger at Sigurd's faithlessness that caused his early death. The story is told differently in the medieval German Nibelungenlied, wherein there is no role for Valkyries as guardian spirits or as battle maids of the god. The composer Richard Wagner (1813-1883), however, deliberately (and dishonestly) brought the Valkyries of Scandinavian tradition into the role of Brynhilde in his operatic cycle, The Ring of the Niebelungs. (499)

Note that Richard Wagner imported the Valkyries into a tradition in which they were total strangers, in which they had no part. As we said above, most people derive their concept of the Valkyries from the operas of Richard Wagner, and this is most unfortunate, because the Valkyries in Wagner's operas bear almost no resemblance to the original Valkyries of the Viking sagas.

Says John Lindow of the Valkyries:

VALKYRIE:

A female figure of Scandinavian mythology and heroic legend. Old Norse *valkyrja* means literally "chooser of the slain", and thus the Valkyries are understood as figures attendant at battle, choosing who will live and who will die. Although some scholars have seen the Valkyries as goddesses of death, in the extant sources they are purely literary figures.

Concluding his catalogue of the goddesses in Gylfaginning, Snorri Sturluson says that there are women who serve in Valhalla, Odin's hall. They bring drink to the *einherjar*, the dead warriors who inhabit Valhalla. Snorri cites Grimnismal 36, which names thirteen of these maidens, and adds: "These are called Valkyries. Odin sends them to every battle. They choose the arrival of death on men and control victory" (Snorra Edda, Gylfaginning, chapter 22). The close association with Odin, natural because he is a god of the dead, is further suggested by the Odin name *Valkjosandi* (one

choosing the slain), found in the verse of a tenth century Icelandic skald. *Voluspa* 30 names six Valkyries and says they are women of Herjan (Odin).

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The names mentioned in these and other passages have generally to do with battle. A tenth century poet used two for them, *Gondul* (shaft bearer) and *Skogul* (shaft), in *Hakonarmal* to choose Hakon the Good to fall in battle and thus to swell and improve the forces of *inherjar*. Another poet, in the vision poem *Darratharljoth*, used Valkyrie names for women who weave the fates of men in the Battle of Clontarf (1014). A third poem, *Haraldskvoethi*, attributed to Thorbjorn Hornklofi, presents a description of the warlike and courtly attributes of Harald Fairhair as a dialogue between a Valkyrie and a raven, a traditional beast of battle.

Valkyries appear to in heroic poetry, particularly the Helgi poems. Sigrun is the beloved of Helgi Hundingsbani and Svava of Helgi Hundingsbana II. The prose coda to *Helakvitha Hundingsbana II* states that Helgi and Sigrun were reincarnated as Helgi Haddingsbani and the Valkyrie Kara." (500)

Says Carol Rose:

VALKYRIES

These are the nymphs or maidens of battle, also known as the Vakkjnor or Wlakyries, in Nordic mythology. Their name means the Choosers of the Slain. These spirits are Odin's attendants or Wish Maidens that ride the skies on the clouds or fly as Swan maidens to the scene of battle. They hover above the fray dressed in battle armor on their mighty horses, guiding the heroes and selecting with the kiss of death, those who will be slain. Then they conduct the souls of the fallen heroes back to Valhalla in triumph, to feast with Odin and drink mead from the skulls of their enemies. Although essentially the Battle Maidens, the Valkyries often comprised members of other spirit groups such as Skuld, a member of the Norns, and Judur and Rota, who are deities. Originally the Valkyries were fearful spirit beings of the *Prose Edda* but were later given greater prominence in the *Volsung Saga*. Their number varies from three to 27; the named ones are *Brynhilde*; *Geiroluli*; *Goli*; *Goll*, meaning **herald**; *Gondul*, meaning **she-wolf**; *Held*, meaning **hero**; *Herfjotur*; *Hilde*, meaning **war**; *Hildur*; *Hlokk*; *Hrist*, meaning **torm**; *Judur*; *Mist*, meaning **cloud gray**; *Radgrid*; *Randgrid*; *Reiginlief*; *Rota*; *Sigrun*; *Skeggold*; *Skoul*, meaning **carrier-through**; *Skuld*; *Swawa*; *Thrud*, meaning **power**; *Thrudur*; and *Wolkenthrut*, meaning **cloud power**." (501)

Note that Brynhilde (Old Norse: *Brynhildr*) is one of the Valkyries whose name apparently had no meaning in Old Norse.

Helene A. Guerber gives a comprehensive description of the Valkyries;

The Battle Maidens

Odin's special attendants, the Valkyries or battle maidens, were either his daughters, like Brynhilde, or the offspring of mortal kings, maidens who were privileged to remain immortal and invulnerable as long as they implicitly obeyed to god and remained virgins. They and their steeds were the personification of the clouds, their glittering weapons being the lightning flashes. ...

[Note: here I am reminded of the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa:

*The monsoon comes in royal pomp
His Chariots are the clouds
The the flashes of his trappings the lightning bolts
The thunder his kettle drums.]*

...The ancients imagined that they swept down to earth at Valfather's command, to choose among the slain in battle heroes worthy to taste the joys of Valhalla, and brave enough to lend aid to the gods when the great battle shall be fought.

They are through some battlefield, where men fall fast,
Their horses fet-locked deep in blood, they ride,
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven
To glad the gods and feast in Odin's hall.

Balder Bead, Matthew Arnold

These maidens were pictured as young and beautiful, with dazzling white arms and flowing golden hair. They wore helmets of silver or gold, and blood-red corselets, and with spears and shields glittering, they boldly charged through the fray on their mettlesome white steeds. These horses galloped through the realms of air and over the quivering Bifrost, bearing not only their fair riders, but the heroes slain, who after having received the Valkyries' kiss of death, were thus immediately transported to Valhalla.

The Cloud Steeds

As the Valkyries' steeds were personifications of the clouds, it was natural to fancy that the hoar fros and dew dropped down upon earth from their littering manes as they rapidly dashed to and fro through the air. They were therefore held in high honor and regard, for the people ascribed to their beneficent influence much of the fruitfulness of the earth, the sweetness of dale and mountain slope, the glory of the pines, and the nourishment of the meadowland.

Choosers of the Slain

The mission of the Valkyries was not only to battlefields upon earth, but they often rode over the sea, snatching the dying Vikings from their sinking dragon ships. Sometimes they stood upon the strand to beckon them thither, an infallible warning that the coming struggle would be their last, and one which every Northland hero received with joy. [Note that choosing was one of the functions of the *Fravashies*.]

Slowly they moved to the billow side;
And the forms, as they grew more clear,
Seemed each on a tall pale steed to ride,
And a shadowy crest to rear,
And to beckon with faint hand
From the dark and rocky strand,
And to point a gleaming spear.
Then a sickness on his spirit fell,
Before the unearthly train;
For he knew Valhalla's daughters well,
The choosers of the slain!

Valkyriur Song, Mrs. Hemans

Their Numbers and Duties

The numbers of the Valkyries differ greatly according to various mythologists, ranging from here to sixteen. Most authorities, however, naming only nine. The Valkyries were considered as divinities of the air; they were also called Norns, or wish maidens. It is said that Freya and Skuld led them on to the fray.

She saw Valkyries
Come from afar
Ready to ride
O the tribes of god;
Skuld held the shield,
Skaugul came next,

Gunnr, Hildir, Gaundul,
And Geir-skaugul.
Thus now are told
The Warrior's Norns.

Saemund's Edda, Henderson's translation

The Valkyries, as we have seen, had important duties in Valhalla, when, their bloody weapons laid aside, they poured out the heavenly mead for the *Einheriar*. This beverage delighted the souls of the newcomers, and they welcomed the fair maidens as warmly as when they had first seen them on the battlefield and realized that they had come to transport them where they fain would be.

In the shade now tall forms are advancing,
And their wan hands like snowflakes in the moonlight are gleaming;
They beckon, they whisper, "Oh! Strong Armed in Valor,
The pale guests await thee - mead foams in Valhalla"
Finn's Saga, Hewitt

Wayland and the Valkyries

The Valkyries were supposed to take frequent flights to earth in swan plumage, which they would throw off when they came to a secluded stream, that they might indulge in a bath. Any mortal surprising them thus, and securing their plumage, could prevent them from leaving the earth, and could even force these proud maidens to mate with him if such were his pleasure.

It is related that three of the Valkyries, Orlun, Alvit, and Svanhvit, were once sporting in the waters, when suddenly the three brothers Egil, Slagfinn, and Volund the smith, came upon them, and securing their swan plumage, the young men forced them to remain upon earth and become their wives. The Valkyries, thus detained, remained with their husbands nine years, but at the end of that time, recovering their plumage, or the spell being broken in some other way, they effected their escape.

There they stayed
Seven winters through;
But all the eighth
Were with longing seized;
And in the ninth
Fate parted them.
The maidens yearned
For the murky wood.
The young Alvit,

Fate to fulfill.

Lay of Volund, Thorpe's translation.

The brothers felt the loss of their wives extremely, and two of the, Egil and Slagfinn, putting on their snow shoes, went in search of their loved ones, disappearing in the cold and foggy regions of the North. The third brother, Volund, however, remained at home, knowing all search would be of no avail, and he found solace in the contemplation of a ring which Alvit had given him as a love-token, and he indulged the constant hope that she would return. As he was a very clever smith, and could manufacture the most dainty ornaments of silver and gold, as well as magic weapons which no blow could break, he now employed his leisure in making seven hundred rings exactly like the one which his wife had given him. These, when finished, he bound together; but one night, on coming home from the hunt, he found that someone had carried away one ring, leaving the others behind, and his hopes received fresh inspiration, for he told himself that his wife had been there and would soon return for good.

That selfsame night, however, he was surprised in his sleep, and bound and made prisoner by Nidud, King of Sweden, who took possession of his sword, a choice weapon invested with magic powers, which he reserved for his own use, and of his love ring made of pure Rhine gold, which later he gave to his only daughter, Bodvild. As for the unhappy Volund himself, he was led captive to a neighboring island, where, after being hamstrung, in order that he should not escape, the king put him to the incessant task of forging weapons and ornaments for his use. He also compelled him to build an intricate labyrinth, and to this day a maze in Iceland is known as "Volund's house".

Volund's rage and despair increased with every new insult offered him by Nidud, and night and day he thought upon how he might obtain revenge. Nor did he forget to provide for his escape, and during the pauses of his labor he fashioned a pair of wings similar to those his wife had used as a Valkyrie, which he intended to don as soon as his vengeance had been accomplished. One day the king came to visit his captive, and brought him the stolen sword that he might repair it; but Volund cleverly substituted another weapon so exactly like the magic sword as to deceive the king when he came again to claim it. A few days later, Volund enticed the king's sons into his smithy and slew them, after which he cunningly fashioned drinking vessels out of their skulls, and jewels out of

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their eyes and teeth, bestowing these upon their parents

and sister.

But their skulls
Beneath the hair
He in silver set,
And to Nidud gave;
And of their eyes
Precious stones he formed,
Which to Nidud's
Wily wife he sent.
But of the teeth
Of the two
Breast ornaments he made,
And to Bodvild sent.

Lay of Volund, Thorpe's translation.

The royal smith did not suspect whence they came; and so these gifts were joyfully accepted. As for the poor youths, it was believed that they had drifted out to sea and had been drowned.

Sometime after this, Bodvild, wishing to have her ring repaired, also visited the smith's hut, where, while waiting, she unsuspectingly partook of a magic drug, which sent her to sleep and left her in Volund's power. His last act of vengeance accomplished, Volund immediately donned the wings which he had made in readiness for this day, and grasping his sword and ring he rose slowly in the air. Directing his flight to the palace, he perched there out of reach, and proclaimed his crimes to Nidud. The king, beside himself with rage, summoned Egil, Volund's brother, who had also fallen into his power, and bade him use his marvelous skill as an archer to bring down the impudent bird. Obeying a signal from Volund, Egil aimed for a protuberance under his wing where a bladder full of the young princes' blood was concealed, and the smith flew triumphantly away without hurt, declaring that Odin would give his sword to Sigmund - a prediction which was duly fulfilled.

Volund then went to Alf-heim, where, if the legend is to be believed, he found his beloved wife, and lived happily again with her until the Twilight of the Gods (*Gotterdammerung*)."

FREYA

"Freya, the Viking goddess of love and beauty, was the most beloved and beautiful of the Viking goddesses. Strangely, Freya, though goddess of love, was not only

(857)

soft and pleasure-loving, for the Vikings believed that she had very martial tastes, and that as Valfreya she

often led the Valkyries to the battlefields, choosing and claiming one half of the heroes slain. She was therefore often represented in corselet and helmet, shield and spear, the lower part of her body only being clad in the usual flowing feminine garb. Noted R.B. Anderson in Norse Mythology:

Folkvang 'tis called,
Where Freya has right
To dispose of the hall-seats.
Everyday of the slain
She chooses the half,
And leaves half to Odin" (502)

Padraic Colum gives another account of the Valkyries:

THE VALKYRIE

"Against the time when the riders of Muspelheim, with the Giants and the evil powers of the Underworld, would bring on battle, Odin All-Father was preparing a host of defenders for Asgard. They were not of the Aesir nor of the Vanir; they were of the race of mortal men, heroes chosen from amongst the slain on the fields of battle in Midgard.

To choose the heroes, and to give victory to those whom he willed to have victory, Odin had battle-maidens that went to the fields of war. Beautiful were those battle-maidens and fearless; wise were they also. For to them Odin showed Runes of Wisdom. Valkyries, Choosers of the Slain, they were named.

Those who were chosen on the fields of the slain were called in Asgard the Einherjar. For them Odin made ready a great hall. Valhalla, the Hall of the Slain, it was called. Five Hundred and forty doors had Valhalla, and out of each door eight hundred Champions might pass. Every day the Champions put on their armor and took their weapons down from the walls, and went forth and battled with each other. All who were wounded were made whole again, and in peace and goodly fellowship they sat down to the feast that Odin prepared for them. Odin himself sat with his Champions, drinking wine but eating no meat.

For meat the Champions ate the flesh of the boar Saehrimmer; every day the boar was killed and cooked, and every morning it was whole again." (503)

(858)

Below is a selection from the saga Voluspa: The Prophecy of the Seeress contained in The Elder Edda, of which we have spoken

above:

War-father (Odin) picked for her rings and circlets:
He had back wise tidings and wands of prophecy;
She saw widely and widely beyond, over every world.

She saw *Valkyries* come from widely beyond,
Ready to ride to the people of the gods.
Shall-be bore one shield, Brandisher another,
Battle, War, Wand-maid and spear-brandisher:
Now are reckoned War-lord's ladies,
Ready to ride over earth, *Valkyries*.(504)

Below is a selection from the saga Helgakvida Hjorvardssonar:

The Song of Helgi Hjorvardsson, also contained in The Elder Edda:

Thrice nine maids, but one rode in front,
A fair girl wearing a helmet;
The horses shuddered, and from their manes
Fell dew into the deep dales,
Hail in the high woods;
From there comes prosperity for men;
All I looked at was loathsome to me.(505)

Below is a selection from the Viking Saga The Lay of Harold,
the author of which is unknown. The Harold of the title is Harold
Fairhair, king of Norway (ca. 860-933).

Hearken, ye ring-bearers, while of Harold I tell you,
The mightily wealthy, and his manful war deeds;
Words I overheard a maiden high-minded speaking,
Golden-haired, wite armed, with a glossy-beaked raven.

Wise thought her the Valkyrie; they were welcome never
Men to the bright-eyed one, she whom birds speech knew
well.
Greeted the light-lashed maiden, the lily-throated
woman,
The Mymir's-skull-cleaver (the raven) as on a cliff he
was perching.

"How is it, ye ravens - whence are ye come now
With beaks all gory, at break of morning?
Carrion-reek ye carry, and your claws are bloody.
(859)

Were ye near at night-time, where ye knew of corpses?

Shook himself the dun-hued one, and dried his beak,
The eagle's oath-brother, and of answer bethought him:
"Harold we follow, Halfdan's first-born,

The young Yngling, since out of egg we crept.

"That king thou knowest, him who at Kvinnar dwelleth,
The hoard-warder of Northmen, who has hollow war-ships
With reddish ribs and with reddened war-shields,
With tarred oar blades and with tents foam-besprinkled.

"Fain outside would he drink the ale at Yule-tide,
The fight-loving folk-warder, and Frey's-game play
there.
Even half-grown, he hated the hearthfire cozy,
The warm women's room, and the wadded down-mittens.

"Hearken how the high-born one in the Hafrs-firth
fought there,
The keen-eyed king's son, against Kiotvi the wealthy:
Came the fleet from the eastward, eager for fighting,
With gaping figureheads and graven ship-prows.

"They were laden with franklins and lindenshields
gleaming,
With Westland spearshafts and with Welsh broadswords.
The berserkers bellowed as the battle opened,
The wolf-coats shrieked loud and shook their weapons.

"Their strength would they try, be he taught them to
flee,
The lord of the Eastmen who at Utstein dwelleth.
The steeds-of-Nokkvi (ships) he steered out when
started the battle.
Then boomed the bucklers ere a blow felled Haklang.

"The thick-necked *atheling* behind the isle took
shelter:
He grew loath, against Lufa to hold the land of his
fathers.
Then hid under benches, and let their buttocks stick
up,
They who were wounded, but thrust their heads keelward.

"Their shoulders shielded the shifty heroes -
Were they showered with slung-shot - with the shingles-
of-Gladhome.
Home from the Hafrs-firth hastened they eastward,

(860)

Fled by way of Iathar, of ale-cups thinking.

"On the gravel lay the fallen, given to the one-eyed
Husband of Fulla; were we fain of such doings.
"Of more and other things shall the maids of Ragnhild,
The haughty women-folk, now have to gabble
Than of the heath-dwellers (wolves) which Harold not
ever

Feasted on the fallen, as their friends had done oft.

"The high-born liege-lord took the lady from Denmark -
Broke with his Rogaland sweethearts and their sisters
from Horthaland,
With those from Heithmork and halogaland eke."

THE VALKYRIE

"Whether is open-handed he-who-hastens-the-battle (the
king) to those who fend faithfully foemen from his
homeland?"

THE RAVEN

"With much goods are gladdened the gallant warriors
Who in the hall of Harold while away the time with
chess playing:
With much wealth he rewards them, and with well-forged
broadswords.
With gold from Hunland and with girls from the East-
folks.

"Most happy are they when there is hope for battle,
All ready to rouse them and to row strongly,
So as to snap the thongs and to sunder the thole-pins,
To churn the brine briskly at the beck of their liege-
lord."

THE VALKYRIE

"of the skalds' (Viking bards) lot would I ask thee,
sincethou skill of that you boast;
How the skalds fare there thou full well knowest -
They who are in Harold's hall."

THE RAVEN

"Is seen fom he raiment and their red-old finger rings
That a kind king they have.
Red fur-cloaks own they, most fairly bordered,
Swords wound with silver, and sarks (shirts of mail)
(861)

ring-woven,
Gilded baldricks and graven helmets,
Heavy gold bracelets which Harold bestowed on them."

THE VALKYRIE

"Of the berserkers' lot would I ask thee, thou who
fattens on corpses:
how fare the fighers who rush forth to battle

and stout-hearted stand against the foe?"

THE RAVEN

"Wolf-coats are they called, the warriors unfleeing
Who bear bloody shields in battle;
The darts redden where they dash into battle
And shoulder to shoulder stand.
"T" is men tried and true only, who can targes shatter,
whom the wise war-lord wants in battle." (506)

The Poetic Edda is an anthology of pre- or non-skaldic Viking Sagas, all anonymous, collected by the Icelandic scholar Snorre Sturlason (1178-1241). Though the sagas are anonymous and their dates of composition unknown, it is obvious by the language, the subject matter, and the verse forms that they proceed from various historical periods. The Valkyries appear with a certain frequency in The Poetic Edda. In the following, a selection from The Lay of Helgi Hjorvarthsson, the protagonist is a Valkyrie:

'Hjorvarth and Sigrlinn had a son who was large of body and handsome. He spoke little, and no name would cling to him. One time he sat on a hill and saw nine valkyries riding by. One of them was the stateliest.

She said;

"not soon will, Helgi, hold sway over ribs
Nor, reddener-of-swords, over Rothulsvoll-
Screamed the eagles early- if you say nothing:
Though stouthearted, Hero, I want you!"
(862)

Helgi said:

"What gift goes with the given name
Which, white-armed maid, on me you have bestowed?
Think you well what you will say:
I'll have none of the name, if you do not explain."

The Valkyrie said:

"Swords know I, lie in Sigarsholm,
A full fifty but only four, I say;

Of the bitter brands the best is one,
A wound-dealing wand all wound with gold.

"There is Praise in the hilt, Power in the blade,
Awe in the edge, for whosom ever owns it;
On the blade winds him a blood-hued worm,
But on the sword-guard a snake lies coiled.

Eylimi was the name of a king, and his daughter Svava was a valkyrie and rode through the air and over the sea. It was she who had given Helgi his name, and she often afterwards shielded him in battles.

Helgi said:

"You take not, Hjorvarth, wholesome counsel,
Leader-in-war- though wide your fame -
Sacking with fire the seats of kings
Who hardly have done harm to you;

"But Hrothmar lets lavish gold rings
Which that our kin in keeping had:
But little fears he that foemen live,
But deems he wields dead men's riches.

Hjorvarth answered that he would help Helgi with an army if he wished to avenge his mother's father. Then sought Helgi the sword of which he had heard, and fared forth with Atli. They felled Hrothmar and did many a great deed.

Helgi killed the giant Hati, whom he found sitting on a rock cliff. Helgi and Atli had moored their ships in the Hatafirth. Atli kept watch during the first part of the night. ...

"...King Helgi was a mighty warrior. He fared to King Eylimi and asked for the hand of his daughter. Helgi and Svava swore oaths to each other, and their love was great. Svava stayed at home with her father, but Helgi was in the wars; yet was Svava a Valkyrie as before. ...

(863)

...Helgi had spoken thus because he thought himself *fey*, and believed that it was his wraith [According to northern belief, every person was born with a *fylgja*, an accompanying tutelary spirit (here translated as *wraith*) which left him when he was *fey*, choosing another person to follow and protect.] Hethin had met with when he saw the woman riding on the wolf. King Alf, the son of Hrothmar, had challenged him to do battle with him on "Sigar's Field" on the third day.

Then said Helgi:

"A witch woman on a wolf did ride
In the gloaming, wished to get with Hethin:
Full well she saw that soon would fall
Sigrlinn's son on Sigarsvellir."

There was a great battle, and Helgi was mortally
wounded.

Sent them Helgi Sigar, to fetch
King Eylimi's only daughter:
"Bid her quickly come hitherward
If her lord she would find alive."

Sigar said:

"Helgi has me bitterward sent
To say to you, Svava, these words:
He sorely longs to see you, before
The bold baron's breath has left him."

Svava said:

"What harmed Helgi, King Hjorvarth's son?
Most heavy is my heart with sorrow:
If the sea has swallowed him, or a sword wounded him.
My wrath shall reach theretch very soon."

Sigar said:

"He fell this morn at Freka Stone,
Under heaven who was of all heroes best;
'tis Alf who has won in the weapon-play.
In evil hour it all happened.

Helgi said:

"hail to thee, Svava! Do not be sorrowful,
though nevermore we meet together;
In the blood of my wounds I welter here;
(864)

All to near the steel struck to my heart.

"I beg of you, my bride, weep not;
But to my words, Svava, I beseech you, hearken:
With my brother share your bed,
Let youg Hethin have your love."

Svava said:

"That vow I made in Munarheim,
When Helgi gave me many gold rings,
That never would I, if not in his,
In unfamed hero's arms lie willing."

Hethin said:

"Kiss me, Svava: I come not ever,
Rogheim to see, nor Rothul-fells,
Until I have avenged King Hrothvarth's son
Under heaven who was of all heroes best." (507)

The Second Lay of Helgi the Hunding-Slayer

"One time he (Helgi) lay with his fleet in Bruna Bay and made a cattle raid on land, and his men ate meat raw. Hogni was the name of a king whose daughter was Sigrun. She became a Valkyrie and rode through the air and over the sea. She was Svava born again.

She rode to Helgi's ships and said:

"To the steep shore who steers the fleet?
Where, ye heroes, lies your homestead?
For what abide you now in Bruna Bay?
Whither list you now to lay your course?"

Helgi said:

"Yis Haamal steers the fleet to the steep shore,
The warriors' homestead on Hles Isle lies;
A good breeze bide we in Bruna Bay.
And east list we to lay our course."

The Valkyrie said:

"Where have you, hero, hoisted war shield,
Or fed Gunn's fowls [Gunn, "battle", is a Valkyrie, her fowls hence are the birds of prey - eagles and ravens.]
with fallen men?
Why is your breastplate covered with blood,
(865)

Why, clad in armor, do you eat raw meat?"

Helgi said:

"This, last of all, did the Ylfing's son
West of the sea, if to there you list,
That captives we bound in Braga Grove,
And with sword sated the sibling of eagles:
I have now said why my sark is red;
And by strand why little we cook our meat."

The valkyrie said:

"Of the fight you tell when fell in battle,

By Hlegi's hand, Hunding the king;
Clashed ye in combat to avenge your kinsmen;
Streamed the blood then over the brand's edges."

Helgi said:

"How were you, woman, that we the men
Who in combat clashing their kinsmen avenged?
No luck is there of lordly kings' sons
In all like to our kindred."

The Valkyrie said:

"Not far was I, young folk warder,
When yestermorn the mighty king fell;
But Sigmund's son most sly I believe
To hint of that battle with hidden runes.

"I watched you there on warship standing,
On bloody bow, breasting the waves -
They coolly played the keels about.
Now strives the hero to hide him from me,
But to Hogni's daughter is Helgi known."

Granmar was the name of a mighty king who dwelled
ar Svarins Hill. He had many sons. One was Hothbrodd,
another, Guthmund, and a third, Starkath. At a meeting of
kings, Hothrodd plighted himself to Sigrun, the daughter
of King Hogni. But when she heard of that she rode
through the air and over the sea with her Valkyries to
seek Helgi. He was then at Loga Fells and had fought
against the sons of Hunding, and there he had felled Alf
and Eyolf, Hjorvarth and Hervarth, and was now all
wearied with battle, and was seated beneath the Eagle
Rock. There Sigrun found him, and flung her arms about
his neck and kissed him and told him the tidings.

(866)

Sought then Sigrun the gladsome sea king,
And hastened Helgi's his hand to grasp,
Helmeted king with kiss greeted;
To the maiden turned then his mind the lorf.

"Nor hid her heart's wish Hogni's daughter;
Said that Helgi's love she would have,
That dear had been, and dwelled in her heart,
The son of Sigmund ere seen by her.

"Was I given to Hothbrodd before gathered host,
But for other hero my heart did long;
Though fear I, king, my kinsmen's wrath,
For thwarted have I the thanes' dearest wish."

Helgi said:

"Reck you shall not of Hogni's wrath,
Nor of the ill will of all your kin;
With me you shall now, young maiden, live;
Nor dread I, dear one, your doughty brothers."

Helgi drew together a great fleet and sailed to Freka Stone. At sea a fearful storm arose. Flashes of lightning shone about them and struck the ships. They saw nine Valkyries ride aloft and knew again Sigrun. Then the storm fell and they made land unharmed. The sons of Granmar were seated on a cliff when the ships neared land. Guthmund leaped on his horse and rode to a hill by the harbor to find out whose fleet it was.

Sinfjoti, the son of Sigmund, made answer to him, and that also is written here.

Guthmund rode home with these tidings of war. Then gathered the sons of Granmar an army. Many kings came there, and among them Hogni, Sigrun's father, and his sons Bragi and Dag. A great battle followed, and there fell all the sons of Granmar, and all their leaders but only Dag, the son of Hogni. He was given quarter and swore oaths to the Volsungs. Sigrun went upon the battlefield and found Hothbrodd near to death.

She said:

"Will not Sigrun of the Seva Fells,
Highborn Hothbrodd, ever hold in your arms;
Have lost their lives - men's limbs tear now
Grey-coated wolves - all of Granmar's sons."

Then she found Helgi and was most glad.

(867)

He said:

"Not good only was given youm Sigrun,
Till norns, though, in this had a share:
Fell this morning at Freka Stone
Bragi and Hogni - my brand slew them;

"and at Hle Fells, Hrollaug's sons,
And at Styr Cliffs, Starkath the king:
Of goodly warriors I grimly saw him -
His body battled albeit headless.

"On the field have fallen by far the most,
Slain by the sword, of Sigurn's kinsmen;
In war has won only great woe,
Since strife did stir among surdy lords."

Then wept Sigrun.

He said:

"Take heart, Sigrun, a Hild though you have been to us:
It is of no avail to fight against fate."

Sigrun said:

"Alive I could wish who are lying dead,
And in my arms I could fold you. ...

...Helgi wedded Sigrun and had sone by her. Helgi did not live long. Dag, Hogni's son, sacrificed to Odin that he should help him avenge his father, and Odin loaned Dag his spear. Dag found Helgi, his sister's husband, in a grove which is near Fjotur Grove. He ran Helgi through with his spear, Helgi died.

Dag rose to Seva Fells and told Sigrun the tidings:

"Loath am I, sister, to tell sad tidings;
For unwilling was I to do you harm:
Fell this morning by Fjotur Grove
Under heaven who was of all heroes best,
And set his foot on sea kings necks."

Sigrun said:

"Shall every one of the oaths strike you
Which is Sigmund's son you earlier swore
By light-hued leaping Leiptr's water,
And by Unn's ice-sold altar.

(868)

"The boat shall not budge which bears you,
A fair wind though fills its sails;
The steed shall not run that you ride,
Though your enemies would flee from you!

"the sword shall not bite which is bared by you,
Buit it will sing over you and smite you down,
Nor shield-shelter but be shattered quickly,
Though sorely needed when set upon.

Then shall I have vengeance for Helgi's death,
If a wolf you were in the wilderness,
Wretchedly roving, and ravenous,
And fed to bursting on foul carrion."

Dag said:

"Bereft of reason and raving are you,
To wish your brother, such a baleful fate:

Of all evil is Odin father:
He did stir strife among staunch kinsmen.

"weregild I give you - red-golden rings,
Vandil's hallowed stead, and Vig Dales also,
Half our homeland - for the harm done to you,
Sigrun, sister, and to your sons."

Sigrun said:

"Shall I sadly sit at Seva Fells,
Nor late nor early in life be glad
But on lord and liegemen fall light-again,
And on Vigblaer's back he is borne hither,
On gold-bitted steed: would I greet him fondly.

"were allied with fear his foemen all,
Their kinsmen seek, cowed by Helgi,
As from the wolf will wildly run
Fell-grazing goats aghast with dread.

"High among heroes did Helgi stand,
Like a shapely ash tree among shrubs and thorns;
Or as dew-dripping deer tower
Above all other beasts of the woodlands:
Glow his horns on high to very heaven."

A mound was built over Helgi. But when he came to Valhalla, Odin let him have sway over all things together with himself.

(869)

Helgi said:

"You shall, Hunding, hearth fires kindle,
And wash the feet of every man;
Shall herd horses and tether hounds,
Give the swine their swill before you goe to sleep."

One of Sigrun's handmaids went at eventide past the barrow and beheld Helgi riding toward it with many men.

'Tis a dream-sight only my eyes behold,
Or the doom of the gods - dead men riding!
With spurs ye urge to speed your horses:
Or may the heroes wend home again?"

Helgi said:

"no dream-sight only your eyes behold,
Our world's end it isn't though us you see
With spurs urging to speed our horses;

Nor may the heroes wend home again."

The handmaid went back and said to Sigrun:

"Come out, Sigrun of Seva Fells,
If the folk-warder seeks to find you:
Helgi is here, his helmet open;
His wounds do bleed: he begs of you
To stay the bloody stream from his breast."

Sigrun went into the mound to Helgi and said:

"As fain am I to find you, Helgi,
As Odin's ravens, hungry for meat,
When war they scent and warm corpses,
And dew besprent the daylight see.

The lifeless king to kiss I wish,
Before the bloody armor you unbuckle;
Your hair, Helgi, is hoary with frost,
With dew-of-wounds all wet are you.
Clammy the hands of Hogni's kinsmen;
How shall I, hero, find help for that?"

Helgi said:

"tis Sigrun's doing, of Seva Fells,
That Helgi drips with the dew of sorrow;
Woman sun-bright, southern, before you sleep,
You sadly weep salt tears;

(870)

Falls each one, bloody, on the breast of the king,
Icy, festering, full of sorrow.

"Is this wondrous wine a welcome drink,
Though life and lands be lost for aye;
Songs of sadness shall no one sing,
Albeit my breast bleeds with wounds:
Now has my bride into the mound come,
The maid praised of men, to me, the dead!"

Sigrun made ready a bed in the mound.

She said:

"A bed made I ready for both of us,
Tis free from care, kingly Helgi;
In your arms will I, atheling, sleep,
As in life, I would lie with you."

Helgi said:

"No wonder say I, will unwonted seem,

Sooner or later, at Seva Fells,
Since lies with the lifeless leader's body
In the mound, Hogni's white-armed daughter-
With the dead the quick the queenly woman."

When morning dawned, Helgi arose and said:

"Along reddening roads to ride I will me,
On fallow steed aery paths to fly:
To the west shall I of Windhelm's bridge,
Before Valhalla's warriors wake (the cock) Salgofnir."

Helgi and his men rode on their way, but Sigrun and her women wended home. On the next evening, Sigrun had a maid watch by the burial mound.

But when the day was at an end, Sigrun came to the burial mound and said:

"Come had by now, if to come he wished,
The son of Sigmund from the seat of Odin;
Little hope that hither the heros will ride,
now the eagles perch on ash-tree limbs,
and all hosts hie them to the home of dreams."

The bondmaid said:

"Twere folly, lady, to fare alone,
You Hogni's daughter, to a dead man's home.
All dead men's ghosts do grow more dread
(871)

As daylight darkens to the dimness of night."

Sigrun lived but a short while longer, for grief and sorrow. It was the belief in olden times that men were born again (reincarnated), but that is now called old women's superstition. Helgi and Sigrun are said to have been born again as Helgi Haddingjaskati and Kara, as the daughter of Halfdan, as is told in The Lay of Kara. She was a valkyrie." (508)

As we have said before, the most famous of the Valkyries was Brynhilde. Below is another lay from The Poetic Edda in which Brynhilde is the chief protagonist.

The Short Lay of Sigurth

The generally accepted title of The Short Lay of Sigurth - thus it is called in the prose immediately preceding it in the Codex Regius - is decidedly a misnomer; for the tragedy, not of Sigurth's, but of Brynhilde's life forms its chief content, just as The

First Lay of Guthrun contemplates Guthrin's sorrows. The performance of the poet is uneven. The introduction strikes one as perfunctory and grudging, as though to furnish just enough background to make Brynhilde's behavior comprehensible. Even Sigurth's dying words contain no memorable lines. It is only when "the fiendish woman's" fierce jealousy is at work, when she eggs on Gunn with scornful threats, when she prepares to be reunited with Sigurth in death, and also when Hogni sternly repels Gunnar's treachery and later refuses to hinder Brynhilde from slaying herself, that the lines rise to a dark grandeur. The latter part of the lay falls off in power and contains elements which one would like to consider interpolations. Thus, the prophecy of Guthrun's fate reminds one of the style of the Gripisspa, besides being psychologically out of place. And unfortunately it cannot be said the character of Brynhilde and her tragedy has been brought humanly near to us. Though one of the longest, our lay is generally attributed to an Icelander of the eleventh or twelfth century. In particular, it is a later, Icelandic development to make Brynhilde a sister of Atli; so, also, is the whole relationship hinted at between Gunnar and Oddrun, especially as a motivation of the fall of the Niflungs. The Volsunga Saga which makes extensive use of the lay allows of fairly close control. The metre is *fornyrthislag*, at times, rather irregular.

(872)

In times long gone came to Gjuki's hall
Sigurth the Volsung - had he slain Fafnir -
in the troth was taken of the two brothers:
to each other swore oaths the kings.

The maid they gave him with much treasure,
Guthrun the young, Gjuki's daughter;
Drank together many days full
Sigurth the young and the sons of Gjuki.

Then wended their way to woo Brynhilde:
Rode Sigurth with them to seek her hall,
Sigmund's young son, the seaways knowing---
For himself had won her if fate had willed,

His naked sword laid the Southron king
Betwixt the two, his trusted blade;
The Hunnish hero, nor held her to him,
But yielded to Gunnar the youthful maiden.

In all her life no ill had she known;
And in her fate no flaw, either;
Of blemish none in her body knew she:
Yet cruel norms came between them.

Outside she sat at eventide;
Began Brynhilde rashly to raise her voice:
"I shall hold Sigurth, the youthful hero,
Within my arms, his end though it be.

"In wrath I spoke: I shall rue it afterwards -
His wife is Guthrun, and Gunnar's, I.
The earthly norms our longing caused."

Outdoorx went she, wishing them evil
Every evening with ice-cold heart,
When both they to bed did go,
Sigurth and Gudrun to sleep together.

Now Gjuki's daughter gladly kisses him
And the Hunnish king clasps his lady:
I have not husband nor happiness,
I must seek my glee in grim revenge.

In hate-filled breast she brooded murder;
"Shall Gunnar forego altogether
My demesnes and me also:
Your love I expect not, liege, to have ever.

"Will I fare thither where before I was,
To my dear kindred, my kinsmen dear -
(873)

There dully dwell and dream through life -
But you do to death Guthrun's darling,
And greatest grow, Gunnar, of all.

"let the son fare alike with his father,
nor keep too long the cub of the wolf:
easier never is revenge
that when a slain warrior's son still lives."

Then hung his head, heartsick, Gunnar;
Brooding darkly he sat all day
nor did he know in nowise clearly
what were for him wisest to do,
since to Sigurth he had sworn clear oaths,
and loathe he was to lose the Volsung.

Both this and that in thought he weighed:
Before now was it nowise known that ever
From her king a queen did go.

Gunnar said:

"To me is Brynhilde, Buthli's daughter,
Above all else, the best of women;
And my life rather would I lose, by far,
Than of her riches bereft to be."

"Summoned he Hogni to secret speech,
To whom he could wholly trust him:
"Will betray Sigurth for the sake of gold?
'Tis good to gain the golden rings,
And at our ease to own this wealth."

To him hardly Hogni answered:
'Twould ill beseem us, for the sake of gold
With swords to sever oaths which we swore -
Our former oaths, the faith we plightd.

"on earth are not more honored kings,
The while we four over peole held sway
And here the Hunnish hero lives,
Nor beneath heaven more highborn sib;
If we begat us, goodly sons,
Still greater grew then the Gjuki kin.

"Full well know I whose wiles these be:
To Queen Brynhilde's unbridled hate."

(874)

Gunnar said:

"Egg we ` Guthorm to the evil deed,
Our youngest brother, a boy as yet:
He stoos wwithout the oaths we swore,
Our former oaths, the faith we plighted.

'Twas easy to egg the over eager one -

* * *

Stood in Sigurth's heart the steel.

Arose in the hall the hero, to wreak him,
And after the rash one in anger threw -
Cast the king's hand - the keen-edged sword,
Gleaming Gram - on to Guthorm flew it.

Then fell on the floor his foe, sundered:
His head and hands did hasten on,
The nether half into the hall fell back.

At Sigurth's side had slept Guthrun,
In carefree slumber, at the side of the king.
To wild woe now awakened she,
In the blood of Frey's friend as she weltered.

Her hands she wrung so ruefully
The bold Sigurth by the bed him lifted:
"Weep not, Guthron, nor wail so sore,
My young ride: your brothers live.

"Too young the heir who after me lives
To flee afar from his father's slayers;
They rashly wrought the reckless deed
Nightly and knavish, but newly sworn to it.

"Like sister's son at their side never rides,
though seven sons you suckle hereafter;
full well I know whose wiles are these:
this bale was wrought by Brynhilde alone.

"Me she loved more than any man;
Yet Gunnar's trust I never betrayed,
But always kept him the oaths I swore,
Lest I be called the Queen's lover."

Her senses she lost - his life the king -
Her hands she wrung so ruefully
That in the cupboard the beakers clinked
And in the garth the geese sang out.
(875)

The Brynhilde laughed, Buthli's daughter,
One time only, out of inmost heart,
On her couch when came to her ears
The grievous wailing of Gjuki's daughter.

Said then Gunnar, the goodly king:
"You do not laugh, vengeful lady,
So gleefully as though your heart was glad:
Wherefore wholly hueless do you grow,
Fiendish woman? I say you are fey.

"But right it was, wretched woman,
That before your eyes was Atli slain,
And with bloody wound your brother lay,
With bloody wounds, for you to bind."

Brynhilde said:

"No fault do I find: you have fought well;
But little Atli fears your anger:
Longer will he live thab you,
And in might will ever overmatch you, Gunnar!

"Now I shall say what you yourself know,
How the Gjukungs grew guilty full soon;
My freedom I had, nor was I fettered in anything
On my brother's benches, with bounty dowered.

"Nor did I wish to ever be wedded,
Till high on horseback to our halls shall ride,
Matchless, ye Gjukungs - mighty kings three.
Would that you never had wandered there!

"That hero's wife I wished to be
Who on Grani's back sat, rich in gold;
His eyes were very unlike yours,
Nor were you like him in looks or shape,
Folk-kings though you called yourselves.

"And Atli said in secret to me
That with me he would not ever share his wealth -
Gold nor lands - if I did not give him my love,
Nor anything else of the golden treasures
In earliest youth which up he yielded,
And in earliest youth to own he gave me.

"Then did I dwell in doubt, full long,
Whether wars to wage, and wend to battle
In bold armor, my brother's spite:
Had that gone forth far to many people,
And to many been a mournful fate.

(876)

"Our bond then we made which bound us together:
In my heart I hoped for the Niflung hoard,
Sigmund's sons' his silver and gold;
Nor did I want another's wealth.

"But him I loved, nor other lord,
A fickle heart I did have in no way;
Will Atli all this hereafter know,
When he hears how to Hel I fared.

"For lightheartedly let no woman
Another's husband hold in her arms.
Now will I slay me and Sigurth follow:
My heavy harm then have I avenged."

Up rose Gunnar, Gjuki's son;
His arm he laid about the lady's neck.

With kindly thoughts all came thither,
The highborn heroes, her hands to stay:
And though she thrust all thanes from her,
Nor would she be hindered Helward to fare.

He summoned Hogni to secret speech:
"I will have all heroes gather in the hall,
Both yours and mine - much we need them -
How we hinder that to Hel she fares;
Until in time we turn her from it:
Some means must we meanwhile find."

To him hardy Hogni answered:
"Hinder her not from faring Helward,
Whence back never she be born again!
Wicked left she her mother's womb,
To the world was she but woe to bring,
Sadness and sorrow to sons of men."

Sadly he (Gunnar) turned from talking with her,
When the gold-dight one her gifts bestowed:
On all she looked which she had owned,
On lifeless bondsmails and on ladies-in-waiting.

She dressed herself in golden armor, grim in her mind,
Ere with the sword she slew herself;
Back on a bolster her body sank:
Dying bethought her of dire counsel:

"now shall hither my handmaids come
If gold they wish, and wealth from me;
Gilded trinkets I give to each,
Embroidered bedclothes, bright hues raiment."
(877)

Were all silent when she said these words,
And all together this answer made:
"No more shall die: we mean to live;
'tis anseeming honor to us women."

Thereupon the lady in linen bright,
So young in years, thus she spoke:
"Un fain I wish none to follow me,
nor lose his life who is loathe to die.

"On your bodies' bones will burn, hereafter,
Far fewer rings when forth ye come -
Nor Menja's meal - and we meet in Hel.

"Seat yourself, Gunnar; I say to you
Your brow-white wife awaits death;
Nor is your ship in harbor
Even though your bride has breathed her last.

"Will Guthron soon forgive you this,
Though often the Queen at Atli's court
Will think in sorrow on Sigurth dead.

"Is a maid child born - her mother she -
Of hue whiter than the very heavens,
Than the sun even, Svanhild hight.

"Will give Guthrun to goodly hero -
That brings sorrow to sons of men -
Nor will she wed whom wish she might:

Will Atli wed her his wife to be -
He, born to Buthli, my own brother.

"Am I much mindful how you dealt with me,
How you did wrong to me the wretched one:
No happiness was mine while I lived.

"It is Oddrun ["Knowing Weapon Runes", Brynhilde's
sister] then you ask for wife,
But Atli will not heed your wishes;
Still, under linen you two will lie:
Will she hold you dear, as I had done
If a kindlier fate had willed it so.

Will Atli then deal ill with you,
In a dungeon will you with worms be laid.

"Will lose his life, not long thereafter,
Atli, when all this evil is wrought -
Lose his treasure and the lives of his sons -
For Gjuki's daughter (Guthrun) grim in her mind,
(878)

With sword full soon will slay him in bed.

"For your sister it would be more seemly
To follow to death her first husband,
If good counsel were given her,
Or heart like mine she had in her breasts.

"Of what will I speak - yet, in spite of us,
She keeps her life a long time after:
Towering billows will toss Guthrun
Beyond the sea to *Jormunrekkr's* [The king of the Goths
on the shores of the Black Sea, i.e., *Hermanric*: Gothic:
Airmnareiks: Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*];
Over the sea Svanhild will she send abroad,
Sigurth's daughter, to a sorry fate.

"Will be her bale Bikki's counsels,
For *Jormunrekkr* [Gothic: *Airmnareiks*] will ill reward
her.

Slain are then all Sigurth's kin,
But greater still are Guhrun's sorrows.

"One boon shall I yet beg of you,
Which in this life my last will be:
On a meadow build of many logs
A pyre reared, with room for all
Who after Sigurth did seek their death.

"hide it wholly with hangings and shields,
With well-dyed weeds and many Welsh thralls:
Let the Hunnish hero burn hard by me.

"On the Hunnish hero's other hand let burn
Of my bondmaids, bracelet-decked,
Two at his head, two at his feet,
The hero's hounds and hawks also two;
Then all is ordered evenly.

"Let the wand-of-wounds (sword) be once more laid
Bwtwixt us two truehearted ones,
As when we both one bed did share,
Though then we were husband and wife.

"On his heels do not fall the shining hall's
Ring-handled gate, on hinges rolling,
If you follow him my faithful thralls:
At our rich riding shall no man rail.

"For he is followed by five bondmaids
And eight henchmen of honest kin,
My nurse and all the dowry
That which Buthli to Brynhilde gave.
(879)

"I have told you much, yet more I would say
But for my fate: my speech fails me,
My voice weakens, my wounds do burn:
But I told you the truth - my times is come." (509)

In the above we meet not only valkyries, but also the king of the Goths on the shores of the Black Sea, Hermanric (Gothic; *Airmnareiks*: Old Norse; *Jormunrekkr*, of the clan or dynasty *Amal* or *Amalung*) Once again we see that the Goths in their home on the shores of the Black Sea must have had an epic tradition, which was influenced by the Celts and Iranians who were their neighbors and with whom they intermingled and were much influenced, and also that they maintained contacts with their ancient Scandinavian homeland.

Brynhilde, often identified as queen of the valkyries, is of particular interest to us because, as we have seen, the name, usually transcribed by the chroniclers who wrote in Latin as *Brunhilda*, was used by the Goths, even long after they had left the shores of the Black Sea and migrated to Italy and Spain. This

would seem to indicate that said name was originally Gothic, and, like the Valkyries, is yet another proof that the Goths when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea always maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland.

The following selections are from The Poetic Edda.

Brynhilde's Ride to Hel

After the death of Brynhilde two funeral pyres were made, one for Sigurth, and that one was kindled first; but on the other, Brynhilde was burned, and she was laid in a bower which was lined with cloth of gold. It is said that Brynhilde rode in this bower on her way
(880)

to Hel. She came to a dwelling place where lived a giantess.

The giantess said:

"Your shroud must halt there! Your way lies not through
My homestead, standing on stones upraised.
'Twere better for you in your bower to weave,
than in Hel to hanker after Guthrun's husband.

"Why would you, wayward fair Welsh [very curious that
Brynhilde, the Valkyrie, should be called a Celt] woman,
Ever drift into my lowly dwelling?
From your hands have you, highborn lady,
Washed the blood of many warriors."

Brynhilde said:

"Do not upbraid me, you bride of thurses,
That in many frays I fought with heroes [as a Valkyrie,
a battle maiden];
Of us both, I believe, I am the better:
Uncouth to mankind is ever your kin."

The giantess said:

"And you, Brynhilde, Buthli's daughter,
To most woe were you of all women born:
To Gjuki's offspring you brought only harm,
And you did lay low their lordly house."

Brynhilde said:

"As the wiser one from my shroud I will
Tell you, witless woman, if to wit you listen,

How Gunnar's lies my love did steal,
How the false one's guile made me faithless.

"Was I cursed and raised in a noble king's hall,
Beloved by most of lieges and thanes.
But in Hlymdale court I was ever
called battle maiden beneath my helm by whoever knew
me.

"The fearless king our feather coats took -

Eight sisters we were - an oak beneath.
When I was of twelve winters, if to wit you listen,
When to Agnar I dear oaths did swear.

(881)

"To Hel I sent old Hjalmgunnar,
The Gothic king, all gashed with wounds,
But bestowed victory on stouthearted Agnar;
Then Odin wreaked his wrath on me.

"With shields he screened me in Skatalund;
A ring he raised of red ones and white ones (flames).
And bade my sleep be sundered by him
who naught would fear, nor be faint of heart;

"Made the waster-of-wood (fire), as the welkin high,
Burn all about my bower to southward;
Bade him only ride over it
Who would fetch me the gold on which Fafnir lay.

"The giver-of-gold rode Grani then
Where my foster father his folk-land ruled;
Did Sigurth seem, the sea king of the Danes,
Among weapon-wielders worthiest of all.

"Beneath linen we two did lie together
As though we were born brother and sister:
In full eight nights neither of us
His hands did lay in love on the other.

"Yet Guthrun said, Gjuki's daughter,
That I had slept in Sigurth's arms;
Then I grew aware, as I would not, rather,
How they beguiled me Gunnar to wed.

"Women and men to the world are born,
Their lives to live in longing and sorrow;
Our lives we should not have lived apart,
Sigurth and I - sink now, thurs-bride!"(510)

The Lay of Sigdrifa

Sigurth rode over Hindar Fell On the fell he saw a bright light, as though a fire were burning there, and it shone to very heaven. When he drew near, he found there a wall of shields, and a banner loomed above it. He entered into his wall of shields and saw that in it slept someone in full war weeds. Sigurth first lifted the helmet off the sleeper's head, and then he saw that it was a woman. Her coat of mail was tight about her as though it were grown to the flesh. With his sword Gram he slit the byrnie, from the neck down, and also both sleeves, and took it off

Then she awoke and sat up, and beheld Sigurth, and said:
(882)

"What slit my byrnie? How was broken my sleep?
Who lifted from me the leaden weight?"

He answered:

"Tis Sigmund's son - on Fafnir's body
Ravens fatten - 'tis Sigurth's brandd."

She said:

"Hail to thee, Hail, ye day's sons!
Hail, night and daughter of night!
With blythe eyes look on both o us:
Send to thoe sitting here speed!

"hail to you, ods! Hai goddesses!
Hail, earth that gives to all!
Goodly spells and speech bespeak we from you,
And healin hands in this life."

Sigurth sat down and asked her name. She said her name was Sigrdrifa and that she was a Valkyrie. She said that two kins had fought.

Sigrdrifa felled Hjalmgunnar in the battle, but Odin in revenge pricked her with a sheep-thorn [a thorn on which "sheep runes" are scratched] and said ha she should never henceforth fight in battle, but be wedded. "But I too made a vow that I should never be wedded to a man who knew fear." (Then she took a horn full of mead and gave it to him, to bind him o her.)

She said:

"Long was my slumber, asleep was I long,
Long to the luckless is life:
'is Valfather's will that wake I could not,
Nor rid me of runes o sleep."

Then Sigurth asked that she teach him wisdom, if so it
be that she had knowledge from all the worlds.

Sigrdrifa said:

"Ale I bring thee, thou oak of battle,
With strength blessed and brightest honor;
'is mixed wih magic and mighy sons,
With goodly spells wish-speeding runes.

"Learn victory runes if thou victory want,
And have them ob thy sword's hilt -
(883)

On thy sword's hilt some, on thy sword's guard some,
And call twice upon Tyr (god of war)

"Learn ale runes eke, lest another man's wife
Betray the who trusted In her:
On thy beer horn scratch it, and the back of thy hand,
And the Nauth rune [Nauth = need] on thy nails.

"Thy beaker bless to banish fear
And cast a leek [antidote against poison] in thy cup,
Then know I that never thou needest fear
That bale in thy beer there be.

"Learn help runes eke, if help thou wilt
A woman to bring forth her babe:
On thy palms wear them and grasp her wrists,
And ask the disir's aid.

"Learn sea runes eke if save thou wilt
The sail-steeds on the sea:
On the bow scratch them, and on rudder blade,
And etch tem with fire in the oars:
However beetling the billows and black the deep,
Yet comest thou safe from the sea.

"Limbs runes learn thou, if a leech you would be,
And wish wounds to heal:
On the bark scratch them of bole in the woods
Whose boughs bend to the east.

"Speech runes learn thou, to spite no one,
Lest out of hate he harm thee:
These wind you, these weve you,
And gather them all together
When men to moot are met at the Thing,
And all Thing-men are there.

"Mind runes learn thou if among men thou wilt
Be wiser than they:
them did grave

them did hit upon Hropt [Odin].

Lacuna
Made of the sap which seeps in drops
Out of Heithdraupnir's head,
Out of Hoddrofnir's horn.

"On the brink stood he [Odin] with Brimir, the sword;
On his head he had a helm:
Then muttered Mimir's head
Wisely first this word,

(884)

And sooth said of this:
"Said on the shield graven before the shining god which
stands,
On Arvakr's ear, and on Alsvith's hoo,
On the wheel which turns beneath [the giant] Hrungnir's
bane's wain,
on Sleipnir's teeth, and on the sleigh's strap bands,
"On the paw of the bear and o Bragi's [he god of
poetry] tongue,
On the old wolf's claw and on the eagle's beak,
On the bloody wings and on the bridge's head,
On the midwife's hand and on the healing spoor,

"On glass and on gold and on good luck token,
In wine and in wort and on wonted seat,
On Gungnir's [Odin's spear] point and on Grani's
breast,
On the norn-mail eke and the night owl's beak.

"Off were scraped all which on were scratched,
And mixed with the holy mead,
And sent about and abroad.
The Aesir have them, the alfs have them,
And some the wise Vanir have
And some, mortal men.

"These beech runes be, and birth runes, too,
And all ale runes,
And mighty, magic runes:
For whoever unspoiled, and unspilt, eke,
For his help will have them:
Gain he who grasps them,
Till draws near the doom of the gods! [*Gotterdammerung*]

"Now shall thou choose, since choice you have,
Hero beneath shining h,
To say or not to say: with yourself it rests!
Meted out is all evil."

(*Sigrdrifa said:*)

"This counsel I first: of kinsmen of thine
At no time fall thou foul:
Curb thy revenge, though cause there be:
'twill boot thy dying day.

"This other I counsel, that oath thou swear not
But thou tell the truth:
For baleful doom follows breach of truce;
Ill fares the breaker of oaths.

(885)

"This third I counsel, that at Thing thou never
Bandy words with witless weight;
For unwise man full often says
Worse words than he knows.

'Tis well nowise if naught thou sayest:
A craven thou will be called;
[or taunted that true the charge.
Fickle is homemade fame,
But good it be gotten]
Make away with him when he waits him not,
And reward thus the wicked lie.

That fourth I counsel, if foul witch live
By the way thou wish to fare:
To go on is better than be her guest,
Though that the night be near.

Foresight is needful to the sons of men,
Wherever in the fray they fight;
Often harmful hags do haunt the way,
Who dull both weapon and wit.

That counsel I fifth: though fair women,
And brow-white, sit on bench:
Let the silver-dight one not steal thy sleep,
Nor lure thou women to love!

That counsel I sixth: though swaggering speech
And unkind made over the cups:
With drunken warriors no words thou bandy,
For wine steals many a one's wits.

Quarrels and ale have often brought
Sorrow to sons of men -
Foul death to some, ill fate to others:
Much woe is wrought in the world.

That counsel I the seventh: if for cause thou fight
Against stouthearted heroes:
'tis better to battle than be burned alive
Within his own house and home.

That counsel I eighth, to keep thee from evil,
Nor dally with dastardly deeds;
No maiden mar thou, nor married woman
Lure thou to love with thee.

That counsel I ninth, that corpses thou bury,
Wheresoever on earth thou find them -
Whether sickness slew them, or in the sea they
(886)

drowned,
Or whether they fell in battle.

[“A bath shalt make for the dead man’s body,
And wash both his hands and head;
Dry and comb him, ere in coffin laid,
And bid him sleep sweetly.]

That counsel I tenth, that thou trust never
Oath of an outlaw’s son;
Whether art his brother’s bane, or felled by his
father;
A wolf often sleeps in his son, though young,
And glad of the gold though he be.

Seldom sleeps the sense of wrong
Nor, either, hate and heartache.
Both his wits and weapons a warrior needs
Who would fain be foremost among folk.

That counsel I eleventh: to keep thee from evil,
From wherever it may threaten thee:
Not long the lord’s life, I ween me,
Have fateful feuds arisen.” (511)

Thanks to Richard Wagner, Brynhilde is, of all the Valkyries,
the one who is best known and most appears as an individual
character, not simply one of the Valkyries.

Says Helene A. Guerber, very succinctly:

“The story of Brynhilde is to be found in many
forms. Some versions describe the heroine as the
daughter of a king taken by Odin to serve in his
Valkyrie band, others as chief of the Valkyries and
daughter of Odin himself.”(512)

Besides The Poetic Edda, Brynhilde also appears in The Saga

of the Volsungs;

"Sigurd said: 'Never can there be found a wiser woman in the world than you. Give me more wise counsel.' Brynhilde answered: 'It is right to do your bidding and to give you good advice, because you seek it wisely.' Then she said: 'Do well by your kinsmen and take little revenge for their wrongdoings. Endure with
(887)

patience and you will win long-lasting praise. Beware of ill dealings, both of a maid's love and a man's wife; ill often arise from these. Control your temper with foolish men at crowded gatherings, for they frequently speak worse than they know. When you are called a coward, people may think that you are rightfully named so. Kill the man another day, rewarding him for his malicious words.

'If you travel a road where evil creatures dwell, be wary. Although caught by nightfall, do not take shelter near the road, for foul beings who bewilder men often live there.

'Even if you see beautiful women at a feast, do not let them entice you so that they interfere with your sleep or distress your mind. Do not allure them with kisses and other tenderness. And if you hear foolish words from drunken men, do not dispute with those who are drunk on wine and have lost their wits. To many men such things bring much grief or even death.

'It is better to fight with your enemies than to be burned at home. And do not swear a false oath, because hard vengeance follows the breaking of truce. Do the right thing by dead men, be they dead from disease, by drowning, or by a weapon. Prepare their bodies with care. And do not trust any man, even though he is young, whose father or brother or close kinsman has been killed by you; often a wolf lies in a young son. Beware of the wiles of friends. I see only a little of your future life, yet it would be better if the hate of your in-laws did not descend upon you.'

Sigurd said: 'No one is wiser than you. And I swear that I shall marry you, for you are to my liking.' She replied: 'I would most prefer to marry you, even should I choose from among all men.' And this they pledged with vows between them." (490 pp. 67-72)

"Now Brynhilde, Heimir's foster daughter, had come home. She stayed in a bower with her maidens. More skilled in handicraft than other women, she embroidered her tapestry with gold on it, stitched stories of the noble deeds that Sigurd had wrought: the slaying of the serpent, the seizing of the gold, and the death of Regin. It is said that one day Sigurd rode into the woods with his hounds and hawks and many followers. When

he returned home, his hawk flew to a high tower and settled by a window. Sigurd went after the hawk. Then he saw a fair woman and realized that it was Brynhilde. Both her beauty and her work affected him deeply. He went to the hall but did not want to join in the sport of the men. Then Alsvid said: 'Why are you so quiet? This change in you concerns us, your friends.'

(888)

Why can you not be merry? Your hawks are moping, as is your horse Grani, and it will be a long time before this is amended.'

Sigurd answered: 'Good friend, listen to what is non my mind. My hawk flew to a tower and when I captured him, I saw a beautiful woman. She sat at a golden tapestry and embroidered there my past deeds.' Alsvid replied: 'You have seen Brynhilde, a woman of most noble bearing.' Sigurd said: 'There was only a short time between your arrivals.'" Sigurd said: 'This I learned just a few days ago. This woman seemed to me the best in the world.'

Alsvid spoke: 'Such a man as you should not pay attention to a woman. It is bad to pine for that which cannot be obtained.' 'I shall meet her", said Sigurd. "I shall give her gold and gain mutual affection and love.' Alsvid answered: 'There has yet to be a man that she allows to sit by her or to whom she gives ale to drink. She wants to go warring and win all kinds of fame.' Sigurd said: 'I do not know whether she will answer me or not or whether she will let me sit by her.'

The next day Sigurd went to her chamber. Alsvid stood outside by the room, making arrow shafts. Sigurd said: 'Be greeted, lady. And how do you fare?' She replied: 'I am faring well. My kin and friends are alive, but it is unknown what fortune men will have to their dying day.'

He sat down next to her. Then four women entered bearing large gold goblets and the best of wine and stood before them. Brynhilde said: 'That seat is granted to few, except when my father comes.' Sigurd replied: 'Now it is granted to whoever pleases me.' The room was hung with the most precious tapestries and cloth covered the whole floor. Sigurd said: 'Now it has happened as you promised me.' She answered: 'You will be welcomed here.'

Then she rose up and the four maidens with her. She brought him a gold cup, and invited him to drink. He reached toward the cup but took her hand, drawing her down beside him. He put his arms around her neck and kissed her, saying: 'No fairer woman than you has ever been born.' Brynhilde said: 'It is wiser counsel not to put your trust in a woman, because women always break their promises.'

Sigurd said: 'The best day for us would be when we

can enjoy each other. Brynhilde said: 'It is not fated that we should live together. I am a shield-maide. I wear a helmet and ride with the warrior kings. I must support them, and I am not averse to fighting.' Sigurd answered: 'Our lives will be most fruitful if spent

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together. If we do not live together, the grief will be harder to endure than a sharp weapon.'

Brynhilde replied: 'I must review the troops of warriors, and you will marry Gudrun, the daughter of Gjuki.' Sigurd answered: 'No king's daughter shall entice me. I am not of two minds in this, and I swear by the gods that I will marry you or no other woman.' She spoke likewise. Sigurd thanked her for her words and gave her a gold ring. They swore their oaths anew. He went away to his men and was with them for a time, prospering greatly."(513)

Note that in the above passage Brynhilde quite clearly proclaims herself to be a Valkyrie rather than a mortal woman.

The fire began to flare
And the earth to shudder
And high FLAMES
To heaven towered.
Few of the king's men
Had courage enough
To ride into the fire
Or to leap across it.

Sigurd with his sword
Spurred Grani on.
The flames expired
Before the prince,
The fire all fell back
Before the fame-hungry one.
The harness was radiant
Which Regin had owned.

And when Sigurd got past the flames, he found a beautiful dwelling and inside it sat Brynhilde. She asked who this man was. He called himself Gunnar [of Gothic origin], son of Gjuki, 'and with the consent of your father and the agreement of your foster father, you are my intended wife, provided I ride your wavering flame and if you should so decide.' 'I hardly know how to respond,' she said. Sigurd stood straight upon the floor, resting on the hilt of his sword, and said to Brynhilde: 'I shall pay a generous marriage settlement of gold and precious treasures in return for your hand.'

She answered gravely from her seat, like a swan on a wave, in her mail coat, [very valkyrie], and with her

sword in her hand and her helmet on her head. 'Gunnar', she said, 'do not speak of such things to me, unless you surpass every other man and you will kill those who

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have asked for me in marriage, if you have the courage to do so. I was in battle with the king of Gardarki (the steppes of Russia and Ukraine, another reference to the Goths, or perhaps to the Sarmatians and Alans) and our weapons were stained with the blood of men, and this I still desire.' He replied: 'You have performed many splendid feats, but now call to mind your vow: that, if this fire were crossed, you would go with the man who did it.' She recognized the truth in his answer and the significance of his speech. She rose and received him well.

He stayed there for three nights and they slept in one bed. He took the sword Gram and lay it unsheathed between them. She asked why he put it there. He said it was fated that he must celebrate his marriage in this manner or else die. He took from her the ring Andvaranaut, which he had given her, and gave her now another ring from Fafnir's inheritance. After this he rode away through the same fire to his companions. Sigurd and Gunnar changed back into their own shapes and then rode into Hlymdale and related what had passed.

That same day Brynhilde journeyed home to her foster father. She told him in private that a king had come to her 'and rode through my wavering flames, declaring he had come to win me. He called himself Gunnar. Yet when I swore the oath on the mountain, I had said that Sigurd alone could do that, and he is my first husband.' Heimar said that it would have remain as it was. Brynhilde said; 'My daughter by Sigurd, Aslaug, Shall be raised here with you.'

The kings now went home, and Brynhilde went to her father. Grimhilde received them well and thanked Sigurd for his support. A feast was prepared and a great many people came. King Budli came with his daughter and his son Atli. And the feast lasted many days. When the celebration ended Sigurd remembered all his vows to Brynhilde, although he did not let this be known. Brynhilde and Gunnar sat together at the entertainment and drank good wine."(514)

One day Brynhilde and Gudrun went to bathe in the river Rhine. Then Brynhilde waded farther out in the river. Gudrun asked what this meant. Brynhilde said: 'Why should I be your equal more in this than in other matters? I think my father is more powerful than yours, and my husband has accomplished many splendid feats and rode through the burning fire, but your husband was a thrall of King Hjalprek.' Gudrun answered angrily: 'It would be wiser for you to hold your tongue than to

insult my husband. Everyone agrees that no one at all
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like him has come into the world. It is not fitting for you to insult him, because he was your first man. He killed Fafnir and rode the wavering flames when you thought it was King Gunnar. He lay with you and took from your hand the ring Andvaranaut, which you can now see here for yourself.'

Brynhilde saw the ring, recognized it, and became as pale as death. Brynhilde went home and spoke no word that evening. When Sigurd came to bed Gudrun asked: 'Why is Brynhilde so gloomy?' Sigurd replied: 'I am not certain, but I suspect that we shall soon know more clearly.' Gudrun said: 'Why does she not take delight in wealth and happiness and in the praise of all men, as she married the man she wanted?' Sigurd said: 'Where was she when she said this, that she thought herself to have the best man or the one that she most wanted to marry?' Gudrun answered: 'In the morning I shall inquire whom she most wants to marry.' 'This I ask you not to do,' Sigurd replied, 'for once done, you will repent it.'

That morning they sat in their bower, and Brynhilde was silent. Then Gudrun said: 'Be cheerful, Brynhilde. Did our conversation distress you? What prevents happiness?' Brynhilde replied: 'Malice alone brought you to this. You have a grim heart.' 'Do not think that', said Gudrun. 'Tell me instead.'

Brynhilde answered: 'Only ask what is best for you to know. That is suitable for noble women. And it is easy to be satisfied, while everything happens according to your desires.' Gudrun replied: 'It is early yet to boast, but this is somehow prophetic. Why are you goading me? I have done nothing to grieve you.' 'You shall pay for marrying Sigurd. I cannot bear that you enjoy him and that vast gold treasure.' Brynhilde answered: 'I did not know of your agreement', said Gudrun, 'and my father might well arrange a marriage for me without consulting you.'

Brynhilde replied: 'Our talk was not secret and yet we had sworn oaths. You knew that you were betraying me. And that betrayal I shall avenge. But your pride will not easily subside and many will pay for this.' 'I would have been content', said Brynhilde, 'if you did not have the nobler man.' Gudrun answered: 'You have such a noble husband with abundant wealth and power that it is uncertain who is the greater king.' Brynhilde replied: 'Sigurd fought Fafnir and that is worth more than all of Gunnar's power,' as is told:

Sigurd fought the dragon
And that afterward will be
Forgotten by no one

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While men live.
Yet your brother
Neither dared
To ride into the fire
Nor to leap across it.

Gudrun replied: 'Grani would not run the fire with King Gunnar on him, but Gunnar dared to ride into it. There is no need to challenge his courage.' 'I do not hide my lack of goodwill for Grimhilde,' Brynhilde said. Gudrun answered: 'Do not blame her, for she treats you like her own daughter.' Brynhilde replied: 'She contrived the whole onset of this misfortune that consumes us. She brought Sigurd the ruinous ale, so that he could not remember my name.' Gudrun answered: 'You speak many unjust words - it is a great lie.'

Brynhilde replied: 'Enjoy Sigurd as if you had not betrayed me. You are undeserving to live together. May things proceed for you as I foresee.' Gudrun answered: 'I will enjoy more than you would wish. No one has reported that he was too good for me, not even once.' Brynhilde answered: 'You are spiteful in your speech. When you regain your composure, you will regret this conversation. Let us no longer bandy words of hate.' Gudrun said: 'You first flung malicious words at me. Now you act in a conciliatory way, yet hatred is at the root of this.'

'Let us stop this useless chatter', said Brynhilde. 'I kept my silence for a long time about the sorrow in my breast, yet I love only your brother. Let us speak of other things.' Gudrun said: 'Your thoughts see far beyond the present.'

Great sorrow came to pass because they went to the river and Brynhilde recognized the ring, from which their conversation arose.

After this conversation Brynhilde took to her bed. King Gunnar received word that she was sick, and he went to see her, asking what vexed her. But she did not respond and lay as if dead. And when he persisted in this manner, she answered: 'What did you do with the ring I gave you?' King Budli gave me this ring at our last parting, when you, the sons of King Gjuki, came to him and swore you would destroy and burn if you did not get me. He then took me aside and asked which man of those who had come I would choose. But I offered to defend the land and to be commander of a third of the army. There were then two choices at hand: either I would have to marry the man he wished or give up all wealth and his pledge of friendship. He said that his friendship was more profitable for me than his anger.

'Then I debated with myself whether I should

submit TO his will or kill many men. I thought myself powerless to contend with him. So it happened that I betrothed myself to the one who would ride the horse Grani with Fafnir's inheritance, so that one who would ride through my wavering flames and would kille those men whom I deceided should die. Now, no one dared to rise except Sigurd alone. He rode through the fire because he was not short of courage for the deed. He killed the dragon and Regin and five kings - unlike you, Gunnar, who blanched like a corpse. You are neither king nor champion. And I made thi solemn vow at my father's home that I would love that man alone who is the noblest man born, and that is Sigurd. Now I am a breaker of oaths, as I do not have him. Be cause of this I shall bring about your death, and I have Grimhilde to reward in an evil fashion. There is no woman worse or more cowardly.'

Gunnar responded in such a manner that few heard: 'You have spoken many false words, and you are a malicious woman to blame that woman who is far above you. She was not so discontent as you are, and she did not torment dead men. She murdered no one and she is praised.' Brynhilde answered: 'I have had no secret meetings, nor have I committed any crimes. My nature is different, and I might be more disposed to kill you.' Then she wanted to kill King Gunnar, but Hogni put her in fetters. Gunnar then said: 'I do not want her to live in chains.'

Brynhilde answered: 'Do not concern yourself about that, because fom this day on you will never see me cheerful in your hall. I will neither drink nor play chess, speak entertainingly, embroider fair garments with gold, nor give you advice.' She declared it the most grievous sorrow that she was not married to Sigurd. She sat up and struck her tapestry so that it tore apart. She bid her chamber door be opened, so that her lamentations could be heard far away. Now the sorrow was boundless and was heard throughout the stronghold.

Gudrun asked her servingwoman why they were so gloomy and sad: 'what is wrong with you? Why do you go about like mad people? What panic has seized you?' Then a woman of the court, Svafrlod, answered, 'This is an evil day. Our hall is full of grief.'

Gudrun spoke to her friend: 'Stand up, we have slept a long time. Wake Brynhilde. We will go to our needlework and be cheerful.' 'I will not do it', she said. I will neither wake her nor speak to her. For many days she has drunk neither mead nor wine and a godlike wrath is upon her.' Gudrun spoke to Gunnar: 'Go visit her.' She said, 'and say that her grief pains

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us.' Gunnar answered: 'I am forbidden to see her or share her wealth.'

Still Gunnar went to visit her and tried many directions of conversation with her, but he received nothing in the way of an answer. He went away now and met with Hogni, asking him to visit her. Hogni, though saying he was not eager to see her, went but got nothing from her. Then Sigurd was found and asked to visit her, but Sigurd did not reply. So matters stood that evening.

The next day, when Sigurd returned home from hunting, he met with Gudrun and said: 'I have come to see that this horror is full of portent, and Brynhilde will die.' Gudrun answered: 'My lord, strange and marvelous qualities are associated with her. She has now slept for seven days, so that none dare wake her.' Sigurd replied: 'She is not sleeping. She is plotting harsh deeds against us.'

Then Gudrun spoke tearfully: 'It is an enormous grief to foresee your death. Go rather and visit her and see whether her vehemence will subside. Give her gold and o appease her anger.' Sigurd went out and found the hall open. He thought Brynhilde asleep, drew back the bedcovers from her, and said: 'Wake up, Brynhilde. The sun is shining throughout the town, and you have slept enough. Throw off your sorrow and be happy.' She said: 'How arrogant you are to come and see me! No one has behaved worse toward me in this treachery.'

Sigurd asked: 'Why do you not speak to people? What is vexing you?' Brynhilde answered: 'I will tell you of my anger.'

Sigurd said: 'You are bewitched if you believe I think harshely of you. And you received as your husband the one you chose.'

'No', she said. 'Gunnar did not ride through the fire to me, nor did he pay me the marriage settlement in slain men. I wondered at the man who entered my hall, and I thought I recognized your eyes,, but I could not perceive clearly because of the vil that lay over my fate.'

Sigurd said: 'I am no nobler a man than the son of Gjuki. They killed the king of the Danes and a great prince, the brother of King Budli.' Brynhilde answered: 'I have many wrongs to discharge against them - do not remind me of my anguish. You, Sigurd, killed the serpent and rode through the fire for my sake. The sons of Gjuki did not do that.' Sigurd answered: 'I did not become your husband nor you my wife, and a noble king paid your marriage settlement.' Brynhilde replied: 'I have never looked so upon Gunnar that my heart was

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gladdened. I loathe him, although I conceal it from others.'

'It is terrible,' said Sigurd, 'not to love such a king. But what troubles you most? It seems to me that his love would be worth more than gild to you'.

Brynhilde answered: 'It is the most grievous of all my sorrows that I cannot bring it about that a sharp blade be reddened with your blood.' Sigurd said: 'Hold your judgement. It is a short wait until a biting sword will stick in my heart, and you could not ask for worse for yourself, because you will not live after me. From here on few days of life are left to us.'

Brynhilde answered: 'Your words do not come from little distress, since you cheated me of all delight; I care not about my life.'

Sigurd replied: 'Live, and love King Gunnar and me, and I will give all my treasure so that you do not die.'

Brynhilde said: 'You do not altogether know my character. You surpass all men, yet no woman has become more loathsome to you than I.'

'Something else is closer to the truth,' replied Sigurd. 'I love you more than myself, although I was the object of the deceit that cannot now be changed. Always when my mind was my own, it pained me that you were not my wife. But I bore it as well as I could since I lived in the king's hall. Yet I was happy that we were all together. It may be that what was earlier foretold will have to happen, but it shall not be feared.' Brynhilde answered: 'You have delayed too long in telling me that my sorrow grieves you, and now I shall find no comfort.' 'I should like us both to enter one bed,' said Sigurd, 'and you to be my wife.'

Brynhilde answered: 'Such things are not to be said. I will not have two kings in one hall. And sooner would I die before I would deceive King Gunnar.' Now she recalled their meeting on the mountain and sworn oaths - 'but now everything has changed and I do not want to live.' 'I could not remember your name', said Sigurd. 'I did not recognize you until you were married. And that is my deepest sorrow.'

Then Brynhilde spoke: 'I swore an oath to marry that man who would ride through my wavering flames, and that oath I would hold to or else die.' 'Rather than have you die, I will forsake Gudrun and marry you.', said Sigurd. And his sides swelled so that the links of his mail burst. 'I do not want you,' said Brynhilde, 'or anyone else.' Sigurd went away.

As it is told in the Lay of Sigurd,

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Out went Sigurd
Leaving talk,
Heroes' worthy friend,
And grieved so deeply
That the heaving breaths
Of the battle-eager one

Sheared from his sides
The iron-woven shirt.

And when Sigurd entered the hall, Gunnar asked if he knew what Brynhilde's affliction was and whether she had recovered her speech. Sigurd said she was able to speak. And now Gunnar went to visit her again and asked what her sorrow meant and whether there was a cure for it. 'I do not want to live,' said Brynhilde, 'because Sigurd has betrayed me, and he betrayed you no less, when you let him come into my bed. Now I do not want to have two husbands at the same time in one hall. This shall be Sigurd's death or yours or mine, because he has told Gudrun everything, and she reviles me.'

After this Brynhilde went out and sat under her chamber wall. She lamented grievously, declaring everything, both land and power, hateful to her, since she did not have Sigurd. And Gunnar came to her again. Then Brynhilde said: 'You shall lose both power and wealth, life and me, and I shall journey home to my kin and remain there in sorrow unless you kill Sigurd and his son. Do not raise the wolf cub.'

Gunnar now became very distressed. He thought he did not know the best course to pursue, for he was bound by oath to Sigurd. And various thoughts shifted in his mind., but he thought the worst dishonor would be if his wife left him. Gunnar said: 'Brynhilde is more precious to me than anything else, and she is the most renowned of all women. I would forfeit my life rather than lose her love.'

And he called his brother Hogni to him and said: 'I am confronted with a difficult choice.' He said that he wanted to kill Sigurd, that Sigurd had betrayed his trust: 'We will then also control the gold and have all the power.' Hogni said: 'It is not fitting for us to violate our oaths by breaching the peace. And we have had much support from him. No kings are our equal as long as this king of Hunland lives. And we will never get such a broth-in-law again. Consider how valuable it would be for us to have such a brother-in-law and nephews, too. But I see how this problem arose. Brynhilde stirred it up, and her advice will lead us to disgrace and destruction.'

Gunnar answered: 'We will make this event come about, and I see the means. Let us urge our brother

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Guttorm to act. He is young, knows little, and is not bound by any oath.' Hogni said: 'That seems poor advice to me. And even if the deed is done, we will pay for betraying such a man.' Gunnar said Sigurd must die, 'or else I will die.' He bid Brynhilde rise and be cheerful. She stood up and said, however, that Gunnar would not enter into the same bed with her until this came about.

Now the two brothers talked together. Gunnar said it is a valid felony punishable by death for having taken Brynhilde's maidenhead, 'and let us urge Guttorm on to this deed.' They called him to them and offered him gold and great power to perform the act. They took a snake and the flesh of a wolf and cooked them and gave this to him to eat, as the *skald* says:

Some took wood-fish (serpent),
Some sliced a wolf's carrion,
Some gave to Guttorm
The wolf's (*Geri*, the "ravener", Odin's wolf.) flesh
Mixed with ale.

They used these and many other kinds of witchcraft. And with this nourishment and Guttorm's persuasions and everything else, Guttorm became so violent and fierce that he promised to do the deed. They promised him great honor in return. Sigurd did not expect such deceit. He could also not prevail against either his fate nor his death. Sigurd also did not perceive that he was deserving of betrayal from them.

Guttorm went into Sigurd's room the next morning, while he was resting in his bed. But when he looked at him, Guttorm did not dare attack and turned back to leave the room. And so it happened a second time. Sigurd's eyes flashed so sharply that few dared meet their gaze. But the third time he went in, Sigurd was asleep. Guttorm drew his sword and struck at Sigurd so that the blade stuck in the bed beneath him. Sigurd then took the sword Gram and cast it after Guttorm. It struck him in the back and his head and arms fell back into the room.

Gudrun was asleep in Sigurd's arms, but she awoke to unspeakable grief, drenched in his blood. She wailed so with tears and lamentations that Sigurd rose up on the pillow and spoke. 'Do not weep,' he said. 'Yur brothers live on to grant your pleasure. But I have a son too young to keep a watch out for his enemies, and they have provided poorly for themselves. They will not again find such a brother-in-law to ride with them in the army, or such a nephew, if he is allowed to grow up. And now it has come to pass as has long been foretold.

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I refused to believe it, but no one can withstand his fate. Brynhilde, who loved me more than she did any other man, caused this betrayal. I will swear this, that I never did a disservice to Gunnar. I respected our oaths and I was never overly friendly with his wife. If I had known earlier what was going to happen and had risen to my feet, bearing my weapons, many would have lost their lives before I had fallen. All the brothers would have been slain. It would have been more difficult

for them to kill me than the fiercest wild bison or boar.'

The king now died. Gudrun let out a tormented moan. Brynhilde heard it and laughed when she heard Gudrun sobbing. Then Gunnar said: 'You do not laugh because you are happy in the depths of your heart. Or why has your color left you? You are a vile monster and most likely you are fated to die. No one would be more deserving than you to see King Atli killed before your eyes and to be forced to watch while it happened. We must now sit over our brother-in-law, the killer of our brother.'

She replied: 'No one will protest that there has been too little killing. But King Atli does not care about your threats nor your anger. He will outlive you and be mightier.' Hogni said: 'Now it has come about, as Brynhilde foresaw, and we will never remedy this evil deed.' Gudrun said: 'My relatives have killed my husband. Now you must ride at the head of the army, and when you come to battle, then you will find that Sigurd is no longer at your side. And you will then realize that Sigurd was your luck and your strength. If he had sons such as himself, then you might have fortified yourself with his offspring and their kin.'

Now no one thought himself capable of understanding why Brynhilde had requested with laughter the deed that she now lamented with tears. Then she said: 'I dreamt, Gunnar, that I had a cold bed and you were riding into the hands of your enemies. Your whole family will suffer an ill fate, for you are breakers of oaths. When you plotted his death, you did not clearly remember when you and Sigurd had mixed your blood together. You have rewarded him poorly for everything that he did in good faith for you and for letting you be the foremost. And when he came to me, his oaths were put to the test, for he lay his sharp-edged sword, tempered in venom, between us. But soon you plotted to harm him and me when I was at home with my father and had everything that I wanted. I did not intend that any of you would become my husband when you three kings rode toward the fortress. Then Atli took me aside and asked if I would marry the man who rode Grani. That one

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did not look like you. And then I promised myself to the son of King Sigmund and to no other. But things will not go well for you, even though I die.'

Then Gunnar rose up and put his arms around her neck and begged her to live and to accept compensation. And all the others tried to dissuade her from dying. But she pushed away everyone who came to her, saying it was useless to try to keep her from what she intended to do. Then Gunnar appealed to Hogni, asking him for counsel. He begged Hogni to go and attempt to soften her temper, saying there was now a great need to allay her sorrow

until time had passed. Hogni replied: 'No man should hinder her dying, for she has never been any good to us or to any man since she came here.'

Brynhilde asked for a large amount of gold to be brought and requested all who wanted to accept a gift of wealth to come forward. Then she took a sword and stabbed herself under the arm, sank back into the pillows, and said: 'Let each one who wants to receive gold take it now.' They were all silent. Brynhilde said: 'Accept the gold and use it well.'

Brynhilde then spoke to Gunnar: 'Now I will quickly tell you what will happen in the future. Through counsels of Grimhilde the sorceress, you will soon be reconciled with Gudrun. The daughter of Gudrun and Sigurd will be called Svanhilde, and she will be the fairest of all women born. Gudrun will marry Atli against her will. You will want to have Oddrun, (Atli's sister), but Atli will forbid it. You and Oddrun will then meet secretly and she will love you. Atli will betray you and put you in a snake pit, and then Atli and his sons will be killed; Gudrun will slay them. After that happens, huge waves will carry Gudrun to the fortress of King Jonakr, where she will give birth to noble sons. Svanhilde will be sent out of the land and be married to King Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*). The counsels of Bikki will sting her. With this all your race will be dead and gone and Gudrun's sorrows will be multiplied.'

Brynhilde continued; 'Now, Gunnar, I ask a final request of you: let one huge funeral pyre be raised on the level field for all of us: for me and Sigurd and for those who were killed with him. Let there be tents reddened with the blood of men. Burn the Hunnish king (Atli) there at my side, and at his other side my men, two at his head, two at his feet, and two hawks. Thus it will be equally divided. Lay there between us a drawn sword, as before, when we entered one bed and vowed to become man and wife. The door will not close on his heels if I follow him, and our funerary procession (*Leidsla* means a burial, but it also has the

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metaphoric sense of being led through a vision of the afterlife.) will not be unworthy if, following him, are five bondswomen and eight attendants given me by my father. And those who were killed with Sigurd will also burn there. I would speak further if I were not wounded, but now the gash hisses and the wound is opening. But I have told the truth.'

Sigurd's body was then prepared according to the ancient custom and a tall pyre was built. When it was fully kindled, the body of Sigurd, the bane of Fafnir, was laid on top of it, along with his three-year-old son, whom Brynhilde had ordered killed, and the body of

Guttorm. When the pyre was all ablaze, Brynhilde went out upon it and told her chambermaids to take the gold that she wanted them to have. Then Brynhilde died and her body burned there with Sigurd. Thus their lives ended." (515)

There is yet more in The Saga of the Volsungs which connects Brynhilde with the Goths:

"Gudrun and Sigurd had a daughter called Svanhild. She was the fairest of all women and had keen eyes like her father's, so that few dared to face her glance. She transcended other women in her beauty as the sun does the other heavenly bodies.

Once Gudrun went to the sea, picked up stones in her arms, and walked out into the water, meaning to ill herself. Then towering waves carried her out over the sea. Crossing the water with their help, she came at last to the fortress of King Jonakr, a powerful ruler with many followers. He married Gudrun. Their children were Hamdir, Sorli, and Erp. Svanhild was raised there.

There was in those times a powerful king called Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*). His son was named Randver. The king called his son to speak with him and said: 'You will travel with my counselor Bikki on a mission for me to King Jonakr. Svanhild, the daughter of Sigurd Fafnir's Bane, has been raised there, and I know her to be the fairest maiden under the sun. More than any other woman I would like to marry her, and you are to ask for her hand in my name.' Randver replied: 'I am obliged, sir, to travel on your errand.' Then he had the journey prepared in a fitting manner. They traveled until they came to King Jonakr. They saw Svanhild and thought her beauty most worthy. Randver met with the king and said: 'King Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) wants to offer you his kinship by marriage. He has heard of Svanhild and wants to choose her as his wife. She could hardly be given to a man who

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is more powerful.' King Jonakr called it a splendid match and said: "Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) is a king of great renown.'

Gudrun said: 'Fortune is too fragile a thing to trust that it not break.' But with the exhortations of the king and all things considered, an agreement was reached. Svanhild went to the ship with a splendid following and sat on the raised deck next to the king's son. Then Bikki spoke to Randver: 'It would be more proper for you to have so beautiful a wife, rather than for an old man to have her.' That idea suited Randver's thinking well, and he spoke agreeably to her, as she did to him. They arrived home in their own land and met with

the king. Bikki said: 'It behooves you, my lord, to know what has happened, although it is difficult to relate. Yet it has to do with deceits against you. Your son has received Svanhild's full love, and she is his mistress. Do not let such a wrong go unpunished.'

In the past Bikki had given the king much bad counsel, although this outstripped any of his previous ill advice. The king listened to his many wicked persuasions. He could not still his anger and ordered that Randver should be taken and hanged on the gallows. When Randver was led to the gallows, he took a hawk, plucked from it all its feathers, and said that it should be shown to his father. When the king saw it, he said: 'One can see that he thinks I am shorn of honor just as this hawk is horn of feathers.' Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) then ordered Randver removed from the gallows, but Bikki had been busy in the meantime and Randver was dead.

Bikki spoke again: 'No one deserves worse from you than Svanhild. Let her die in disgrace.' The king answered: 'I accept your advice.' Then Svanhild was bound in the gate of the fortress and horses were driven at her. But when she opened her eyes the horses did not dare trample on her. When Bikki saw this, he commanded that a skin bag be drawn over her head. Thus it was done, and then she died.

Gudrun heard of Svanhild's violent death and she spoke to her sons: 'How can you sit there so peacefully or speak with cheerful words, when Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) has had your sister shamefully trampled to death under the hooves of horses? You do not have the spirit of Gunnar or of Hogni. They would avenge their kinswoman.' Hamdir answered: 'Little did you praise Gunnar and Hogni when they killed Sigurd and you were reddened with his blood. Vile was the vengeance for your brothers when you killed your sons by Atli. We might better kill King Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) if we were all together. But we cannot

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endure your taunts; so persistently are we being urged.'

Gudrun went laughing and gave them drink from deep goblets. Afterward she chose large sturdy coats of mail and other armor for them. Then Hamdir said: 'Here we shall part for the last time. You will bear the tidings and will hold a funeral feast for us and Svanhild.' Then they departed.

Gudrun went to her chamber, her sorrow yet heavier, and said: 'I have been married to three men. First I wedded Sigurd the slayer of Fafnir, and he was betrayed, bringing me my deepest sorrow. Then I was given to King Atli, yet my heart was so full of hatred against him that in my grief I killed our sons. Then I went into the sea, but I was borne to land by waves, and I was married

to this king. Then I married off Svanhild, sending her away to a foreign land with enormous wealth; when she was trampled under the feet of horses it was the most grievous of my sorrows after Sigurd. It was grimmest for me when Gunnar was placed in the snake pit, but it was harshest when the heart was cut out of Hogni. Better if Sigurd would come to meet me and I would go with him. Not a son, not a daughter is left here to comfort me. Do you remember now, Sigurd, what we spoke of, when we entered one bed? You said you would visit me from Hel and then wait there for me.' Thus ended her lamentations.

It is now to be told of Gudrun's sons that she had prepared their armor so that iron could not bite through it. She cautioned her sons to cause no one damage with stones or other large objects, telling them they would come to harm if they did not do as she said. After they had set out they met their brother Erp and asked how he would help them. He answered: 'As the hand helps the hand, or the foot helps the foot.' They took this reply to mean that he would not help them at all, and so they killed him.

Gudrun's sons continued on their way, and it was but a short time before Hamdir stumbled and threw out his hand. 'Erp must have told the truth,' he said. 'I would have fallen just then, if I had not braced myself with my hand.' A short time later Sorli stumbled. He threw out his foot, regained his balance, and said: 'I would have fallen just then if I had not supported myself with both feet.' Thus they decided that they had wronged their brother Erp.

They journeyed until they came to King Jormunrekkr's (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*). They went before him and attacked at once. Gamdir cut off both his handsli both his feet. Then Hamdir said: 'His head would now be off if our brother Erp were alive, whom we

(903)

killed on the way. Too late we have realized this.' As the verse relates:

Off would now be the head
If Erp were living
Our battle-eager brother
Whom we killed on the way.

In the action the brothers had not observed their mother's wishes, as they had used stones to wound. Now men attacked them, but they defended themselves bravely and well, killing many of the attackers. Iron was of no avail against the brothers. Then a one-eyed man, tall and ancient, came up and said: 'You are not wise if you do not know how to kill these man.' King Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) answered: 'Advise us how, if you

can.' He said: 'You should stone them to death.' Thus it was done and from all directions stones flew at them. So ended the lives of Hamdir and Forli.' (516)

Brynhilde also plays a prominent role in The Elder Edda, as we shall see below:

The spoke Brynhilde, Budli's daughter;
'Now you will enjoy weapons and lands,
All that Sigurd alone would have ruled,
If only he had held on to his life a little longer.

'It would not have been fitting that he would have ruled
Gjuki's inheritance and troops of Goths,
When he had already had five sons,
Keen warriors, to govern the people.'

The Brynhilde laughed - the whole bower resounded -
A single time, with all of her heart:
'Long should you enjoy lands and retainers,
Now you have had the bold prince felled.' (517)

Then spoke Brynhilde, Budli's daughter:
'Let that creature lack husband and children
Who caused you, Gudrun, to grieve,
And gave you speech-runes in the morning.'

Then spoke Gullrond, Gjuki's daughter:
'Shut your mouth, you hateful bitch, and do not say such
words!
You have always proven poisonous to princes:
The whole world sees you steeped in wickedness,
A source of sorrow for seven kings,
(904)

A mighty widow-maker of wives.'

Then spoke Brynhilde, Budli's daughter:
'Atli (Attila the Hun) alone caused all the grief,
My brother, born to Budli;

'For in the hall of the Hunnish people
We saw on the prince the serpent-bed's fire;
I have paid for this trip ever since:
Those sights I never stop seeing.'

She stood by the standing-beam, summoned her strength:
Her eyes blazed fire, she snorted venom,
Brynhilde, Budli's daughter,
When she gazed on Sigurd's wounds.

Brynhilde did not want to live after Sigurd; she had

eight slaves and five slave girls killed, then she killed herself with a sword, just as it says in The Short Song of Sigurd. (518)

Until they went to woo Brynhilde
With Sigurd riding in their retinue,
The young Volsung, and he knew the way;
He would have had her if he could (519)

'To me Brynhilde alone is better than all others,
Born to Budli, she is the foremost of women;
I should rather forsake my life
Than lose the treasures of that girl. (520)

'There will never ride, though you raise seven,
A sister's son like him to the Thing;
I see quite clearly what brought this about:
Brynhilde alone causes every ill. ...

Then Brynhilde, Budli's daughter, laughed
A single time, with all her heart,
When she could hear from bed
The shrill weeping of Gjuki's daughter (521)

After Brynhilde's death two pyres were prepared, one for Sigurd, which burned first, and Brynhilde was burned on the other; and she was in a wagon, hung with valuable cloths. It was said, that Brynhilde drove in her wagon along the road to Hel, and went past an
(905)

enclosure, where a certain ogress lived. The giantess said:

'You must not pass through
My courtyards paved with stone;
It would suit you better to be at your weaving,
Rather than visit another's husband.

'Why should you visit from Valland,
Scatter-brain, my dwelling?
You have, gold-goddess, if you want to know,
Gentle lady, washed a man's blood from your hands.'

Then Brynhilde said:

'Do not taunt me, woman from out of a rock,
I will be thought nobler than you,
Wherever folk know our descent.'

The giantess said:

'Brynhilde, you were Budli's daughter,
Born to the worst luck in the world;
You have ruined Gjuki's children,
Destroyed their splendid homes.'

Brynhilde said:

'I, the wise one in the wagon, will tell you,
Who are totally witless, if you want to know,
How Gjuki's heirs acted towards me,
Loveless and breaking their oaths.

'The courageous king had the feather-cloaks
Of us eight (Valkyrie) sisters placed under an oak;
I was twelve ears old, if you want to know,
When I swore oaths to the young prince.

'Everyone who knew me in Din-dales
Called me War-maiden wearing a helmet (Valkyrie).

'Then I let the old man of the Goths,
Helm-Gunnar, go straight off to Hel;
I gave the victory to Auda's young brother;
Odin became very angry with me for that.

'He surrounded me with shields in Skata-grove,
Red and white, and bucklers touching;
He bade someone to end my sleep,
One who never knew any fear.

(906)

'He caused around the south of my hall,
Wood's enemy to blaze up high;
He bade a warrior ride over it,
Who brought me the gold that lay under Fafnir.

'The fine gold-giver (Sigurd) rode Grani
Where my foster-father governed his halls;
He alone seemed better than all the rest,

'We slept and were happy in but one bed,
As if he had been born my brother;
Not at all for the space of eight nights
Did we lay one arm over another.

'But Gudrun taunted me, Gjuki's daughter,
That I slept in Sigurd's arms;
Then I found out, what I never wanted:
That they had tricked me into taking a husband.

'They must all too long in the face of great strife
Men and women be born and raised;
We two shall never be torn apart,
Sigurd and I together: sink yourself, giantess-
spawn!(522)

'Then Grimhild (Gunnar's mother) found out, queen of the
Goths,
In what frame of mind I was:
She threw down her embroidery, fetched her sons,
With eagerness she asked
Who would compensate their sister fo her son,
Or pay for her slaughtered husband. ...

'Grimhild brought me a beaker to drink,
Cool and bitter: I forgot my wrong;
It was enhanced by the power of fate,
The sea cooled chill and sacrificial boar's blood.

'There were on the horn all sorts of runes
Cut and reddened - I could not read them -
A long heather-fish (snake) and an uncut grain
From Haddings' land, the innards of animals. ...

'I do not want to have a husband
Nor to marry Brynhilde's brother;
It is unseemly for me with the son of Budli
To have children or to live in joy.' (523)

(907)

'He asked that a helmet be obtained for Brynhilde,
Said that she would become a wish-maid (Valkyrie);
Said that she would be raised the noblest
Maid in the world, unless fate spoiled things.

'In the bower Brynhilde was weaving,
She had lands and men beneath her,
The earth trembled, and heaven above,
When Fafnir's killer (Sigurd) found the fortress.

'Then warfare was waged with a foreign sword,
The fortress breached, that Brynhilde owned;
It was not long after, woefully little,
Until she knew all the plotting.

Then she had harsh vengeance brought about,
Of which we have all had experience enough;
It will travel around all men's lands,
That she slew herself alongside Sigurd.

'And I came to love Gunnar,
Giver of rings, as Brynhilde should have done.'"(524)

Brynhilde is of special importance to us; her name, as we have noted, is certainly Gothic rather than Viking. Note that in the Viking sagas Brynhilde at times appears as a Valkyrie, at other times as a mortal woman. Apparently, with due to the the passage of centuries and the linguistic passage or translation from Gothic to Old Norse, Brynhilde the Valkyrie became conflated or confused with a Gothic princess with the personal name "Brynhilde" or "Brunhilda".

That the Valkyries are ultimately of Iranian origin is of the greatest importance for our purposes. The only way that an Iranian element such as the Valkyries could have reached the Vikings is by way of the Goths. Thus, it is a proof both of the Iranian influences on the Goths, but also a demonstration that the Goths maintained contacts with their ancient Scandinavian homeland even

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after they were settled on the northern shores of the Black Sea. Though most certainly not as polyethnic as the Goths or even the Vandals, the Vikings show much Celtic and Iranian influences in their art and architecture, or, at least, architectonic decoration, as we shall see below. The Celtic influence may have reached the Vikings from various sources, not only the Goths. However, the Iranian influence must have reached the Vikings by way of the Goths when the Goths lived on the shores of the Black Sea.

There are other proofs that the Goths maintained contacts with their ancient Scandinavian homeland. As we said in another

place, the Runic alphabet apparently was invented by the Goths, so its use by the Vikings is yet another proof that the Goths maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland even when they were settled on the shores of the Black Sea. Viking art certainly has its own merits; someone referred to its "lyric power". Though the Vikings certainly put their own unmistakable stamp on it, yet it is obvious that Viking art is derivative, being borrowed from far older artistic traditions. Essentially, it is evident to the observer that Viking Art is derived from Iranian, in this case Sarmatian and Alanic art, though with a certain Celtic element being present. This is exactly what one would expect had the Vikings derived their art from the Goths when the Goths were resident on the shores of the Black Sea. The famous dragon used by the Vikings to decorate the prows of their ships - hence they are often called "dragon ships" - is obviously

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derived from the "animal style" of the Sarmatians and Alans and also the Celts. Remember the appearance of dragons in the Arthurian Cycle, and also "Pendragon", the surname of King Arthur, and the motive for which he used a dragon as the heraldic motif which he used to decorate his shield. Also, as we have noted Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "El Cid", like King Arthur and also Kai Khusrau of the Shah Namah, used the dragon as the heraldic symbol with which he decorated his shield. In this case it may be that El Cid was influenced by the Arthurian Cycle, and used the dragon as the heraldic emblem on his shield, as did King Arthur; however, in this case a Visigothic origin would seem to be more likely. We

shall see that there are yet other proofs that the Goths, when resident on the shores of the Black Sea, maintained contacts with their ancient Scandinavian homeland. Also, as we have noted, this was no doubt a factor when, much later, the Vikings followed the trail from Scandinavia to the Black Sea which had been blazed by the Goths, and, among other things, founded Kievan Rus'.

Note that in some sources one of the Valkyries is named **GUTH**, obviously a variant of "Goth". The saga known as Voluspa or The Prophecy of the Seeress says:

The Valkyries flock from afar she (the Seeress) beholds
Ready to ride to the realm of men:
Skuld held her shield, Skogul likewise,
Guth, Hild, Gondul, and Geirskogul:
For thus are named Odin's maidens,
Ready to ride over reddened battlefields.(525)

Also note that one of the Valkyries is named "**Gondul**", a name which does not appear to be Viking, but rather to be derived

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from the common Gothic name "**Gandalf**", made famous by J.R.R. Tolkien.

Guthrun's Lament

"Not yet ended are Guthrun's sorrows. Her dearest child, Svanhild, her daughter by Sigurth, had been fostered at King Jormunrekkr's [Hermanric; Gothic: *Airmnareiks*] court, out of harm's way. Yhither Guthrun was carried by the waves, after vainly trying to end her life by drowning - a development of the legend peculiar to the North. She married the king. In this poem her sons by King Jormunrekkr [Hermanric, Gothic: *Airmnareiks*] - **this theme from old Gothic legend had been touched on already by Jordanes (6th century)**. Their fall leaves Guthrun utterly bereaved and unwilling to live longer.

Of the two lays dealing with this matter, The Lay of Hamthir and Guthrun's Lament, the former is definitely the older and more original. However, here as elsewhere, the order of the Codex Regius is followed, an order which is advantageous also by reason of the Introductory Prose.

After iterating, in a somewhat modified form, the first stanzas of the older lay, the poet gives us lonely Guthrun's lament before the self-immolation which her rival, [the valkyrie] Brynhilde, had suggested to her to her after Sigurth's death. Indeed, one is tempted to regard the Lament as an elaboration of the hint here given.

In its essence the poem is a biographic monologue, not devoid of lyrical power and not at all "incitation". In fact it seems to presuppose the action of The Lay of Hamthir. The break between the tenderly elegiac portion and the first stanzas, whose spirit is that of the fiery Lay of Hamthir, is unmistakable. Toward the end, a reminiscence of the Sweet William motif of The Second Lay of Helgi appears. These beautiful stanzas are, to be sure, by some scholars considered to have originally belonged to some other poems about Sigurth.

The lay is generally referred to the 11th century, and was most likely composed in Iceland. The Volsunga Saga, Chapter 41, gives a close paraphrase of it.

When she had slain Atli, Guthrun went down to the sea to drown herself, but she could not sink. She floated across the bay to the land of King Jonakr [which name appears to be Slavic]. He took her to wife, and their sons were Sorli, Erp, and Hamthir.

(911)

There was also fostered Svanhild ["she who fights in swan garment; something typical of Valkyries], her daughter by Sigurth, Svanhild was given in marriage to King Jormunrekkr [Hermanric; Gothic: *Airmnareiks*] the mighty. Bikki was his councilor: it was he who led on Randver, the king's son, to wish to wed her himself. This, Bikki told the king. He had Randver hanged on the gallows and Svanhild killed under the hooves of horses. But when Guthrun heard of this she spoke to her sons (as is told here).

Wickedest words, most woe-bringing,
Out of hate-filled heart heard I spoken
When, unflinching, egged to slaughter
Guthrun her sons with grim speeches.

"Why sit ye still and sleep through life,
Nor loathe to speak light-hearted words,
When Jormunrekkr [Hermanric; Gothic: *Airmnareiks*]
Your young sister,
Her, Svanhild was, was by horses trampled.

"Ye are little like beloved Gunnar,
Nor like to Hogni's stout heart is yours:
Your sister's slayer would ye seek forthwith

If bold ye were like my two brothers,
Or if hardy you were like the race of Sigurth.

Said then Hamthir, the hardy-minded:
"Not so highly did you think of Hogni's deed
When from sleep they waked Sigurth, your spuse:
With blood was your bluish-white bed linen reddened
From grievous gashes, in his gore as he lay.

"Bitterly did you your brethren avenge,
For yourself most sadly, when your sons you did murder;
With the youths could we Jormunrekkr [Hermanric;
Gothic: *Airmnareiks*] kill -
Our sister's slayer - of the same mind all.

"The helmets bring of the Hunnish kings -
Has whetted us to hateful strife."

Laughing, Guthrun to the garner wended,
And kingly crests she from coffers chose,
And broad breastplates brought to her sons:
The hardy heroes their horses mounted.

(912)

Then said Hamthir the high minded:
"So will wend hither to his mother's hall
The god-of-spears (warror), inGothland slain,
That for all of us you may mead drink:
For Svanhild, our sister, and your sons also."

Weeping, Guthrun, Gjuki's daughter,
Sat sadly beside the hall
With tear-wet cheeks, to tell her sorrow,
Her weary tale, in many a way.

"Three homes knew I, three hearth fires;
Was I brought to the hall of three husbands;
Matchless among men was to me Sigurth -
He who was murdered by Hogni and Gunnar.

"More woeful wife, than I, never lived,
Nor was ever one in the world thus wronged;
When the Athelings to Atli gave me.

"The keen-eyed youths I called to me:
To wreak my wrath I wrought it thus:
I hewed off the heads of the Hniflung heirs.

"To thye sea I wended, weary of life,
The hateful norms (fates) I hoped to thwart:
Tossed me nor drowned, the towering billows,

On land was I lifted, to live on doomed.

"The bed I mounted - had better fate hoped -
Once more mated, with a might king, [*Jormunrekkr*;
Gothic: *Airmnareiks*].
I issue bore, as heirs two sons,
As heirs two sons to the atheling.

"About Svanhild seated sat her bondmaids,
Whom of all my children I cherished most:
Of hue whiter, my halls within,
Than bright sunbeams were Svanhild's brows.

"In gold I arrayed her and goodly cloths,
Ere that to Gothland [Kingdom of *Jormunrekkr* or
Airmnareiks] I gave her away.

"The saddest this of my sorrows all,
When horses' feet the fair hair trod
On Svanhild's head, besmirched in mire.

"But sorest this when my Sigurth they
Daid murder foully, fey, in my bed;
But bitterest this, when my brother Gunnarthe
(913)

glittering snakes slavered over.

But hardest this, when to the heart
Of hardy Hogni hewed the king's men.
I called to mind many sorrows -
Why should I bide to bear still more?

"Bridle, Sigurth, the black-hued steed,
Let the fleet-footed horse hithermost run:
Here sits with me nor son's wife nor daughter
To give Guthrun golden trinkets.

"To mindcall you what to me was said,
The time we, Sigurth, sat together:
That from Hel, hero, would hither wend your way,
As would I to you out of the world.

"Raise up, ye earls, the oaken heap,
Under Heaven let it the highest be,
That fire may burn the hate-filled breast's
Carks and cares. And quell all sorrows.

"May it lighten your lot, ye earls,
And ye, noble women, your woe also,
To have hearkened to the harrowing tale
Of Guthrun's sorrows, Gjuki's daughter." (526)

Like Guthrun's Lament, the Saga The Lay of Hamthir is of

particular interest to us. Says Lee M. Hollander:

"The Lay of Hamthir" enjoys the sad distinction of having been handed down in a more fragmentary condition than any other of the longer Eddic lays. A number of stanzas are certainly missing, others clearly interpolated, and still much surgery and sympathetic treatment to make it all intelligible. Nevertheless, enough is discernible to recognize that it brought the great Eddic cycle of heroic songs to a worthy as well as a logical, conclusion. In its original form it must have been a masterpiece of dramatic construction, with every episode furthering the action of the poem.

As it happens, "Hamthismal" is also the one poem of the collection which unquestionably goes back to recorded history. The Gothic historian Jordanes (sixth century AD) in his *Getica* reports that Hermanricus (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*), king of the Ostrogoths, had a woman by the name of Sunilda (Gothic: *Suinilda*) bound to wild horses and torn to pieces because of the treachery of her husband, and that in revenge therefore her two brothers, Sarus and

(914)

Ammius, fell upon him and wounded him. Legend, we may suppose, explained the king's otherwise inexplicable, cruel deed as one done in a jealous rage; it made Sunilda his wife and invented the figure of his son Randver, who seduced her and was hanged by the king.

As pointed out above, several stanzas of "Guthrun's Lament" seem to have originally belonged to this lay and are fairly considered in this connection. As a whole, they and the following stanzas breathe a sinister power equal to the best in Eddic poetry: the unwilling brothers dashing away to their doom - snorting with rage, their mother's wild laugh yet ringing in their ears - a doom which they seal by venting their wrath on their half brother Erp. And the scenes in *Jormunrekkr's* (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) hall, however fragmentary, are full of energy and passion.

The measure is, variously, *malahattr* and *fornyrthislag*, which, in itself, constitutes a sufficient reason for considering the lay as it stands a composite of two or more older, fragmentary poems. That another lay existed seems to follow from the fact that the *Volsunga saga* (Chapter 42) paraphrases only the *fornyrthislag* stanzas (quoting St, 28, II. 1-2), and none of the *malahattr* stanzas, from which, indeed, the version of the saga differs considerably.

The origin of the lay is sought, with little conclusiveness, in Norway. Both vocabulary and style point to the tenth century or earlier. The skald Bragi (early ninth century) devotes four spirited stanzas of his *Ragnarsdrapa* to the attack and slaying of

Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) by Hamthir and Sorli;
but it is impossible to decide which of the two poems is
the earlier.

[Sorrowful deeds the dayspring saw,
Unwelcome dawn, the alf folks (dwarfs) grief;
Thus early morn the ill of men and sadness quickens.]

'Twas not but now, nor newly, either,
But ages ago, time out of mind,
[of all things ilder thsn any, this,]
When Gunthrun egged on, Gjuki's daughter,
Her young sons to avenge Svanhild the fair:

"A sister had ye, was she Svanhild called;
Her Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) in wrath had
trampled
By white and black steeds, on highroad faring,
By grey, war-hardened Gothic horses.

(915)

"Ye alone are left of my lordly strain;
But not keen are ye as those kings of yore.
(Ye are little like beloved Gunnar
Or Hogni, his brother, bear-hard in mind.)

"On earth I am lonely like to asp in holt,
Amidst foes unfriended like fir stripped of boughs,
Of gladness bereft as the greenwood of leaves
When the waster-of-twigs (fire) on a warm day comes."

Said then Hamthir, the hardy-minded:
"Not so highly thought you of Hogni's deed
When from sleep they waked Sigurth, your husband -
On your bed they were seated, but his slayers laughed.

"With blood was your bluish-white bed linen reddened -
By skilled hands woven - in his wounds as he lay.
By the side of Sigurth you sat when he died,
No glee gladdened you: thus Gunnar willed it.

"When you ended Eitil's and Erp's life too,
You would harm Atli (Attila), but did harm him
yourself;
So ought each one work ill on his foe
With slaughterous sword that himself he harm not."

Said then Sorli with seemly wisdom:
"Not yet wearied are you of words, I see:
With our mother I wish not idle words to bandy;
Whatever you crave, Guthrun, but will bring you grief?

"Did bewail your brethren and both your dear sons,

Your trusted kinsmen, betrayed foully:
Shall you us, Guthrun, bewail you now;
We sit on our horses, and far away shall die."

"Said the highborn lady, before the heroes standing
He slim-fingered one, to her sons speaking:
"Are your lives at stake if you listen not to me:
How could two men else ten hundred Goths
Strike down and fetter in their stronghold alone?"

Then rashly rode they, with wrath snorting,
(Sorli and Hamthir, the sons of Guthrun,
Forwardly fared over fells cloud-dripping,
On their Hunnish horses, their harm to avenge.

"on the way found they their wily brother.

(916)

(Hamthir said:)

"This brownish bastard will bring us help?"
Answered Erp, of another born:
"Full quickly I come to my kinsman's help,
As one hand hastens to help the other,
(or one foot would its fellow help.)"

(Hamthir said:)

"scarce could one foot its fellow help,
Of one hand hasten to help the other!"

Said Erp these words as on they fared -
High on horseback the hero sat -
"I reckon not to show the road to a craven."
A brazen bastard they called their brother.

From the sheaths they drew their sharp swords forth,
The gleaming wound-gashers, to gladdeb Hel:
The twain overthrew a third of their strength
When they struck down to earth young Erp, their
brother.

Their fur cloaks they shook and fastened their swords,
In silken sarks (magic silken armor) they themselves
arrayed.

Still further they fared on their fateful path,
Till their sister's stepson they saw on the gallows,
The wind-cold wolf-tree, (gallows) to the west of the
castle,
By the crane's food (serpent?) they crept- uncouth was

that sight.

There was glee in the hall, ale-gay the throng,
And the horses' hoofbeats they heard not at all,
Ere a hero stouthearted his horn did blow
(the tidings to tell of the two coming).

Went then to warn the celebrating king
Of the helm-clad two on horseback seen:
"Be on guard now, ye Goths, wend they grimly hither,
The mighty kinsmen of the maid you trod down."

Chuckling, Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) his chin-
beard stroked,
With wine wanton he welcomed the fray;
Shook his dark locks, at his white shield looked,
In his hand upheld the horn all golden.

(917)

"Most happy were I if behold I might
Hamthir and Sorli my hall within:
Bind them would I with long bowstrings,
The good sons of Guthrun on gallows fasten."

Their rose outcry in the hall, alecups were shattered
... ..
In the blood they lay from the breasts of Goths. ...

(In stanza 4 of the skald Bragi's *Ragnarsdrapa* (ninth century) Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) is described as falling prone into the ale on the floor with which is mixed his own blood.)

Then said Hamthir the hardy-minded:
"You did wish, Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*), that
we should come;
Your feet you see into the fire hurled,
And both your hands into the flames thrown."

(According to the account of *Skaldskaparmal*, Chapter 39, Guthrun advised them to attack Jormunrekkr (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*) at night in his bed: "was Sorli and Hamthir to hew off his hands and feet, but Erp his head." They follow her advice, but Erp is lacking at the critical moment to perform his share.)

Then roared the king, akin to the gods,
bold in his byrnies (coat of mail), as a bear would
roar:
"Cast stones, ye men, as steel will bite not,
Nor iron swords, on the sons of Jormunrekkr (Gothic:
Airmnareiks)"

(*Sorli said*)

"Ill didst thou, brother. To open that bag (the mouth):
From wordy bag oft comes baleful speech;
You are hardy, Hamthir, but a hotspur ever:
Much wants he who witless is."

(*Hamthir said:*)

"Off were his head if Erp lived still,
Our warlike brother, on the way whom wevslew,
The stouthearted hero whom hateful norns (fates)
Egged us to kill, who ought to have benn hallowed.

"Not should we, say I, be of wolfish kind,
(918)

nor seek to slay one another
Like the wolves of the waste, wild and greedy,
That howl in the hills.

"Well we have fought and felled many Goths,
Stand on athelings slain like eagles on a tree;
Glorious we die, whether today or tomorrow:
Lives till night no man when the norns have spoken."

There fell Sorli, slain at the gable,
At the hall's hindwall stooped Hamthir then.(527)

Below is another Old Norse poem which is generally considered to be of Gothic origin. The geography is at times difficult to identify, in part because of the passage of so many centuries, in part, no doubt because of the passage from Gothic to Old Norse, translated by a scribe whose geographical knowledge may have been limited. The subject matter is obviously a tremendous conflict between Goths and Huns. Some identify the location of the battle with the great battle of the Catalaunian Fields, others some forgotten battle on the plains of the Danube; I believe it refers to the steppes of the valley of the Dniepr. I am more inclined to believe that the scene is the plains of the valley of the Dniepr, or, less probably, the Danube, because the battle of the

Catalaunian Fields was not only between Goths and Huns, but a great many other peoples were involved, including the Romans; and also because the Catalaunian Fields are so far from the scene in which the poem given below takes place.

Lee M. Hollander gives a synopsis of The Lay of Hloth and Angantyr, or The Battle of the Huns.

"On one of his expeditions the evil but wise son of Hervor, King Heithrek, abducts the daughter of the powerful Humli, King of the Huns. In Humli we may see
(919)

the representative of the royal race of the Ostrogoths, the Amal or Amalung, who for a time were subjects, or allies, of the Huns; and in Heithrek, *Hardurik (Ardaricus)*, King of the Gepids, a tribe related to the Goths, who fought heroically against the Huns. The daughter of Humli gives birth to Hloth, who is brought up by his maternal grandfather, since Heithrek put his mother away in favor of another queen whose children by him are Angantyr and Hervor - a quasi reincarnation of her amazon grandmother. When Heithrek dies Angantyr succeeds him; but his half brother (Hloth) claims an equal share of the inheritance."

Of yore they say, Humli over Huns held sway;
Gizur over Scandinavians,(???) over Goths, Angantyr;
Valdar over Danes, but over the Welsh (western and southern Europeans) Caesar (the Roman Emperor)
And Alrek (?) the Bold over English (Angles?) folk.

Hloth was born there in Hunnish folk-lands -
With with dagger and broadsword and byrnie (coat of mail) long,
With ring-docked helmet and sharp-hewing sword,
With horses well broken, in the hallowed land.

Now Hloth learned about the death of his father, and that his brother, Angantyr, had himself made king over all those lands which Heithrek had owned. Then King Humli advised Hloth to claim from Angantyr his share of the inheritance with fair words, as is said here:

Rode Hloth from the East, King Heithreks' first-born,
To the halls where dwell the dauntless Gothss -
To Arheimar (the banks of the Dniepr) - to claim his heir-lands.
There was Angantyr drinking funeral feast for Heithrek.

Before the high hall he found a hero standing,
From far lands hailing, him he welcomed.

HLOTH said:

"Into high hall now go you, hero,
And bid Angantyr make answer to me."

The warrior went in before the table of King Angantyr,
and said:

(920)

"Is Hloth come here, King Heithrek's heir,
Your bastard brother, your brother he;
High the young hero his horse does sit:
Would he now, thane, with you have speech."

But when King Angantyr heard this, he threw down
his trencher on the board and rose and clad himself in
his coat of mail. He took his white shield in hand, and
grasped the sword Tyrfing with the other. Then there
arose much din in the hall; as is here said:

Rose outcry in the hall; with the atheling (noble,
prince) stood up,
the Gothic king, his goodly warriors:
they all fain would here what Hloth did say,
and know what answer Angantyr made.

ANGANTYR said:

"Hail to you Hloth, King Heithrek's son
and my own brother! On the bench sit you!
In his hall let us drink Heithrek's funeral feast
The father of us, the first of mankind
In wine or in mead - whichever seems worthiest."

HLOTH said:

"Not hither came we from Hunnish lands
To share with you your wine and mead -
"The half will I have of what Heithrek owned,
Of awl and of edge, of all treasure,
Of cow and calf, of quern harsh-grinding,
Of thrall and of bond-maid, and those born of them,
"the mighty forest which is Murkwood (Tolkien's
Mirkwood) called,
The hallowed grave (burial place of the Gothic kings)
which in Gothland stands,
The shining stone which by the Dniepr stands,
Half of the war-weeds which Heithrek owned,
Of lands and lieges and of lustrous arm-rings."

ANGANTYR said:

"Your shining shield will be shattered, brother,
And by cold spears will be split many another,
And many a man will meet his death
Before Tyrfing in two I sunder,
Or to you, son of Humli, leave the half of it!

(921)

'Will I give you, brother, gleaming arm-rings,
Much wealth of gold, what most you wish -
Twelve hundred slaves, twelve hundred steeds,
Twelve hundred bond-men with bucklers armed.

"To every man of you much will I give -
other and better things than ever he had:
to every man a maid will I give,
and give each maiden a golden necklace.

"About you sitting shall I silver heap,
About you going shall I gold-trinkets pour, so that the
rings will roll about you; you shall govern a third
of Gothic lands."

Gizur, called the armor-bearer of the Ostrogoths,
King Heithrek's foster father, was then in Argantyr's
company. He was exceedingly old then. When he heard
Argantyr's offer he thought that too much was offered,
and said:

"Could no better be offered to a bond-woman's son -
To the son of a bond-woman, though born to a king.
The bastard son then sat on a hill
When the prince the heirlooms shifted.

Gizur sarcastically implies that Hloth would
acknowledge himself to be a bastard, entitled to
compensation - and no more - if he accepted anything but
half of his inheritance. Hloth is likened to a shepherd
on a hill, tending his flocks, when the kingdom was
divided.

HUMLI said:

"Shall we feast at our ease till winter is over,
Drink and converse, quaffing the mead,
And teach our warriors weapons to fashion,
Which to battle bravely we shall bear forward.

"Well shall we arm the warrior host,

And help you, Hloth, with hardy deeds;
With twelve-year old draughts, and two-year old foals,
Thus shall we the host of the Huns be gathered."

That winter, King Humli and Hloth stayed at home;
but when spring came they drew together so great a host
that there was a dearth of fighting men in Hunland. ...
And when this mighty host was gathered they rode through
Murkwood. ... As they came out of the forest they found
many farms and level fields. In the fields

(922)

there stood a fair castle. There ruled Hervor,
Angantyr's and Hloth's sister, and with her, Ormar, her
foster father. They warded the land against the Huns and
had a great host. ... One morning, about sunrise, Hervor
stood on a tower above the castle gate. She saw so much
dust southward toward the forest that it hid the sun for
a long time. Then she saw a glow under the dust, as
though from gold, of fair shields inlaid with gold, of
gilded helmets and bright coats of mail. Then she
understood that this was the Hunnish host, and most
numerous. She hurried down and called her trumpeter and
bade him summon the host. Then said Hervor to them:
"Take your weapons and make ready for battle; but you,
Ormar, ride out toward the Huns and offer them battle
before the southern gate."

ORMAR said:

"Assuredly shall I, with shield aloft,
To the Hunnish host hurriedly ride,
To summon them to the southern gate
There against the Goths to try the game of war."

And so he did and then returned to the castle.
Then was Hervor armed and all her host. ... There was a
great battle; but because the Huns had a much greater
host, the battle turned against Hervor, and at length
she fell, and round about her, many men. But when Ormar
saw her fall he fled, and with him all they who still
lived. He rode day and night as fast as he could, to
King Angantyr by the banks of the Dniepr, while the Huns
took to harrying and burning the countryside. When he
arrived he said:

"From the south I come, to say these tidings:
Burned is the far-famed forest Murkwood (Tolkien's
Mirkwood),
All Goth-land drenched with the gore of the fallen.

"I know that Hervor, Heithrek's daughter,
And your sister, by the sword has fallen.
Have Hunnish hosts hewed down the maiden

With many another of your warriors.

Was she readier for war than with wooer to dally,
Or on a bench to sit as wedded bride."

When Angantyr heard this he stroked his beard and
was silent for a long time. At last he said:

(923)

"Was unbrotherly dealt with, my brave sister!
Now have fallen the fighters who fared with you.
Full many the men when mead we drank, -
Have I fewer followers when I would have more.

"In all my host no hero do I see,
Though I should beg him and buy him with rings,
Who would raise the war-shield and ride for me
To the Hunnish hosts herald battle."

It was King Heithrek's law, that if a hostile army
was in the land and the king of the land challenged them
to a pitched battle and appointed the battle field, then
those warriors must not tarry before battle
was tried between them. Gizur then armed himself with
good weapons and leaped on his horse as though he were a
young man, and said to the king;

"To the Huns where shall I herald battle?"

ANGANTYR said:

"On the down of Dun-heath (Dniepr valley? Danube plain?)
and in battle valleys
shall the battle be beneath Iassar fells (???) brow,
where often the Goths their gloves reddened,
and victory won warriors in sword-play."

Then Gizur rode till he came upon the Hunnish army.
When he was within earshot he called out with a loud
voice and said:

* * *

* * *

"Afraid are your hosts, fey is your leader -
you have angered Odin: we offer you battle.

"On the downs of Dun-heath (Dniepr valley; Danube plain)
and in the battle valley
I bid you battle, 'neath the Issar-fells' (???) brow.
(May Odin overawe Angantyr's foes

And may this spear fly over you as I do bid it."

When Hloth had heard Gizur's words he said:

"Seize ye Gizur The Ostrogoth's follower,
Angantyr's man, from the valley of the Dniepr come!"

(924)

HUMLI said:

"No hurt nor harm to him shall be done,
To hero who fares to herald us war."

GIZUR said:

"Will not Hunnish hornbows do harm to us ever,
Nor Hunnish wiles hinder our warriors?"

Gizur then gave the spurs to his horse and rode back to King Angantyr. . . . The king asked him whether he had encountered the Huns. Gizur said: I spoke with them and summoned them to combat.

"On the downs of Dun-heath (Dniepr valley? Danube plain?)
And in the battle valleys."

Angantyr asked him how great an army the Huns had.
Gizur said:

"Huge was the host (of Hunnish warriors)

"Sixteen squadrons saw I foregathered;
Had each squadron fully five thousand men,
And each 'thousand', thirteen hundred,
And each 'hundred', horse-men eight-score."

Angantyr then got together an army to meet the Huns, who were twice his strength. The battle lasted eight days, with great slaughter which was made good, in the case of the Goths, by continual reinforcements; so that at last the Huns were forced to give ground. Angantyr stepped into the front ranks with the sword Tyrfing in hand, and slew Hloth and Humli. Then the Huns took to flight, and the Goths slew so many that the rivers were dammed up and overflowed their banks and the valleys were filled with dead men and horses. Angantyr went about on the battlefield to search among the fallen. He found his brother Hloth. Then he said:

"Untold arm-rings I offered you, brother,
A wealth of gold and what most you did wish.

As guerdon for strife now you have gotten neither,
Nor lands nor lieges (vassals) nor lustrous rings.

"A baleful fate wrought it that, brother, I slew you!
Let it ever be told. Ill is the norms' (fates)
doom." (528)

(925)

The above Viking sagas constitute one of many proofs that the Goths had an epic tradition since time immemorial. The stories of *Berig*, who led the migration of the Goths from Scandinavia, *Filimer*, who led the Goths to the Black Sea, and the Gothic heroes *Terparmara*, *Hanala*, *Fritigern*, and *Vidigoia*, all mentioned by Jordanes, undoubtedly reached Jordanes, directly or indirectly, by way of epic poetry.

The above-quoted Viking saga, called by Lee M. Hollander The Lay of Hloth and Angantyr or The Battle of the Huns is also one of many proofs that the Goths maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland even after they had reached the shores of the Black Sea.

Also note that the sword of the Gothic king Angantyr has a name, i.e., *Tyrfing*, and almost a personality of its own. This last, i.e., giving a name and almost a personality to the sword of the hero, is found in the Chanson de Roland, in the Celtic and Iranian epics, and also in the Castilian or Spanish epic; however, said element is NOT found in the non-Viking Germanic epics. Therefore, the above Viking saga, which is obviously of Gothic origin, is yet another proof of Celtic and Iranian influences which passed to the Goths.

Essentially, I agree with Ramon Menendez Pidal concerning the Gothic origin of the Castilian epic. Indeed, it could be said that

I begin where Don Ramon Menendez Pidal left off. Back in my days at the University of Granada, someone called me "the new Menendez Pidal".

(926)

The reader will note that I agree with Herwig Wolfram that the original homeland of the Goths is what is today southern Sweden. I find the arguments of those who do not agree with Wolfram and myself to be weak in the extreme, an example of what in Spain we call *positivism atontado*, i.e., "idiotized positivism", scientism run amok, the *reduction ad absurdum* of the scientific method.

I believe that we have demonstrated that the Goths had an epic tradition when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea, and that said tradition was strongly influenced by the Iranian nomad peoples, or *Sakas* of the Eurasian Steppes, in the particular case sarmatians and Alans, who so influenced the Goths in so many other ways, as we have shown. One of the many proofs of this is the German Chanson de Geste Hildebrand, which virtually appears to be a translation of the episode of "Sohrab and Rustam" of the Shahnamah by Firdausi.

Below is the "Tale of Sohrab" as it appears in the Shahnamah by Firdausi, translation by Dick Davis:

"At dawn one day Rustam decided to go hunting, to drive away the sadness he felt in his heart. Filling his quiver with arrows, he set off for the border with Turan, and when he arrive in the marches he saw a plain filled with wild asses (or *onagers*); laughing, his face flushed with pleasure, he urged Rakhush forward. With his bow, his mace, and his noose he brought down his prey and then lit a fire of brushwood and dead branches; next he selected a tree and spitted one of the slaughtered asses on it. The spit was as light as a feather to him, and when the animal was

roasted he tore the meat apart and ate it, sucking the marrow from its bones. He sank back contentedly and slept. Cropping the grass, his horse rakhush wandered off and was spotted by seven or eight Turkish horsemen. They galloped after Rakhush and caught him and bore him off to the city, each of them claiming him as his own

(927)

prize.

Rustam woke from his sweet sleep and looked round for his horse. He was very distressed not to see Rakhush there and set off on foot toward the nearest town, which was Samangan. To himself he said, "How can I escape from such mortifying shame? What will our great warriors say, 'His horse was taken from him while he slept?' Now I must wander wretched and sick at heart, and hear my armor as I do so; perhaps I shall find some trace of him as I go forward."

The king of Samangan was told that the Crown Bestower, Rustam, had his horse stolen from him and was approaching the town on foot. The king and his nobles welcomed him and enquired as to what had happened, adding, "In this town we all wish you well and stand ready to serve you in any way we can." Rustam's suspicions were laid to rest and he said, "In the pastures, Rakhush wandered off from me; he had no bridle or reins. His tracks come as far as Samangan and then peter out into reeds and the river. If you can find him, I shall be grateful, but if he remains lost to me, some of your nobility will lose their heads."

The king answered, "No one would dare to have done this to you deliberately. Stay as my guest and calm yourself; tonight we can drink and rejoice, and drown our worries with wine. Rakhush is such a world-renowned horse, he will not stay lost for long."

Mollified by his words, Rustam agreed to stay as the king's guest. He was given a chamber in the palace and the king himself waited on him. The chieftains of the army and the city's nobility were summoned to the feast; stewards brought wine, and dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked girls sought to calm Rustam's fretfulness with their music. After a while Rustam became drunk and felt that the time to sleep had come; his chamber had been sweetened with the scents of musk and rosewater, and he retired there for the night.

When one watch of the night had passed, and Venus had come into the darkened sky, a sound of muffled whispering came to Rustam's ears; gently his chamber door was pushed open. A slave entered, a scented candle in her hand, and approached the hero's pillow; like a splendid sun, a paradise of tints and scents, her mistress followed her. This beauty's eyebrows curved like an archer's bow, and her ringlets hung like nooses to snare the unwary; in stature she was as elegant as a cypress tree. Her mind and body were pure, and she seemed not to partake of earthly existence at all. The lionhearted Rustam gazed at her in astonishment; he asked her what her name was and what it was that she sought on so dark a night. She said:

*"My name is Tahmineh; longing has torn
My wretched life in two, though I was born
The daughter of the king of Samangan,*

*And am descended from a warrior clan.
But like a legend I have heard the story
Of your heroic battles and your glory,
Of how you have no fear, and face alone
(928)*

*Dragons and demons and the dark unknown,
Of how you sneak into Turan at night
And prowl the borders to provoke a fight,
Of how, when warriors see your mace, they quail
And feel their lion hearts within them fail.
I bit my lip to hear such talk, and knew
I longed to see you, to catch sight of you,
To glimpse your martial chest and mighty face -
And now God brings you to this lowly place.
If you desire me, I am yours, and none
Shall see or hear of me from this day on;
Desire destroys my mind, I long to bear
Within my woman's womb your son and heir;
I promise you your horse if you agree
Since all of Samangan must yield to me."*

When Rustam saw how lovely she was, and moreover heard that she promised to find Rakhush for him, he felt that nothing but good could come of the encounter; and so in secret the two passed the long hours of night together.

As the sun cast its noose in the eastern sky, Rustam gave Tahmineh a clasp which he wore on his upper arm and said to her, "Take this, and if you should bear a daughter, braid her hair about it as an omen of good fortune; but if the heavens give you a son, have him wear it on his upper arm, as a sign of who his father is. He will be a boy like Sam (father of Zal, grandfather of Rustam) the son of Nariman (founder of the royal house of Sistan, to which belong Sam, Zal, and Rustam), noble and chivalrous; one who will bring down eagles from their cloudy heights, a man on whom the sun will not shine harshly."

Then the king came to Rustam and asked how he had slept, and brought news that Rakhush had been found. Rustam rushed out and stroked and petted his horse, overjoyed to have found him; he saddled him and rode on his way, content with the king's hospitality and to have found his horse again.

Nine months passed, and the princess Tahmineh gave birth to a son as splendid as the shining moon. He seemed another Rustam, Sam, or Nariman, and since his face shown bright with laughter, Tahmineh named him Sohrab (Bright-visaged). When a month had gone, he seemed a year old; at three, he played polo; and at five, he took up archery and practiced with a javelin. By the time he was ten, no one dared compete with him and he said to his mother, "Tell me truly now, why is it I am so much taller than other boys of my age? Whose child am I, and what should I answer when people ask about my father? If you keep all this hidden from me, I will not let you live a moment longer." His mother answered, "Hear what I have to say, and be pleased at it, and control your temper. You are the son of the mammoth-bodied hero Rustam and are descended

from Dastan, Sam, and Nariman. This is why your head reaches to the heavens; since the Creator made this world, there never has been such a knight as Rustam." Secretly she showed him

(929)

a letter that Rustam had sent, together with three rubies set in gold; then she said, "Afrasiab must know nothing of this, and if Rustam hears of how you have grown, he will summon you to his side and break your mother's heart." Sohran answered, "This is not something to be kept secret; the world's chieftains tell tales of Rustam's prowess; how can it be right for me to hide such a splendid lineage? I will gather a boundless force of fighting Turks and drive Kavus (a Persian king of the Kayanid dynasty, son of Qobad) from his throne; then I will eradicate all trace of Tus (a Persian prince, son of Nozar, grandson of Manuchehr) from Iran and give the royal mace and crown to Rustam, I will place him on the throne of Kavus. Next I will march on Turan and fight with Afrasiyab (a king of Turan) and seize his throne too. If Rustam is my father and I am his son, then no one else in all the world should wear the crown; when the sun and moon shine out in splendor, what should lesser stars do, boasting of their glory?" From every quarter swordsmen and chieftains flocked to the youth.

Afrasiyab was told that Sohran had launched his boat upon the waters and that, although his mouth still smelled of mother's milk, his thoughts were all of swords and arrowa. The informants said that he was threatening war against Kavus, that a mighty force had flocked to him, and that in his self-confidence he took no account of anyone. Afrasiyab laughed with delight; he chose twelve thousand warriors, placed them under the command of Barman and Human, and addressed his two chieftains thusly: "This secret must remain hidden. When these two face each other on the battlefield, Rustam will surely be at a disadvantage. The father must know his son, because he will try to win him over; but, knowing nothing, the ancient warrior filled with years will be slain by our young lion. Later you can deal with Sohrab and dispatch him to his endless sleep." Afrasiyab sent the two to Sohrab, and he entrusted them with a letter encouraging the young warrior in his ambitions and promising support.

There was an armed outpost of Iran called the White Fortress; its keeper was an experienced warrior named Hejir. Sohrab led his army toward the fortress, and, when Hejir saw this, he mounted his horse and rode out to confront him. Sohrab rode in front of the army, then drew his sword and taunted Hejir, "What are you dreaming of, coming to fight alone against me? Who are you, what is your name and lineage? Your mother will weep over your corpse today." Hejir replied, "There are not many Turks who can match themselves against me. I am Hejir, the army's brave commander, and I shall tear your head off and send it to Kavus, the king of all the world; your body I shall thrust beneath the dirt." Sohrab laughed to hear such talk; the two attacked each other furiously with lances. Hejir's lance struck at Sohrab's waist but did no harm, but when Sohrab returned the blow, he sent Hejir sprawling from his saddle to the ground. Sohrab leapt down from his horse, intending to sever his enemy's head, but Hejir twisted away to the

right and begged for quarter. Sohrab spared him, and in triumph preached submission to his captive. Then he had him bound and sent
(930)

to Human. When those in the fortress realized that their leader had been captured, both men and women wailed aloud with grief, crying out, "Hejir is taken from us."

But one of those within the fortress was a woman, daughter of the warrior Gazhdaham, named Gordafarid. When she learned that their leader had allowed himself to be taken she found his behavior so shameful that her rosy cheeks became as black as pitch with rage. With not a moment's delay she dressed herself in a knight's armor, gathered her hair beneath a Rumi (Byzantine) helmet, and rode out from the fortress, a lion eager for battle. She roared at the enemy's ranks, "Where are your heroes, your warriors, your tried and tested chieftains?"

When Sohrab saw this new combatant, he laughed and bit his lip and said to himself, "Another victim has stepped into the hero's trap." Quickly he donned his armor and a Chinese helmet and galloped out to face Gordafarid. When she saw him, she took aim with her bow (no bird could escape her well-aimed arrows) and let loose a hail of arrows, weaving to left and right like an experienced horseman as she did so. Shame urged Sohrab forward, his shield held before his head to deflect her arrows. Seeing him approach, she laid aside her bow and snatched up a lance and, as her horse reared toward the clouds, she hurled it at her opponent. Sohrab wheeled round and his lance struck Gordafarid in the waist; her armor's fastenings were severed, but she unsheathed her sword and hacked at his lance, splitting it in two. Sohrab bore down on her again and snatched her helmet from her head; her hair streamed out, and her face shone like a splendid sun. He saw that his opponent was a woman, one whose hair was worthy of a diadem. He was amazed and said, "How is it that a woman should ride out from the Persian army and send the dust up from her horse's hooves into the heavens?" He unhitched his lariat from the saddle and flung it, catching her by the waist, then said: "Do not try to escape from me; now, my beauty, what do you mean by coming out to fight? I have never captured prey like you before, and I will not let you go in a hurry." Gordafarid saw that she could only get away by a ruse of some kind, and, showing her face to him, she said, "O lionhearted warrior, two armies are watching us and, if I let them see my face and hair, your troops will be very amused by the notion of your fighting a mere girl; we had better draw aside somewhere, that is what a wise man would do, so that you will not be a laughing stock before these two armies. Now our army, our wealth, our fortress, and the fortress' commander will all be in your hands to do with as you wish; I will hand them over to you, so there is no need for you to pursue this war any further." As she spoke, her shining teeth and bright red lips and heavenly lips and heavenly face were like a paradise to Sohrab; no gardener ever grew so straight and tall a cypress as she seemed to be; her eyes were liquid as a deer's, her brows were two bent bows, you would say her body was a bud about to blossom.

Sohrab said, "Do not go back on your word; you have seen me

on the battlefield; do not think you will be safe from me once you
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are behind the fortress walls again. They do not reach higher than the clouds and my mace will bring them down if need be." Gordafarid tugged at her horse's reigns and wheeled round toward the fortress; Sohrab rode beside her to the gates, which opened and let in the weary, wounded, woman warrior.

The defenders closed the gates, and young and old alike wept for Gordafarid and Hejir. They said, "O brave lioness, we all grieve for you, but you fought well and your ruse worked and you brought no shame on your people." Then Gordafarid laughed long and heartily and climbed up on the fortress walls and looked out over the army. When she saw Sohrab perched on his saddle, she shouted down to him:

*"O king of all Asian hordes, turn back,
Forget your fighting and your planned attack."
She laughed; and then, more gently, almost sighed:
"No Turk will bear away a Persian bride;
But do not chafe at Fate's necessity -
Fate did not mean that you should conquer me.
Besides, you are not a Turk, I know you trace
Your lineage from a far more splendid race;
Put any of your heroes to the test -
None had your massive arm and mighty chest.
But news will spread that Turan's army is here,
Led by a stripling chief who knows no fear;
Kavus will send for noble Rustam then
And neither you nor any of your men
Will live for long: I should be sad to see
This lion destroy you here - turn now and flee,
Do not trust your strength, strength will not save your life;
The fatted calf knows nothing of the knife."*

Hearing her, Sohrab felt a fool, realizing how easily he could have taken the fortress. He plundered the surrounding settlements and sulkily said: "It is too late for battle now, but when dawn comes, I will raze this fortress' walls, and its inhabitants will know the meaning of defeat."

But all night Gazdaham, Gordafarid's aged father, sent a letter to Kavus telling him of Sohrab's prowess, and secretly, before dawn, most of the Persian troops evacuated the fortress, traveling toward Iran and safety.

When the sun rose above the mountains, the Turks prepared to fight; Sohrab mounted his horse, couched his lance, and advanced on the fortress. But as he and his men reached the walls, they saw very few defenders; they pushed open the gates and saw within no preparations for battle. A straggle of soldiers came forward, begging for quarter.

When King Kavus received Gazdaham's message, he was deeply troubled; he summoned his chieftains and put the matter before them. After he had read the letter to his warrior lords - men like Tus, Gudarz (the son of Keshvad), Giv (son of Gudarz), Gorgin,

Bahram, and Farhad - Kavus said, "According to Gazhdaham, this is going to be a lengthy business. His letter has put all other thoughts from my mind; now, what should we do to remedy this situation, and who is there in Iran who can stand up to this new warrior?" All agreed that Giv should go to Zabol (Sistan) and tell Rustam of the danger threatening Iran and the Persian throne.

Kavus wrote to Rustam, praising his prowess and appealing to him to come to the aid of the throne. Then he said to Giv, "Gallop as quickly as wind-borne smoke and take this letter to Rustam. Do not delay in Zabol; if you arrive at night, set off on the return journey the next morning. Tell Rustam that matters are urgent." Giv took the letter and traveled quickly to Zabol, without resting along the way. Rustam came out with a contingent of his nobles to welcome him; Giv and Rustam's group dismounted together, and Rustam questioned him closely about the king and events in Iran. After they had returned to Rustam's palace and rested a while, Giv repeated what he had heard, handed over the letter, and gave what news he could of Sohrab.

When Rustam had listened to him and read the letter, he laughed aloud and said in astonishment, "So it seems that a second Sam is loose in the world; this would be no surprise if he were a Persian, but from the Turks it is unprecedented. I myself have a son over there, by the princess of Samangan, but he is still a boy and does not yet realize that war is the way to glory. I sent his mother gold and jewels, and she sent me back an answer saying that he would soon be a tall young fellow; his mouth still smells of mother's milk, but he drinks his wine, and no doubt he will be a fighter soon enough. Now, you and I rest for a day and moisten our dry lips with wine, then we can make our way to the king and lead Persia's warriors out to war. It is possible that Fortune has turned against us, but if not, this campaign will not prove difficult; when the sea's waves inundate the land, the fiercest fire will not stay alight for long. And when this young warrior sees my banner, his heart will know his revels are all ended; he will not be in such a hurry to fight anymore. This is not something we should worry ourselves about."

They sat to their wine and, forgetting all about the king, passed the night in idle chatter. The next morning Rustam woke with a hangover and called again for wine; this day too was passed in drinking and no one thought about setting out on the journey to Kavus. And once again on the third day Rustam ignored the king's summons and had wine brought. On the fourth day Giv bestirred himself and said, "Kavus is a headstrong man and not at all intelligent; he is very upset about this business and he can neither eat nor sleep properly. If we stay much longer in Zabol (Sistan), he will be extremely angry." Rustam replied, "Do not worry about that; there is not a man alive who can meddle with me." He gave orders that Rakhush be saddled and that the trumpet for departure be sounded. Zabol's knights heard the trumpets and, armed and helmeted, they gathered about their leader.

They arrived at the king's court in high spirits and ready to serve him. But when they bowed before the king, he at first made them no answer, and then, addressing Giv, he burst out in fury, "Who is Rustam that he should ignore me, that he should flout my orders in this way? Take him and string him up alive on the gallows and never mention his name to me again." Giv was horrified at Kavus' words and remonstrated, "You would treat Rustam in this way?" The courtiers stared, struck dumb, as Kavus then roared to Tus, "Take both of them and hang them both." And, wildly as a fire that burns dry reeds, he sprang up from the throne. Tus took Rustam by the arm to lead him from Kavus' presence and the warriors there watched in wonder, but Rustam too burst out in fury and addressed the king:

*"Smother your rage; each act of yours is more
Contemptible than every act before.
You are not fit to be king; it is Sohtab you
Should hang alive, but you are unable to."
Tus he sent sprawling with a single blow
Then strode toward the door as if to go
But turned back in his rage and said, "I am
The Crown Bestower, the renowned Rustam,
When I am angry, who is Kay Kavus?
Who dares to threaten me? And who is Tus?
My helmet is my crown, Rakhush is my throne,
And I am slave to none but God alone.
If Sohrab should attack, who will survive?
No child or warrior will be left alive
In all Iran - too late, and desperately;
You will seek for some escape or remedy;
This is your land where you reside and reign -
Henceforth you will not see Rustam here again."*

The courtiers were deeply alarmed, since they regarded Rustam as a shepherd and themselves as his flock. They turned to Gudarz and said, "You must heal this breach, the king will listen to no one but you; go to this crazy monarch and speak to him mildly and at length, and with luck we will be able to restore our fortunes again." Gudarz went to Kavus and reminded him of Rustam's past service and of the threat that Sohrab was to Iran, and when he had heard him out, Kavus repented of his anger and said to Gudarz, "Your words are just, and nothing becomes an old man's lips like wisdom. A king should be wise and cautious; anger and impetuous behavior bring no good to anyone. Go to Rustam and remind him of our former friendship; make him forget my outburst." Gudarz and the army's chieftains went in search of Rustam; finally they saw the dust raised by Rakhush and caught up with him. They praised the hero and then said, "You know that Kavus is a brainless fool, that he is subject to these outbursts of temper, that he erupts in rage and is immediately sorry and swears to mend his ways. If you

are furious with the king, the people of Iran are not at fault; already he regrets his rage and bites the back of his hand in repentance."

Rustam replied, "I have no need of Kay Kavus: My saddle is my throne, my helmet is my crown, this stout armor is my robes of state, and my heart is prepared for death. Why should I fear Kavus' rage; he is no more to me than a fistful of dirt. My mind is weary of all this, my heart is full, and I fear no one but God himself." Gudarz replied, "Iran and her chieftains and the army will see this in another way; they will say that the great hero was afraid of the Turk and that he sneaked away in fear; they will say that if Rustam has fled, we should all flee. I saw the court in an uproar over Kavus' rage, but I also saw the stir that Sohrab has created. Do not turn your back on the king of Iran; your name is renowned throughout the world, do not dim its lustre by this flight. And consider: The army is hard pressed, this is no time to abandon throne and crown."

Rustam stared at him and said, "If there is any fear in my heart I tear it from me now." Shamefaced, he rode back to the king's court, and when he entered, the king stood and asked his forgiveness for what had passed between them, saying, "Impetuous rage is part of my nature; we have to live as God has fashioned us. This new and unexpected enemy had made my heart grow faint as the new moon; I looked to you for help and when you delayed your coming, I became angry. But seeing you affronted by my words, I regretted what I had said." Rustam replied, "The world is yours; we are all your subjects. I have come to hear your orders." Kavus said, "Tonight we feast, tomorrow we fight." Entertained by musicians and served by pale young slaves, the two then sat to their wine and drank till half the night had passed.

At dawn the next day the king ordered Giv and Tus to prepare the army; drums were bound to elephants, the treasury doors were opened, and war supplies were handed out. A hundred thousand warriors gathered and the air was darkened by their dust. Stage by stage they marched till nightfall, and their glittering weapons shone like points of fire seen through a dark curtain. So day by day they went on until at last they reached the fortress' gates, and their number was so great that not a stone or speck of earth was visible before the walls.

A shout from the lookouts told Sohrab that the enemy's army had come. Sohrab went up onto the city walls and the summoned Human; when Human saw the mighty force opposing them, he gasped and his heart quailed, Sohrab told him to be of good cheer, saying, "In all this limitless army, you will not see one warrior who will be willing to face me in combat, no, not if the sun and moon themselves came down to aid him. There is a great deal of armor here and many men, but I know of none among them who is a warrior to reckon with. And now in Afrasiyab's name I shall make this plain a sea of blood." Cheerful and fearless, Sohrab descended from the walls. For their part the Persians pitched camp, and so vast was the number of tents and pavilions that the plain and

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surrounding foothills disappeared from view.

The sun withdrew from the world, and dark night spread her troops across the plain. Eager to observe the enemy, Rustam came before Kavus. He said, "Let me go from here unarmed to see just who this new young hero is, and to see what chieftains are accompanying him." Kavus replied, "You are the man for such an undertaking; take care, and may you return safely."

Rustam disguised himself as a Turk and made his way quickly to the fortress. As he drew near he could hear the sound of drunken revelry from the Turks within. He slipped into the fortress as a lion stalks wild deer. Then he saw Sohrab seated on a throne and presiding over the festivities; on one side of him sat Zhendeh-Razm and on the other were the warriors Human and Barman. Tall as a cypress, of mighty limb, and mammoth chested, Sohrab seemed to fill the throne. He was surrounded by a hundred Turkish youths, as haughty as young lions, and fifty servants stood before him. In turn, all praised their hero's strength and stature and sword and seal, while Rustam watched the scene from afar.

Zendeh-Razm left the gathering on some errand and saw a warrior, cypress-tall, whom he did not recognize. He came over to Rustam and said, "Who are you? Come into the light so that I can see your face." With one swift blow from his fist, Rustam struck out at Zhendeh-Razm's neck, and the champion gave up the ghost there and then; he lay motionless on the ground, never returning to the feast. After a while Sohrab noticed his absence and asked after him. Retainers went out and saw him lying prone in the dirt; neither banquets nor battles would concern him again. They returned wailing and weeping, and told Sohrab that Zhendeh-Razm's days of feasting and fighting were over. When Sohrab heard this, he sprang up and hurried to where the warrior lay, and the musicians and servants with tapers followed after him. He stared in astonishment, then called his chieftains to him and said, "Tonight we must not rest but sharpen our spears for battle: a wolf has attacked our flock, eluding the shepherd and his dog. But with God's aid, when I ride out and loose my lariat from the saddle, I will be revenged on these Iranian warriors for the death of Zhendeh-Razm." And with this he returned to the feast.

For his part Rustam slipped back to the Persian lines, where Giv waited on watch. Rustam told Giv of how he had killed one of the enemy, and then went to Kavus and gave him news of Sohrab, saying that the new hero had no equal in either Turan or Iran, and that he was the image of Rustam's own grandfather, Sam. He told Kavus of how he had killed Zhendeh-Razm, and then he and the king called for musicians and wine.

When the sun had flung its noose into the sky, and rays of light shot through the empyrean, Sohrab armed himself and went up onto a tower on the city walls; from there he could see the Iranian forces spread out below. He summoned Hejir and, after promising wealth if he was truthful and prison if he was not, he said to him, "I want to ask you about the leaders and champions of the other side, men like Tus, Kavus, Gudarz, Bahram, and the

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famous Rustam; identify for me everyone I point out to you. Those multicolored pavilion walls enclosing tents of leopardskin; a

hundred elephants are tethered in front of them, and beside the turquoise throne that stands there, a banner rises emblazoned with the sun and topped with a golden moon; there, right in the center of the encampment - whose place is that?" Hejir replied, "That is the Persian king's court, and there are lions there as well as elephants."

Sohrab went on, "Over to the right, where all the baggage and knights and elephants are, there is a black pavilion around which are countless ranks of soldiers; the banner there bears an elephant as its device, and there are gold-shod knights on guard before it; whose is that?" Hejir answered, "The banner embroidered with an elephant belongs to Tus, the son of Nozar." "And the red pavilion that so many knights are crowded around, where the banner shows a lion and bears in its center a huge jewel, whose is that?" "The lion banner belongs to the great Gudarz, of the clan of Keshvad."

"And the green pavilion, where all the infantry are standing? Where the banner of Kaveh is; look, a resplendent throne shines there, and on it is seated a hero who is head and shoulders taller than all those who stand in front of him. A magnificent horse, with a lariat slung across its saddle, waits next to him and neighs toward its lord every now and again. The device on the banner is of a dragon, and its staff is topped with a golden lion." Hejir answered, "That is some lord from Tartary who has recently joined forces with the king." Sohrab asked the new lord's name, but Hejir said, "I do not know his name; I was here in this fortress when he came to our king." Sohrab was saddened in his heart, because no trace of Rustam was to be seen.

He questioned Hejir further, pointing out an encampment around a banner that bore the device of a wolf. "That belongs to the eldest and noblest of Gudarz's sons, Giv." Hejir replied, "And over toward where the sun is rising, there is a white pavilion thronged about with foot soldiers; their leader is seated on a throne of teak placed on an ivory pedestal and he is surrounded by slaves?" "That is Prince Fariborz, the son of King Kavus." "And the scarlet pavilion where the soldiers are standing around the entrance, where the red, yellow, and purple banners are; behind them towers a taller banner bearing the device of a wild boar and topped with a golden moon?" "That belongs to the lion-slaying Goraz, of Giv's clan."

And so Sohrab sought for some sign of his father, while the other hid from him what he longed to know. Once again he asked about the tall warrior beneath the green banner, beside whom waited a noble horse bearing a coiled lariat. But Hejir answered, "If I do not tell you his name, it is because I do not know it myself." "But this cannot be right," Sohrab said. "You have made no mention of Rustam; the greatest warrior in the world could not stay hidden in this army camp; you said he was the foremost of their heroes, keeper of the country, and ward of the marches."

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"Perhaps this great warrior has gone to Zabolestan, for now is the time of the spring festival." Sohrab answered: Do not talk so foolishly; his king has led their forces into the fields; if this

world champion were to sit drinking and taking his ease at such a time, everyone would laugh at him. If you point out Rustam to me, I will make you a wealthy and honored man, you will never want for anything again: but if you keep his whereabouts hidden from me, I will sever your head from your shoulders; now choose which it is to be."

But in his heat the wily Hejir thought, "If I point out Rustam to this strong Turkish youth, who has such shoulders and who sits his horse so well, out of all our forces it will be Rustam he will choose to fight against. With his massive strength and mighty frame, he could well kill Rustam, and who from Iran would be able to avenge the hero's death? Then this Sohran will seize Kavus' throne. Death with honor is better than aiding the enemy, and if Gudarz and his clan are to die, then I have no wish to live in Iran either." To Sohrab he replied, "Why are you so hasty and irritable? You talk of nothing but Rustam. It is not him you should try to fight; he would prove a formidable opponent on the battlefield. You would not be able to defeat him and it would be no easy matter to capture him either."

When Sohrab heard such slighting words, he turned his back on Hejir and hid his face. Then he turned and struck him with such violence that Hejir sprawled headlong in the dirt. Sohrab went back to his tent and there donned his armor and helmet. Seething with fury, he mounted his horse, couched his lance, and rode out to the battlefield like a maddened elephant. None of the champions of the Persian army dared confront him: seeing his massive frame, his martial figure on horseback, his mighty arm and glittering lance, they said, "He is another Rustam; who would dare look at him or oppose him in combat."

Then Sohrab roared out his challenge against Kavus, "What prowess have you on the battlefield? Why do you call yourself King Kavus when you have no skill or strength in battle? I will spit your body on this lance of mine and make the stars weep for your downfall. The night when I was feasting and Zhendeh-Razm was killed, I swore a mighty oath that I would not leave a single warrior living in all Persia, that I would string Kavus up alive on a gallows. Is there one from among all Persia's fighting champions who will oppose me on the battlefield?" So he stood, fuming with rage, while not a sound rose from the Persian ranks in answer to his challenge. Sohrab's response was to bend low in the saddle and bear down on the Persian camp. With his lance he severed the ropes of seventy tent pegs; half of the great pavilion tumbled down, the sound of trumpets rang in the air, and the army scattered like wild asses (onagers) before a lion. Kavus cried out, "Have someone tell Rustam that our warriors are confounded by this Turk, that I have not one knight who dares confront him." Tus took the message to Rustam, who said,

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*"When other kings have unexpectedly
Asked for my services, or summoned me,
I have been rewarded with a gift, with treasure,
With banquets, celebrations, courtly pleasure -*

*But from Kavus I have witnessed nothing more
Than constant hardships and unending war."*

He ordered that Rakhush be saddled and, leaving Zavareh to guard his encampment, he rode out with his warriors beside him, bearing his banners aloft.

When he saw the mighty Sohrab, whose massive frame seemed so like that of Sam, he called to him, "Let us move aside to open ground and face each other man to man." Sohrab rubbed his hands together, took up his position before the ranks of waiting soldiers, and answered, "Do not call any of your Persians to your aid, you and I will fight alone. But the battlefield is no place for you, you will not survive one blow of my fist, you are tall enough and have a fine chest and shoulders, but age has clipped your wings, old man!" Rustam stared at the haughty young warrior, at his fist and shoulders, and the way he sat his horse, and gently said to him:

*"So headstrong and so young! Warm words, and bold!
The ground, young warrior, is both hard and cold.
Yes, I am old, and I have seen many wars
And laid low many mighty conquerors;
Many a demon has perished by my hand
And I have not known defeat, in any land.
Look on me well; if you escape from me
You need not fear the monsters of the sea;
The sea and mountains know what I have wrought
Against Turan, how nobly I have fought,
The stars are witness to my chivalry,
In all the world there is none can equal me.
Then Sohrab said, "I am going to question you,
Your answer must be honest, straight, and true:
I think that you are Rustam, and from the clan
Of warlike Sam and noble Nariman."
Rustam replied, "I am not Rustam, I claim
No kinship with that clan or noble name:
Rustam is a champion, I am a slave - I own
No royal wealth or crown or kingly throne."
And Sohrab's hopes were changed then to despair,
Darkening before his gaze the sunlit air.*

Sohrab roode to the space allotted for combat, and his mother's words rang in his ears. At first they fought with short javelins, then attacked one another with Indian swords, and sparks sprang forth from the clash of iron against iron. The mighty blows left both swords shattered, and they grasped their ponderous maces, and a weariness began to weigh their arms down. Their

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horses too began to tire, and tuhe blows the heroes dealt shattered both the horse armor and their own cuirasses. Finally, both the horses and their riders paused, exhausted by the battle, and neither hero could summon the strength to deliver another blow. The two stood facing one another at a distance, the father

filled with pain, the son with sorrow, their bodies soaked with sweat, their mouths caked with dirt, their tongues cracked with thirst. How strange are the ways of the world! All beasts will recognize their young - the fish in the sea, the wild asses on the plain - but suffering and pride will make a man unable to distinguish his son from his enemy.

Rustam said to himself, "I have never seen a monster fight like this; my combat with the White Demon was as nothing to this and I can feel my heart's courage begin to fail. A young, unknown warrior who has seen nothing of the world has brought me to this desperate pass, and in the sight of both our armies."

When their horses had rested from the combat, both warriors - he who was old in years and he who was still a stripling - strung their bows, but their remaining armor rendered the arrows harmless. In fury then the two closed, grasping at one another's belts, each struggling to throw the other. Rustam, who on the day of battle could tear rock from the mountain crags, seized Sohrab's belt and strove to drag him from his saddle, but it was as if the boy were untouched and all Rustam's efforts were useless. Again these mighty lions withdrew from one another, wounded and exhausted.

Then once more Sohrab lifted his massive mace from the saddle and bore down on Rustam; his mace struck Rustam's shoulder and the hero writhed in pain. Sohrab laughed and cried, "You cannot stand up to blows, it seems; you might be cypress-tall, but an old man who acts like a youth is a fool."

Both now felt weakened by their battle, and sick at heart they turned aside from one another. Rustam made toward the Turkish ranks like a leopard who sights his prey; like a wolf he fell on them, and their great army scattered before him. For his part, Sohrab attacked the Persian host, striking down warriors with his mace. Rustam feared that some harm would come to Kavus from this young warrior, and he hurried back to his own lines. He saw Sohrab in the midst of the Persian ranks, the ground beneath his feet awash with wine-red blood; his spear, armor, and hands were smeared with blood and he seemed drunk with slaughter. Like a raging lion Rustam burst out in fury, "Bloodthirsty Turk, who challenged you from the Persian ranks? Why have you attacked them like a wolf run wild in a flock of sheep? Sohrab replied, "And Turan's army had no part in this battle either, but you attacked them first even though none of them had challenged you." Rustam said, "Evening draws on, but, when the sun unsheathes its sword again, on this plain we shall see who will die and who will triumph. Let us return at dawn with swords ready for combat; go now, and await God's will."

They parted and the air grew dark. Wounded and weary, Sohrab

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arrived at his own lines and questioned Human about Rustam's attack. Human answered, "The king's command was that we not stir from our camp; and so we were quite unprepared when a fearsome warrior bore down on us, as wild as if he were drunk or had come from single combat." Sohrab answered, "He did not destroy one warrior from this host, while I, for my part, killed many Persians

and soaked the ground with their blood. Now we must eat, and with wine drive sorrow from our hearts."

And on the other side, Rustam questioned Giv, "How did this Sohrab fight today?" Giv replied, "I have never seen a warrior like him. He rushed into the center of our lines intending to attack Tus, but Tus fled before him, and there was none among us who could withstand his onslaught." Rustam grew downcast at his words and went to King Kavus, who motioned him to his side. Rustam described Sohrab's massive body to him and said that no one had ever seen such valor from so young a warrior. Then he went on, "We fought with mace and sword and bow, and finally, remembering that I had often enough pulled heroes down from the saddle, I seized him by the belt and tried to drag him from his horse and fling him to the ground. But a wind could shake a mountainside before it would shift that hero. When he comes to the combat ground tomorrow, I must find some way to overcome him hand to hand; I shall do my best, but I do not know who will win; we must wait and see what God wills, for he it is, the Creator of the sun and moon, who gives victory and glory." Kavus replied, "And may he lacerate the hearts of those who wish you ill. I shall spend the night in prayer to him for your success."

Rustam returned to his own men, preoccupied with thoughts of the coming combat. Anxiously, his brother Zavareh came forward, questioning him as to how he had fared that day. Rustam asked him first for food, and then shared his heart's forebodings. He said, "Be vigilant, and do nothing rashly. When I face that Turk on the battlefield at dawn, gather together our army and accoutrements - our banner, throne, the golden boots our gurads wear - and wait at sunrise before our pavilion. If I am victorious I shall not linger on the battlefield, but if things turn out otherwise, do not mourn for me or act impetuously; do not go forward offering to fight. Instead, return to Zabolestan and go to our father, Dastan; comfort my mother's heart, and make her see that this fate was willed for me by God. Tell her not to give herself up to grief, for no good will come of it. No one lives forever in this world, and I have no complaint against the turns of Fate. So many lions and demons and leopards and monsters have been destroyed by my strength, and so many fortresses and castles have been razed by my might; no one has ever overcome me. Whoever mounts his horse and rides out for battle is knocking at the door of Death, and if we live a thousand years or more, Death is our destiny at last. When she is comforted, tell Dastan not to turn his back on the world's king, Kavus. If Kavus makes war, Dastan is not to tarry, but to obey his every command. Young and old, we are all bound for Death; on this earth no one lives forever." For half the night they

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talked of Sohrab, and the other half was spent in rest and sleep.

When the shining sun spread its plumes and night's dark raven folded its wings, Rustam donned his tigerskin and mounted Rakhush. His iron helmet on his head, he hitched the sixty loops of his lariat to his saddle, grasped his Indian sword in his hand, and rode out to the combat ground.

Sohrab had spent the night entertained by musicians and

drinking wine with his companions. To Human he had confided his suspicions that his opponent was none other than Rustam, for he felt himself drawn to him, and besides, he resembled his mother's description of Rustam. When dawn came, he buckled on his armor and grasped his huge mace; with his head filled with battle and his heart in high spirits, he came onto the field shouting his war cry. He greeted Rustam with a smile on his lips, for all the world as if they had spent the night in revelry together:

*"When did you wake? How did you pass the night?
And are you still determined we should fight?
But throw your mace and sword down, put aside
These thoughts of war, this truculence and pride.
Let us sit and drink together, and the wine
Will smooth away our frowns - both yours and mine.
Come, swear an oath before our God that we
Renounce all thoughts of war and enmity.
Let us make a truce, and feast as allies here
At least until new enemies appear.
The tears that stain my face are tokens of
My heart's affection for you, and my love;
I know that you are of noble ancestry -
Recite your lordly lineage to me."*

Rustam replied, "This was not what we talked of last night; our talk was of hand-to-hand combat. I will not fall for these tricks, so do not try them. You might be still a child, but I am not, and I have bound my belt on ready for our combat. Now, let us fight, and the outcome will be as God wishes. I have seen much of good and evil in my life, and I am not a man for talk or tricks or treachery." Sohrab replied, "Talk like this is not fitting from an old man. I would have wished that your days would come to an end peacefully, in your bed, and that your survivors would build a tomb to hold your body while your soul flew on its way. But if your life is to be in my hands, so be it; let us fight and the outcome will be as God wills."

They dismounted, tethered their horses, and warily came forward, each clad in mail and helmeted. They closed in combat, wrestling hand-to-hand and mingled blood and sweat poured from their bodies. Then Sohrab, like a maddened elephant, struck Rustam a violent blow and felled him; like a lion leaping to bring down a wild ass, he flung himself on Rustam's chest, whose mouth and fist and face were grimed with dust. He drew a glittering dagger to sever the hero's head from his body, and Rustam spoke:

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*"O hero, lion destroyer, mighty lord,
Master of mace and lariat and sword,
Our customs do not count this course as right;
According to our laws, when warriors fight,
A hero may not strike the fatal blow
The first time his opponent is laid low;
He does this, and he is called a lion, when
He has thrown his rival twice - and only then."*

By this trick he sought to escape death at Sohrab's hands. The brave youth bowed his head at the old man's words, believing what he was told. He released his opponent and withdrew to the plains where, unconcernedly, he spent some time hunting. After a while Human sought him out and asked him about the day's combat thus far. Sohrab told Human what had happened and what Rustam had said to him. Human responded, "Young man, you have had enough of life, it seems! Alas for this chest, for these arms and shoulders of yours; alas for your fist, for the mace that it holds; you had trapped the tiger and you let him go, which was the act of a simpleton! Now, watch for the consequences of this foolishness of yours when you face Rustam again."

Sohrab returned to camp, sick at heart and furious with himself. A prince once made a remark for just such a situation:

*"Do not make light of any enemy
No matter how unworthy he may be."*

For his part, when Rustam had escaped from Sohrab, he sprang up like a man who has come back from the dead and strode to a nearby stream where he drank and washed the grime from his face and body. Next he prayed, asking for God's help and for victory, unaware of the fate the sun and moon had in store for him. Then, anxious and pale, he made his way from the stream back to the battlefield.

And there he saw Sohrab mounted on his rearing horse, charging after wild asses like a maddened elephant, whirling his lariat, his bow on his arm. Rustam stared at him in astonishment, trying to calculate his chances against him in single combat. When Sohrab caught sight of him, all the arrogance of youth was in his voice as he taunted Rustam, "So you escaped the lion's claws, old man, and crept away from the wounds he dealt you!"

Once again they tethered their horses, and once again they grappled in single combat, each grasping the other's belt and straining to overthrow him. But, for all his great strength, Sohrab seemed as though he were hindered by the heavens, and Rustam seized him by the shoulders and finally forced him to the ground; the brave youth's back was bent, his time had come, his strength deserted him. Like a lion Rustam laid him low, but, knowing that the youth would not lie there for long, he quickly drew his dagger and plunged it in the lionhearted hero's chest. Sohrab writhed, then gasped for breath, and knew he had passed beyond concerns of

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worldly good and evil. He said:

*"I brought this on myself, this is from me,
And Fate has merely handed you the key
To my brief life: not you but heaven's vault -
Which raised me and then killed me - is at fault.
Love for my father led me here to die.
My mother gave me signs to know him by,
And you could be a fish within the sea,*

*Or pitch black, lost in night's obscurity,
Or be a star in heaven's endless space,
Or vanish from the earth and leave no trace,
But still my father, when he knows I am dead,
Will bring down condign vengeance on your head.
One from this noble band will take this sign
To Rustam's hands, and tell him it was mine,
And say I sought him always, far and wide,
And that, at last, in seeking him, I died."*

When Rustam heard the warrior's words, his head whirled and the earth turned dark before his eyes, and when he came back to himself, he roared in an agony of anguish and asked what it was that the youth had which was a sign from Rustam, the mostcursed of all heroes.

"If then you are Rustam," said the youth, "and you killed me, your wits were dimmed by an evil nature. I tried in every way to guide you, but no love of yours responded. Open the straps that bind my armor and look on my naked body. When the battle drums sounded before my door, my mother came to me, her eyes awash with tears, her soul in torment to see me leave. She bound a clasp on my arm and said, "Take this in memory of your father, and watch for when it will be useful to you'; but now it shows its power too late, and the son is laid low before his father." And when Rustam opened the boy's armor and saw the clasp he tore his hair and heaped dust on his head. Sohrab said, "By this you make things worse. You must not weep; what point is there in wounding yourself like this? What happened is what had to happen."

The shining sun descended from the sky and still Rustam had not returned to his encampment. Twenty warriors came riding to see the battlefield and found two muddied horses but no sign of Rustam. Assuming he had been killed, they sent a message to Kavus saying, "Rustam's royal throne lies desolate." A wail of mourning went up from the army, and Kavus gave orders that the drums and trumpets be sounded. Tus hurried forward and Kavus told him to have someone survey the battlefield and find out what it was that Sohrab had done and whether they were indeed to weep for the fortunes of Iran, since if Rustam had been killed, no one would be able to oppose Sohrab and they would have to retreat without giving battle.

As the noise of mourning rose from the army, Sohrab said to Rustam, "Now that my days are ended, the Turks' fortunes too have

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changed. Be merciful to them, and do not let the king make war on them; it was at my instigation they attacked Iran. What promises I made, what hopes I held out to them! They should not be the ones to suffer, see you look kindly on them."

Cold sighs on his lips, his face besmeared with blood and tears, Rustam mounted Rakhush and rode to the Persian camp, lamenting aloud, tormented by the thought of what he had done. When they caught sight of him, the Persian warriors fell to the ground, praising God that he was alive, but when they saw his ripped clothes and dust-besmeared head and face, they asked him

what had happened and what distressed him. He told them of the strange deed he had done, of how he had slaughtered the person who was dearer to him than all others, and all who heard lamented aloud with him.

Then he said to the chieftains, "I have no courage left now, no strength or sense; go no further with this war against the Turks, the evil that I have done today is sufficient." Rustam returned to where his son lay wounded, and the nobles - men like Tus, Gudarz, and Gostaham - accompanied him, crowding around and saying, "It is God who will heal this wound, it is he who will lighten your sorrows." But Rustam drew a dagger, intending to slash his own neck with it; weeping with grief, they flung themselves on him and Gudarz said, "What point is there in spreading fire and sword throughout the world by your death, and if you wound yourself a thousand times, how will that help this noble youth? If there is any time left to him on this earth, then stay with him and ease his hours here; and if he is to die, then look at all the world and say, 'Who is immortal?' We are all Death's prey, both he who wears a helmet and he who wears the crown."

Rustam replied, "Go quickly and take a message from me to Kavus and tell him what has befallen me; say that I have rent my own son's vitals with a dagger, and that I curse my life and long for death. Tell him, if he has any regard for all I have done in his service, to have pity on my suffering and to send me the elixir he keeps in his treasury, the medicine that will heal all wounds. If he will send it, together with a goblet of wine, it may be that, by his grace, Sohrab will survive and serve Kavus' throne as I have done."

Like wind the chieftain bore this message to Kavus, who said in reply, "Which warrior, of all this company, is of more repute than Rustam? And are we to make him even greater? Then, surely he will turn on me and kill me. How will the wide world contain his glory and might? How will he remain the servant to my throne? If, some day, evil is to come to me from him, I will respond with evil. You heard how he referred to me:

*"When I am angry, who is Kay Kavus?
Who dares to threaten me? And who is Tus?"*

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When Gudarz heard these words, he hurried back to Rustam and said:

*"This king's malicious nature is a tree
That grows new, bitter fruit perpetually;*

You must go to him and try to enlighten his benighted soul." Rustam gave orders that a rich cloth be spread beside the stream; gently he laid his wounded son there and set out to where Kay Kavus held court. But he was overtaken on the way by one who told him that Sohrab had departed this world; he had looked round for his father, then heaved an icy sigh, and groaned, and closed his

eyes forever. It was not a castle the boy needed his father to provide for him now, but a coffin.

Rustam dismounted and removed his helmet and smeared dust on his head.

Then he commanded that the boy's body be covered in royal brocade - the youth who had longed for fame and conquest, and whose destiny was a narrow bier borne from the battlefield. Rustam returned to his royal pavilion and had it set ablaze; his warriors smeared their heads with dust, and in the midst of their lamentations they fed the flames with his throne, his saddlecloth of leopardskin, his silken tent of many colors. Rustam wept and ripped his royal clothes, and all the heroes of the Persian army sat in the wayside dust with him and tried to comfort him, but to no avail.

Kay Kavus said to Rustam, "The heavens bear all before them, from the mighty Alborz Mountains to the lightest reed; man must not love this earth too much. For one it comes early and for another late, but Death comes to all. Accept this loss, pay heed to wisdom's ways, and know that if you bow the heavens to the ground or set the seas aflame, you cannot bring back him who is gone; his soul grows old, but in another place. I saw him in the distance once, I saw his height and stature and the massive mace he held; Fate drove him here to perish by your hand. What is it you would do? What remedy exists for this? How long will you mourn in this way?"

Rustam replied, "Yes, he is gone. But Human still camps here on the plains, along with chieftains from Turan and China. Have no rancor in your heart against them. Give the command, and let my brother Zavareh lead off our armies." The king said, "This sadness clouds your soul, great hero. Well, they have done me evil enough, and they have wreaked havoc in Iran, but my heart feels the pain you feel, and for your sake, I will think no more of them."

Rustam returned then to his home, Zabolestan, and when news of his coming reached his father, Zal-Dastan, the people of Sistan came out to meet him, mourning and grieving for his loss. When Dastan saw the bier, he dismounted from his horse, and Rustam came forward on foot, his clothes torn, with anguish in his heart. The chieftains took off their armor and stood before the coffin and smeared their heads with dust. When Rustam reached his palace, he

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cried aloud and had the coffin set before him; then he ripped out the nails and pulled back the shroud and showed the nobles gathered there the body of his son. A tumult of mourning swept the palace, which seemed a vast tomb where a lion lay; the youth resembled Sam, as if that hero slept, worn out by battle. Then Rustam covered him in cloth of gold and nailed the coffin shut and said, "If I construct a golden tomb for him and fill it with black musk, it will not last for long when I am gone; but I see nothing else that I can do."

*This tale is full of tears, and Rustam leaves
The tender heart indignant as it grieves:
I turn now from this story to relate*

The tale of Siyavush and his sad fate.

The German Chanson de Geste called Hildebrand survives only in an Old High German or *Althochdeutsh* recension, but gives clear signs of having been translated from some other Germanic language. So, this ancient Chanson de Geste, originally Iranian or Saka, i.e., Sarmatian or Alanic, passed to the Goths during their residence on the north shores of the Black Sea, and finally was translated to the Old High German or *Althochdeutsch* recension which we have today, either directly from the Gothic, or perhaps from the Gothic by way of Old Norse. Said Gothic epic tradition was also no doubt influenced by the Celts.

We have also demonstrated that the Goths when they lived on the north shores of the Black Sea maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland, so fragments of the Gothic epic tradition survive in Viking sagas, as well as in the works of Jordanes. It is generally accepted that the *Valkyries* of the Viking sagas were originally the *Fravashis* of the Iranian tradition. Virtually the only way that the above Fravashi-Valkyrie motif could have reached the Vikings would be by way of the Goths,

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who, as we said above, always maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland while they lived on the north shores of the Black Sea.

Also, as we shall see in Chapter 8, Celtic and Iranian substrata are clearly visible in the epic tradition of Kievan Rus'; this indicates that said substrata must also have been present in the Gothic epic, now lost except for a few small

fragments. As we have seen, the Goths when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea were much influenced by both Celts and Iranians. The time of Kievan Rus' was much later than that of the Goths, so, if Celtic and Iranian substrata are clearly visible in the epic tradition of Kievan Rus', they must also have been present in the lost Gothic epic, otherwise it is very difficult to explain how said substrata reached Kievan Rus'. If one assumes that the Gothic epic contained Celtic and Iranian substrata, then we have no problem, as we have a continuum without a real break; however, if one denies that the lost Gothic epic contained Celtic and Iranian substrata, then we have not a continuum, but rather an unbridged chronological chasm or void between Celts and Iranians on the one hand, and Kievan Rus' on the other.

Finally, the Visigoths migrated to Spain, where they settled mainly in what is today the region of Old Castile, also one of the most Celtic parts of Spain. So, the Gothic epic tradition, which contained powerful - probably predominant - Iranian influences, and all this combined with the Celtic heritage of Old Castile to finally produce the Spanish or Castilian epic. Thus, to affirm a

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Gothic origin for the Castilian epic - as did Ramon Menendez Pidal - is also to affirm an Iranian origin for it, as well as Celtic influences, acquired by the Visigoths both in Central Europe and also in Spain.

We have noted earlier that in the Castilian or Spanish epic the swords of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "El Cid" have names and almost personalities of their own; some have tried to use this

fact as a proof against the theory of Ramon Menendez Pidal concerning the Visigothic origin of the Castilian or Spanish epic.

On the contrary, the above-quoted Viking saga is yet another vindication of Ramon Menendez Pidal, because it demonstrates that giving the sword of the hero a name and almost a personality is typical of the Gothic epic, and also demonstrates the presence of Celtic and Iranian elements in the Gothic epic, which was later passed on to the Castilian or Spanish epic. Since at least part of the Celtic elements in the Castilian or Spanish epic were present in the Gothic epic, and all the Iranian elements in the Spanish or Castilian epic were a heritage of the Visigoths, and therefore of the Gothic epic, Ramon Menendez Pidal has been vindicated by those who sought to attack his theory of the Visigothic origin of the Castilian or Spanish epic.

Single combat was known to the Goths, usually on horseback. This custom is also most definitely NOT Germanic; it may be either Celtic or Saka; the fact that the Gothic single combat was always on horseback would seem to favor a Saka origin for the custom.

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Certainly this is the opinion of Wolfram, who considers this custom part of the "Scythianization", "Iranization" or Saka'ization" of the Goths (529). The Sakas had a culture superior to that of the Goths, and had a far more extensive, ancient, varied and interesting epic tradition. Taking note of all this it would seem highly possible that the Gothic epic tradition, like other aspects of the culture of the Goths, was more Iranian than Germanic.

In the Shah Namah, Rustam unknowingly kills his son, Sohrab. In the Nart Cycle of the Ossetians, Urismag unknowingly kills his son. In the Ulster Cycle Cu Chulainn kills his own son, Conlai. The difference between the Ulster Cycle and the Iranian epics in this regard is that Cu Chulainn and Conlai are not in opposing armies. Conlai is under oath (more exactly, what is called in Gaelic a *gessa* or tabu) not to reveal his identity nor to refuse combat with anyone. When he lands in Ulster and refuses to reveal his identity, Cu Chulainn must fight him. Therefore, though similar, this is really not the same as the Persian custom of *manomaxos*. That a similar custom did exist in Pagan Ireland is abundantly shown in the Tain Bo Cualnge, though not in the *tain* or *chanson de geste* referring to the combat between Cu Chulainn and Conlai.(530) That there should be so close a parallel between two Iranian epics and a Celtic epic is no surprise, for reasons given in other parts of this work. As was said before, the Nart Cycle and the Rustam Cycle of the Shah Namah are both of Saka origin. Bowra (531) noted that in the affair of the sacred cup,

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from which only the hero may drink, there is a parallel between the Nart Cycle and a Saka custom noted by Herodotus. The parallel between the sacred cup of the Sakas and the Grail Legend is clear. Many believe that the Grail Legend is of Celtic origin (532).

Louis Charpentier among others relates the Grail Legend to the sacred cauldron of the Celtic god Lug. That the word "Grail" has a Celtic etymology appears certain (533). In the Shah Namah the cup of Jamshid (Avestan *Yima*, Vedic *Yama*) from which he drank

enormous quantities of wine, is prominently mentioned. This seems to indicate that the cup itself and perhaps the wine (or whatever beverage is really meant) possessed some special properties. This is recorded by Omar Khayyam, who said (Rubaiyat, translation by Edward Fitzgerald, 4th edition, quatrain XVIII):

They say the lizard and the leopard keep
The courts where Jamshid gloried and drank deep

This is a quite close parallel with the European legend in which the Holy Grail is interpreted as the cup or chalice from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, as we have said before.

Also in the Shah Namah, Kai Khusrau has a sacred cup in which he is able to see what is happening in all the world. By this means he discovers that the Iranian knight Bezhan is languishing in a Turanian dungeon. The consulting of said cup has a sacramental character, and it should quite definitely be called a sacred rather than a magic cup. The combination of a sacred character with magical properties makes the parallel with the

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sacred cauldron of the god Lug very close indeed.

In my opinion, the existence of the belief in the sacred cup among Sakas and Persians reinforces the position of those who believe that the pagan Celts also believed in the Grail or Sacred Cup. Bowra says that in the Nart Cycle only those of stainless character could drink from the Sacred Cup, and therefore the parallel with the Grail Legend is close indeed. This is significant, since of all peoples of Western Europe it is the Celts who are most closely related to the Iranians and the Indo-

Aryans. A comparison between the Grail Legend and the relevant parts of the Nart Cycle might be interesting. It would be very interesting to see the relation between Percival and Galahad on the one hand and the heroes of the Nart Cycle on the other. The Freudian interpretation of the concept of the Sacred Cup appears to me to be singularly unconvincing, "seeking five feet on the cat", as the Spanish say. It appears evident to me that the legends of the Sacred Cup among the Iranian and Celtic peoples is a dim memory of the Soma or Haoma ceremony; there is certainly nothing strange in the idea of the vessel of the Sacred Beverage itself becoming sacred. The Cup of Jamshid and the Medieval Grail Legend which connects the Holy Grail to the Last Supper and therefore to the Sacrament of the Eucharist certainly seems to bear this out. En toto, all this, source of so many romances and lyrics from the early Middle Ages until today, (see Chapter 1) is yet another proof of the close kinship between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranians and Indo-Aryans on the other.

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There exists a Germanic chanson de geste written (at least the version that we have today) in the time of Charlemagne called Hildebrand. In this chanson de geste, Hildebrand, the principal protagonist, kills his son Hadubrand. Said chanson de geste appears to be of Gothic origin, because Hildebrand and Hadubrand are identified as Ostrogoths and because the chanson de geste shows signs of having been translated to Old High German (*Althochdeutsch*) from some other Germanic language, either Old Norse or (most likely) Gothic. (534) In the Shah Namah and in

Hildebrand, father and son are separated for a long period and at last are in opposing armies. In both narratives father and son challenge one another to single combat, called *manomaxos* by Procopious of Caesarea, a Byzantine historian of the time of Justinian. Single combat was also known among the ancient Celts.

Said Diodorus Siculus (History, V:29.3:

"It was their (the Celts') custom, when drawn up for battle, to come forward before the front line and challenge the bravest of their enemies drawn up opposite to them to single combat. Whenever one accepts the challenge, they praise in song the manly virtues of their ancestors and also their brave deeds. ... Then reviling and belittling their opponents they try to rob them by their words of their boldness of spirit before the contest."(535)

Said custom is found in the Irish epic, especially in the Ulster Cycle. Indeed, the single combats of Cu Chulainn mac Sualtair, champion of Ulster, against various champions of other parts of Ireland occupy perhaps half of the Tain Bo Cualnge, as anyone may prove to himself by reading said work. One also finds this

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custom, though less frequently, in the Welsh-Breton Arthurian Cycle. Except for Hildebrand, I have been unable to find this theme in any Germanic epic. The presence of the theme of *manomaxos* or single combat (which Procopius of Caesarea describes as a Persian custom) in the Celtic epic is yet another proof of the close kinship between the Celts on one hand and the Iranians and Indo-Aryans on the other, as well as yet another proof of the influence of Celts and Iranians on the Goths.

Manomaxos is a very Persian custom, which consists of single

combats as a prelude to the main battle. To challenge the enemy to single combat was a way to win the esteem of one's comrades-in-arms and to gain honors. Quite possibly said custom was introduced into Persia by the chivalrous Parthians (536), who were themselves of Saka origin. In the Shah Namah, father and son do not recognize one another until too late, as is also true of the Nart Cycle and the Ulster Cycle (537). In Hildebrand, but the son does not believe him, and Hildebrand kills his son in self-defense.

The only difference between the episode of Rustam and Sohrab on one hand and Hildebrand and Hadubrand on the other is that, while Rustam and Sohrab do do not recognize one another until too late, between Hildebrand and Hadubrand there is recognition, but only on the part of the father.(538) This is more to Germanic taste, since the idea of Destiny or Fate which the hero can foresee but not avoid is particularly characteristics of the Viking sagas. No doubt this concept has its roots in the deeply pessimistic ideology of the Germanic mythologies, which consider inevitable

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the eventual triumph of the Forces of Darkness and the death of the gods themselves in the final *Gotterdammerung*.

In both episodes, of the Shah Namah and of Hildebrand, the father recognizes his son thanks to a golden bracelet given as a gift years before. In the Shah Namah, Sohrab's bracelet is not visible beneath the coat-of-mail, and Rustam does not know that Sohrab is his opponent until too late (539). In Hildebrand, the bracelet is visible in spite of the coat-of-mail, but Hadubrand cannot believe that Hildebrand is his father.(540) In the Shah

Namah, Rustam recognizes the bracelet (after Sohrab is dead or dying) because it bears his coat-of-arms or insignia; Hildebrand recognizes the bracelet thanks to an inscription (541).

There is indeed a Viking or Old Norse version of the story of Hildebrand. This is the Asmundrsaga Kappabana (542), which follows the Old High German Version in all respects. Whether the Old High German (*Althochdeustch*) version was translated directly from the Gothic or from the Old Norse version, which was certainly derived from the Gothic, we are uncertain. However, it would seem beyond a doubt that the story of Hildebrand and Hadubrand came to the ancient homeland of the Goths in the Scandinavian Penninsula, and is thus a proof that the Goths on the shores of the Black Sea maintained contacts with their ancient northern homeland, that the Goths already had an epic tradition when they lived on the shores of the Black Sea. Finally, since the story Hildebrand and Hadubrand appears to be virtually a translation of the story of Rustam and Sohrab in the Shah Namah, with only a minor alteration

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to adapt it to Germanic taste, a resemblance far too close to be a coincidence, and since there exists no parallel in any other Germanic epic, it is virtually conclusive proof that said Gothic epic was strongly influenced by the Sarmatians and Alans.

Conflict between father and son is not typical of the Germanic epics. Bowra does not mention and I do not know of any other example in any Germanic epic of mortal conflict between father and son, nor of single combat as a prelude to the main battle (the *manomaxos* which Procopius of Caesarea describes as

something typical of the Persians), something undoubtedly Iranian rather than Germanic, nor of recognition by means of a golden bracelet. Change the names and Hildebrand would be a typical Iranian chanson de geste. Hildebrand appears to be taken from the Shah Namah, but for chronological reasons if nothing else this is impossible. Also for chronological reasons if nothing else I am certain that no one is going to say that the plot of Hildebrand was brought to Europe as a result of the Crusades. It appears evident that the Nart Cycle, the Rustam Cycle of the Shah Namah and Hildebrand all proceed from a common Saka source. Here we appear to have a Saka theme in a Gothic chanson de geste, very lightly altered to better conform to the Germanic taste, an alteration perhaps made in the transmission from the original Gothic-language version to the Old High German (*Althochdeutsch*)-language version - perhaps directly from the original Gothic, perhaps by way of Old Norse - which we have today. Most probably the earlier Gothic-language version did not contain the

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alteration, and faithfully followed the Saka original. One may affirm that to assign a Gothic origin to the Castilian epic is at the same time to affirm that said epic contains a strong Iranian element.

I have spoken a great deal of the chanson de geste of The Seven Princes of Lara (or Salas). At this point I believe it advisable to give a resume of it.

During the reign of Ramiro III of Leon (966-984), Gonzalo

Gustios was lord of Salas (near Burgos). His wife, Sancha, was the sister of Ruy Velasquez. Of this marriage were born seven sons. Ruy Velasquez married doña Lambra, cousin of the Count of Castile, Garci Fernandez. At the wedding festivities in Burgos, Gonzalo, one of the seven princes of Salas, had an altercation with Alvar Sanchez, cousin of doña Lambra, and killed him by a hard blow on the Adam's apple. Gonzalo Gustios and the Count of Castile succeeded in pacifying the situation for the moment. Some days later, a servant of doña Lambra, at her orders offended Gonzalo grossly. The seven princes then killed the servant.

Furious, doña Lambra complained to Ruy Velasquez, who swore to take revenge.

Ruy Velasquez then wrote a letter to Almanzor (al-Mansur, Hajib of the Caliph of Cordoba Hisham II) in Arabic (so that Gonzalo Gustios could not read it). In the letter he asked Almanzor to kill Gonzalo Gustios, and advised him that he, Ruy

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Velasquez, would betray the seven princes of Salas to the Muslims at Almenar (Southwest of Soria), and thus Almanzor would have a fine opportunity to deal a hard blow to the power of Garci Fernandez, Count of Castile. Ruy Velasquez then requested that Gonzalo Gustios deliver the letter to Almanzor in Cordoba, saying that it had to do with some money owed him.

But Almanzor imprisoned Gonzalo Gustios in place of killing him. Meanwhile Ruy Velasquez sent word that he was leading an incursion into Muslim territory and was joined by the seven princes, Nuño Salido, their tutor, and 200 knights. On the way

appeared birds of ill omen. This small force found itself facing 10,000 Muslims at Almenar. Ruy Velasquez defected to the Muslims even before the battle. The seven princes, Nuño Salido and the others all died in a terrible battle. The Muslims cut off the heads of the seven princes and Nuño Salido and took them to Cordoba. There occurred the famous scene in which Gonzalo Gustios is shown the heads of his seven sons. After this Almanzor released Gonzalo Gustios. The Muslim woman who had served him said that she was soon to bear a child, and Gonzalo Gustios took off his ring and broke it, giving half to the woman.

Soon afterwards a son was born to the Muslim woman, and given the name Mudarra. When of age, Almanzor permitted Mudarra to take a small force of Christian prisoners and Mozarabs to Castile. In Salas he showed the half of the ring to Gonzalo Gustios. Mudarra later slew Ruy Velasquez in single combat and burned dona Lambra alive to avenge the treachery to his father and to his

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half-brothers (543).

For a long time this chanson de geste was considered to be pure fiction, but now almost all authorities are agreed that, except for that part which has to do with Mudarra, the chanson de geste is fundamentally historical (544). In other words, the fictional part has to do with "the son avenger". Menendez Pidal and others considered this to be a Germanic characteristic. But note; this incident has more character of retribution than of revenge, since Mudarra had never seen his father nor his half-brothers. This is more harsh justice than pure blood-for-blood

revenge.

Note also the close parallel between the above incident and that recorded by Narshakhi, who says that he took it from "the books of the Parsees" or Zoroastrians of Bukhara, in which it is Kai Khusrau (Avestan: *Kavi Haosravha*) who takes the part of the "son avenger", killing the Turkish king Afrasiyab, as a matter of fact burning him alive as Mudarra burned doña Lambra. As Mudarra took revenge for his father and half-brothers, so Kai Khusrau avenged his father, Siyavush. Note also that Mudarra kills Ruy Velasquez in single combat, following a custom which is Iranian and Celtic, but most definitely not Germanic. The Seven Princes of Lara (or Salas), rather than being a chanson de geste of a purely Germanic character, is one in which Germanic and Iranian elements are inextricably mixed, though with a clear predominance of the the Iranian characteristics. This is more or less what one might expect in a Gothic chanson de geste.

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Note also the custom of taking heads as war trophies, an ancient Celtic custom found in the Ulster Cycle. The incident of the heads of the seven princes of Lara (or Salas) is considered by some to be novelesque rather than historical, though there is disagreement on this point. In any case, the idea of taking heads was that of Ruy Velasquez, a Castilian, NOT of the Muslims.

In summary, my hypothesis concerning the origins of the Castilian epic is the following: the Celtic epic tradition remained as a basic substratum of the Castilian epic. Menendez Pidal appears to affirm this in an oblique manner when he notes

that Old Castile, homeland of the Castilian epic, has a Celtiberian and Cantabrian (which is to say Celtic, tardily and very thinly Romanized and among the most Celtic parts of the Peninsula) base, as was noted before (545-546). It is most unfortunate that don Ramon Menendez Pidal was not more knowledgeable in the Celtic and Iranian fields.

The other and more immediate origin of the Castilian epic is the Gothic epic tradition, which contains a strong, probably predominant Iranian element and also, no doubt, a somewhat weaker Celtic element, though, as we have said, separating Celtic elements from Iranian elements would be very difficult at best, and impossible in most cases. French, Welsh-Breton and Arabic elements are present in details, but are late, i.e., found only in the the most recent chansons de geste of the Castilian epic, and not really fundamental nor of much importance. Of course, one could say that the Welsh-Breton influence reinforced the Celtic

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substratum, as well as the Iranian, or Alanic, element. Thanks to said substratum, the Iranian elements, artistic, literary, etc., which arrived with the Alans and the Visigoths and Celtic elements which also arrived with the Visigoths found the ground in Spain already prepared, since the close relations between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranian and Indo-Aryan peoples on the other is indisputable.

The Christians who continued living under Muslim rule in Spain are called Mozarabs. If there existed an epic tradition among the Mozarabs, said epic must have been as Hispanic as the

Castilian and have proceeded from the same sources, minus the French and Breton elements. I, like Menendez Pidal, believe that Old Castile, a land at once very Celtic and very Gothic, had the strongest epic tradition of the Peninsula, and that it is not necessary to look to another part of the Peninsula for the homeland of the Castilian epic. To prove my hypothesis would not be easy, but neither would it be impossible. To demonstrate the Celtic element, it would be necessary to compare the totality of the Castilian epic which has survived with all the known Celtic epics, complete cycles and fragments, and in order to demonstrate the Saka element it would be necessary to compare the Castilian epic with the Shah Namah, the Garshasp Namah, the other cycles and fragments from Seistan, the Sogdian fragments mentioned by Frye and the Nart Cycle of the Caucasus. At present I do not have the resources to do either the one or the other, but it would be a fine project for another occasion.

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We have spoken of the concept of honor in connection with the Celts. Says Henri Hubert:

"... principle of the moral life of the Celts, honor ... in this refinement of the moral of honor was a principle of civilization whose developement was not detained by the political fall of the Celtic societies. The Celts passed this legacy to their descendants." (547)

Anyone who knows the Celtic epic, whether Irish or Welsh-Breton, knows that honor and chivalry are two of its basic themes. Louis Charpentier, as we said before, has noted the similarity between the Rule of the Templars, written by St. Bernard of

Clairvaux, and the rules of the Order of the Red Branch of pre-Christian Ireland, as well as the fact that the Code of Chivalry of Medieval Europe is to be found in a virtually complete form in the Ulster Cycle (548).

The concept of honor is also very typical of the oriental ethno-linguistic cousins of the Celts, i.e., the Iranians, and therefore may have been brought to Spain by the Alans and the Visigoths. Among the Ancient Iranians, to not keep one's given or sworn word was a grave sin against Mithra.(549) The ancient Persians were well known for their truthfulness and honesty; Herodotus says that it was the pride of the Persians that they always kept their word (550), much in contrast to the lying, perfidious Greeks. The Parthians were far more chivalrous and honorable than the Romans (551), and the Sassanian Persians more chivalrous and honorable than the Byzantines, as Procopious of Caesarea noted (552).

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Also among the ancient Indo-Aryans it was a grave sin against the gods Varuna and Mitra not to keep one's word (553-554). In the Mahabharata the incidents abound in which a hero keeps his word even in very difficult circumstances, and the few cases in which a character does not keep his word or commits any act that might be considered dishonorable or unchivalrous are condemned in very strong terms. Even in the midst of a bloody war the *Kshatriyya* (warrior caste) are models of chivalry (555). Honor in a broad sense of the term may be considered as the principle theme of the great Indo-Aryan epic. We may conclude that a strong sense

of honor is common to the Aryan peoples (Aryan used in the exact sense of the Iranians, Indo-Aryans and Celts). The fact that the Celts also have a strong sense and concept of honor is one of a multitude of elements which demonstrate the close relation between the Celts on the one hand and the Iranians and Indo-Aryans on the other.

Of course, to say that the strong concept of honor and chivalry present in the Castilian epic proceeds from the Celts and from the Alans and Goths is not a contradiction; both theories may be true, the Celtic substratum preparing the ground, the Iranian elements introduced by the Alans and the Visigoths reinforcing something already present.

Note the themes of the Shah Namah mentioned by Frye: revenge, the idea that a king must be just and pious above all, the *farr* or charisma of the Royal Glory, the loyalty of a man to his family and of a vassal to his liegelord or king (556).

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Arthur Pendragon, known as "King Arthur, carried a banner which bore the dragon as his heraldic device, as is indicated by the Welsh name "Pendragon"; the same is true of Kai Khusrau, in the Shah Namah of Firdausi, who also carries a banner which bears the dragon as its heraldic device. On his shield, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, "El Cid", bore the dragon as his heraldic symbol. So, King Arthur, Kai Khusrau, and El Cid all used the dragon as their heraldic device.

Revenge is a theme of the Germanic, Celtic, Castilian, Indo-Aryan and French epics as well as the Persian (557). The idea

that a king must be just and pious above all is present in the Castilian, Indo-Aryan and Celtic epics as well as the Persian. It is somewhat weakly present in the French epic, but notably absent in the Germanic. Loyalty of a man to his family is present in the in the Castilian and Indo-Aryan epics as well as the Persian, but absent or weak in the Germanic, Celtic and French epics (558-559). It would appear that, as a main theme at least, family loyalty is peculiar to the Castilian, Indo-Aryan and Persian epics. Loyalty of a vassal to his liegeland or king is present in the Celtic and Castilian epics as well as the Persian, and somewhat weakly present in the French. The loyalty of Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, el Cid, to his wife, dona Ximena, and children Elvira and Sol, is one of the characteristics which strongly distinguishes him from the heroes of the French epics, as anyone who has read the Cantar de Mio Cid knows. Also, the loyalty of el Cid to his liegelords, first Sancho II and later Alfonso VI in spite of the gross

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misconduct of Sancho II and the shabby treatment received by el Cid at the hands of Alfonso VI is a fine demonstration indeed of the loyalty of a vassal to his liegeland. At various times in the Cantar de Mio Cid occurs the exclamation:

"What a good vassal if only he had a good liegeland."

The loyalty of el Cid's own vassals to him, particularly Alvar Fanez and Martin Antolinez, even when he has fallen into poverty and disgrace is very moving.

As any reader of the Tain Bo Cualnge knows, the loyalty of a vassal to his liegeland is one of the principle themes of the

Irish epic. This is particularly notable in the case of Fergus mac Roig, who fights against his friends, the Ulstermen, because it is his duty as vassal of Ailill MacRosa Ruaid, king of Connaught. It is also notable in the case of Cu Chulainn mac Sualtaim and Fer Diad mac Demain. Old comrades-in-arms and the best of friends, they fight to the death because of their loyalty as vassals, Cu Chulainn being a vassal of Conchobar MacNessa, king of Ulster, Fer Diad a vassal of Ailill of Connaught. Thus, their loyalty as vassals is even stronger than their friendship. The scene is tragic and moving.

Compare the conduct of el Cid and that of the Irish heroes on the one hand to that of Roland at Roncesvalles on the other. In Chanson de Roland verse LXXIX Roland says:

"A vassal must suffer great distress for his liegelord,
Must support great heat and great cold
One must also lose his skin and his hair"

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His later conduct does not exactly match these fine words.

The duty of Roland as commander of the rearguard was to prevent the main body of the Frankish army from being taken by surprise. His first duty, therefore, was to warn Charlemagne of the approach of the large Muslim force and then to hold them at bay until the main body was prepared to give battle. This Roland did not do. For the sake of his own glory and heroism, Roland refused to warn Charlemagne and attempted to face the whole Muslim army with only the forces of the rearguard. Because of this the rearguard was annihilated, and if the Muslims had pressed their advantage might have taken the Frankish main body in the rear and

rolled it up like a blanket in the narrow valley. Roland's conduct, undeniably brave and heroic, is not that of a loyal vassal. No loyal vassal would seek his own personal glory at grave risk of causing a disaster to his liege lord. Yet, the author of the Chanson de Roland clearly approves of Roland's conduct. Nor is it possible to find a word of reproach concerning the conduct of Roland expressed by Charlemagne. Withall, certainly one of the great scenes of world literature is when the dying Roland offers his right gauntlet (glove), symbol of vassalage, to God (Chanson de Roland, verses CLXXIV-CLXXVI):

Roland feels that death is overcoming him,
It descends from his head to his heart.
He ran beneath a pine tree,
He lay down prone on the green grass.
He places his sword and his oliphant (horn) beneath him.
He turned his head towards the Muslim Army:
He did this because he earnestly desires
That Charles (Charlemagne) and his men (may) say
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That the noble Count Roland died as a conqueror.
He beats his breast in rapid succession again and again.
He offers his right gauntlet (glove) to God (as penance) for
his sins.

Roland feels that his time is finished,
He is on a steep hill, his face turned towards Spain.
He beat his breast with is hand:
Mea culpa (My guilt), Almighty God,
For my sins, great and small,
Which I committed from the time I was born
To this day when I am overthrown here!"
He offered his right gauntlet (glove) to God,
Angels from Heaven descend towards him.
Count Roland lay beneath a pine tree,
He has turned his face towards Spain.
He began to remember many things:
The many lands he conquered as a valian knight,
Sweet France, the men of is noble lineage,
Charlemagne, his liegelord, who raised him.
He cannot help weeping and sighing.
But he does not wish to forget the prayers for his own soul,
He says his confession in a loud voice and prays for God's

mercy:

"True Father, Who never lied,
Who saved Daniel from the lions,
Protect m solu from all perils
Due to the sins which I have committed during my life!"
he offers his right gauntlet (glove) to God.
St. Gabriel (Quranic: "Jibril") took it (the gauntlet) from
his hand.
He laid his head down over his arm,
He met his end, his hands joined together (in prayer).
God sent his angels Cherubim
And St. Michael of the Peril,
St. Gabriel (Qur'anic: "Jibril") came with them.
They bear the Count's (Roland's) soul to Paradise.

One may hope that so valiant a knight served his heavenly
liegelord better than he served his temporal one.

Loyalty of a vassal to his liegelord or king is present in a
sense in the Indo-Aryan epic, since certain characters of the
Mahabharata suffer terribly from conflicts between their loyalty
as vassals and their concept of honor and justice. Said loyalty
to one's liegelord or king is notably absent in the Germanic epic.

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The *Farr* or charisma of the Royal Glory is absent in the
Celtic, Germanic, Indo-Aryan and Castilian epic, and very weakly
present in the French epic. To me it appears that in the Persian
epic said theme is neither Kayanian nor Saka nor Parthian, but
very late, of the Sassanian period. Therefore, the absence of
said theme in the Castilian epic is no proof against Iranian
influence in said epic. The Kayanian period in Eastern Iran was
"taifa" period, with a multitude of small, local kings (560-561),
the Parthian period was feudal (562-563) and the Sakas were nomads
or semi-nomads. So feudal was the Parthian Empire that the lords
of Seistan and Arachosia conducted their private wars in India as
allies of the Sakas, apparently with neither the aid nor the

permission of the Parthian king. Vassals of the Parthian king in their territories in Seistan, Arachosia and Khurasan, in their Indian territories they were independent, much as William the Conqueror was a vassal of the king of France in Normandy but independent of him in England. The famous Gondophares, of the great Suren family of Seistan, and certain of his successors in the Indian kingdom of the Sakas and Pahlavas called themselves *Shahanshah* (king of kings) in their Indian territories (564-565). Some have suggested that Gondophares was the "original" of Rustam, but this is very doubtful among other reasons because Rustam appears as a Saka hero in Central Asia as well as Seistan and because, as far as I am aware, the Rustam of the epic had no connections with India. In my opinion, the figure of Rustam is far older than the time of Gondophares. Certainly it is very

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possible that there was a tendency to identify the conqueror Gondophares with the epic hero Rustam, more or less as many Englishmen in the last century identified Admiral Nelson with Sir Francis Drake. We may conclude that the Sakas and the Kayanian and Parthian periods in Eastern Iran were as unfavorable to the concept of **Farr** as was medieval Castile.

As we have said earlier, the word *Farr* used by Firdausi is derived from the Avestan *Khvarenah* or by way of the Pahlavi *Khvarrah* (566). In the Avesta *Khvarenah* is an *Amesha Spenta*, which may be translated as a Divine Gift or Grace. Said Divine Gift or Grace is graphically represented as a charisma or halo which consecrates the power of princes. *Khvarenah* illuminates

legitimate sovereigns, but was denied to usurpers and was taken from impious, unjust or immoral kings. Monarchs without *Khvarenah* soon lose their crowns and their lives (567). In the Avestan Hymn to Mithra, the god Mithra says that no matter how rich and powerful his kingdom may be and how large may be his armies, an impious, unjust or immoral king is condemned to a violent death, in effect "executed" by someone inspired by Mithra, and his kingdom may be invaded and ruined and a curse fall on his descendants (568). Note well the close parallel between the Avesta and the legends of Hermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*, Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) the Amal (or Amalung), ruler of the Gothic Kingdom on the shores of the Black Sea, and of Roderick (or Rodrigo), the last Visigothic king of Spain. In both cases the impious and immoral conduct of the king causes his

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kingdom to be invaded and ruined. In the legend of Hermanaric or Airmnareiks the Amal as told by Jordanes and the Viking sagas, Hermanaric or Airmnareiks caused Svinhilda to be trampled to death in reprisal for the treason of her husband. This causes

the brothers of Svinhilda to turn against Ermanaric (Gothic: *Airmnareiks*; Old Norse: *Jormunrekkr*) of the clan or dynasty Amal (or Amalung) and he is wounded by them. This in turn causes bitter divisions in the Kingdom of Ermanaric or Airmnareiks, and helps to pave the way for its destruction by the Huns. Thus, the injustice of a king brings ruin on his kingdom and himself.

Somewhat similar is the tale of Theodiscle (Gothic *Theudigisel*), Visigothic king of Spain (569-570), as told by St. Isidore of Seville.(571) Guilty of abusing the wives and daughters of various Gothic nobles, Theodiscle or *Theudigisel* is killed by certain of his vassals at a banquet in Seville.

I have spoken before of the legend of don Roderick, last Visigothic king of Spain. In some versions it is the lechery of Roderick, in others that of Witiza, who was the penultimate Visigothic king, which causes the disaster of the battle of the river Guadalete and the Muslim Conquest of Spain. In any case, here are three cases from Gothic legend in which the injustice, immorality or lechery and impiety of a king brings disaster on him. In two of these cases his kingdom is invaded and destroyed as a result (572).

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Note also the contrast between the Avestan concept of *Khvarenah* and the Sassanian concept of the divine or quasi-divine character of the monarch. The Sassanian Emperors called themselves "brothers of the sun and moon".(573) In the concept of *Khvarenah*, the king is, in the last analysis, only a man, subject like others to the Moral Law, and there is no king powerful enough to escape the wrath of God. The authority of a prince depends on more than material power. It is evident that the Sassanian concepts influenced a great deal the concept of *Farr* used by Firdausi in the Shah Namah. The difference between the Avestan

Khvarenah and its etymological descendant *Farr* is more than merely phonetic.

The Chanson of the Siege of Zamora (from whence the Spanish saying *Zamora, que no se toma en una hora* (Zamora cannot be taken in an hour), part of the Cycle of el Cid, is lost in its original form, but preserved in prose in the General Chronicle of Spain by Alfonso X the Wise and in the Chronicle of 1344 (574).

In said chanson de geste. after the death of Fernando I his kingdom was divided between his three sons. Castile was given to Sancho, Asturias and Leon to Alfonso and Galicia to Garcia, while the Leonese city of Zamora is given to his daughter Urraca. Sancho II does not fulfill the wishes of his father. He imprisons his brother Garcia, and not long afterwards makes war on Leon and has himself crowned king of Leon, sending his brother, Alfonso VI, to exile in Toledo, at that time (1072) ruled by the Muslim king al-Mamun. Zamora, ruled by doña Urraca, very soon became a focus

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of resistance to Sancho II, who was quite unpopular in Asturias, Leon and Galicia. Sancho II then put Zamora under siege (575).

Inspired and very likely paid by doña Urraca, Vellido Ataulfo (very Gothic name!) vassal of Sancho II, stabbed Sancho from behind with a lance. To this day in the old walls of Zamora is a small gate called "Gate of Treachery" where Sancho II was slain. Before dying, Sancho II recognized his death to be a just punishment for not respecting the wishes of his father and for mistreating his brothers and sister. In spite of this, the murder of Sancho II was strongly condemned in Castile, because Vellido

had struck from behind and violated his oath of loyalty to his liegeland. (576)

Since Sancho II had died childless, and Alfonso VI was older than Garcia, he now became heir to Galicia and Castile as well as Leon. He returned from exile in Toledo, was promptly proclaimed king of Galicia and Leon, and his sister doña Urraca proclaimed queen. In Castile, however, there was much suspicion that Alfonso VI had somehow been involved in the death of Sancho II, or at least had known beforehand that said crime was planned. Apparently the Castilians never even contemplated accepting dona Urraca as queen. Since she was not the wife of Alfonso VI, they had no compelling reason for doing so. After much discussion, the Castilians decided that they would accept Alfonso VI as king only if he were willing to swear that he had no part in the murder of Sancho II.

Later Alfonso VI was presented as king of Castile. In the

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famous scene in the church of Santa Agadea in Burgos, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, el Cid, said:

"All suspect that don Sancho was killed by your order; because of this, if you do not swear your innocence we will never kiss your hand."

Three times (note the number three) el Cid and Alfonso VI repeat the following words:

"King don Alfonso, do you come here to swear to me that you did not order the murder of king don Sancho, my liegeland?"

and the king answered:

"Yes, I come."

El Cid continued:

"If you swear a lie, may God grant that you be killed by a traitor, by one of your own vassals, as Vellido was a vassal of king don Sancho, my liegeland." "

The king responded:

"Amen" (577).

The death of Sancho II, including his dying words, and the conduct of the Castilians in general and Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, el Cid, in particular are perfectly congruent with the Avestan concept of *Khvarenah*. The idea that a king must be a Christian gentleman is very persistent in the history of Spain, as the Carlist Wars of the 19th Century show.

In summary, all the themes of the Shah Namah mentioned by Frye are present in the Castilian epic, the only exception being a theme of Sassanian origin, which could hardly have come to Spain with the Alans and the Goths. One theme, giving a name and almost

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a personality to the hero's horse, and even to his sword or swords seems to be peculiar to the Castilian and Iranian epics; we seem to see this last reflected also in the Arthurian "sword in the stone", while the theme of family loyalty is found in the Castilian and Iranian epics as well as the Indo-Aryan epic tradition. Another, loyalty of a vassal to his liegeland is present in the Celtic epic and (weakly) in the French epic as well as the Persian and Castilian epics. The idea that a king must be just and pious above all is present in the Persian and Castilian epics and to some extent in the Welsh-Breton Arthurian Cycle. The theme of the "son avenger", though not mentioned by Frye, is

present in the Persian epic, notably in the case of Siyavush and Kai Khusrau. It is present, though rather weakly, in the Germanic epic. It is also present in the Castilian epic, most notably in the *chanson de geste* of The Seven Princes of Lara (or Salas).

There are, then, certain themes which the Castilian epic shares with the Persian epic but not the Germanic epic. This would indicate that there was a strong Iranian element in the Gothic epic tradition, and that said Iranian influence was very likely stronger than the Germanic. This Iranian influence at last was passed from the Gothic epic tradition to the Castilian epic tradition.

As we have noted above, I essentially follow the lead of Ramon Menendez Pidal, who rather convincingly demonstrated that the Spanish or Castilian epic is essentially of Gothic origin; in effect, I begin where don Ramon left off. My work does not

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supplant that of Ramon Menendez Pidal; it supplements it.

The Goths themselves were originally from what is today southern Sweden. If they possessed an epic tradition when they were yet in Scandinavia we have no way of knowing; the very sparse legends and traditions - such as those concerning Berig, who led the Goths in their migration across the Baltic - may be slightly suggestive of an ancient epic tradition, but they cannot be considered as proof of its existence.

In any case, when the Goths resided on the north shores of the Black Sea they most certainly had an epic tradition; whether its nucleus was brought by the Goths from Scandinavia, or whether

it was purely inspired by the Celts and Iranians with whom the Goths were in such close contact there is, of course, no way to know, nor even a basis for forming an opinion.

That the Gothic epic was inspired by or at the very least profoundly influenced by the epic traditions of the Sarmatians and Alans, who were *Sakas* or Iranian nomads of the Russian-Ukrainian steppes there can be no possible doubt; we have given a multitude of proofs of this in the course of this chapter. At this juncture we will give here only a few examples.

The story of Hildebrand and Hadubrand (the Gothic versions of these proper names is unknown) is virtually a translation of the story of Sohrab and Rustam in the Shah Namah.

There are abundant proofs that while on the shores of the Black sea the Goths maintained contact with their ancient Scandinavian homeland. Runes were are certainly a Gothic invention

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which was passed to the Vikings.

Also, Iranian cultural elements were passed from the Goths to the Vikings. The scholarly consensus is that the Valkyries of Viking legend were inspired by the Iranian Fravashies. "Brynhilde", the name of one of the Valkyries - in some sources she is called the "queen of the Valkyries" - is transparently a Gothic name, the name of a Gothic princess, as we have noted above. The "orientalizing" elements in Viking art were also passed to the Vikings from the Sarmatians and Alans by way of the Goths. In some of the Viking sagas it is obvious that elements of the Gothic epic are preserved, though at times in a confused and even

garbled form, but still clearly recognizable.

In the Castilian epic are found elements which could be either Celtic or Iranian, such as single combat. These elements were no doubt partly brought to Spain by the Goths, as the Goths themselves were profoundly influenced by the Celts. Also, one must not forget the very powerful Celtic substratum in Old Castile, homeland of the Castilian Epic.

We have also noted that the Arthurian Cycle was profoundly influenced by Alanic cavalry stationed by the Romans in what is today northern England. The fact that Kai Khusrau, King Arthur and El Cid all bear the dragon on their shields as their heraldic device is a powerful and many-layered symbol.

Michael McClain

