

## EASTERN ANALOGIES OF LŐRINC TAR'S DESCENT TO HELL

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Tinódi's "Zsigmond király és császárnak krónikája" ("Chronicle of Sigismund King and Emperor") contains eight stanzas<sup>1</sup> inserted before the concluding stanza which constitute a belated Hungarian versified variant of medieval European visions of the other world.

"I heard it as a song, true or not  
That Lőrinc Tar entered the hell.  
He saw a fiery bed there, and  
Four fiery men were standing at its four corners.  
Lőrinc Tar was told there that  
The bed was kept ready for King Sigismund.  
The four men, one archbishop, one bishop and  
Two laymen, were evil persons all of them.  
The archbishop was damned for unjust tithe,  
The chancellor for taking illegal fees,  
The two noblemen were punished for violence,  
One was suffering for levying fals toll.

Lőrinc Tar beheld there many wonders.  
He saw a tub with fire aflame  
In which Emperor Sigismund bathed  
Wallowing with the Queen's daughter Mary.  
He saw maidens without *párta*,\*  
Beautiful and beautifully dressed womenfolk,  
Whose navel had been grabbed and  
Whose breasts had been seized by Sigismund.  
Lőrinc Tar told the Emperor what he had seen  
To which he said he would see to it  
That his bed be taken from hell  
And directed to heaven.  
He did impair somewhat the crown,  
He detached thirteen towns

<sup>1</sup> Published by Heltai in the Cancionale in 1574. These stanzas confuse the order of the initial letters: therefore, and also on the strength of other evidence, J. HORVÁTH regards them as having been inserted by Heltai. (HORVÁTH, 1953, pp. 216—219, 508—9.) Our quotation is taken from BARTA—KLANICZAY, 1951, pp. 255—256.

\*"Párta" is the name of an old Hungarian head-dress that was worn by virgins only.

And pledged them for eighty thousand florins  
 With which to build St. Sigismund's chapel.  
 He endowed it with riches and many priests  
 And lavished greatest wealth on it  
 And he named it after St. Sigismund  
 So as to lift his bed from hell."

Lőrinc (Lawrence), descending from the clan of Rátót, with estates at Tar, Pásztó and Sirok, was a favourite of Sigismund and his name figures in several deeds granted by the sovereign. His pilgrimage to the nether world is mentioned in the *Peregrinatio Laurentii Taar*, a Latin poem from the beginning of the 16th century in which, following English models, he is represented as having made a voyage round the whole world.<sup>2</sup> Of more importance is the fact that a "description" of his "descent to hell" has been preserved, i.e. the story of his visit to the cave of St. Patrick in Ireland, of his visions in that "purgatory" which he dictated to Jacobus Yonge, Notary Royal in Dublin, while waiting for his vessel. This "Prohemium memoriale super visitatione Domini Laurencii Ratholdi militis et baronis Ungarie factum de purgatorio sancti Patricii in insula hibernie" presents the legend in the following version.<sup>3</sup> As soon as the door is locked upon Lőrinc and he penetrates into the cave, two evil spirits try to pull him back to the entrance; they tear his garments to pieces but run away upon beholding the sign of cross and hearing the name of Christ. This is the first vision. In the second, a gentle white bearded man approaches him; after listening to the prayer of Lőrinc and the mention of Christ's incarnation, he loses patience and reviles our hero ferociously for giving credit to such nonsense in spite of all his learning and erudition. Being likewise a devil, the old man, too, is driven away by the sign of cross. A beautiful lady of distinguished bearing appears in the third vision; her figure first reminds him of a long admired acquaintance; yet, when she starts dallying with him and urges him to come nearer, he realizes his error and repulses the advances of the "female devil" with contempt. Lőrinc is greeted in the fourth and last vision by a winsome young man in the Hebrew language; he reveals himself as the archangel Michael in whose honour he had a church erected on his estate at home.<sup>4</sup> The angel conducts our hero on dark spiral stairs to an endless green field and, upon his repeated request, shows him the purgatory where devils are tormenting the soul of "numerous still living persons"; he sees there the souls of his deceased ancestors, parents and kinspeople. He sees also his houses, further his benefactors, children and acquaintances with the excep-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. KARDOS, pp. 178 and 280; HORVÁTH, 1953, p. 508. Both are following FEST in this respect. For the cultural background of the legend see KARDOS. The relevant parts of the text run as follows: "... de Thar, Laurentius hic. Qui miles et barro ... propago Sobole Ratholdi ... qui ... novit secreta Patrici ..." i.e. the secrets of St. Patrick's cave.

<sup>3</sup> After POSONYI, 1942 and FÉLICE, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> According to information received from L. Mezey, this refers to the church at Tar.

tion of a certain person, a favourite of his; however, the Lord does not allow him to behold either this person or the hell and heaven since he has not arrived here with the intention to quit the terrestrial world for good. Lőrinc, depressed by the sight of so many suffering souls, wants to know whether their misery will once finish and whether the many masses offered for their salvation, the many alms and benefactions will help them in escaping from their miserable condition. The angel comforts him: their punishment is but temporary, they are suffering according to the inscrutable will of God. The angel gives him advice as to *how he could rescue the souls of the members of his family*. The angel entrusts him finally with *secret commissions* and favours him with *revelations*. Lőrinc was not in a position to reveal them to the notary since he had been enjoined to communicate the messages *to nobody but those immediately concerned*. Lőrinc gets back to the entrance and leaves the cave next morning through a gate opened by the prior. And all this happened in 1411 when the sun was in the sign of the Scorpio at the XVIIIth degree, and the moon in that of the Libra, that is on the 11th or 12th of November. The author presents a copy of the safe conduct granted by Sigismund in 1408 in which protection and permission are asked from those concerned for Lőrinc of Rátót and Pásztó, the Warden of the Queen, the illustrious knight, and his retinue. The notary did, in point of fact, ask Lőrinc Tar about the motives of the pilgrimage. Lőrinc specified his reasons: 1. He had read and been told that if anyone who had doubts concerning certain tenets of the Roman Catholic faith visited the purgatory of St. Patrick, his doubts would be allayed. He had begun to doubt the existence of the invisible and intangible human soul, and regained his conviction down there. 2. He was moreover *actuated by the desire to tell his sovereign* that he had seen that much talked-of purgatory. This was authenticated by the letter issued under the Royal Seal. 3. He had heard from many people that the Irish saints accomplished numerous miracles, and he wanted to verify these rumours. Asked by the notary of Dublin whether he had bodily experienced all those things or whether it was only his soul that descended to the hell, our hero responded thus: "Raptus fui utrum extra corpus nescio, Deus scit" (I do not know whether I was swept outside my body, God only knows).

By the time Lőrinc Tar decided to undertake the pilgrimage, the cave of St. Patrick had gained wide fame and had many visitors. The first "visitor" after St. Patrick, the nebulously legendary founder, was a — probably likewise legendary — knight by the name of "Oenus" or "Owin" whose visions, extremely popular, were recorded in numberless manuscripts since the end of the 12th century and on which all subsequent visions in the cave were based. The legend of this knight ran like this.<sup>5</sup> Oenus becomes conscious of his grave sins and wishes to atone in St. Patrick's purgatory. He is received in a palely

<sup>5</sup> After POSONYI, 1942 and FÉLICE, 1906.

illuminated field by fifteen men clad in white who prepare him for the horrors he will have to face and all of which he can escape by repeating the name of Jesus Christ. He is then attacked by evil spirits who try to drag him back to the entrance amidst blood-curdling howls. Demons are nailing men and women to the ground by means of fiery clamps, tearing out their hearts, rotating them by their limbs tied to the spokes of fiery wheels, and throwing them into cauldrons filled with boiling tar and melting ores and then into a stinking river. The invocation of Jesus always invests Oenus with force. His prayers help him in crossing a sulphurously flaming river on a slippery, high and steep bridge which spans the orifice of the hell. He arrives at the other bank of the river where the devils have no power; passing through the gem-studded gate of a great wall, he inhales bracing scents which restore his strength. He reaches then the Garden of Eden whence man had been expelled. He would fain tarry there but has to return. The splendid gate closes behind him, and he is fled by the demons on his way back. Before leaving, he is once more met by the fifteen divine emissaries who bless him and enjoin him to make haste. The prior awaits him at the exit.

The famous legend excited not only the imagination of various peoples and, among Hungarians, not only that of Lőrinc Tar, but had kindled the phantasy of another Hungarian knight 58 years before him. It was György Krizsáfnfi, a knight of Lewis I the Great (of Anjou, 1342—1382), "*Georgius de Ungaria, Filius cuiusdem magnatis militis et baronis de Ungaria qui Crissaphan nominatur*", who, as commanding officer of Apulia and commander of several fortresses, perpetrated a great many murders. Conscience stricken, he undertook a pilgrimage in the course of which he reached the cave of St. Patrick. His visit was likewise verified by authentic records. He did not dictate his visions like Lőrinc Tar; it was an Augustinian monk of Provence who — according to M. Voigt — subsequently recorded the visions. This monk crammed his records with theological and strongly didactic comments. The pilgrimage was carried out "*laudabiliter*" on December 7, 1353, in the following manner.<sup>6</sup> The door closed behind him. He found himself in a dark cavity, but it began to dawn upon his prayer; he reached a barren field where his visions started. There appeared, on his ardent invocation, three old men of identical aspect, one of whom asked his business, then whispered him the way to gaining the grace of Christ, and taught him the prayer which would be his sole weapon against the demoniac forces. An emissary of the Lord would afford him insight into the mysteries of the purgatory, the hell and the paradise provided he gave a proof of his fidelity. As soon as the benevolent spirits disappeared, the attack of the evil ones began. In the first vision, the devils still appeared in their original form. In the next three visions they tempted György as horsemen,

<sup>6</sup> After POSONYI, 1952, VOIGT, 1924 and HAMMERICH, 1931 (also 1927).

merchants, beautiful maids, and then again as monsters tormenting supine souls tied with fiery chains; thereafter, they tried to entice him in the guise of churchmen. Failing in these efforts they disguised themselves as his next of kin (his father and three brothers) and tried to make him commit apostasy. It was in the ninth vision — "*De apparitione domicile*" — that György met a distinguished lady, a highly respected acquaintance, who expressed her joy at his having escaped the torments of the demons; she pretended to have been sent by God's angel in order to accompany our hero in his further pilgrimage. However, by trying to induce him to don a splendid dress and bedeck himself with precious jewels, she revealed herself as a fiendish devil. After further adventures and various sufferings György reached the bridge over the orifice of the hell; it was sharp as a razor and trembled like an aspen leaf. After having crossed, he encountered the archangel Michael who showed him the purgatory. There, he *beheld his mother* among the suffering souls; they just exchanged glances, and — "owing to the great distance" — his mother asked him with her eyes only that he pray for her. He saw there furthermore *acquaintances* and many unknown people, as also great kings, prelates and simple monks. More than two thousand persons were named and their sins enumerated by the angel. György arrived finally at the hell where he once more encountered *acquaintances*, sinners of all ranks and both sexes. He beheld at last the Garden of Eden, both the terrestrial and the real paradise. Everything was explained to him by the angel. He should have liked to remain there but had to return to Earth. All he asked for was that he should be saved from hell, that he *should be told the length of his life and learn the way in which he could deliver his mother from the purgatory*. The angel entrusted him thereafter with messages to ecclesiastic and secular potentates and enjoined him to reveal the messages to nobody but those concerned. The addressees, all high church dignitaries and great personages, are enumerated in this case. He was expected at the entrance of the cave when the 24 hours had elapsed and everybody marvelled at his arrival in the company of a heavenly emissary. As soon as he left the cave, the crowd — passionately enraptured — beset him, tore his garments from his body and cut them into pieces as relics.

The work of the Augustinian monk was disseminated in numerous copies, and even German translations thereof are known as "*Georg von Ungarn im Purgatorium Patricii*" and under other titles.

The text of the three visions makes it evident that they were written under each other's influence, and the individual features of each version can be well distinguished from features that are common to all. The helpful spirits appearing in the bright field, the exorcizing power of Christ's name, the attempt of the evil spirits to drag the invader back to the entrance, the tortures, the steep and slippery or sharp and trembling bridge and the sight of the terrestrial paradise — where he would like to remain — originated from the Oenus legend.

Investigators have compared these visions with other visions of the world beyond, that had nothing to do with St. Patrick's cave, e.g. with the revelations of St. Peter and St. Paul, as also with the Dialogues of St. Gregory, further with the visions of St. Fursey and Beda Venerabilis, finally, with the most perfect samples of the genre, the Visio Alberici from the 12th century and the Tnugdalu. It is from these that the details of the punishment of the terrestrial potentates (the essential feature of the rhymed legend of Lőrinc Tar as applied to Sigismund); the appearance of the archangel Michael in the role of a heavenly companion; the sending of certain messages to the Earth; the punishment of the sinful sovereign by means of a fiery throne (a feature present in the György-legend) and a fiery bed in which he is suffering by day, respectively at night; the presence of his adulterous wife in the fiery bed and numerous other motifs were derived. There is, however, something which did not originate from these sources and which is a common and even emphasized feature of both Hungarian "visions". Both Hungarian knights want to know the fate of their next of kin, their ancestors and even that of their still living relatives, and also their own future. The messages, entrusted to them, are addressed to persons by name, must be kept secret and delivered to them in person. These messages are, moreover, supplemented by "revelations", evidently about the future of those concerned. This is quite clear from the rhymed descent to hell in which Lőrinc Tar "tells" Sigismund, his master, what he had seen concerning the emperor's future; impressed by this disclosure, Sigismund does suitable penance. Already the confession of Lőrinc, the "memoriale", contains a reference of this nature, viz. that it was also on Sigismund's behest that he wanted to see the purgatory.

Of course, this characteristic feature is obscured at many points in the visions of Knight György as recorded by a monk, e.g. where the *devils* assume the *image of his next of kin* in order to beguile him; or in the passage in which, in addition to his kinspeople beheld in the purgatory, he enumerates a great number of unknown people whose names were probably added to the tale by the zealous monk. There is, however, a point at which the original tale seems to have been preserved, and we see here a characteristic personal feature: the hero beholds his own mother among the suffering souls. He wants to know in the following how it would be possible to rescue her from the purgatory, and he also wants to learn about the rest of his life. (These personal elements, concerning the hero and his next of kin, cannot be found in Tinódi's poem; naturally so, since the whole legend forms but a part of the "Chronicle of Sigismund King and Emperor" so that only visions concerning Sigismund are selected from among the earlier songs to which the first line alludes.) Another individual feature common to both Hungarian versions is the appearance of the distinguished and beloved lady whose presence among the next of kin and the close acquaintances must have been due to the influence of courtly-knightly life.

References to close relatives in other-worldly visions are known only from times subsequent to the visions of György, and even then they were rare, casual and short. (The legend of György Krizsáfnfi produced a demonstrably deep effect on later legends.) William Staunton made his pilgrimage to the cave of St. Patrick a few weeks before that of Lőrinc Tar; he was seriously reproached in his visions by his deceased sister for having, on account of a difference in rank, prevented her marriage with the man she had loved: it is a sin in the eyes of God to frustrate the union of two loving hearts even if one of them happens to derive from a family of shepherds and the other from emperors and kings. The essence of the vision is, thus, not the interest in the fate of kinspeople but the democratic spirit which pervades the whole text in which bishops who failed to preach to the common folk are flogged by their erstwhile servants, a tendency which characterizes our versified legend as well. Another visitor of Patrick's cave, Raymond (1397), recognizes his female cousin among the sinners; she has to suffer because of having made up her face in a conspicuous manner. This, too, is just an example and not a genuine enquiry into the fate of kinspeople as contained in the two Hungarian versions.

Although there exists one more complex of medieval legends in which the protagonists "inquire about their ancestors", namely the visitors of the Sybilla cave who land likewise in another world,<sup>7</sup> these arrive at the cave or hill after asking their way to it and find there a "terrestrial paradise", sexual pleasures in the first place, and it is not there that they learn the fate of their forebears. Besides, this concept, composed of Breton and classic traditions, gained popularity through the French-Italian romances that arose about 1410–1420 so that it is not likely to have been known to Lőrinc Tar and could in no case have been known to György Krizsáfnfi. That the two Hungarian knights add the fate of their next of kin to the body of traditional European visions points to the existence of some local Hungarian tradition.

E. POZSONYI, too, conjectures an old Hungarian popular tradition in the background of our legend of Lőrinc Tar, but the body of folktales referred to by him<sup>8</sup> is part of the common European tradition and contains no specially Hungarian elements. The type of tales quoted by Pozsonyi is nevertheless worthy of note, and we propose to expatiate upon it in some detail.

The tale type in question consists of three episodes. 1. Before being born, a child is promised to be given to the devil. 2. Grown up, the boy descends to hell in order to rescind the covenant and make himself free. En route, he meets a great sinner (Madej, a bandit) who asks the boy to find out what kind of punishment he (the bandit) has to expect in the other world. The boy, comply-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. LÖHMANN, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> "Stephen the Killer" and its variants: BERZE NAGY, 1957, No. 757 as also their European analogues: ANDREIEV, 1927.



ing with the request, sees the bandit's fiery bed. 3. Frightened, the bandit repents and dies converted amidst certain miracles. (It is here that the motif of the sprouting stick, known from the Tannhäuser legend, crops up.) Irish, Scotch, Breton, French, German, Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Slovene, Croatian, several Roumanian, Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Russian variants of this tale are known. Three types are distinguished among these variants: a western (with French, Breton, West-German, scattered South-German and Saxon, a Danish, several Czech variants and a Polish version); a middle type (with several German, some Danish, Polish, Ukrainian, Czechoslovak, Hungarian, Slovene, Croatian, Roumanian and Lithuanian versions; and finally a Great Russian type, certain elements of which are pale reflections of the western type (by way of German—Novgorod mediation, according to N. P. Andreiev). Andreiev claims that the middle type developed among the Poles and is a later creation than the others. However, on account of its higher artistic value it has found acceptance over a vast area, and certain elements of it have even invaded the Great Russian and the western variants. Noteworthy for us is the fact that, according to this central type, the bandit is to lie in a fiery bed in the other world just like Sigismund in Tinódi's poem. All variants of the Great Russian type speak likewise of fiery beds, whereas a fiery chair is mentioned in all western variants. Andreiev is unaware of the fact that both concepts originated from medieval visions: in both regions they are remnants of the fiery throne and bed awaiting the king. He seems justified in concluding that the western type was the first to arise; it was presumably among the Bretons that three medieval complexes of legends were amalgamated: 1. the child promised to the devil; 2. the legends about the descent to hell (this is confirmed also by the fact that the wanderer in hell beholds different sinners in certain Breton, German, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and South Slav variants which, because of their small number, are not regarded by Andreiev as original elements); 3. legends of the repentant sinner.

Two of the three, the second and the third, constitute the contents of Lőrinc Tar's versified peregrination, including the motif of the fiery bed. Our versified legend is, at the same time, a direct offspring of the medieval visions of the inferno.

Worthy of note is also the area of dissemination where the distribution and separation of the western and the central type as well as the mixed German area are strongly suggestive of the East-European dissemination of French ballads around Hungary as a centre.<sup>9</sup> This is borne out by certain passages in which — as stated by Andreiev in spaced-out type — the Hungarian and the French-Breton forms are identical with one another but different from other

<sup>9</sup> Cf. VARGYAS, 1960. and 1964

forms.<sup>10</sup> It is quite possible that a new thorough revision will find the point of origin in Hungary instead of Poland. (The number of variants is not decisive since it depends on the intensity of the work of collection, on its earlier or later date and, in the first place, on whether any given people has archaic or more advanced traditions.) A connection must have existed in this case between the prose folktales and the old verses commemorating Lőrinc Tar's pilgrimage. The fact that, though in a modified form, the name Madej, a common one among the Poles, appears not only among the Czechs and Slovenes but in Hungary as well (e.g. Máday), argues against a Hungarian origin. However, the process may have occurred the other way round: elements of the budding folktale may have invaded the legend and given rise to the known versified variant. The parallelism between the poem about Lőrinc Tar and the folktale is in any case striking.

Living popular belief contains further analogues. Hungarian necromancers and ecstasies, too, emit their soul to the spirits of the dead in order to gather information about the fate of the living, and they, too, tell of the fate of dead kinspeople<sup>11</sup> after their return to Earth. Memories of this kind must have haunted Lőrinc Tar when answering the notary's question in the terms „Raptus fui. . .” (I was swept outside my body. . .). This is an accurate translation of a popular expression widespread among the Palots of Hungary: „to be carried away, swept outside one's body in a state of trance” (in Hungarian: „elragadtatik”) in contrast to the general expression “to hide” (in Hungarian: „elrejtezik”).<sup>12</sup> The term under consideration wants to convey the idea of ecstasy, whereas in other visions, pilgrims experience their adventures “bodily” and in a state of “wakefulness”. Similar memories may have suggested the “revelations” and “messages” which were directed to particular persons and which the “ecstasies”, too, must, deliver only to those immediately concerned. The difference in this respect consists in that, according to the popular belief, the message is brought by a mediator, and it is this person who falls into trance and not the person whose (or whose next of kin's) future in this or the next

<sup>10</sup> »Wie wir sehen, ist die am meisten verbreitete (normale) Form unseres Auftritts den Franzosen und Bretonen ganz unbekannt, fast ebenso unbekannt auch den Magyaren; auch bei den Deutschen und den Tschechen ist die Form nicht besonders stark vertreten . . . am häufigsten kommt sie bei den Polen, Ukrainern und Grossrussen vor« (ANDREIEV, 1927, p. 103). »Logisch muss man natürlich einen engen Zusammenhang zwischen den beiden Höllenszenen annehmen, . . . die westlichen Varianten (die französischen, bretonischen, deutschen) sowie die magyarischen, litauischen und slovenischen kennen einen derartigen Zusammenhang gar nicht oder fast gar nicht, während er in den polnischen, grossrussischen, weissrussischen und ukrainischen bestimmt vorwiegt« (ANDREIEV, 1927, pp. 108—109). There is not much more than this that would form a link between the Russian and the western type.

<sup>11</sup> DIÓSZEGI, 1958, pp. 297—303.

<sup>12</sup> See DIÓSZEGI, 1958, p. 299 and the accompanying map. But this passage is reminiscent of the Bible, too. Cf.: »Scio hominem in Christo ante annos quattuordecim, sive in corpore nescio, sive extra corpus nescio, Deus scit, raptum huiusmodi usque ad tertium caelum. Et scio huiusmodi hominem sive in corpore, sive extra corpus nescio, Deus scit: quoniam raptus est in Paradisum: et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui.« Kor. II, 12, 2—5.

world is revealed. It must be admitted that, in this respect, Lőrinc Tar who descends to hell for the sake of Sigismund stands closer to the Hungarian popular belief.

Going a little farther afield we encounter other analogies. Not only medieval Europe produced poems commemorating pilgrimages to the nether world: we find them among the Turkic-Mongolian peoples of Siberia as well, with the difference that, among these peoples, descent to hell forms the subject of heroic epics and not of legends. Each of the following four examples forms part of extensive and significant epic songs.

A very long epic song, some passages of which reach to great depths of antiquity, presents the first analogue; it originates from the basin of Minusinsk.<sup>13</sup> A monster kills a young man and takes his severed head to the nether world. The sister of the victim follows the monster in order to retrieve her brother's head. Reaching the nether world, she beholds the track of the monster's horse on the level path. She then sees an old woman pouring milk into seven jugs; a steed, three fathoms high which is well fed although there is neither grass nor water in the barren field; further on, she beholds a lean jade standing in high grass next to a brook; one half of a human body which obstructs the flow of a brook; also, she sees an entire corpse over which the stream is gushing forth unimpeded. A girl passing by — likewise a mythical heroine — tells her where to find the house of the Irle Khans. Entering the house, she finds herself in utter darkness where disembodied beings begin to mangle her; frightened, she starts shouting. The first Irle Khan enters hereupon; the girl follows him through many rooms where different punishments are being meted out; she sees spinning women; further, women who are unable to swallow; women with stones tied to their neck and arms; men with a noose around the neck, with eyeballs starting from their sockets; men whose body is pierced by bullets, men lacerating themselves with knives or lacerated by dogs. In each of the last two rooms she sees a married couple: the first have a large rug, but it is not enough to cover them and they are pulling it off one another, while a small rug suffices to shelter the other couple. She comes hereafter into the presence of all Irle Khans; she rebukes them for having had her brother killed, and they reproach her for having dared invade their house. They would not allow her to return, nor would they restore her brother's head unless she was willing and able to stand a certain test of strength. This is carried out, whereupon the Khans become friendly and, requested by our heroine, show her the wonders of their realm and explain the meaning of the scenes she had witnessed. The miracle of the half and the complete human body means that, with sound judgement, even persons deprived of physical strength are equal to great tasks, while — without sound judgement — even great strength is of no avail.

<sup>13</sup> SHIEFNER, 1859, No. XV, lines 365—868.

The fat and the lean horse symbolize the fact that even rich pastures become useless if left untended, while good care works miracles even under untoward conditions; the woman, pouring the milk, had added water to the milk in her life on Earth and has to separate them now; the two married couples bring home the lesson that bickering and selfishness lead to misery even in wealth, while concord engenders contentment even if wealth is lacking. The heroine is then shown her way to the upper world. Arriving on Earth, she finds the body of the brother and resuscitates him.

More faded, abridged, but more archaic in most of its elements is the story regarding the journey of the Mongolian Khan Bogda Gesser to the nether world, a tale attached to the history of Gesser's life.<sup>14</sup> On his descent, Gesser assumes the shape of the king of birds, sets a trap for mouse-shaped Khan Erlik, and beats him with a ninety-nine angled bludgeon until the soul of his mother is restored. Possessed of it, he takes the rescued soul to the region of the gods. This part is, according to I. J. SCHMIDT, more ancient than the preceding parts, and also its language is different; it may be the insertion of a more archaic and more popular song which had nothing in common with Buddhist religious notions.

G. N. POTANIN presents a long Soyot or Mongolian epic song which composed of several parts, originated from the region at the confluence of the rivers Yenisei Beikem and Hakem.<sup>15</sup> The hero is bid by his father to fetch the sheepskin coat of his great grandfather from the nether world. He arrives at the yurt of Khan Erlik. As soon as he dismounts, he is seized, put in iron chains and thrown into the yurt. Regaining consciousness, he sees a hoary old man sitting on a dais in front of him who wants to know why he has come, how he dared come to a place whence there is no way back. The hero tells the old man that he was bid by his father to fetch the coat of the great grandfather. The old fellow bursts out laughing: "The Khan will be here with his wife anyway, he need not have sent his son!" The boy, questioned as to what he saw along the way, gave an account of his adventures. "And what does all this mean?" — asked Khan Erlik (he was the old man). The boy could not tell, and so Khan Erlik supplied the explanation. The lean-flanked mare with the rich fodder symbolized the stingy rich who are of no use either to themselves or to others; the fat mare with poor fodder and few water symbolized poor people content with what they possess. The boy he saw was not suffering on account of his sins: he had been entrusted with so much cattle as was impossible for him to handle. "On your way back help the poor boy and, returning to the upper world, tell everybody on Earth to offer sacrifices at the death of grown-ups and not at that of children. When you get home, sacrifice the offspring

<sup>14</sup> SCHMIDT, 1839, pp. 283—287 »Gesser's Fahrt in die Unterwelt um seine Mutter zu befreien.«

<sup>15</sup> POTANIN, 1883, IV., pp. 617—618, in No. 181.

of the first-foaled brown mare and the calf of the black cow." He has the coat delivered to the boy and bids him to tell his father that the latter should present himself, together with his elder wife, in the underground realm without delay in exchange for the solicited coat. Without looking back, the hero leaves the nether world in a haste and complies with his assignments: both his father and the latter's wife die shortly, and the hero succeeds as Khan.

G. N. POTANIN presents the contents of a Mongolian (Durban) — presumably likewise long and well adjusted — epic song.<sup>16</sup> The hero, having gone through many adventures, marries but remains childless for a long time. He asks the heavenly power for a son; they promise him one provided he first "evacuates the eighteen hells", i.e. rescues the souls kept there. The hero complies with the task, and horrifies Khan Erlik and his son by his tremendous physical strength. The liberated souls ascend to heaven on a rainbow. Only a single great sinner is left whom the hero is unable to liberate. He argues with Erlik, it comes almost to a crossing of swords; at last, Erlik releases the soul for 21 years after which it will have to return. The hero then questions Erlik as to what are the principal good deeds and the cardinal sins. Erlik supplies the requested information and wishes the hero good luck. The latter mounts a horse which is led by the son of Erlik. They arrive at a jostling crowd of men and cattle; the men are being stabbed by spears, their blood is flowing in torrents, they are hardly able to walk, and their moaning fills the air. Questioned, the companion of the hero explains that these people were wounded in a war waged by twelve countries against one another; they cannot reach Khan Erlik and are now roaming this desert. "Send them to heaven" — so the hero is prompted which is then done. They arrive thereafter at a tree whose boughs are loaded with weeping children and twittering little birds. Erlik's son explains that these are the souls of children who died in times of war. These, too, are sent to heaven by the hero who then parts company with his companion, goes home to find there a newly-born son.

According to POTANIN's notes accompanying the text, his collection contains Mongolian and Altaian-Turkic variants of this story. "These bylinas present, in an epic form, the scenes enacted by the shamans. There is a clear relationship between the Durban poem and the Irin-Sayan and Mongolian versions; this is in our opinion a new epic representation of the shaman ritual. It explains the presence of the horse and the indication of its name in the legend: the horse on which the shaman is riding to Erlik's empire . . . The common foundation of the legend is rooted in the notions of North-Asiatic shaman-

<sup>16</sup> POTANIN, 1883, IV., No. 135, lines 481—484. Already POTANIN did connect this text with the story of Madej. ANDREIEV who refers to it incidentally and is hardly familiar with the literature of nether-world pilgrimages holds that the agreement is but of general character. Of course, he is ignorant of the connecting link, i. e. of the versified and prose legend of Lőrinc Tar. Apart from this, he quotes from POTANIN only the texts connected with the special motifs regarding Madej the bandit.

ism regarding the cause of diseases; certain elements are identical with shamanistic beliefs concerning the realm of souls and the shamans' functions at the sick-bed. The names of persons figuring in the legend support this assumption. The essence of the plot is the shaman's journey on the horse Bűrű to the dark empire of Erlik in order to redeem the lost soul" (op. cit., p. 910). This correlation is quite clear in Bogda Gesser Khan's "descent to hell". There can be no doubt that the infernal peregrinations in the Turkic—Mongolian heroic songs are epic manifestations of shamanism, and, thus, products of an internal development.

It is a common feature of these Siberian pilgrimages to the nether world that the hero undertakes them for the sake of some next of kin — mother, brother, etc. Another common feature is that the hero either questions Erlik or is questioned by Erlik as to the meaning of the observed scenes which are then explained to the hero. Many of their features are similar to those to be found in Christian visions of the other world, with the difference that the Siberian visions refer to the nether world only and never to heaven. It is in this respect that the vision of Lőrinc Tar shows a close similarity to them: he sees — in contrast to other Christian visions — just one part of the other world, the purgatory, while the other two parts are closed to him — allegedly by divine command. Also in the Eastern texts are the heroes entrusted with messages, partly with general ones and partly messages addressed to their relatives.

We have authentic proofs to show that these stories were once known among Hungarians: certain Hungarian folktales have preserved their characteristic parts with astonishing accuracy. These folktales belong to the type known as "Lambs" (Hungarian: "Möndölöcskék" — BERZE-NAGY, No. 758\* which is not included in the European stock of folktales). The story runs as follows. Three poor boys, one after the other, enter the service of an old man, but only the youngest does his job which is to follow the lambs through thick and thin. They cross a river which withers his flesh; the lambs breathe on him on the other side and his body becomes more beautiful than before. (Or, his legs wither away but grow again.) According to J. KRIZA's version,<sup>17</sup> they arrived at a meadow on which the grass was high enough to be mown; yet, the cattle grazing there were so lean that the slightest wind could have blown them away. The lambs reached then a field where there was no grass; the cattle stood on the barren soil and were nevertheless as fat as could be wished. The lambs came thereafter to a forest where they heard whining and howling from every tree. Looking up, the boy saw sadly trittering fledgling sparrows on all boughs. The lambs continued their way and reached a large garden where two dogs were fighting like grim death without being able to damage each other. Following the lambs, the boy came to a big lake from which a woman vainly tried to ladle something. Going further on, they arrived at a brook; it contained wonder-

<sup>17</sup> KRIZA, 1911, pp. 163—170. The quotation is on pp. 165—168.



fully clear water. The boy was thirsty, but — on the point of drinking from the rivulet — thought it might be better to drink from the source where the water promised to be still clearer. Arriving at the source, he saw that the water was gushing forth from the mouth of a stinking dead dog; disgusted, he preferred to remain thirsty. They next stopped at a beautiful garden. — Coming home, the old man, his master, explained to the boy the meaning of the scenes he had seen along the way. The beautiful champaign was his uncontaminated youth; the river washed off his sins; the lambs which breathed on him were angels; the lean cattle amidst succulent grass meant the misers who had great wealth in this world but stinted themselves the very food; they would have great wealth in the other world too, sufficient to eat, sufficient to drink, they would eat and drink amply and yet always feel hungry and thirsty; the fat cattle in the barren field meant those who had not much in this world and yet shared it with the poor; they would not possess much in the beyond and still never suffer from hunger or thirst; the young whining birds in the forest meant the children who, buried unbaptized in this world by their mother, would incessantly weep and cry in the next; the two dogs fighting over the possession of the garden symbolized two kinsmen: they were quarrelling in this world over bits of property and would continue to be bickering after death; the woman trying to catch something with a ladle meant somebody who had added water to the milk on Earth and was condemned to separate milk from water in the lake for eternity; the water flowing from the dead dog meant the sermons of priests who did not practise what they preached; finally, the beautiful garden meant heaven. Several variants of this story are known. Among the Hungarians in the environs of Braşov (Rumania),<sup>18</sup> two pigs had to be attended; they crossed two rivers, got first thin and then put on flesh again. Following the pigs, the young swineherd beheld a barren hill on which only occasional blades of grass were growing. A big herd of oxen was grazing there, and they were so fat that there was hardly room enough for all of them. Going on, they came to high grass which reached above their head, and the oxen grazing there were lean and puny. They arrived thereafter at a big garden where two mastiffs were lacerating one another. The pigs turned finally into angels in a small house where a well-laid table was awaiting them, and where the scenes seen along the way were explained. The rivers washed off the sins also in this case. The parable of the oxen meant that a person content with his earnings and feeding his cattle from his own products would be blessed by God. . . The cattle of men who tried to get them fat at the expense of others were accursed and became thin instead of growing fat. The dogs symbolized people who were at loggerheads in this world, showed no forgiveness even at the hour of death and continued bickering thereafter. The small house meant heaven.

<sup>18</sup> HORGER, 1908, pp. 85—96. The quotation is on pp. 87—89.

Compendious notes of A. IPOLYI<sup>19</sup> present certain details of the above story from the county Hont. It is the leg of the lambs which wastes away in the river. The lambs arrive in this variant at a field where the grass reaches up to the neck, and the cattle grazing there are so lean that their ribs can be counted. They come to a pasture in which there is hardly any grass, and the cows grazing there are nevertheless so fat that it is a joy to look at them. They find a golden forest in which an old man celebrates the mass, and that old man is God himself. The explanation is then given as follows. Fat cows on the poor grazing land meant charity, lean cows on fertile pasture symbolized avarice. — In a tale from Bánfa, the hero sees fat lambs on sandy soil and lean ones in high grass, and he encounters also a dog fighting a snake.<sup>20</sup> In a variant from Sarkad,<sup>21</sup> the lambs cross a ramshackle bridge and change into angels in the chapel. Variants from Köröstárkány, Göcsej and Baranya contain the same story.<sup>22</sup>

There is still another Hungarian counterpart of the Siberian infernal visions.<sup>23</sup> In this version it is *the king who bids his son to fetch the engagement ring of his mother dead for 30 years*. The prince is accompanied by his iron brother-in-law. They see a cow along the way: it is grazing in forbidden land and is lean nevertheless, while another cow grazing in wasteland is fat. *A rock collapses under the weight of a wren-sized bird, while a blade of grass and a hair are not even bent by the weight of a goose-sized bird.* . . The prince is then urged by his iron brother-in-law to go on alone and disinter his mother. He does it, tells the mother what he is up to and asks her for the golden ring. His mother, complying with the request, remarks that this was the only gift she received from her husband and now he wants her to return even this solitary present. "Let him have it; *he will die soon anyway*, because he wants to take your wife." On his way back, the iron brother-in-law explains the meaning of the scenes. The cow in the forbidden (i.e. rich) pasture was lean because it had been given as a present to a poor man, and the donor regretted his magnanimity; the fat cow in the wasteland had likewise been presented but the donor never regretted the deed. The parable of the birds is not explained. The iron brother-in-law gives then instructions to the prince: 'Go to your father and tell him to sow Indian corn, to eat samp in the morning and to milk his cow in order to have

<sup>19</sup> KÁLMÁNY, 1914, pp. 172—177, No. 25. The quotation is on pp. 175—176.

<sup>20</sup> BERZE NAGY, 1940, II., No. 13, p. 539.

<sup>21</sup> ARANY—GYULAI, 1872, pp. 376—382. The quotation is on pp. 380—381.

<sup>22</sup> Ethn. XXXIII, 1922, p. 81; GÖNCZI, 1948, No. 6, p. 300; BÁNÓ, 1942, No. 29, p. 189. BERZE NAGY presents a sixth manuscript variant. He remarks that the type is rooted in eastern religious concepts, but offers no explanation nor does he refer to eastern analogues (BERZE NAGY, 1957).

<sup>23</sup> Nyr., XVI, 1887, pp. 377—380, from the county Szolnok-Doboka. The tales mentioned in Notes 15—20 are to be found also in NAGY BERZE's summaries, cf. "A magyarság néprajza" ("Ethnography of the Hungarian people"), III. pp. 262—263.



fresh milk because God will take lunch with him... (this is to say that the father should offer sacrifices as in the Siberian songs). The king refuses to do as bidden and is killed by the iron brother-in-law. His death is prophesied in the nether world like in the other songs.

It is evident that these examples include nearly all elements contained in the Siberian pilgrimages to the nether world. The most constantly recurring theme is that of the lean and the fat cattle; it is explained in different ways, but the contrast between the rich and the poor is emphasized in all versions. The bickering spouses are replaced in our versions by fighting dogs which symbolize wrangling kinspeople, the heavy and light-weight birds are substituted for the miracle of the man with the half and that with the complete body; the similarity is perfect as regards the scene of the woman ladling the milk and that of the souls of dead children appearing as birds on the tree. A very important common feature is the retrieval of some property of a dead parent or other ascendant, a task set by the father of the hero which is the reason for his descent to hell. The Hungarian variants, too, contain the command to offer sacrifices, and — modified according to the given story — the father's death. All these details point clearly to a connection between the infernal journeys of the heroic songs and their Christianized versions, and it is evident that stories of this nature constitute a type living in several variants both here and in the East.

At the time of Lőrinc Tar or György Krizsáfáni, our versions must have been still more archaistic, must have been still closer to their Siberian counterparts, and it was in that form that they influenced the Christianized visions of our two knights. The scene, for instance, in which Knight György beholds his mother among the sufferers, eagerly asks Archangel Michael how it would be possible to rescue her from the torments of the purgatory and even requests the archangel to pray for her with the other angels, is easily recognizable as the Christian version of stories like that of Gesser who claims the soul of his mother or that of the maid who visits hell in quest of her brother's head. There can be no doubt that the adventures of the two Hungarian pilgrims were influenced by living Hungarian traditions of Eastern origin. This is sufficiently proved by the presence in our folktales of nether-world pilgrimages suggestive of shamanistic models, and that traces thereof are to be found in the legend of Lőrinc Tar. It is striking that the folktale version of these legends, the story of Madej the bandit, is somehow related to the versified legend of Lőrinc Tar, and that the Hungarian variants seem to occupy a sort of central position; not less striking is the fact that we find two Hungarians among the historically verified visitors of St. Patrick's cave. Although these two visitors are separated in time by two generations, their visions show common features which have no precedents in European tradition but can easily be traced back to Eastern prototypes.

We are convinced that one is dealing here with a phenomenon encountered also in other genres governed by tradition, most recently in ballads, namely, that Hungarian traditions, while rooted in eastern soil, were adapted to the prevailing European cultural and literary trends, a process facilitated by a certain affinity between European and Eastern traditions. This affinity and adaptation enabled Hungarians to become an integral part of the new European cultural pattern and yet preserve certain ancient individual traits. A sort of happy compromise is made between the old eastern traditions of pagan times and the European ideals of the time. As in the case of ballads, this amalgamation becomes manifest under the reign of the Anjou dynasty. It seems to be the period in which the contradictions between Christian and pagan, European and Eastern cultures had finally become adjusted, the point of time up to which elements of the ancient Hungarian culture had survived in a nearly unchanged form, the period when these elements could reappear in the national "consciousness": in the Christian culture, in the literature. It may be that the rise of our peasantry to higher forms of life revived ancient traditions hitherto hidden in the deeper layers of national culture. The legends of György Krizsáfáni and Lőrinc Tar as also our ballads are in any case products of the age in which the brothers Kolozsvári created their St. George (now in Prague), the statue of a western Christian knight riding a horse caparisoned in the eastern fashion.

A lesson offers itself for future investigations. It is customary in Hungary to make a sharp distinction between European and eastern traditions: a given phenomenon is either European or eastern, the two concepts are currently regarded as mutually exclusive. The similarity between the eastern forms of the journeys to the nether world and the Christian European notions (which latter were likewise rooted in popular traditions) makes it evident that one is not dealing here with contrasting concepts but rather with variant phenomena.<sup>24</sup> It was for this reason that the Hungarians were able to adopt Christian-European culture without great difficulty, a change that was not such an utter break with the past as it is generally assumed to have been. It would be futile to try to explore these variant phenomena — especially well preserved in Celtic (Breton, Irish, Scotch) traditions — from the sole angle of European

<sup>24</sup> A variant phenomenon of this kind is pointed out by ANDREIEV in connection with the eastern parallels of the story concerning Madej: "Natürlich können wir in der mongolischen Erzählung eine zufällig entstellte Variante der Madejlegende erblicken, ... doch spricht folgendes Bedenken dagegen: die palästinensisch-arabischen ... , die kabyliischen ... , und die mongolischen Legenden scheinen zusammengenommen auf die Existenz eines festen Erzählungsschemas hinzudeuten, ... vorläufig aber ... müssen wir mit der Wahrscheinlichkeit rechnen, dass wir hier sozusagen eins der möglichen Vorstadien der Madejlegende vor uns haben, nicht aber diese Legende selbst; mit anderen Worten: unter der Hauptquelle der echten Madejlegende kann eine Erzählung gewesen sein, die unserer mongolischen 'Variante' in Schema und Inhalt sehr ähnlich war, ohne dass sie mit letzterer durchaus genetisch verwandt gewesen zu sein braucht: sie konnte auch selbständig auf analogem Wege aus analogen Materialien entstanden sein" (N. P. Andreiev, 1927, pp. 260—264).

literary history and with reference to the European folklore only; it would be still less possible to study them from the sole viewpoint of eastern folklore: they have to be explored and understood by comparative Eurasian folkloristic, literary and historical research work.

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